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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 975

Offered February 14, 2019

*Commending the Attucks Theatre.*

Patrons—Jones, J.C.; Senators: Lewis and McClellan

WHEREAS, the Attucks Theatre, the oldest operating theatre in the nation that was financed, designed, constructed, and operated by African Americans, has served the Norfolk community for 100 years; and

WHEREAS, the Attucks Theatre traces its roots to the Twin Cities Amusement Corporation, formed by a group of African American businessmen from Norfolk and Portsmouth in response to the segregation of public entertainment venues in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Twin Cities Amusement Corporation sought funding for the Attucks Theatre from two African American-owned businesses, the Brown Savings Bank and Tidewater Trust Company, and hired Harvey N. Johnson, a 25-year-old African American architect; and

WHEREAS, opened in 1919, the Attucks Theatre is a fine example of the grand movie palaces of the time period, with elaborate balconies, an orchestra pit, and state-of-the-art lighting; the building was also designed to accommodate new businesses with space for retail shops and offices; and

WHEREAS, the Attucks Theatre was named for Crispus Attucks, who is considered the first American casualty of the Revolutionary War, an event memorialized on the stage curtain of the 600-seat theater; and

WHEREAS, the Attucks Theatre quickly became an icon in the local African American community and a center for cultural life in Norfolk, drawing comparisons to New York City's Apollo Theater; and

WHEREAS, the Attucks Theatre was added to the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1981 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1982; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Attucks Theatre features a full calendar of events, including screenings of the documentary *The Historic Attucks Theatre: The Apollo of the South*; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Attucks Theatre on the occasion of its 100th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Attucks Theatre as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the theatre's unique contributions to the performing arts in the Commonwealth and service to the Norfolk community.

INTRODUCED

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