

**ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY REPORT FOR THE
DRURY LANE THEATRE AND MARTINIQUE RESTAURANT
AND BANQUET HALL IN EVERGREEN PARK,
COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

For Submission To:

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ABSTRACT

The Public Service Archaeology Program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign conducted an architectural resource survey review of the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall in Evergreen Park, Cook County, Illinois. The investigations were undertaken for Manhard Consulting of Vernon Hills, Illinois. In advance of proposed demolition for a Wal-Mart store on the northwest corner of 95th Street and Western Avenue. The investigations included the development of a historical context statement for Evergreen Park, Dinner Theatres, and the Drury Lane Theatre, a description of the architectural resources and a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) significance and integrity assessment. All of the structures contained within this complex are less than 50 years old, but they were considered against the NRHP criteria for structures less than 50 years in age. The investigation identified that the Drury Lane Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex is well known, is an early example of one type of dinner theater, and displays an unusual Moorish style pre-cast concrete façade indicating potential NRHP eligibility under criterion A, B, and C. The report, based on an understanding that buildings less than 50 years old need to meet a higher standard, recommends that the buildings individually and as a group be determined ineligible for the NRHP.

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INTRODUCTION

The Public Service Archaeology Program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was contracted by Manhard Consulting of Vernon Hills, Illinois to conduct an architectural resource survey review of the Drury Lane Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located in Evergreen Park, Cook County, Illinois (Figure 1). The project area is a proposed location for the construction of a new Wal-Mart store to be constructed at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park (Figure 2). In order to construct the new building, the existing Drury Lane Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex have been slated for demolition. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) [Log No. 011060903] was unable to determine if the buildings in the complex were eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) based on previously submitted documentation and requested the preparation of a resource survey report (Appendix A). This report provides general background information including the local and architectural history for the project area, a history of the dinner theater genre, the methods used to complete the architectural investigations, and the results of those investigations.

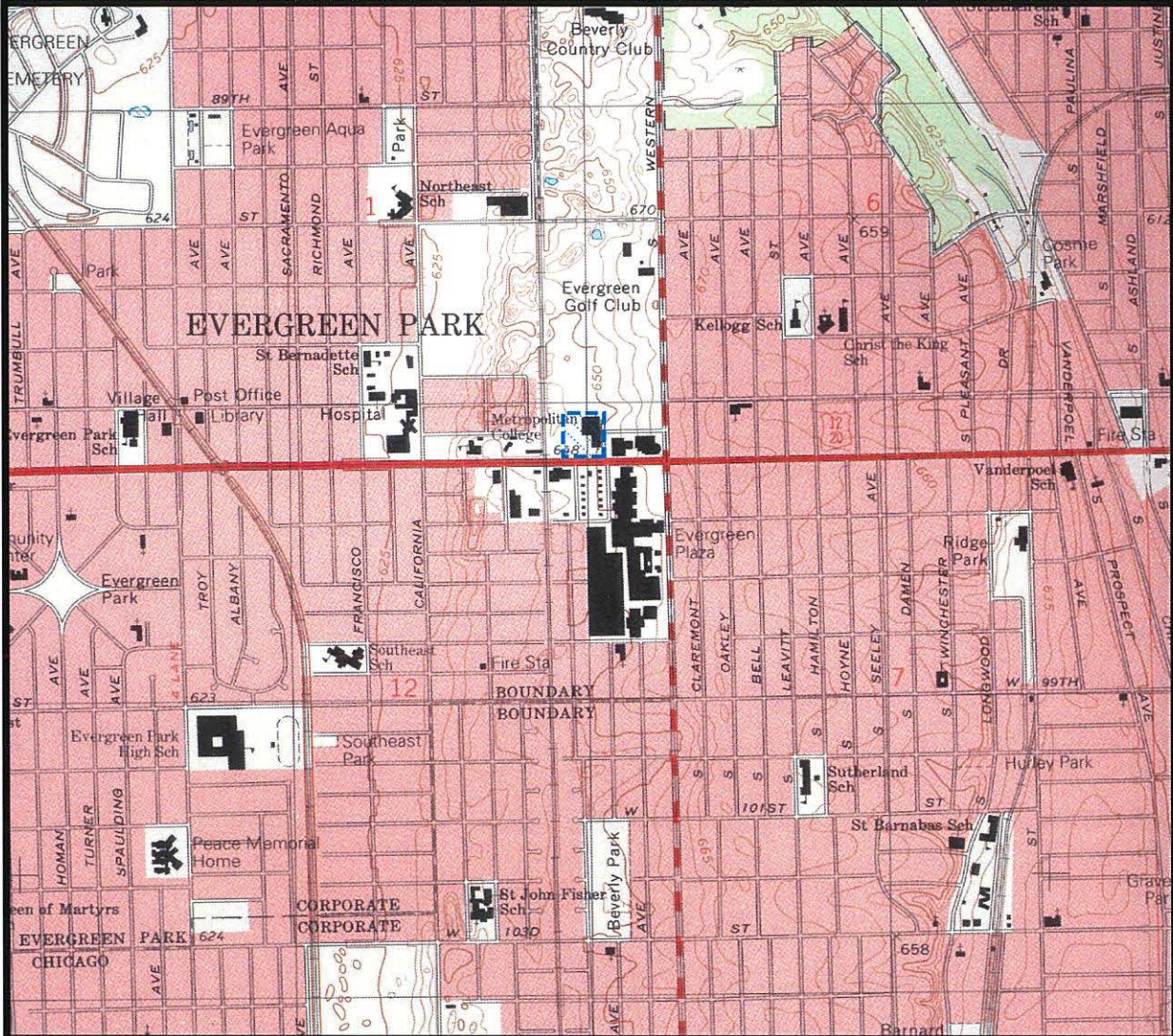
This project examines the Drury Lane Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois. This complex of parking lots and buildings include the original Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall building constructed in 1956 as a restaurant and banquet hall and modified in 1957 or 1958 to include a performance theatre, the Sky Room addition constructed in the 1970s in order to provide more dining space, and a Chapel constructed in 1998 for wedding services and photographic purposes. Each of these structures is described and they are assessed for eligibility to the NRHP.

This project was conducted by staff members of the Public Service Archaeology Program from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Fieldwork was conducted on 8 December 2003 by Mr. David Halpin and Ms. Marcy Prchal and on 1 January 2004 by Mr. Gregory Komperda. Historical background research was conducted by Mr. Christopher Flynn. Ms. Marcy Prchal and Mr. Christopher Flynn conducted telephone interviews with individuals associated with the Drury Lane Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall. Dr. Kevin McGowan served as the Principal Investigator and co-authored this report with Ms. Marcy Prchal and Mr. Christopher Flynn. Mr. David Halpin provided technical assistance with the field observations and report preparation. The conclusions provided here are the authors.



Figure 1. Location of project in Illinois.

BLUE ISLAND QUADRANGLE
 COOK COUNTY - ILLINOIS
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)1997



ILLINOIS
 QUADRANGLE LOCATION

KEY



Project Area

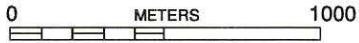


Figure 2. Location of project area.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The site for the proposed Wal-Mart store is the current site of the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois. The evaluation of architectural resources at this location requires an understanding of the historical and architectural context for this area of Illinois. The results of the contextual background research are provided below.

Cook County

Cook County was officially created by an act of the Illinois legislature on 15 January, 1831. Prior to that date, it had been included in numerous other state or territorial counties, the latest being Putnam County from 1825 to 1831. When first established, Cook County stretched from Wisconsin to Indiana and included all of present day Lake and DuPage counties, two-thirds of Will County, and smaller portions of McHenry and Kane Counties. In 1836 those portions of Will, McHenry and Kane were split off, and in 1839 Lake and DuPage Counties were carved out of McHenry and Cook respectively, leaving Cook County with its present boundaries (Johnson 1960:37, 40). When Cook County was created in 1831, the state legislature designated the unincorporated settlement at the mouth of the Chicago River as the new county's seat. The entire population of the county at the time was about one hundred persons, with the settlement now being called Chicago estimated at between fifty and sixty. Chicago was incorporated as a town in August 1833, and during that year its population grew to about 1,800. In 1837 it was incorporated as a city, with a population exceeding 4,000, and William B. Ogden was elected its first mayor. By 1849 the county population reached an estimated 40,000 (Johnson 1960:82-83, 87). With the population swelling and expanding throughout the region, Cook County elected in November 1849 to adopt a township form of government. The number and make-up of townships changed several times but as of 1960, Cook County had thirty-eight townships, thirty so-called country townships and eight City of Chicago townships (Johnson 1960:92, 94). Cook County and the many communities that comprise it continued to grow and develop throughout the twentieth century. The county, covering an area of 945.7 square miles, had a population in the year 2000 of 5,377,507. Chicago is currently ranked the third largest city in the United States after New York and Los Angeles (www.epodunk.com).

Worth Township

The townships of Cook County were established in a series of federal government surveys, the first of which was made in 1821. By 1840, the county had fourteen townships, and by 1845, sixteen townships including those within the City of Chicago. When Cook County elected to officially adopt a township form of government in 1849, Worth Township was one of twenty-seven townships to choose a town supervisor in the first elections of 1850. Prior to 1850, Worth, Bremen, Palos, Orland, and Lemont townships were included in a political entity called York Precinct (Johnson 1960:92-94; Goodspeed & Healey 1909:334). At the time of its organization, only the villages of Oak Lawn and Worth were located in Worth Township. The village of Blue Island, one of the earliest settlements in the county, was at that time included in Calumet Township (Goodspeed & Healey 1909:330). Today, Worth Township includes the communities of Alsip, Blue Island, Chicago Ridge, Crestwood, Evergreen Park, Hometown, Merrionette Park, Midlothian, Oak Lawn, Palos Heights, and Worth. It is situated in the southern portion of Cook County and is bordered on the north by Stickney and Lake Townships, on the east by Calumet, on the south by Bremen, and on the west by Palos Township.

Evergreen Park

Evergreen Park is a residential suburb located adjacent to the Beverly section of Chicago, seventeen miles southwest of the Chicago Loop. The village covers an area of approximately four square miles bordered on the north, south, and east by the City of Chicago, and on the west by the village of Oak Lawn. The center of Evergreen Park is now the intersection of 95th Street and Kedzie Avenue but the original center was to be the park located at 97th Street and Homan Avenue, from which the village received its name. The streets in this part of Evergreen Park were laid out in a wagon wheel pattern reminiscent of Paris, but instead of becoming a commercial district as planned, it developed into a residential neighborhood.

In 1893, at a time when other struggling communities surrounding Chicago were requesting annexation, Evergreen Park voted instead for incorporation. The approximately five hundred residents, most of them descendants of farming families who settled the area, designated four square miles as the Village of Evergreen Park. The village continued to grow and prosper, and is now one of the leading southwest suburbs of Cook County. It supports five public elementary schools and one public high school, as well as four Catholic elementary schools, and is home to Moraine Valley Community College. St. Xavier's University is located on the southern border of the village. The largest employer in Evergreen Park is the Little Company of Mary Hospital and Health Care Centers. Medical history was made here on 17 June 1950 with the first human organ (kidney) transplant performed (www.evergreenpark-ill.com).

Growth in the village, and in surrounding communities, was stimulated by the opening in the early 1950s of the "Evergreen Park Shopping Center" located at Western Avenue and 95th Street. This planned center, one of the first in the country, along with stores on Western Avenue from 95th to 98th Streets, and on 95th Street from Hamilton to Maplewood Streets, comprises a major regional retail center (Kitagawa and Taeuber 1963:158). Evergreen Plaza, as it is now called, consists of over 1.2 million square feet of space, housing one hundred thirty stores, shops, restaurants, and professional offices. Evergreen Park is also home to the Drury Lane Theatre complex, one of the first of many dinner theaters opened around the country in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Evergreen Park experienced a population boom in the 1950s, and today has a population in excess of twenty thousand (U.S. Census Bureau 2000, from www.evergreenpark-ill.com).

Architectural History

A review of the architectural records for Illinois shows changing architectural styles that fit the needs of the growing community and reflected the changing fashions of different eras. Early Euro American building styles in North America reflect styles that were popular in Europe at the time of the arrival of the colonists. While the fundamental ideas behind these styles survived the journey to the New World, the construction techniques often had to be altered to fit their new location. Initially, building styles varied from region to region, but as the population grew and methods of transportation improved, ideas and materials became more widely available. Over the course of time, both populations and styles of architecture became more homogenous. As the population grew, and with the introduction of the railroads and improvements to the roadways, ideas and building materials became available to a much larger number of people than ever before. For the structures examined here, the focus is on architectural styles found in the Midwest in the twentieth century with an emphasis on those forms most commonly found in Illinois. All of these styles may be found in both pure and Vernacular forms, and may include only some or all of the characteristics common to that style.

Eclecticism

Eclectic design, popular in Illinois and throughout the United States, began to appear in the 1880s, usually in the form of period homes for the wealthy. The Eclectic style was based on designing pure copies of traditional architectural forms. The style grew in popularity after it was used in the construction of temporary buildings for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, but did not become accessible to the middle class until the 1920s, when new and less expensive techniques for adding brick and stone veneer to the exterior of frame houses were developed. According to McAlester and McAlester (1998:465-466) here are thirteen main subtypes of Eclectic design that are found throughout Illinois: Colonial Revival (1880-1955), Neoclassical (1893-1955), Tudor (1890-1940), Beaux Arts (1885-1930), Italian Renaissance (1890-1935), Mission (1905-1920), French Eclectic (1915-1970), Spanish Eclectic (1915-1940), Prairie (1900-1920), Craftsman (1905-1925), Monterey (1925-1955), Modernistic (1920-1940), and International (1930-1980).

Design after World War I

After the First World War architecture in America began to undergo some significant changes. Architects, influenced by changing attitudes in Europe, began to design based on a reinterpretation of spatial relationships and rationalization of construction methods. In the 1920s this was loosely called the International Style, which is the earliest form of Modernism (Peel, Powell, and Garrett 1989:38).

The main ideas behind Modernism came from Europe, brought over by architects seeking to escape the war. Modernistic buildings, built from 1920 to 1940, can be divided into two main groups, Art Moderne, which became the prevailing Modernistic style, and Art Deco. Art Moderne buildings tend to have smooth stucco wall surfaces decorated with horizontal grooves or lines, a flat roof with a small ledge at the roofline, horizontal balustrade elements, and an asymmetrical façade. One or more corners on an Art Moderne building may be curved and have curved windows that add a "streamlined" appearance making the buildings reminiscent of airplane and automobile designs of the era. The design may also include round or glass block windows. In contrast, Art Deco buildings use zigzags, chevrons, and other stylized geometric motifs on the façade, and include towers and various other projections above the roofline. Art Deco was more common in public and commercial buildings and apartments than in homes. The style came into fashion after architect Eliel Saarinen won second place for his Art Deco design in the *Chicago Tribune* headquarters' design contest in 1922 (McAlester and McAlester 1998: 465-466).

The International style has been used in design since 1925. Common characteristics of the International style include a flat roof, usually without ledges, windows set flush with the walls, smooth unadorned wall surfaces, an asymmetrical façade, curtain walls, cantilevered projections, and an absence of decorative detailing around doors and windows. Buildings in this style are usually architect-designed and found in more fashionable suburbs. The International style reached its peak of popularity in the 1930s, but it experienced a resurgence in the 1970s (McAlester and McAlester 1998: 469-470).

Design after World War II

By the end of World War II, many more changes were taking place. High technology entered peoples' lives almost completely. Technological developments lead to peoples' acceptance of Modernism as "the most appropriate architectural expression of the new age" (Gelernter 1999:263). In the post WWII world, Modernism symbolized a break with the past and with traditional ideas and values that influenced pre-WWII architecture, and emphasized the "shiny new age of peace and prosperity" (Gelernter 1999:263). There was an emphasis on rational and efficient building technology that suited the enthusiasm for high technology and a concept of design as rational problem solving. Modernism

symbolized the idea that Americans were “rational, efficient, the confident possessors of immense power and wealth, and yet not flashy or desirous of individual expression” (Gelernter 1999: 263).

Modernist architecture of the 1950s and 1960s can be separated into two main camps, that of the ‘sculptural’ concrete architecture done by Le Corbusier and that of the ‘steel and glass’ architecture introduced by Mies van der Rohe (Peel, Powell, and Garrett 1989:54). Le Corbusier, a French architect, used “economy, honesty of construction, and a primitive emotional presence” to design in roughly cast concrete (a technique called *bretton brut*) which expressed the form or mold into which the concrete had been poured. This technique inspired an enthusiasm among many Modernists for raw concrete, and later developed into what was called the Brutalist style (Gelernter 1999:264). Mies van der Rohe, well known as a Chicago architect, saw buildings as “technical and visual problems to be solved” (Gelernter 1999:264). A building was seen as a “simple and rational structural cage, onto which he hung an external cladding system completely subservient to the structure’s inherent geometrical grid” (Gelernter 1999:264). Van der Rohe used glass or metal panels hung from a metal frame to form what was called a curtain wall. Both Le Corbusier and van der Rohe worked under the idea that extraneous decoration was not essential to a building, and could even take away from the building’s overall architectural integrity.

Some architects saw van der Rohe as too severe and austere, and claimed he was losing sight of beauty and art. In the 1950s, many in the Modernist school of architecture began to see architecture in the new light of aesthetic shape making (Gelernter 1999:277). These people were the New Formalists, or Neo-neo Classicists who “explored various ways in which the basic frame and cover box could be elaborated or even decorated to provide a more elegant and commanding presence” (Gelernter 1999:269). They turned to more traditional Classical examples, using columns and other classical design motifs in new and inventive ways. The idea never caught on extensively – many felt it obscured the constructional reality, whereas showing the constructional reality was the original goal of Modernists. Both the Modernists and the Traditionalists saw New Formalism as “lacking in substance” (Gelernter 1999:270).

By the early 1960s, architects began to see themselves as “shapemakers or form-givers, concerned primarily with developing expressive forms outside the bounds of the traditional styles” (Gelernter 1999:261). Renewed interest in Expressionism encouraged the use of unusual shapes, circles and triangles, and sculptural effects, a practice which is represented in Frank Lloyd Wright’s design for the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Paul Rudolph, another follower of modern Expressionism, was a New Brutalist; he used cast-in-place concrete for a “brutal aesthetic effect” and saw architecture as “the art of making expressive forms” (Gelernter 1999:277). The 1960s saw Modernism at its peak, but it was also challenged at this time. As architecture became more abstracted; many felt that it lacked “obvious or previously understood meanings” (Gelernter 1999:281). The ultimate goal, however, was to create striking and memorable images for each building.

Commercial Architecture

Middle and late nineteenth century commercial structures benefited from advances in building technology and new and better products. The introduction of cast iron and improvements in the manufacture of glass allowed shopkeepers to have a better and larger display area at the front of the store. These display windows were usually decorated, with a wood panel on the bottom and a transom window with prism glass at the top. While the first floor was dedicated to business, the second floor typically provided living space for the business owner. These buildings were often topped with a highly decorated pressed metal cornice, sometimes embossed with the name of the business owner. This type of commercial building was popular throughout the middle to late nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

After World War II, there was a population shift from the cities to newly designed suburbs. With this shift came a change in where people shopped, did their banking, and went for entertainment. Strip-style shopping centers and malls, and freestanding banks and theaters replaced the traditional downtown street-fronting buildings, and this era saw a decline in the downtown commercial areas of many small towns.

In the mid-1950s there was a change in the ideas behind the structure of communities. There was an overall view that the traditional ideas of design and construction were outdated and wrong. The traditional practice of "dense building oriented to the street and packed onto comparatively small blocks ... was now considered a relic of the past" (Longstreth 1987: 126). New models in building instead divided the land up into large sections that were delimited by major roads and accessed by small entries. The commercial buildings within these sections were freestanding or grouped into clusters surrounded by great areas of open space. This change in the arrangement of buildings was brought about by the need for off-street parking areas for the rapidly growing number of autos in use by the general population, and it was encouraged by the availability of large amounts of cheap available land (Longstreth 1987: 126).

Many of the commercial buildings constructed at this time were influenced by the Modern architecture movement, which rejected the use of historical examples and concentrated on a building's space and volume. Above anything, in commercial construction this movement encouraged a sense of flow and connectedness between the interior and exterior, even though the two were still viewed as distinct spaces. This idea was emphasized through the use of front parking areas with the building becoming more of a "backdrop" (Longstreth 1987: 127). This led to the development of open air pedestrian malls, in which the buildings themselves are defined more by the projecting roofline than by the walls, which were usually constructed primarily of glass. Multistory buildings were typically freestanding, all sides were treated as the traditional façade, and there is generally no differentiation between the ground floor and the upper floors except where the entrance is inserted. Sometimes, however, there may be a two-part division with the lower level appearing as a void under the projecting upper levels (Longstreth 1987: 129). In the 1960s the Mansard style, a subgroup of the Neoelectic movement, became another popular style in design. This style, which was named for its use of the mansard roof, was used in shopping centers and other commercial buildings (McAlester and McAlester 1998: 487).

These ideas of design and construction were used for buildings with various functions, including retail buildings, banks, theaters, hotels, and other public places, which were designed using a variety of architectural ideas. Commercial architecture continued along these same lines for some time; it is only in recent years that we see a return to some of the traditional building styles that were prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research undertaken to document the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois included archival, field, and laboratory research. The specific methods are outlined below.

Archival Methods

Archival research methods undertaken prior to field investigations included an examination of local histories and records to develop an architectural and historical context for Evergreen Park and a thematic context for dinner theatres. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with those associated with the theater and its construction. Interviews were conducted with: Anthony DeSantis, the founder and original owner of the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall, on 12/18/03 and 01/09/04; Ray Lazzara, current Co-owner of Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall, on 12/8/03 and 12/18/03; Vernon Schwartz, actor, stage manager, director, and producer for Drury Lane, on 12/20/03 and 01/16/04; John Batolomeo, Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall architect; The Lombard Company, construction firm for Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall; and Joe Mitchell, Founder of La Comedia Dinner Theater, Dayton, Ohio on 01/11/04.

Field Methods

Photographs of the interior and exteriors of all buildings within the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall were taken with permission. This occurred on 8 December 2003 with Ray Lazzara, the current co-owner of the complex. Photographs were also taken of the surrounding area and of other structures associated with the building's architect on 1 January 2004.

Laboratory Methods

Photographs from the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall and selected neighborhood photographs were examined and compared with standard architectural resources to prepare individual building descriptions. The suite of research data was then examined against the National Register Bulletin No. 22 – Guidelines for evaluating and nominating properties that have achieved significance in the past 50 years (Sherfy and Luce 1996). This report was written and compiled from the written and photographic evidence gathered during the field visit, research, and interviews conducted for this project.

RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATIONS

The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex is located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois. The Drury Lane complex consists of parking lots and buildings that include the original theater building which serves as a restaurant and banquet hall, the Sky Room addition, and the Chapel (Figure 3). The results of the archival, field and laboratory investigations are detailed below.

Site Setting

The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex is located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois. The complex is bounded on the north by a Sam's Club discount store and associated parking area, on the south by 95th Street, on the east by an access drive and a Montgomery Ward's auto service center, and on the west by a McDonald's restaurant. Ninety-fifth Street is the main street in a large commercial and residential area, and is lined with late twentieth century businesses, including fast-food restaurants, banks, discount stores, and other services. Surrounding neighborhoods are dominated by a variety of mid twentieth century residences. House types in the area include Colonial Revival, Tudor, Bungalow, and other Vernacular styles.

History of the Evergreen Park Drury Lane Theatre

The current Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex in Evergreen Park, Illinois, is the historical descendent of an earlier night club and tent theatre begun after World War II. Anthony DeSantis, the ninety-year-old founder of the Drury Lane Theatre, relates that it began in 1946 as an outdoor summer theater in a tent. DeSantis at that time owned the Martinique Night Club at 9750 South Western Avenue, where he booked big bands led by musicians such as Bernie Cummins, Ted Weems, Griff Williams, Eddie Howard, Art Kassel, and Tony Pastor. Patty Page was a featured singer fronting the house bands, and WGN radio broadcast live from the Martinique every Saturday night. Two local theatrical producers, Dan Goldberg and Jules Pfeiffer, approached DeSantis and asked if they could lease the parking lot adjacent to the Martinique to set up a summer theater in a tent. The first production, in 1947, was a musical review called "Maid in the Ozarks", which ran for two months on Broadway in the summer and fall of 1946 (www.ibdb.com). Goldberg and Pfeiffer named their summer theater-in-a-tent the Drury Lane Theatre, and produced shows there for three seasons. Mr. DeSantis, together with theatrical producer Vernon Schwartz, continued the summer theater at that location for several more years, and began booking well-known actors and entertainers to star in the productions. In 1955, construction on the new Evergreen Park Shopping Center forced him to move to the Drury Lane's present location on 95th Street, where DeSantis built a new Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall in 1956. He raised another tent for summer theater and continued booking well known but often fading stars, many of whom had had successful movie careers in Hollywood, to appear in popular dramatic and musical plays. The star-in-a-popular-play format proved to be a big hit with audiences. When the tent blew down in 1957 during a performance of "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" DeSantis decided to bring the Drury Lane Theatre into the basement of the Martinique (Anthony DeSantis, personal communication 12/18/03 and 1/9/04). At that point the theatrical productions became a year-round affair. Vernon Schwartz recalled "We did theater full time to capacity audiences. Stars clamored to play Drury Lane because it had class – plush carpets and beautiful chandeliers" (personal communication 12/20/03 and 01/16/04).

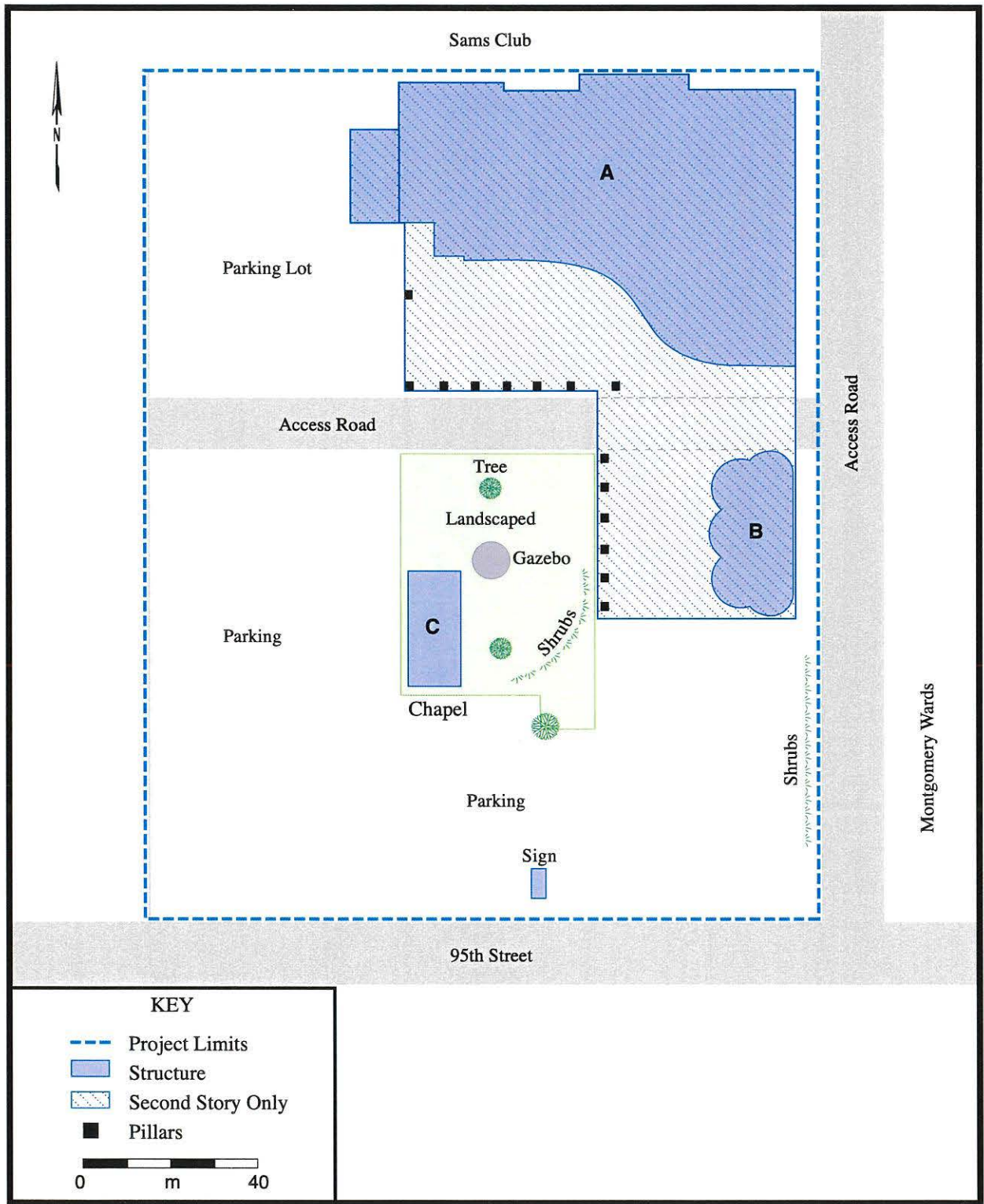


Figure 3. Sketch map of project area.

The dinner theater venue proved so successful that in 1965 a new 800-seat theater in the round was constructed. In the early 1970s a "sky room" connecting the two buildings and a large ballroom was added. A stars' apartment, called the Purple Passion Room, was also built into the complex, to help keep down expenses. During the 1950s, 1960s, and into the 1970s, DeSantis was able to keep the top pay for featured stars, such as Claudette Colbert and Pat O'Brien, at about \$5,000 a week, with some productions running for about eight weeks. The Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall hosted innumerable large weddings and other receptions. The Drury Lane Theatre was so successful during this period that DeSantis opened four additional Drury Lane venues in the Chicago area, including Drury Lane East (McCormick Place), Drury Lane Water Tower Place, Drury Lane North in Lincolnshire and the Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace, which he still manages (DeSantis, personal communication). By the late 1970s, however, salaries demanded by talent agents became too high, and the star-system format began to die out. Finally, in 1988, DeSantis sold the Drury Lane Theatre-Martinique Restaurant complex in Evergreen Park to John and Ray Lazzara, who renovated the interior and continued to host weddings in the Martinique's wedding chapel and large banquets in the Grand Ballroom. The Lazzara brothers brought back star singers such as Debbie Reynolds, Lou Rawls, Jim Nabors, Dianne Carroll, and Rosemary Clooney to perform in the Drury Lane Theatre. They also established a childrens' theater, drawing young talent from the southwest suburbs, the greater Chicago area, and northwest Indiana. Over the years, the Drury Lane Theatre's clientele has changed from young and middle-age couples out for an evening of dinner, dancing, and live theater, to organized groups of senior citizens bused in from a five-state area (Ray Lazzara, personal communication).

Drury Lane Description

The current Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant complex, situated in the northeast corner of an expansive parking lot (Figure 4 and 5), is made up of three main elements including the original 1956 main banquet and restaurant building (Structure A) with rear addition (Figure 6), the 1970s Sky Room (Structure B) front addition to the main building (Figures 7 and 8), and the 1998 Brick Chapel (Structure C) (Figure 9). A large distinctive metal and neon sign located adjacent to 95th Street in the southeast corner of the parking lot announces the location of the theater complex to the public (Figure 10). The architectural styles used in the Dinner Theatre and Banquet building (Structures A and B) reflect aspects of sculptural Modernism, as well as elements of Modern Expressionism in the use of unusual shapes and sculptural effects.

Exterior

The original complex building (Structure A) was constructed in 1956 as a restaurant and banquet hall. It was designed by Chicago architect John Bartolomeo and built by The Lombard Company of Alsip, Illinois (Ray Lazzara, personal communication). This first building has a steel frame with pre-cast concrete panels on the front and side upper levels and exposed brick at the back (Figure 11). The lower level and portions of the upper level of this building were originally clad in marble panels; these are still evident on the exterior of the lower south facade (Figure 12) and on the interior walls of the 1970s Sky Room addition (Structure B). The original front entry, which is currently the entry into the Martinique Restaurant and the theatre box office, has marble stairs and a marble entry floor (Figure 13). Inside, the original tabular limestone walls are evident in some areas (Figure 14). In 1965, more dining space and the current theater was added, as were two penthouse apartments for the actors (Owens 2003). The exterior of this addition was also marble-clad, and the exterior wall can be observed between the Sky Room and the older structure. This new dining space also included large gold-trimmed windows on the second story. Exterior details include 3-dimensional pre-cast concrete panels on the south and west sides, cast in a Middle Eastern or Islamic style (Figure 15), with space along the bottoms of the panels for



Figure 4. General view of the Drury Lane building complex. The view is to the east.



Figure 5. The original (Structure A) Drury Lane building with additions. The view is to the southeast.



Figure 6. The original Drury Lane building with addition. The view is to the east.



Figure 7. The Drury Lane Sky Room addition (Structure B). The view is to the east.



Figure 8. The Drury Lane Sky Room addition. The view is to the north.



Figure 9. The Drury Lane Chapel (Structure C). The view is to the south.



Figure 10. The Drury Lane sign. The view is to the east.



Figure 11. Brick back of original Drury Lane building. The view is to the southwest.



Figure 12. Marble panels of interior walls.



Figure 13. Marble stairs and interior floor.



Figure 14. Tabular limestone walls.

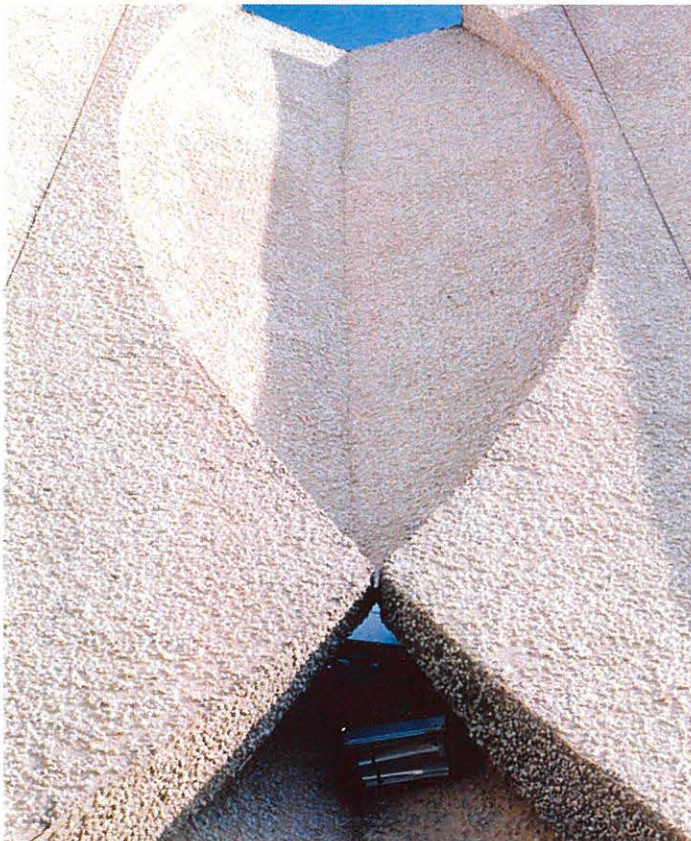


Figure 15. Cast concrete panels.

exterior lighting (Figure 16). There is also a covered exterior drop-off area. On the east side is a recent rear addition to the original building. It is built of cast concrete over a skeleton of metal and concrete panels (Figure 17).

The Sky Room addition (Structure B) was constructed in the 1970s in order to provide more dining space. The Sky Room addition was designed by Donald Smith, an associate of John Bartolomeo (John Bartolomeo, personal communication). This addition is a steel framed structure with a cast concrete/gravel aggregate panel finish; it appears to be metal panels over a metal frame with an applied concrete finish (Figure 18). The northern half of the building, which connects to the 1965 theater addition, is one level, with a driveway that passes underneath (Figure 19). The southern part of the building is two levels, with the first floor serving as a lobby and the second as a continuation of the Sky Room dining area. The first floor lobby area is made up of plain aggregate panels and windows. Notable exterior details include 3-dimensional pre-cast concrete panels with 3-pane projecting windows with aluminum casements; these panels are designed to continue the Middle Eastern or Islamic-themed style of the earlier structure. Windows on the south and east side are pointed in a Gothic manner, with 2 large panes on top, each forming one half of the window, and a smaller triangular pane along the bottom (Figure 20). The west side has no upper windows, but is made up of S-shaped pre-cast concrete panels only.

The Chapel (Structure C) was built in 1998 by the current owners, Ray and John Lazzara (Ray Lazzara, personal communication). It is a brick front-gabled building on a poured concrete foundation. Decorative elements include a steeple, colored windows, cast concrete windowsills, and cast concrete applied crosses (Figure 21).

Interior

Inside, the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant includes the 800-seat theater (Figure 22), eight dining rooms, six bars, three kitchens, two two-bedroom apartments, a box office, lobbies, a coatroom, and offices. Interior examinations were limited as the venue was operating as an active business at the time of the survey.

The main entrance is dominated by a marble staircase and entryway associated with the original 1956 building. The first floor consists of the Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Rooms, a cocktail lounge, the theater box office, a coatroom, a reception desk, kitchen space, and offices. Décor is dominated by oak-painted wood paneling, mirrored walls, and acoustic-tile ceilings (Figure 23). A staircase leading to the basement dining area displays an interior tabular limestone wall from the original 1956 structure (Figure 24).

The dining area in the basement is part of the original structure. The dining room is decorated with walnut panels and acoustic-tile ceilings (Figure 25). A kitchen and boiler room are also located in the basement. There are elevators off of the basement lobby area. A basement-level six-car garage was not examined.

The upper level includes a dining area, kitchens, the 1965 theater, and the penthouse apartments. The upper dining area dates from the 1956 structure. It is decorated with paneled walls and acoustic-tiled ceilings; the original interior walls are tabular limestone (Figure 26). A storage area and the theater were added 1965; the north wall of the storage area is the original brick exterior wall. All of the theater walls have been covered in some way, and therefore no exterior material is evident. The theater itself is a rectangular theater-in-the-round and seats 800. There are large screens at two ends and decorative sound-absorbing screens lining the walls. Located behind the theater are brick rooms from the original 1956 structure. The upper lobby area (Figure 27) is also part of the original structure; it is separated from the



Figure 16. Exterior lighting.



Figure 17. Recent addition. The view is to the southeast.



Figure 18. Sky Room addition (Structure B) concrete and gravel panels. The view is to the south.



Figure 19. Covered drive. The view is to the east.

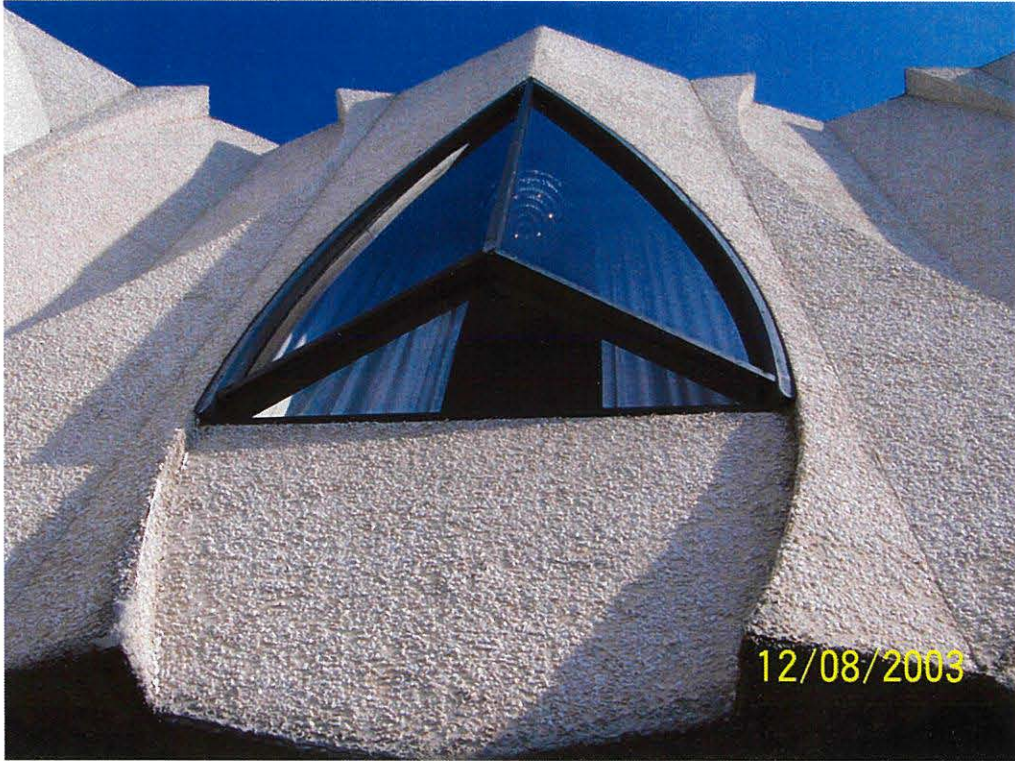


Figure 20. Sky room windows. The view is to the east.



Figure 21. Chapel details. The view is to the south.



Figure 22. Theatre.



Figure 23. Interior decor (Structure B - Sky Room).



Figure 24. Staircase to basement (Structure A - Lobby).



Figure 25. Basement dining room.



Figure 26. Upper level dining room.



Figure 27. Upper lobby (Structure A).

apartments by a wall of glass and aluminum. The apartments were not examined as they were still in use at the time of the evaluation.

The Sky Room addition (Structure B) was built onto the theater and dining complex in the 1970s. The north interior wall of the upper banquet area is the original southern exterior wall of the building; the interior walls are constructed of marble with recessed exterior lighting, and match the exterior walls downstairs. There are gold outlined doors and windows along the marble wall. The east wall displays a stained walnut bar and panels, while the west wall is lined with floor to ceiling Gothic-style pointed windows. There is a kitchen facility behind the bar. The southern part of the Sky Room has a staircase leading to a lower lobby.

The interior of the chapel, which was constructed in 1998, was not examined.

The Architect

Architect John Bartolomeo was licensed in 1949, and worked in the Chicago area for 43 years with his firm, Bartolomeo and Associates, until he closed the practice in 1992. Bartolomeo was friends with Drury Lane founder Anthony DeSantis, and was hired by DeSantis in 1956 to design the Martinique Restaurant Banquet facility in Evergreen Park. Bartolomeo designed the exterior of the theater in pre-cast concrete, which was a new technique at the time, because it could be cast while the rest of the building was being constructed and it could be worked with in the cold weather. Bartolomeo has designed many other buildings in the Chicago area, including The Lawn Savings and Loan building (Figure 28) at 95th Street and Western Avenue in Evergreen Park, built in 1960, the 10-story Arthur Rubloff Building (Figure 29) at the Plaza Shopping Center in Evergreen Park, and the Mundelein College Research Center in Chicago. John Bartolomeo currently lives in Scottsdale, Arizona where he works as an artist (John Bartolomeo, personal communication).

Drury Lane Theatre and Dinner Theaters in America

The dinner-theater concept evolved from general trends occurring in the entertainment industry throughout the 1940s. The popularity of Big Band music, exemplified by orchestras led by Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and the Dorsey brothers, whose live performances were often broadcast around the country on radio, carried over into the post-war boom years. Suburban communities sprang up on the outskirts of America's cities during the post World War II era. The transition to a peacetime economy and the pent up desire for consumer goods following World War II created an affluent suburban populace, which in turn, spawned an industry designed to bring live quality entertainment to the American public in their local communities. The eventual success of the dinner theater concept was in part a result of the demise of the long-standing Hollywood studio system (Owens 2003), which effectively controlled the careers of its stars with strict long-term contracts. The power of television to bring entertainment directly into homes, and a 1948 U.S. Supreme Court ruling requiring studios to give up their almost exclusive ownership of the nation's movie theaters, helped loosen the grip studios had on the entertainment industry in America. The end of strict controls brought career instability to many who had enjoyed contractual security but at the same time, for many whose Hollywood careers were beginning to fade, resulted in greater flexibility and opportunities to perform and entertain in a variety of venues. Summer stock-theater touring companies had long enjoyed a measure of popularity around the country. Restaurant dining and after-dinner dancing were common and popular forms of entertainment. Soon the idea of combining dinner, music, and theater, with the added attraction of featuring a well-known star performer, was realized in the dinner-theater venue.



Figure 28. Lawn Savings and Loan building on 95th Street.



Figure 29. Arthur Rubloff office building.

It is not clear where the first dinner theater opened, or which operation can legitimately claim to be the first in the country, but it is known that many such dinner-theater businesses opened during the post war years of the late 1940s and 1950s, continuing into the next several decades. Part of the confusion lies in those features that define dinner theater. Early dinner-theater owners developed a variety of formats, designed to make the best use of the space they inhabited. The Barksdale Tavern in Hanover, Virginia may be one of the first dinner theaters in the country. It was started as a college theater in a colonial period building in 1953 or 1954 by six local college students. The theater sat about 150 people and, to bring the public, they served lunch and dinners in a separate room (Joe Mitchell, phone interview, 12 January 2004). Bill Pullinsi started the Candlelight Theatre Restaurant in the Presidential Arms Hotel in Washington D. C. in 1959. The operation seated 600 patrons and used table service in the same room in which the plays were presented. He then moved the Candlelight Dinner Theater to the Chicago area at 55th Street and Harlem Avenue in Summit (Vernon Schwartz, personal communication). The centerstage.net web site states that the Candlelight opened in 1961, and lists an impressive 200 productions from 1961 through 1986. When the original building was closed and demolished due to the construction of Interstate-55 in 1964, a second Candlelight Theater was constructed in Summit, which finally closed down in 1997. By this reckoning, however, the opening of the Candlelight would appear to have post-dated the earliest incarnation of the Drury Lane-Martinique operation by at least a decade.

The exact definition of a dinner theater is a matter of debate. Strictly speaking, according to Anthony DeSantis, a dinner theater is one that features a theater in the dining room (DeSantis, personal communication). By this standard, the Candlelight has been called America's first dinner theater (centerstage.net). The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex has never offered dinner and theater in the same room, yet has been recognized since at least the 1950s as one of America's premier dinner-theaters. The Barn Dinner Theater in Greensboro, North Carolina, which opened in 1962, bills itself as the oldest continuously operating dinner theater in the United States. Much like the Candlelight, a hydraulic "magic stage" descends from the ceiling in the middle of the dining room, where seating is "in the round" (www.barnndinner.com). The Barn Dinner Theater was such a success that they were franchised around the country. During the heyday of dinner theaters from the early 1960's through the late 1970s, there were 30 to 40 Barn Dinner Theaters, all with the characteristic "barn" structure architecture (Joe Mitchell, phone interview, 12 January 2004). The "landmark" Showboat Dinner Theater in St. Petersburg, Florida, which closed in 1995, was run by Maurice Shinnors, from Chicago, for over twenty years. In its prime during the 1970s and 1980s, the Showboat, housed in a massive paddlewheeler shaped building, "was the most successful dinner theater in the United States. He was responsible for being the first and the most successful in bringing in big-name stars to dinner theaters. It was really his claim" to fame (Shinnors, Paul: www.sptimes.com/2002/11/20).

An important qualification distinguishing one type of dinner theater from another is whether it was an Equity theater or a non-Equity theater. During the 1960s and 1970s, there were approximately 70 to 80 Equity theaters in operation versus some 300 to 400 non-Equity theaters. The former might be considered the elite dinner theaters because to attract big Hollywood stars, who would almost certainly be members of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the venue would have to be an Equity theater. The Drury Lane Theater was an Equity theater virtually from its inception, and made it a policy to hire as its employees members of the International Alliance of Television and Stage Hand Equity (IATSE) (Joe Mitchell 11 January 2004; Vernon Schwartz 16 January 2004).

Many dinner theaters opened since the 1950s across the country have closed their doors or eliminated either the theater or the restaurant operation. During the early 1980s, the Chicago area boasted six dinner theaters. Summit's Candlelight Playhouse closed in 1997, Drury Lane East (McCormick Place) and Drury Lane Water Tower Place have been closed for years, Drury Lane North is now the Marriott Lincolnshire Theater, and the Pheasant Run theater, opened by theatrical producer Carl Stone in St. Charles, no longer

offer dinner-theater packages (Owens 2003). When the Drury Lane Theatre in Evergreen Park closes, only the Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace will remain. The National Dinner Theater Association, organized by theatrical producers in 1978, has in its membership more than forty dinner theaters located around the nation. Prominent active dinner theaters include the Broadway Palm in Fort Myers, Florida, The Broadway Palm West in Mesa, Arizona, The Dutch Apple Dinner Theater in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, The Barn Dinner Theater in Greensboro, North Carolina, and for Illinoisans, the Circa 21 Dinner Theater in Rock Island, Illinois (www.ndta.com; www.restaurant.org).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park, Illinois is a set of two interconnected buildings and a free-standing chapel that serve as a suburban commercial and entertainment center. The foundation for this center began in 1947 several blocks to the south of the current facility, where the Martinique Night Club stood and the original Chicago Drury Lane tent theatre. Both facilities were moved to the present location in 1956, with the construction of the Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall, designed by John Bartolomeo and built by The Lombard Company, and the re-establishment of an adjacent tent theatre. The theatre function was shifted into the Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall facility after a tent collapse in 1957. Subsequent to that time the building complex has been known by both the Drury Lane theatre venue and the Martinique Restaurant and Banquet venue. The theatre and restaurant functions have always been separate which separates this facility from classic dinner theaters where both functions occur in the same space. The facilities have expanded and been remodeled to accommodate changing needs. Major changes noted during the past 48 years include: the removal of the separate tent theatre structure and its initial operation within the basement of the Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall in 1957; the construction of the 800-seat theater in the round and two penthouse apartments in 1965; the adjacent and connected Sky Room addition in the 1970's; and the separate Chapel structure in 1998. The facility has had two owners. Anthony DeSantis was the original owner and still operates the Drury Lane Theatre in Oak Brook Terrace. He sold the Evergreen Park operation to John and Ray Lazzara in 1988, who are the current owners.

Significance

The National Register of Historic Places *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years* (Sherfy and Luce 1996) outlines the four criteria to be taken into account when considering a property for the Register. The four criteria include properties:

- A: that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B: that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C: that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D: that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Usually, properties that are less than 50 years old, such as the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall, are not considered eligible for the National Register unless, in addition to the above criteria, the property has achieved significance within the last 50 years and is an integral part of a district or "of exceptional importance" (Sherfy and Luce 1996). The building complex must therefore be evaluated against the traditional NRHP criteria, but the standards are higher because of its short recent history.

In evaluating the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall for NRHP eligibility, it is important to consider a variety of factors, including the building's architectural history and significance as well as its place in local and national history. The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall was designed and built during a time when many new and experimental architectural and construction techniques were being used. The architect, John Bartolomeo, worked in the Chicago area for 43 years from 1949-1992, and other examples of his work can be seen in

The Lawn Savings and Loan building at 95th Street and Western Avenue in Evergreen Park, built in 1960, and the 10-story Arthur Rubloff Building at the Plaza Shopping Center, also in Evergreen Park. The original theater building was constructed using pre-cast concrete panels, a new technique at the time that quickly became popular because it allowed the builder to cast panels while the frame of the building was being constructed, and also proved ideal for use in Chicago's cold winter temperatures. The building was constructed by the Lombard Company, one of the first companies to manufacture concrete panels (www.lappco.com). The artistic design of the theater is based on elements of Modern architecture and Modern Expressionism, ideas in design that were popular at the time of its construction.

The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre opened at a time when many such theaters were starting around the country, including The Candlelight Playhouse in Summit, Illinois, which opened at about the same time as the Drury Lane and billed itself as the first dinner theatre in the country. The late 1950s and 1960s were a time of increased mobility for the American family, and entertainment locations in the suburbs were easily accessible with the growth of the automobile industry. Changes in Hollywood contract rules in the 1940s and 1950s had many screen stars looking for venues, and establishments like the Drury Lane provided places where they could continue to perform. Many stars have performed at the Drury Lane over the years, including Tony Bennett, Cyd Charisse, Lana Turner, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and Ozzie and Harriet. Eventually five Drury Lane Dinner Theatres were in operation in the Chicago area, but today only two locations, Evergreen Park and Oakbrook Terrace, are still in operation as dinner theaters. This follows a pattern of dinner theater closings throughout the country in recent years. The Drury Lane in Evergreen Park has provided a source of entertainment in the Chicago area for local residents as well as theatergoers from the surrounding states for nearly 50 years. It has been an important location for local residents, many of whom have gotten married there or celebrated a significant event, and it has also provided a location for various children's theaters over the years.

In a very basic sense, the buildings located at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park represent a commercial entity designed as both a banquet hall and re-designed to incorporate an entertainment theatre. Both of these commercial activities have long histories and can be associated with architectural structures of significance, but far fewer commercial buildings brought both of these functions together under one roof with a single management. Classic dinner theatres are defined as having a dining and theatre function sharing the same space. This is not the case with the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall. Here the two commercial functions existed side-by-side and was commercially successful. As a commercial entity the facility has played a part in countless lives, both famous and common, but it has not been uniquely recognized for a particular historical event or person during its' 48-years of existence.

Given the information gathered there is evidence to support the potential eligibility under criteria A, B, and C, but not under criterion D. The evidence, however, is not overwhelmingly strong. A review provides a summary of the evidence for against potential NRHP eligibility.

The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex is potentially eligible for the NRHP under criterion A because it is part of a broad pattern of our history. Although dinner theatres represented only a small part of one form of entertainment in the United States in the post-World War II years, they clearly caught on and spread throughout the country particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall represents one of these establishments and an early one in the Chicago-area. While the Drury Lane is not a true dinner theatre, it was more common for businesses to offer dinner and theatre in separate spaces rather than combined, as is the case with a classic dinner theatre. Therefore the foundations of the Drury Lane entertainment and business venture can be tied to a national trend toward these multi-function establishments following World War II. It has also contributed to the trend as it blossomed into five

theatres in the Chicago area and a number of the individuals that started at the Drury Lane went on to develop related venues. Carl Stohn was an early Drury Lane theatre director who went on to open the Pheasant Run Dinner Theatre in the Chicago area, and the current Marriot Lincolnshire theatre is an old Drury Lane theatre. In this way, the Drury Lane portion of the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall not only represents a result of the mid to late twentieth century changes in entertainment, but it also play a role in those changes.

The theater complex may also be potentially eligible under criterion B in that it played host to many national entertainment celebrities through the years. Prior to the twentieth century historically significant individuals typically functioned in the arenas of business, politics, or religion. From the founding days of the United States well into the twentieth century, the historical figures were politicians like Abraham Lincoln or Steven Douglas, or businessmen like Marshall Field or George Pullman that were identified as significant contributors to our past. The development of the motion picture, radio and television media brought a new type of celebrity to the American public. These professional entertainers became better known than most politicians, inventors, or businessmen because of their recognition as larger than life celebrities. The Drury Lane, as an Equity theatre, helped to bring these stars, whose careers were coming to a close, into the lives of ordinary citizens through the live stage. The Drury Lane therefore can be associated with lives of well known individuals who played significant parts in the entertainment industry.

Additionally, the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall, but not the Chapel facility, may be potentially eligible under criterion C. The theater complex was designed in an architectural style that was becoming increasingly popular at the time, and it was constructed using techniques that were also spreading in popularity. The modernistic styles and building techniques employed in the construction of the buildings embody “distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction”. The question of whether or not the structures “represent the work of a master” cannot be addressed at this time, and the question will be left for posterity.

Alternatively, the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall appear ineligible under criterion D because it has not so far yielded, nor is it likely to yield, information important to history or prehistory. The building complex is in part representative of entertainment and building trends in the mid to late twentieth century. The structures themselves offer little to understanding these trends. The knowledge and information about these trends are best understood by interviewing the people involved or capturing the essence of what happened through booking records, other documents, or historical accounts. It is not the buildings themselves that are important to this piece of history, because the history is better captured in written records and in the memories of the participants.

The evidence collected in the study of this building has indicated that the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall complex is of local importance because of all of the residents and visitors to Evergreen Park who have shared the experience of dining, watching performances, and attending weddings at the facility. Nationally, while the Drury Lane complex represents one of many establishments of this nature that began operation at this time during the 1950s and 1960s, it is one of few that are still in business. These findings indicate the structures may be potentially eligible for the NRHP, but the evidence isn't overwhelmingly compelling. Based on an understanding that structures less than 50 years old need to achieve a higher threshold to be considered eligible for the NRHP it is recommended that the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant in Evergreen Park, Cook County, Illinois be determined ineligible for the NRHP. Specific factors contributing to this recommendation focus on the business and entertainment function of the facility. Under the notion that businesses seek to make money, often by establishing relatively unique consumer niches, it is evident that the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet

Hall was successful at wedding a banquet hall function with a dinner and theatre function. It didn't accomplish this in the way the "classic" dinner theatres did, it simply set aside space within a single building for the different functions. This form of adaptation can be seen in another of other businesses like restaurants that also run banquet facilities or movie facilities that serve concessions, theatres with reception halls, or gambling casinos with restaurants and theatres. This in turn raises the question if evolving forms of business and entertainment should be considered significant. Likewise, does the focusing of the American public on entertainment celebrities as persons of importance make the places the celebrities perform places of importance? The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall clearly served and entertained a large number of people, but should a building be considered significant because of the number of people it served, because then all public buildings and most successful business buildings would then fall within the category of significance. The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located in Evergreen Park has clearly played an important role, but it is not clear that role constitutes a location "of exceptional importance". Based on the architectural evaluation and the historical information collected, the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant in Evergreen Park, Cook County, Illinois it is recommended that the structures be determined ineligible for the NRHP.

Summary

The Public Service Archaeology Program conducted an architectural and historical review of the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall located in Evergreen Park, Cook County, Illinois. The project was undertaken in response to an IHPA request (Log No. 011060903) for additional information prior to the proposed demolition of the facility and the construction of a new commercial facility at 2500 West 95th Street in Evergreen Park. The Drury Lane Dinner Theatre contains many elements of Modern architecture and Modern Expressionism, both ideas in design that were popular at the time of its construction. The theater itself is one of many dinner theatres that opened throughout the country after World War II, but one of the few that persist. A suite of characteristics expressed in the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall facilities capture a segment of American culture within the past 50 years. It is generally seen as one of the earlier commercial buildings to combine dinner and theatre venues, albeit separately, under one roof and it incorporated a new type of building material, pre-cast concrete panels, in its design for the restaurant and banquet hall. These characteristics, however, are interpreted as falling short of the criteria established for the NRHP for structures constructed within the last 50 years. Factors that weigh against NRHP eligibility include: the location is not the original location of the Chicago Drury Lane Theatre; the original building was constructed as a banquet hall and restaurant with separate theatre facilities but was retrofitted and redesigned to accommodate both functions; this type of commercial complex was wide-spread across the United States and many continue to function and operate currently; the facility has not been uniquely identified with an individual or event of either national or state-wide significance. Based on the collective findings, it is recommended that the Drury Lane Dinner Theatre and Martinique Restaurant and Banquet Hall facilities be determined ineligible for the NRHP.

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Illinois Historic
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Voice (217) 782-4836

Cook County

Evergreen Park

Proposed Wal-Mart, Demolition and New Construction

NW Corner of 95th and Western

COEC, MANHARD-4042

IHPA Log #011060903

October 24, 2003

RECEIVED

OCT 27 2003

Joshua Wheeler

Manhard Consulting, Ltd.

900 Woodlands Parkway

Vernon Hills, IL 60061

MANHARD CONSULTING, LTD.

Dear Mr. Wheeler:

Our staff has reviewed the documentation submitted concerning the above referenced undertaking. Our comments are required in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

IHPA staff historians have been unable to determine if the buildings(s) present in the project area and scheduled for demolition are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). We require that a survey of the subject resource(s) by a qualified historian be undertaken to assist in the identification of historic properties. A list of historians with survey experience is enclosed for your reference.

The resource survey report generated for submittal to this office shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Historical Context(s) Statement
2. Historic Resource Description
3. NRHP Significance and Integrity Assessment
4. Area Map and Site Plan (8.5" x 11")
5. Current 35mm Color Photographs - Exterior, Interior, Details, Site, etc.

If you have any questions, please contact Cody Wright, Cultural Resource Manager, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701, 217/785-3977.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker

Anne E. Haaker

Deputy State Historic

Preservation Officer

AEH

encl

A lane of memories

Curtain coming down on legendary S.W. Side entertainment venue

BY TOM MCNAMEE
Staff Reporter

In the summer, you might catch a Sox game at Comiskey. Or take in the night air with a Lucky Strike on the front porch.

But in the fall, you'd call the baby-sitter and dress up nice and go the Drury Lane.

You might see "Fiddler on the Roof," or "Camelot." Tony Randall might be on the bill, or Cesar Romero.

You'd get there early and eat at the Martinique, right under the same roof as the Drury Lane, and while you ordered your shrimp cocktail and porterhouse, you might mention to the waitress how your nephew had his wedding reception in the big ballroom upstairs and how the whole family celebrated grandma's 80th birthday in one of the smaller rooms downstairs, and how, in a couple of weeks, you'll be back yet again for, of all things, a first communion party.

The Drury Lane and the Martinique. On Chicago's Southwest Side, it was the classic combo for half a century — just a lovely way to go steppin' out.

So it's easy to understand all the sighs and tears to be found there this weekend. Just about everybody, from the regular customers to the owners, is swapping decades of memories.

The Drury Lane Theatre is closing Sunday after the final performance of its last show, "Celebration on Ice." The restaurant will close six days later — after one last Saturday night bash.

And what will replace these South Side institutions?

A Wal-Mart.

"It was like the high-class place on the South Side — not like the North Side, with all those elite places," said Henrietta Twarok, of Crestwood. "Around here, there wasn't always much else."

Twarok and two old friends were



Skaters perform in the Drury Lane's final production, "Celebration on Ice." —SCOTT STEWART/SUN-TIMES

having lunch before the Friday matinee. They had stories to tell.

"So once we saw the McGuire Sisters — remember them? — and Phyllis McGuire took my husband up on stage — the shyest man you ever met," Eileen Coyne said. "Later, Phyllis told me she always picks Irish men because they have the right faces, you know?"

"My daughter's been giving me gift certificates to all the shows for 15 years," interjected Marilyn Marszalek, of Oak Lawn. "We've been coming to all the shows."

"But then, after my husband's up there with the McGuire Sisters, everybody's coming up to him in the parking lot, and he loves it," Coyne continued. "You'd think he's running for alderman."

"My son's wedding reception was in the little room," Twarok threw in. "The wedding was out of town."

"I went to the Jewel the next day," Coyne continued, "and, you know, this girl who sliced the lunch meat, she said, 'Was that you last night? Was that your husband on stage?'"

At this point, a waitress stopped by the table. She leaned forward

and confided, "This is a neighborhood place."

The Drury Lane opened in 1946 in a big tent at 95th and Western in Evergreen Park.

For the times, the tent was not so strange. The war was just over, veterans were getting hitched and having kids like they were in some kind of a race, and new neighborhoods were sprouting overnight.

Little houses on concrete slabs popped up by the thousands. One new Catholic church, St. Thomas More, held its first services in a Quonset hut.

The Drury Lane wasn't exactly Broadway, even after moving into an actual building, at 2500 W. 95th St., in 1956. But it was seldom flat-out bad, and occasionally it was something special.

You could find yourself singing "To dream the impossible dream..." for days after seeing "Man of La Mancha," or until your spouse begged you to stop.

Stars of a certain quivering wattage played the Drury Lane: David Janssen, Joseph Cotten, Bob Crane, Cyd Charisse, Eva Gabor, Dorothy Lamour, George Hamilton, Ray Milland, Robert Vaughn, Walter Pidgeon, Gig Young, Bob Cummings, Chuck Connors.

They ate at the Martinique — great for business — and shopped across the street at the Evergreen

Plaza mall. A former stock boy at Walgreens in the early 1970s recalls pointing out the magazine aisle to actor Gene Barry. A former clerk at Vim's sporting goods store will never forget selling Elke Sommer a pair of sweat socks. He remembers she wore an interesting blouse.

In the Martinique's earliest days, recalled hostess Pat Boyle, an employee of 39 years, the restaurant held dances five nights a week and drew a well-heeled crowd from Beverly, a Chicago neighborhood a cut or two above the South Side average.

But over the years, the crowd became more diverse. On a typical Saturday in the 1980s and '90s, the Martinique hosted as many as five wedding receptions at once. Standing in the lobby was like flipping a radio dial. Rap music pounded from one room, polka music from another, a bunch of Irishmen sang "Danny Boy" in a third.

In 1988, Johnny and Ray Lazzara, brothers from Oak Lawn, bought the theater and restaurant from its original owner, Anthony DeSantis — who still owns the Drury Lane Oakbrook Terrace — and overhauled the business plan.

Johnny created more shows for seniors and children. He booked the McGuire Sisters, Rosemary Clooney and Jim Nabors for the older set, and staged shows like "Sleeping Beauty" for the kids. He

negotiated group sales with churches and retirement homes. He hired a fine young director, Marc Robin, who insisted on the same sleek professionalism he had practiced at such venues as Chicago Shakespeare.

"Before Johnny, we had no matinees, no summer shows," said Mary Roeh, one of three ushers known as the Golden Girls. "When Johnny started all that, this place filled up."

Robin's production of "Singin' in the Rain" won three Jeff awards — the highest honor in Chicago theater — including the award for best musical.

The Golden Girls know dozens of regular theatergoers by name. One of their favorite stories is about an elderly man and his sickly wife who never missed a performance, although she was confined to a wheelchair. He pushed her chair, held her purse and cared for her every need. The Golden Girls adored him.

But one day, the man showed up for a show with his daughter. His wife had died. And at the very next show he walked in with a strange woman on his arm.

"Ladies," he said to the Golden Girls, "I want you to meet my lady friend."

As the gray-haired customers poured through the doors Friday, John Lazzara leaned up against the hostess station. He looked totally relaxed and yet totally alert, in that way of restaurant owners everywhere. He said he's going to miss the Drury Lane and the Martinique, although he's opening the New Martinique restaurant in Burbank. But it was time.

"It was about more than money," he said. "It's the quality of life. This is a very stressful business. You're working 70 hours a week."

Johnny's daughter Priscilla, a recent college grad who works alongside him, said it was absolutely wonderful growing up in the Drury Lane.

Mickey Rooney made her laugh. Debbie Reynolds was a sweetie. And her dad taught taught her how to fall in love with what you do.

And she won't be missing the last big party.

"This couple is renewing their vows," she explained. "They said they wanted to have the last party at the Drury Lane. But the party keeps getting bigger because all their friends want to say goodbye, too."



Pat Boyle
39-year career



Singer Lou Rawls



The McGuire Sisters and comedian Royce Elliot



Priscilla Lazzara and actor Jim Nabors



Actress Debbie Reynolds and John Lazzara

THEY PACKED 'EM IN AT THE DRURY LANE

Suburban landmark ends run

Wedding reception last production for Martinique

By Bonnie Miller Rubin
Tribune staff reporter

Hundreds of guests made their way through a receiving line Saturday to wish a South Side couple well in their new life together.

The wedding reception marked a beginning for Martha O'Connor and Barney O'Reilly, but it was the end of an era for an Evergreen Park landmark.

The nuptials were the final affair held at the Drury Lane Theater and Martinique banquet hall. The building is to be razed to make way for a Wal-Mart.

The site near 95th Street and Western Avenue is a repository of cherished memories for generations of Chicagoans, especially those who define themselves by their parishes and the White Sox.

The venue brought a touch of Las Vegas-style glitz to the working-class South Side neighborhood.

"I have been here more than



Tribune photo by Phil Velasquez

The wedding reception of a South Side couple Saturday was the last event to be held at the Drury Lane Theatre/Martinique near 95th Street and Western Avenue.

PLEASE SEE MARTINIQUE, PAGE 4

MARTINIQUE: Landmark offered glitz of Las Vegas

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

100 times in my life, probably 20 in the last year alone," said O'Reilly, 59, a retired Chicago police detective.

His bride, O'Connor, 58, nodded. Indeed, her daughter's reception was held there in October.

So when the couple, who had been dating for 13 years, decided to tie the knot, there was no question of where.

"We get to turn out the lights," said a beaming O'Connor, clutching her bouquet.

Sentiment hung in the air with the plaintive sounds of the Emerald Society Pipe Band, made up of current and former police officers, another reflection of the neighborhood.

"This is where we all came to celebrate life," said Marita Tierney, one of the 500 guests.

Intertwined with decades of personal history are the names of celebrities who appeared at Drury Lane: Debbie Reynolds, Jim Nabors, Vic Damone, Bobby Vinton, Cesar Romero, Elke Sommer, Carol Channing.



Tribune photo by Phil Velasquez

Newlyweds Martha O'Connor and Barney O'Reilly (center) applaud the Emerald Society Pipe Band, which played at their wedding reception Saturday, the final event at the Martinique.

With an imposing neon sign and massive crystal chandeliers, the Drury Lane-Martinique was the place for a downtown night out without the downtown price.

The theater's final show, "Celebration on Ice," was Jan. 10. But the reminiscences drifted back to earlier shows, such as "Hello, Dolly!" "Singin' in the Rain" and "Sophisticated Ladies," which were often sneered at by critics but embraced by audiences.

The venture started in 1949 when then-owner Tony DeSantis was operating the Martinique restaurant (the name plucked from a crossword puzzle) in Evergreen Park.

DeSantis was approached by two men who wanted to pitch a tent in his parking lot for summer theater productions.

He agreed, as long as he could sell drinks during intermission.

At first, ticket sales were anemic, until the marquee featured child actress Margaret O'Brien. The venue became such a draw that when DeSantis moved the restaurant to the current location in 1956, he brought the theater with him.

In 1988 the complex was purchased by John and Ray Lazzarra.

The brothers put their own stamp on the place, including adding an ice show in 1994 and a wedding chapel in 2000.

The theater still had its loyal clientele, but rising costs squeezed the bottom line.

In November the brothers announced that they would pull the plug.

That such a pleasure palace would be transformed into a megastore only added to the sense of loss, guests said Saturday night.

"Bit by bit, we're just losing our history," said Maureen O'Reilly, a Drury Lane-Martinique regular with her husband, Fred, a retired police captain.

Tierney's eyes welled up with tears as she recalled watching

her parents "get dressed to the nines" for a night at the theater.

"Where can you go and do that anymore?" Tierney said. "Today, everyone wears jeans."

While guests knew that Saturday was the last hurrah, they reflected on many "firsts." The first date. The first job.

Richard Haggerty, 55, was a 16-year-old employee when he made a delivery to a regular headliner.

The actress thanked him with a personal, and very intimate, tip, he said.

"I think she had had a lot to drink," he added, still glowing at the memory.

His wife, Suzi Walsh Haggerty plans to be on hand Tuesday when memorabilia goes on the auction block.

Others wondered about the chairs, a piece of velvet draperies or anything that could be pressed into their scrapbooks alongside yellowed corsages and ticket stubs.

The koi in the fish pond and the spiral staircase—the site of thousands of wedding portraits—could only be consigned to memory.

"We're lucky," said the new Mrs. O'Reilly. "We get to be the ones to say goodbye."

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