

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name 66 Drive-In Historic District

other names/site number 66 Drive-In (preferred)

## 2. Location

street & number 17231 Old 66 Blvd. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Carthage (Brooklyn Heights) [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jasper code 097 zip code 64836

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ] )

*LaVerne Brondel*  
Signature of certifying official/Title LaVerne Brondel/Deputy SHPO

2/19/13  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ] )

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet [ ].

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet [ ].

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**66 Drive-In Historic District  
Jasper County, Missouri**

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources Within Property		
		Contributing	Non-contributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	3	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	1	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	4	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ theater  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ theater  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Other: Drive-In Theater  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation concrete  
walls Stucco  
Glass  
roof Metal  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [ x].

See continuation sheet [ ]

**66 Drive-In Historic District  
Jasper County, Missouri**

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

See continuation sheet [x].

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

See continuation sheet [x].

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance**

1949-1952

**Significant Dates**

1949

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Builder/ Ozark Engineering Company

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

**66 Drive-In Historic District  
Jasper County, Missouri**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 9 acres

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	378409	4114998	15	378607	4114998
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	378607	4114454	15	378409	4114739

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Debbie Sheals  
 organization Private Contractor date September, 2002  
 street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779  
 city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FOP for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mark Goodman  
 street & number 17231 Old 66 Blvd. telephone 417-358-8362  
 city or town Carthage state MO zip code 64836

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66 Drive-In Historic District  
Jasper County, Missouri

**Summary:** The Route 66 Drive-In Historic District is located in Jasper County, in an open area on the western edge of Carthage, Missouri. The drive-in property covers approximately 9 acres, and faces Old 66 Boulevard, which follows the original path of Missouri Route 66. The highway forms the southern boundary of the district. The property contains a large collection of highly intact historic resources, most of which date to the year the drive-in opened, 1949; all are in excellent condition. District boundaries include all notable buildings and structures used by the 66 Drive-In business during the period of significance. Those include: a large steel-framed screen house, a stucco concession stand, a ticket booth with glass block walls, and a large freestanding neon sign board. All four of those are counted as contributing resources. The setting is further enhanced by the presence of several original driveway and aisle markers, most of the early speaker stands (now missing the speakers) and the original parking ramp system. The only non-contributing resource in the district is a low modern metal-sided building which sits back to one side of the entrance drive. All of the historic resources of the drive-in have recently been restored, and the theater looks and operates today much as it did during the period of significance.

**Elaboration:** The theater is located on a level plot of ground just west of Carthage, less than three miles from the center of town. Unlike many early drive-ins, which have been surrounded by development over the years, the 66 Drive-In retains its early rural setting. The surrounding parcels of land are relatively open and undeveloped, and the drive-in lot is fringed with mature trees. (See enclosed photos and topo map.)

The drive-in occupies a large rectangular site which fronts on Old 66 Boulevard. The property measures approximately 550 feet along the roadway and is about 715 feet deep. (See Site Plan, Figure One.) The actual outdoor theater area is located at the back of the property; the large screen is set back from the road, and faces away from it. The front lawn, which slopes gently to the street, contains entrance and exit drives, the freestanding signboard, the ticket booth, and the modern building, which houses support operations for the business. The new building, which has metal-clad walls and a low pitched gable roof, is the only non-contributing resources within the district. It is located along the eastern edge of the property, and is partly screened by a wooden fence. (See photo 12.)

The front drives flank a small grass quadrangle which is accented by a neat row of boxwood hedges. Both drives are marked by small metal entrance and exit signs which appear to be early or original. The large freestanding signboard sits close to the street, between the hedges, and the ticket booth is set back from the road, near the screen. (See photos 1-3.) The sign and ticket booth both exhibit elements of the Streamline Moderne style, with curved lines and smooth surfaces.

The large pole-mounted rectangular sign rises well above the line of the hedges, and is easily visible from the road. It has the words "66 DRIVE-IN Now Showing" spelled out in red neon along the top edge. The curved top corners of the sign and the wide flat bands along its lower sides are accented by lighter colored neon tubing. The body of the signboard, which holds

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removable letters for movie postings, is lighted from within. The sign, which is fully operational and highly intact, is a contributing structure.

**Figure One. Site Plan Sketch of the Drive-In. Drawn by Debbie Sheals. Not to scale**

**KEY**

A. Screen House, 1949. Contributing building.

B. Concession Stand/Projection Booth, ca. 1949. Contributing building.

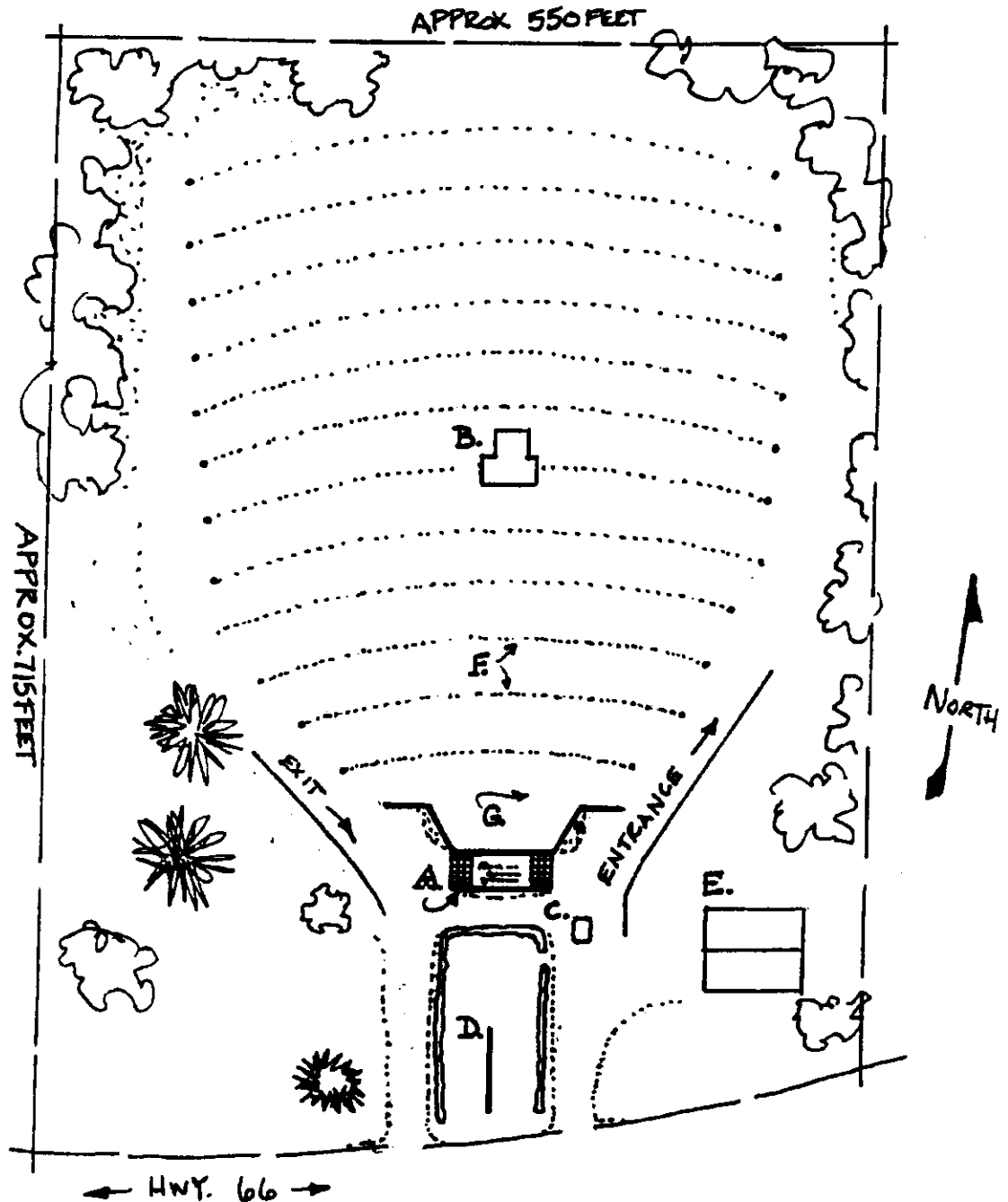
C. Ticket Booth, ca. 1949. Contributing building.

D. Front Sign, ca. 1949. Contributing structure.

E. New support building, ca. 1990. Non-contributing building.

F. Parking rows, 1949. (Not in resource count.)

G. Playground, ca. 1949. (Not in resource count.)



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The ticket booth is located near the southeast corner of the screen building, in the entrance drive. (See photos 2-4.) It is a very small building, no more than 5 feet by 9 feet, with a widely overhanging flat roof. The roof is supported by simple round metal posts, and has two neon strips along its front edges. The walls of the ticket booth, which are made up entirely of wavy glass blocks, curve gently at each corner. Large aluminum-framed windows occupy the upper halves of all except the back wall, which contains a paneled wood entrance door. The ticket booth is in excellent condition and used for its original purpose. It is a contributing building.

The front lawn is visually dominated by the back of the screen house, which doubles as a billboard for the business. The back wall of the screen house, which slopes out and down, is covered with large flat panels that are edged by areas of open steel framework. (See photo 3.) The paneled section of that wall is painted white, with large red block letters which spell out "66 DRIVE-IN THEATER CARTHAGE, MO". The paint is fresh; the lettering and color scheme are original, and closely follow the traces of the original painted sign which were there when restoration of the theater began.

The sloping back wall of the screen makes room for a large enclosure which was originally designed to contain storage space and an apartment.<sup>1</sup> That area today is used for equipment storage. The side walls of that enclosure, which are set several feet in from the sides of the screen, are sheathed with simple flat panels like those used for the billboard. Large modern garage doors occupy the base of each side wall. (See photo 4.) The screen house is in excellent condition and is a contributing building.

The flat front of the screen, which measures 48 feet by 95 feet, faces north, away from the road. The screen surface itself is not original; it was installed later, over the historic framework, to accommodate the advent of Cinemascope. At the base of the screen is a solid wall which curves out from both sides of the screen sub-structure. The wall is structurally tied to the screen building, and at least part of it has the same type of open steel framework used for the main part of the building. (See photos 10 and 11.) The wall steps down in height as it moves away from the sides of the screen, and the side that faces the screen is lined with modern advertisements. The curving wall partly encloses an early playground, which contains some early or original playground equipment.

The main theater area is reached via the drive which runs past the ticket booth, near the east edge of the property. The outdoor auditorium of the drive-in contains twelve curved, evenly spaced parking rows. Each row consists of a level driving area, paralleled by a ramp which inclines toward the screen for optimum viewing. (Cars park perpendicular to the drive, facing the screen.) The ramps all have evenly spaced poles which once contained two speakers each. There

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<sup>1</sup> "Drive-In theater's Steel Tower," Carthage Evening Press, September 3, 1949, p. 10. This article which ran in the local paper a few weeks before the theater opened noted the planned uses for the area beneath the screen.

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are more than 280 speaker poles altogether, with a total capacity of more than 500 cars.<sup>2</sup> (The speakers are gone; the drive-in now broadcasts sound via radio.) At the end of several of the rows are early or original row marker signs which are numbered and have "FULL" indicators to guide moviegoers away from crowded areas. (See photo 5.) The row markers sit on poles the same size as the speaker poles, and measure about 12 by 18 inches. The backs of the signs bear the following words in raised lettering: "Drive In Theater Mfg. Co. K.C. MO Model 30001A Des Pat 154274."

The combination concession stand/projection booth sits 238 feet away from the screen, in the center of the auditorium space. It is a low-slung building with a flat roof, smooth stucco walls and elements of the Streamline Moderne style. The corners of the facade are rounded, and the roof extends out over the side bathroom entrances to emphasize the horizontal lines of the building. Narrow horizontal rows of glass blocks set into the freestanding walls shelter the entrances, and continue the streamlined motif. (See photos 6-10.) The building is painted a light aqua color which is typical of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne buildings. The concession stand is in the back (north) part of the building, and the bathrooms and projection booth are on the side closest to the screen. The concession stand/projection building is in excellent condition and is a contributing building.

The driveway along the west side of the theater space is the exit drive. Cars leaving the theater drive south down that road, past the screen and out to the highway. (See Figure One.) Swinging pipe gates attached to the screen wing walls at the entrance and exit swing shut when the drive-in is closed. A fence composed of vertical wooden slats runs along part of the entrance drive; the exit drive is open to a tree dotted lawn on the southwest corner of the property.

Overall, the drive-in looks and operates today much as it did in 1949. Thanks to the recent restoration, the resources are all in very good to excellent condition and are once again functioning in their original capacity. The contributing resources within the Route 66 Drive-In Historic District exhibit a high level of integrity in all areas of consideration: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. They clearly evoke their period of significance. △

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<sup>2</sup> Pole count is from an *Architectural/Historic Inventory Form* for the Drive-In which was prepared in 1993 by Maura Johnson, for the Route 66 Association of Missouri. (Copy on file with the State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO) The survey form estimated 566 cars, while "Drive-In theater's Steel Tower" proclaimed that the theater would hold 500 cars.



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**Summary:** The 66 Drive-In, in Carthage, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. It is a highly intact drive-in theater which looks and operates today much as it did the year it opened for business, 1949. The drive-in was the product of a national boom in drive-in theater construction which followed WWII; the number of drive-ins in the nation jumped from 52 in 1941 to 4,500 in 1956. This property gains further significance from its association with historic Route 66, which originally bordered the property. The 66 Drive-in is the oldest and most intact historic drive-in theater located directly on Route 66 in Missouri, and one of only nine drive-in theaters known to be operating on Route 66 anywhere in the United States. The drive-in was built in 1949 by local businessmen William D. Bradford and V. F. Naramore, and remained in operation until 1985. The period of significance runs from the opening date of 1949 to 1952, the arbitrary fifty year cut-off point. The historic resources associated with the 66 Drive-In were all restored in the mid 1990s, after which the theater resumed its original function. It is significant as a rare example of a once-common theater type--the drive-in.

**Elaboration:** Carthage is located in southwestern Missouri, in Jasper County. It is the second largest town in the county, and serves as the county seat. Carthage has enjoyed access to major transportation networks throughout its history. It was served by a number of cross-state and cross-country rail lines in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the St. Louis and San Francisco, and the Missouri Pacific. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Carthage benefitted from the establishment of a statewide road system as well; a 1924 highway map of the state shows that southwestern Missouri already had a significant concentration of improved roadways at that time. One of the longest continual sections of paved road shown on that map ran right through Carthage. What was then east-west State Highway 14 was almost completely paved from the Kansas State line to a few miles east of Springfield, which is about 60 miles east of Carthage.<sup>3</sup> State Highway 14 was soon after incorporated into the new Interstate highway system, as part of the famed transcontinental highway, U. S. Highway 66, known by most travelers simply as Route 66.<sup>4</sup>

Route 66 had an immense effect upon the state and the nation. As the first national highway linking Chicago and Los Angeles, it expanded travel options in a way the railroads had only touched upon. In the decades following the creation of Route 66, millions of travelers experienced Missouri via Route 66, and the highway became an interstate conduit for tourism and other traveler-related business activities. Proximity to the popular new highway provided local businesses with a ready-made clientele, and in many towns, the highway became an essential

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<sup>3</sup> Missouri State Highway Commission, "Missouri's Road System: Map Showing Construction Progress," January, 1924. (From the collections of the State Historical Society of Missouri)

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, America's Highways 1776-1976, (Washington, D. C.: USGPO, 1976) pp. 108-109.

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element of the local economy. This held true especially during the Great Depression, a time which actually saw an overall increase in volume for some roadside businesses. The number of cottage courts in the country, for example, increased more than 40% during the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

Route 66 and the rest of the interstate highway system developed largely in response to the explosive growth in automobile use and ownership which occurred in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The number of cars registered nationwide increased at a remarkable rate in the first third of the century, from just over 1.2 million in 1913 to more than 19 million in 1925.<sup>6</sup> There were comparable jumps in Missouri, where vehicle registrations rose from just over 16,000 in 1911, to more than 750,000 in 1931, the year paving of Route 66 was completed in Missouri.<sup>7</sup> That growth in automobile ownership, paired with the availability of good roads, ushered in an era of individual mobility which had never before been possible. Route 66 connected dozens of small towns in Missouri with the rest of the country, and the ever-expanding national love affair with the automobile ensured that connection was here to stay.

That love affair with the automobile also spurred the creation of many new types of businesses which were related to its use. Entrepreneurs across the nation found ways to cash in on the now-ubiquitous car. One such person was Richard M. Hollingshead, Jr., who invented the drive-in theater. As one history of the business put it:

In the early 1930s, Hollingshead began experimenting with showing movies out of doors. By setting up a projector on his automobile hood and aiming it at his garage, he ingeniously combined two of the things that people were most reluctant to give up during the depression: cars and movies.<sup>8</sup>

Hollingshead felt strongly enough about the potential popularity of his idea that he applied for a patent on the concept, which he was granted in 1933. That same year, he and his partners opened the world's first drive-in theater, in Camden, New Jersey.<sup>9</sup> The patent includes his

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<sup>5</sup> John Margolies, Home Away From Home: Motels in America, (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1995) pp. 32-36.

<sup>6</sup> Frederic L Paxson, "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935," The American Historical Review, 51, no. 2 (1946): 236-253.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson Bell, Secretary of State, Official Manual of the State of Missouri (Jefferson City: Mid-State Printing Co., 1946) p. 827.

<sup>8</sup> Chester H. Liebs, Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> Liebs, p. 155.

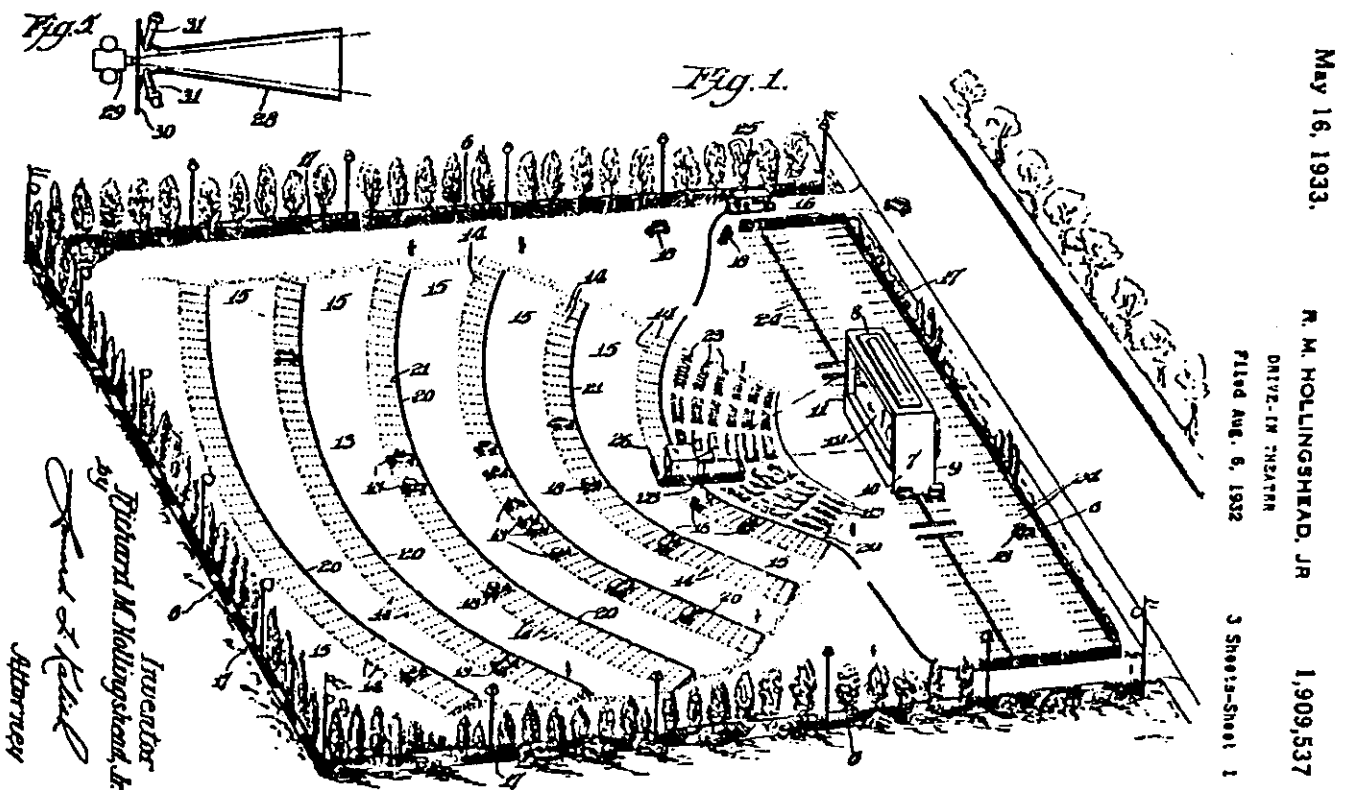
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personal description of the drive-in concept: "My invention relates to a new and useful outdoor theater....whereby the transportation facilities to and from the theater are made to constitute an element of the seating of the theater."<sup>10</sup> The patent application included information on a wide variety of features, and its content shows that Hollingshead had identified all of the major elements needed for a successful drive-in operation. Thousands of other drive-ins built over next few decades, including the 66 Drive-In, bear a striking resemblance to his original design.

Figure Two. Perspective View of a Drive-in, From the 1933 Patent Application, (Patent number 1,909,537; Richard M. Hollingshead, Jr.) The application is reproduced in full as an appendix to Drive-In Theaters, by Kerry Segrave, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Co, Inc., 1992.)



<sup>10</sup> Kerry Segrave, Drive-In Theaters, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Co, Inc., 1992) Appendix I, pp. 203.

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A specific comparison of 66 Drive-In with the features described in the original 1933 patent application reveals many similarities. In the patent narrative, Hollingshead wrote of the need for a "suitable plot of ground" which, like the 66 Drive-In property, should have at least one edge "bordering upon the highway or street." He also spent much time describing the various types of driveways and stalls for the automobiles. The design of the inclined ramps of the 66 Drive-In is very similar to his original concept. The major difference between the two is that the ramps of the 66 Drive-In are sloped in the front to allow motorists to drive forward into the next driveway when exiting; that is a modification which was made industry-wide at an early date. (Hollingshead's design had cars pulling up to a short retaining wall, which meant everyone had to back out to exit.) Also, his plan for getting cars in and out of the theater was nearly identical to that used at the 66 Drive-In, with the driveway leading cars past a small ticket booth and then left into the ramping system, with the exit out the other side.

The screen house shown in the patent drawing is also similar to the one at the 66 Drive-In, especially in its location backing up to the adjacent roadway. That particular layout proved to have a double advantage; facing the screen away from the public road ensured that drivers had to come into the theater to see the show, and the back of the screen house proved to be a great spot for advertising. As Chester Liebs put it: "the back of the drive-in screen tower, if visible from the highway, offered unlimited possibilities for catching the attention of motorists whizzing by."<sup>11</sup>

Hollingshead clearly saw that advantage from the beginning; his theater in Camden featured an elaborate Art Deco style screen house, the back of which faced the road and carried the following words: <sup>12</sup>

**DRIVE-IN THEATER**  
**WORLD'S FIRST**  
**SIT IN YOUR CAR**  
**SEE AND HEAR**  
**MOVIES**

The owners of the 66 Drive-In also used their screen house, which is by far the largest structure on the property, to advantage. The large red letters on the white background were clearly designed to catch 'the attention of motorists', a job they continue to do today.

That screen was actually drawing attention to the business even before the first movie was shown. An article in the local paper which ran in early September of 1949 included a photo of the metal framework as it was being assembled, along with an update on the construction project.

<sup>11</sup> Liebs, p. 160.

<sup>12</sup> A photo of that screen house is included in Segrave, p. 5.

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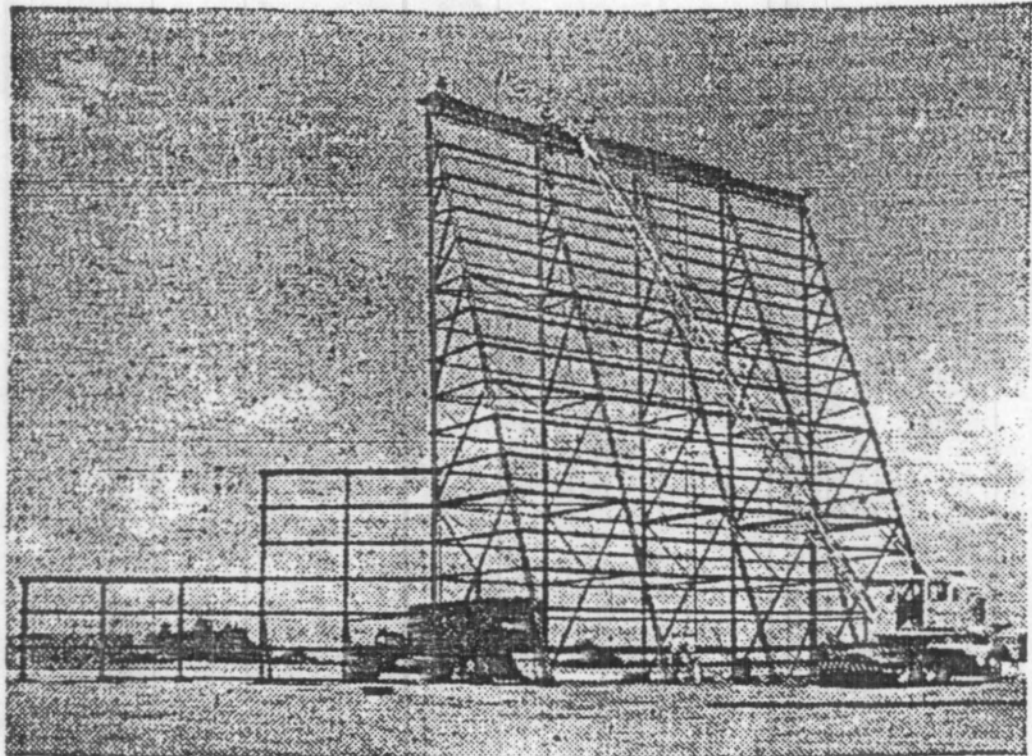
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That article, which was titled "Drive-In Theater's Steel Tower," included information about the builders, revealing that it was largely a local operation. The earthwork for the project, which involved creating ramps for some 500 cars, was done by the Sweeny Construction Company of Neosho, Missouri, which is about 25 miles from Carthage. The screen house was built by the Ozark Engineering Company, from the nearby town of Joplin.

The same article noted that "beneath the steel work back of the tower, a storage room and apartment will be built."<sup>13</sup> That combination of screen house and living quarters was not unheard-of in the industry. Chester Liebs notes, for example, that "the owners of the Cherry Hill Drive-in (in South Carolina) were concerned about providing full-time security for their theater, so they built their twelve room house beneath the slanted supports of the screen tower."<sup>14</sup>

Figure Three. The screen house of the 66 Drive-In, as it appeared less than a month before opening day. From "Drive-In Theater's Steel Tower." Carthage Evening Press. September 3, 1949, p. 10.

## DRIVE-IN THEATER'S STEEL TOWER



Surprisingly, the drive-in opened less than three weeks after the bare frame of the screen was shown in the local paper. On September 22, 1949, a front page article in that same

<sup>13</sup> "Drive-In Theater's Steel Tower," p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Liebs, p. 161.

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paper proclaimed: "New 66 Drive-In Theater West of Town in Formal Opening Tonight."<sup>15</sup> The article included a description of the facility and noted that the "acclaimed" theater was "one of the finest in the mid-west...the films will be shown on one of the largest steel screens in the area...it is complete in every detail with snack bar, modern rest rooms, and other features designed for the comfort of the patrons."<sup>16</sup>

Although it was common in the late 1940s for local theater operators to fight the establishment of drive-ins, this venture appears to represent more of an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude; the new owners already operated an indoor theater in downtown Carthage. The article about the screen tower had noted that "owners of the new drive-in are W. D. Bradfield and V. F. Naramore, who operate the Roxy theater on the south side of the square."<sup>17</sup> The opening night article also noted that Naramore, who was Bradfield's son-in-law, would be in charge of managing the drive-in, while Bradfield would stay on at the Roxie, and book movies for both venues.

Dual theater ownership may also have helped the partners get better films. Drive-in theater operators of the time had a hard time getting distributors to rent quality films to them. As one historical account put it "The major studios simply dominated the industry and didn't want to cheapen their image by releasing movies to outdoor theaters."<sup>18</sup> Another account noted that theater owners had been fighting the battle for years by the time the 66 Drive-In opened. One theater owner went to court in 1940 after learning that "the major studios refused to let him have product on any basis, not first run, second run, or any other run. It was their policy, they told him, to protect their old customers, which meant the indoor houses."<sup>19</sup> Bradfield may have been able to use his connection to the indoor Roxie to leverage better deals for his drive-in operation.

It should also be noted that although the 66 Drive-In was built more than 15 years after Hollingshead's first theater opened in New Jersey, it is actually a relatively early example of the genre. Various market conditions, including patent battles and fights with the major studios, had combined to delay widespread acceptance of the drive-in concept. A short article about drive-ins which appeared in Time magazine in 1941, for example, noted that there were then only about fifty

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<sup>15</sup> "New 66 Drive-In Theater West of Town in Formal Grand Opening Tonight." Carthage Evening Press. September 22, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Drive-In Theater's Steel Tower," p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Don and Susan Sanders, The American Drive-In Movie Theater, (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks, Intl., 1997) p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Segrave, p. 52.

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such theaters open nationwide. That author did, however, observe that things were beginning to pick up: "In the eight years since the first licensed Drive-In opened for business, the then-crackpot cinema sideline has expanded into a \$3,000,000 industry supporting 52 theaters, with twelve others abuilding, and 50 more contracted for."<sup>20</sup> The same article also gives a colorful contemporary description of the drive-ins growing allure:

For casual moviegoers, the Drive-In offers innumerable luxuries. It is a solution for the moviegoer's car parking problem, for persons elderly, ill, or crippled, for those who don't like to dress for the downtown cinema, for parents with no one to mind the children, for those who like to talk and smoke during a performance, and for young bloods looking for a place to make two-bit love.

By the end of that decade, the advantages described in Time had overcome the legal and logistical issues, and the drive-in business saw a period of explosive growth. The increase in the number of drive-ins in operation from the 1940s to the 1950s rivals the rate of growth of the automobile earlier in the decade. Census of Business figures show that the number of drive-ins in the nation increased from 820 in 1948 to 3,799 in 1954. The rate of growth in Missouri was even more dramatic, jumping from 16 in 1948, to an all-time high of 124 in 1954.<sup>21</sup> The 66 Drive-In, therefore, opened on the eve of what one history of the drive-in refers to as "the Golden Years."<sup>22</sup>

This was also a time of great increase in use of Route 66, and the automobile in general. As one history of the drive-in put it, "postwar prosperity nurtured new enterprises, and many found the overloaded American road the perfect place to start a new business and take advantage of traveling motorists. Souvenir shops, gas stations, and drive-in restaurants were springing to life everywhere, but the drive-in grew the most significantly."<sup>21</sup>

Bradfield and Narramore's choice of the name "66 Drive-In" was in all likelihood a conscious effort to link the operation to the trans-continental route which ran past its front drive. By that time, the heavily traveled Route 66 was taking its place in popular culture. Bobby Troupe's smash hit "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" had been out for three years by then, and various guidebooks to attractions along the way had been published. Businesses all over the country, including several drive-in theaters, were capitalizing on the road's fame by then. At one time there

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<sup>20</sup> "Drive-Ins," Time July 14, 1941, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Segrave, p. 187 and Appendix 6.

<sup>22</sup> Segrave, pp. 60-98. Three chapters of that book detail events during "the Golden years, 1950s".

<sup>21</sup> Sanders, p. 30.



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were at least eight other drive-ins in the country which included 66 in their name; of those, only 3 are open today.<sup>22</sup>

Many features of the 66 Drive-In in Carthage, including the neon sign board out front, the glass block ticket booth and the sleek new concession stand, exhibit at least some elements of the Art Deco style. The smooth surfaces and rounded corners of the sign and the support buildings reflect the widespread popularity of the style among theater designers of the time. One history of North American architecture noted that "Art Deco was found everywhere as a theater style, because association with motion pictures universally carried connotations of "modernity."<sup>23</sup>

Another historian of roadside architecture noted that the style was attractive to theater designers for its practical reasons as well. Chester Liebs observed that the "baubles by the thousands" which had characterized indoor movie palaces of the 1920s "added up to a considerable outlay" which was not practical in the lean years of the depression. The clean lines of the Art Deco movement, by contrast, had the dual attraction of connoting modernity and being inexpensive to execute:

White wall surfaces sculpted in Art Deco angles and streamlined curves and bathed in multicolor lights took the place of the elaborate exterior detailing of the previous era....By the end of the decade, dozens of downtown theaters...sported a new look in theater design that might be labeled Hollywood Moderne.<sup>24</sup>

The style proved to be as popular with drive-in designers as it has with "hardtop" movie architects.

As one would expect, the most publicly visible resources of the 66 Drive-In are also the most highly styled. The electric signboard, which sits close to the highway, is one of the most elaborate resources on the property, a status which reflects its importance to the business. As one history has noted, next to the screen house, the "second most important device for calling attention to the drive-in was the attraction board usually located near the edge of the highway."<sup>25</sup> The extensive use of neon for the 66 Drive-In sign, in combination with the curved top and streamlined styling, are typical of both the Art Deco style and roadside signage of the period. The small but elegant ticket booth, with its curved corners and glass block walls, continues the streamlined motif. The

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<sup>22</sup> Drive On In maintains a drive-in database on their website which can be sorted by city, name, or location on Route 66. The database includes basic information, including address and operational status. (<http://www.drive-ins.com>, October, 2002.)

<sup>23</sup> Gowans, Alan, Styles and Types of North American Architecture, (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) p. 252.

<sup>24</sup> Liebs, pp. 159-160.

<sup>25</sup> Liebs, p. 161.



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smooth walls and glass block accents of the concession stand/projection booth also reflect Deco influences, although to a lesser extent than the resources visible from the highway.

The 66 Drive-In is significant as a rare intact example of a once-common business type. The explosive growth of the drive-in theater business which began in the late 1940s did not last; by the late 1980s, the number of drive-ins in operation in the country had dropped back almost to 1940s levels.<sup>26</sup> In Missouri, for example, only 24 Drive-ins were open in 1987, a number which has now dropped to 14. (See Appendixes.) Intact historic drive-ins are even more scarce on Route 66; a recent survey of the surviving historic resources on Route 66 in Missouri found that the 66 Drive-In is only one of three drive-ins on or close to that route. It is the oldest of those three, and by far the most intact. The other two are the Holiday Drive-In, in Springfield, built in the 1960s or 70s, and the 1954 Highway 19 Drive-In, in Cuba, Missouri, which is actually a few miles off of Route 66.<sup>27</sup>

The 66 Drive-In, of Carthage, Missouri, looks and operates today very much as it did a half century ago. It continues to reflect its original function, and stands as an important link to the "Golden Years" of the drive-in theater. It is a rare, significant survivor. ◻

**Figure Four. One of the first ads for the Drive-in ever to run in the local newspaper.**

From the Carthage Evening Press, September 22, 1949, p. 10-A.

<sup>26</sup> Census of Business figures, from Segrave, Appendix 6.

<sup>27</sup> See Becky L. Snider, PhD and Debbie Sheals, *Route 66 in Missouri*, (Columbia, MO: State Historic Preservation Office, 2002) Survey Report. The Cuba Drive-in was not officially inventoried as part of that project, due to its location off the route.

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**Appendix 1.**

Number of Drive-ins open in Missouri 1948-1987.

From Drive-In Theaters, (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Co, Inc., 1992) Appendix 6.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Drive-ins open</u>
1948	16
1954	124
1958	121
1963	108
1967	93
1972	99
1977	85
1982	62
1987	23

**Appendix 2.**

Drive-ins anywhere on 66, which were open as of the fall of 2002.

(From www.Drive-ins.com)

Name, Location

66 Drive-In, Carthage, MO  
 Cascade Outdoor Theatre, W. Chicago, IL  
 Route 66 Drive-In, Springfield, IL  
 Skyview Drive-In, Litchfield, IL  
 Admiral Twin Drive-In, Tulsa, OK  
 66 West Twin Drive-In, Weatherford, OK  
 Winchester Drive-In, Oklahoma City, OK  
 Tascosa Drive-In, Amarillo, TX  
 Skyline Drive-In, Barstow, CA

**Appendix 3.**

Open Drive-ins in Missouri, as of the fall of 2002.

(From www.Drive-ins.com)

(From www.Drive-ins.com)

19 Drive-In, Cuba, MO

21 Drive-In, Van Buren, MO

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Sedalia Drive-In, Sedalia, MO  
66 Drive-In, Carthage, MO  
Barco Drive-In, Lamar, MO  
I-70 Drive-In, Kansas City, MO  
Macon Drive-In, Macon, MO  
Moberly Five-and-Drive, Moberly, MO  
Owen Drive-In, Seymour, MO  
Pine Hill Drive-In, Piedmont, MO  
Starlite Drive-In, Cadet, MO  
Sunset Drive-In, Houston, MO  
Sunset Drive-In, Aurora, MO  
Twin Drive-In, Independence, MO

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The south nine acres of the west 15 acres of the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 1, Township 28, Range 32, in Jasper County, Missouri, as contained between the right of way lines of old U. S. Highway 66 and new U.S. Highway 66 and 71 in Jasper County, Missouri.

### Boundary Justification

The current boundaries encompass all of the land associated with the drive-in during the period of significance which retains integrity. The rear 6 acres of the parcel owned by the current owner of the theater contains a residential property which is not associated with the drive-in.

### Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

66 Drive-In Historic District

17231 Old 66 Blvd., Carthage

Jasper County, MO

Debbie Sheals

May, 2002

Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory, MO Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City.

### List of Photographs

See photo key for indication of camera angle.

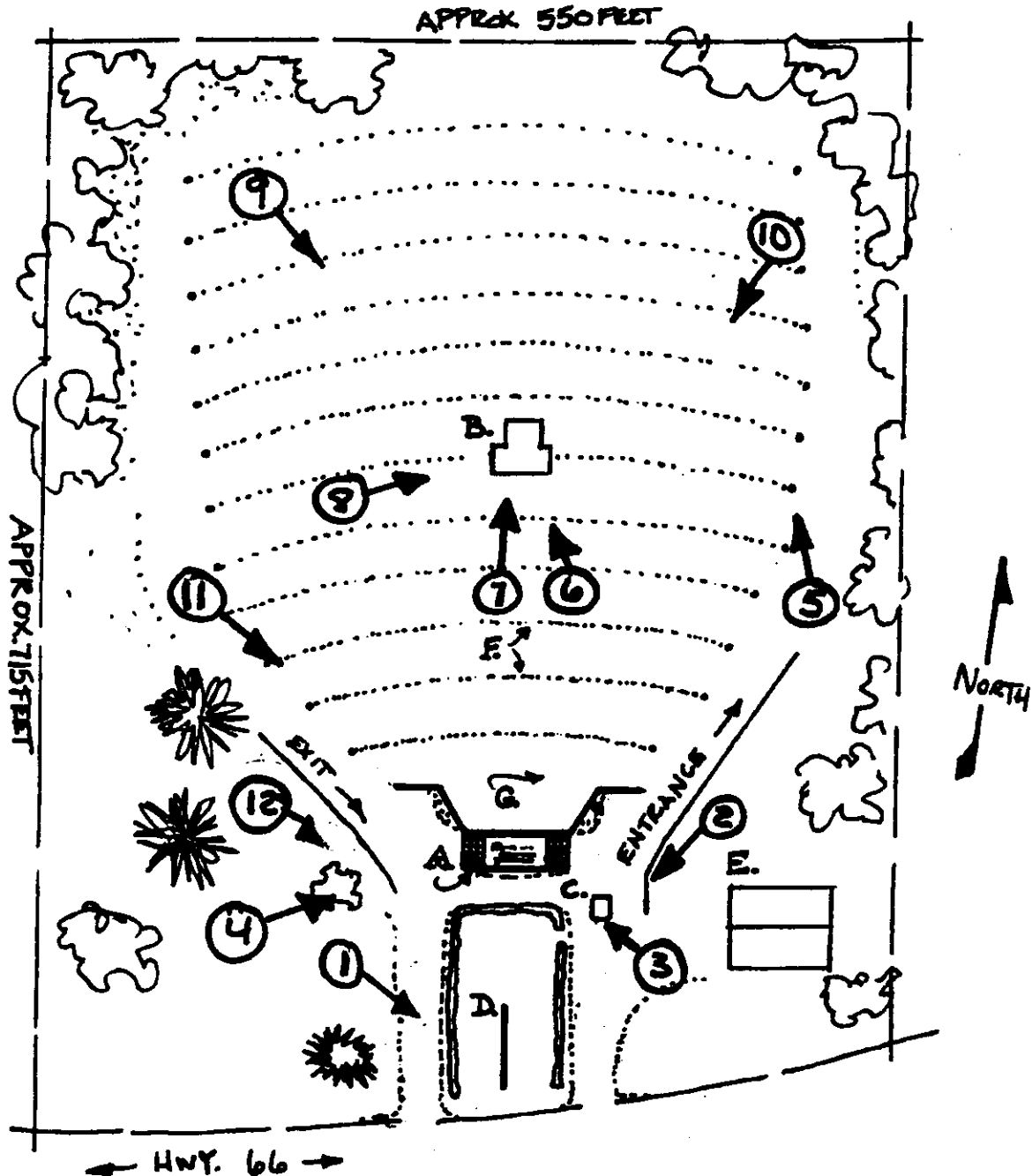
1. Front sign, looking towards the road.
2. Ticket booth, from entrance drive, with sign in background.
3. Screen and ticket booth.
4. Screen, from the west.
5. Aisle markers in the theater, looking north.
6. Projection booth/concession stand, and theater.
7. Projection booth/concession stand.
8. Projection booth/concession stand, with parking ramps.
9. Theater, from northwest corner.
10. Full theater and screen, from northeast corner.
11. Screen and playground.
12. Side view of screen, from the west. (Non-contributing building is in the background.)

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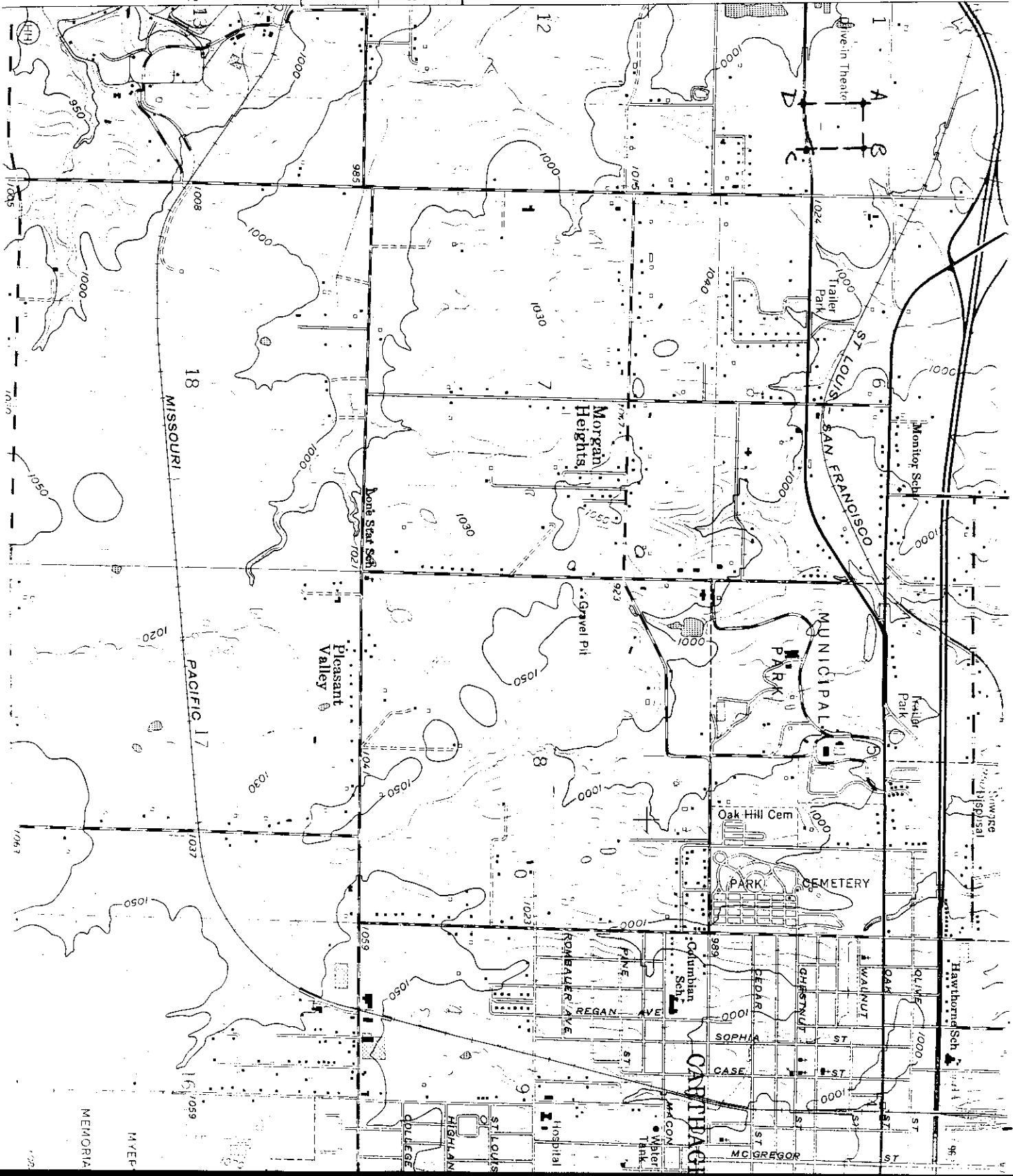
66 Drive-In Historic District  
Jasper County, Missouri



WEBB CITY 6 MI.

666 DRIVE-IN  
HISTORIC  
DISTRICT  
17231 OLD 66  
TRAIL  
CARTHAGE,  
JACKSON COUNTY,  
MO

- A. 15/378409/4114998
- B. 15/378607/4114112
- C. 15/378411/411454
- D. 15/378401/4114739



**66 DRIVE-IN**  
NOW SHOWING  
THE ROOKIE  
BIG FAT LIAR  
FRI SAT SUN  
359-5959







**66**  
**DRIVE-IN**  
**THEATRE**  
**CARTHAGE, MO.**



66  
DRIVE-IN  
THEATRE

CARTHAGE, MO.

