

**The Carver Theater  
2101 Orleans Avenue**

**Landmark Designation Report**

**Construction Date:** 1950  
**Architect:** Jack Corgan (Dallas)

**Site Description:** Square 268, lot 2 measuring 29' X 79', lot 1 forming the corner of Orleans Avenue and N. Johnson Street measuring 20' X 79', lot 10 measuring 31' X 74', lot B measuring 31' X 70', lot A forming the corner of St. Ann Street and N. Johnson Street measuring 40' X 76' X various.  
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**Municipal District:** Orleans Medical Building Corp.  
**Assessment District:**  
**Owner:** December 10, 2002  
**Date Nominated:**

The nomination of this property was based upon its architectural and historical significance. City Ordinance No. 5992 MCS defines a Landmark or Landmark site as: An unimproved parcel of ground (landmark site) or such parcel with improvements or such improvements without grounds (landmark), wheresoever located in the City of New Orleans, subject to the jurisdiction of the Historic District Landmarks Commission, of particular historic, architectural, or cultural significance, which said parcel or parcels, plus its improvements, if any, 1) Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community; or 2) Are identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state, or local history; or 3) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or 4) Are representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual ability has been recognized.

## History of the Property

At a time when "colored" patrons were restricted to second floor balconies, seats at the back of the bus, and separate drinking fountains, the developers of this theater made it a very lush venue designed specifically for Black patrons. The 1050 seat theater cost \$300,000.00 to construct and was one of the finest neighborhood theaters ever built in New Orleans. The Carver, named after African-American scientist and scholar George Washington Carver, was built as an all "colored" theater, with no balcony, and was not open to white patrons. It was air-conditioned from the time of its opening and its projection and sound equipment was top rate. The theater offered both live entertainment and movies.

The theater closed in 1980 and was sold in 1984. It has been partially used since then as a medical clinic and pharmacy. In 2005 the Louisiana Landmarks Society placed the Carver Theater on its list of endangered sites, due to lack of maintenance. Since 1996, when a fundraiser concert was held, efforts have been underway to restore the theater and re-open it as part of a neighborhood cultural complex.

This masonry building, sited on a corner, was built as the Carver Theater. It opened on September 29, 1950. The theater was developed by Jack A. Dicharry and Mrs. Henry Lazarus, the principals of Jadel Theaters. The building was designed by Jack Corgan of Dallas, Texas, in conjunction with August Perez and Associates of New Orleans, from plans dated October 25, 1949. Clad in concrete panels, it features a corner entry dominated by the large "Carver" sign. Just below the sign is an interesting three sided corner window. Below this is a large corner marquee that wraps around two sides of the building. Currently, the façade of the building is in the same condition as when the theater opened, except for normal wear and tear.

### Landmark basis:

Criteria:

- 1) Exemplify or reflect the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community and
- 2) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship

Although the grand movie palaces of the 20s and 30s were considered the "ultimate" for the movie going experience, many more smaller, neighborhood theaters were built in cities across America. The Carver Theater is an outstanding example of a neighborhood theater, a nice example of the Moderne style of architecture and is a poignant reminder of our city's history of segregation. The staff of the HDLC finds that the Carver Theater meets two of the four landmark categories in that it reflects the broad cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state or community and embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or indigenous materials or craftsmanship.