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IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT,  
R.S.O. 1990, Chapter O.18, S. 29 and S. 67

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AUG 27 2001  
HERITAGE & LIBRARIES BRANCH

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AND PREMISES  
IN THE CITY OF HAMILTON, KNOWN MUNICIPALLY  
AS 14 MARY STREET

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE**

RECEIVED  
AUG 21 2001

**TO:** The Ontario Heritage Foundation,  
10 Adelaide Street East,  
Toronto, Ontario.  
M5C 1J3

**TAKE NOTICE THAT** the Council of the City of Hamilton intends to designate the following property, including land and buildings, as a property of historic or architectural value or interest under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act:

14 Mary Street.

**THE REASONS** for the proposed designation are set out in Schedule "A" annexed hereto.

**A NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE** is being published once in The Hamilton Spectator on the date set out below.

**ANY PERSON** may, within thirty days of the date set out below, send by registered mail or deliver to the Office of the City Clerk of the City of Hamilton notice of his or her objection to the proposed designation, together with a statement of the reasons for the objection and all relevant facts. When a Notice of Objection has been received, the Council of the City of Hamilton will refer the matter to the Conservation Review Board for a hearing and report.

Dated at Hamilton, this 17th day of August 2001.

K. Christenson  
City Clerk  
Hamilton, Ontario

## Schedule "A"

### Century Theatre 14 Mary Street, Hamilton

#### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

##### Context

The former Century Theatre at 14 Mary Street is located directly behind the landmark 1881 Copp Block which spans the entire block from Mary to Walnut Street. The theatre building originally stood in the midst of a thriving retail and entertainment district in the downtown core, just steps away from the busy King Street East commercial thoroughfare. Tucked away on a narrow street, its impressive four-storey façade with a crowning cornice arching over the semi-circular sign bearing its original "Lyric Theatre" name was only ever visible to visitors approaching the theatre from King Street at the intersection of Mary Street because of the continuous row of three-storey commercial buildings lining King. Today the building is much more visible from the north than it would have been in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as many commercial/ industrial buildings and houses along Mary Street and King William Street have since been demolished and the vacant land turned into parking lots. Even though the theatre building is vacant and in disrepair, its imposing five-storey brick and cast stone façade still maintains a commanding presence. The new owners of the former Century Theatre intend to convert it into residential units on the upper floors with commercial space on the ground floor, conserving and restoring as many of the original features on the Mary Street façade as possible.

##### History

Opened as a vaudeville theatre in 1913, the Lyric Theatre was hailed at the time to be the largest theatre in Hamilton with a seating capacity of over 2000. It was built for Dominion Theatres Limited to offer "top-class" Loews Vaudeville and moving pictures to the citizens of Hamilton. At a time when this form of entertainment was extremely popular, the Lyric Theatre was one of the seven largest and grandest theatres of its type to be built in Hamilton, three of which were located in the immediate vicinity: the Temple, the Capitol and the Palace. In 1914, the Lyric was sold to the Canadian United Theatre Company of London, Ontario, and became the Keith Vaudeville Circuit's permanent home in Hamilton. The theatre underwent extensive renovations in 1922, making it "one of the most palatial amusement centres in the Dominion". Purchased in 1940 by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theatres it was fully modernized to serve as a state-of-the-art movie house. In 1967, the Century underwent yet another complete refurbishing and continued to operate until closing in 1989 when the new multi-theatre complex opened in Jackson Square. Today, the Century and the Tivoli on James Street North are the only two of Hamilton's grand early 20<sup>th</sup> century theatres to survive with their auditoriums.

## Architecture

The Lyric Theatre was originally built with a four storey wrap-around brick masonry façade designed in a Renaissance Revival style. It featured six pilasters with cast stone capitals supporting a cast stone moulding that was originally surmounted by an elaborate crowning cornice (almost certainly fabricated of galvanized iron) with a central round arched section framing a semi-circular metal sign panel. The symmetrical front façade was divided by four brick pilasters into three window bays. The wood-framed sash windows originally provided natural light for the offices located on the three floors at the front of the building.

In 1922, the building was extensively remodeled with an "elaborate new entrance, modern balcony and beautiful mezzanine floor". In 1940, the building underwent more major changes, which most likely included the fifth floor addition at the front. The architects, Kaplan and Sprachman of Toronto, reputedly designed many outstanding pictures houses across Canada. Claimed to be the first theatre in Canada to have the modern convenience of year-round air conditioning, it was decorated with sensational new fluorescent carpet never before seen in Canadian theatres. Fluorescent paint was applied to the ceiling and wall panels in modernistic designs and illuminated with black lighting. The entrance was again altered to include a new marquee, stainless steel box office, vitrolite cladding and neon lighting. Many of these elements were lost when the theatre was again renovated in 1967. The only decorative feature of the 1940 interior to survive was a series of identical abstract Art Deco panels painted on the side walls of the auditorium, which are now faded but still visible.

Today, the upper façade retains its original brick masonry facing and cast-stone trim, and its original window openings with some of the wood sash windows (now hidden behind metal cladding) and cast-stone lintels. Although the decorative cornice has been removed, the painted metal "Lyric Theatre" sign has survived, now badly faded but with the lettering still just discernible. The only surviving original feature of the street level façades is the cast stone lower cornice which wraps around the sides of the building, where it is still visible and partially intact. The front section may be intact, or partially, behind the aluminum fascia panel. Even in its neglected condition, the former Lyric/ Century Theatre continues to stand as a significant example of Hamilton's early 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre architecture.

## Designated Features

Important to the preservation of the former Lyric/ Century Theatre is the west (front) façade and the 20-foot sections of the north and south walls which echo the architectural treatment of the front façade. Included are the six brick pilasters; the cast stone capitals, sills, upper string course and surviving sections of the lower cornice; the semi-circular metal sign panel; the original window openings and any surviving wood sash windows. Also included are the 1940 painted panels in the auditorium.