

The Hollywood Theater, 123 5th Avenue South, was constructed in 1936 and opened on 3 December, 1936. Built by The Minnesota Amusement Co. and The Welworth Theaters of Wisconsin; the building was designed by the Minneapolis architectural firm of Liebenberg & Kaplan and constructed by the Winona General Contractor, M.L. Christensen. The theater is designed in the Art Deco Style: "The Art Deco Style had come of age in 1925 after the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. The term Art Deco, which is used to describe the assertively modern style of the 1930's symbolized an attempt to resolve the old conflict between Art and Industry by making use of technological advancements in production and by applying modern design to industrial mass production. In this way Art Deco, which is sometimes called machine art, is philosophically linked to the Bauhaus. At its best, the style marked an attempt to come to grips with the aesthetic challenges of the machine age. Art Deco imposed itself in many fields during the 1930's, including graphics, furniture, silver, glass, and jewelry, and even architecture."¹ Thus, Art Deco comes from two sources: The scientific streamlining which used wind tunnels and time-motion studies to improve methods and products in a modern industrial age, as well as the influences of modern art, namely the founding of the Bauhaus School of Design in Germany in 1919; the other, the aforementioned exposition in Paris in 1925. "Art Deco ornamentation consists largely of low-relief geometrical designs, often in the form of parallel straight lines, zigzags, chevrons and stylized floral motifs. In Europe these forms were inspired by Cubism, in America by North and South American Indian Art.

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This ornament could be rich, varied, and handcrafted or reduced to the merest suggestion for efficient machine production.

Concrete, smooth-faced stone and metal were characteristic exterior architectural coverings, with accents in terra cotta, glass and colored mirrors. Polychromy, often with vivid colors, was frequently an integral part of the design. Forms were simplified and streamlined, and a futuristic effect was often sought.

At its best, the Art Deco Style produced a harmonious collaboration of effort by architects, painters, sculptors, and designers. This harmony is well illustrated in some of the great movie palaces of the 1920's and 1930's, where curtains, murals, and light fixtures bore the same Art Deco motifs, as the building itself. Art Deco was a conscious reversion of historical styles and was a popular form of ornamentation. It was, however, scorned by the more intellectual practitioners of a new and even more radically iconoclastic style that began to appear in the 1930's - The International Style."²

The Hollywood Theater clad in squares of Kestota Stone, with openness of glass block and doors of streamliner design, a massive marquee of curved and straight lines highlighted in neon light with graphics in the Art Deco style all combine to make this structure an excellent example of the thirties streamlining - The Art Deco Style. The interior decor follows through as well with recessed lighting, flowing stair railings and porthole door design all following the harmonious principles of the design.

The Hollywood Theater is located directly South of the former La Crosse Theater, which was constructed by Joseph Losey

in 1888, and which closed in 1930. The Art Deco design is carried on in the block to the South of Fifth Avenue which was developed by Dr. Frank Hoeschler. Hoeschler's home at 117 Losey Blvd. North is La Crosse's most notable home of the Art Deco Style.

The Hollywood Theater's opening in 1936 brought first run Paramount Pictures to La Crosse. In 1953, remodeling was under-taken to equip the theater for cinema scope projection which required the removal of seating to install the large screen. However, with decline in movie going and competition from theaters of smaller capacity and more than one viewing room, the theater closed on 28 July, 1989.

Photos of the Hollywood Theater appeared in The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, Spring 1986, page 36.

Respectively Submitted,

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