

Cargill gives World Theater grant

By Jim Adams
Staff Writer

Cargill, Inc., Wednesday gave \$300,000 toward the \$1.5 million restoration of the World Theater in St. Paul, home of "A Prairie Home Companion" radio show.

Cargill has sponsored the show since it first aired in 1974.

Also yesterday Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), which bought the former vaudeville theater in 1981, unveiled architectural plans for the face lift.

They include a new marquee on the

original Exchange St. entrance, which has been closed for 50 years.

Original plaster will be restored inside the theater and box seats will be rebuilt. A broadcast booth and equipment also will be added.

MPR moved its nationally broadcast "Prairie Home Companion" into the nearby Orpheum Theater in January 1984. By then, plaster flakes peeling from the World's ceiling had become a "hall of hunks," MPR said.

Show host Garrison Keillor said the move was based on "one of the simplest tenets of show business — nev-

er perform in a place where things may fall on top of paying customers."

A subsequent inspection revealed that the roof leaked and plumbing and wiring were in bad condition, although the World remained structurally sound.

The St. Paul City Council in November approved a commercial development bond for \$4.3 million, which will be repaid through fund-raising by the World Theater Corp., a nonprofit subsidiary of MPR, said spokeswoman Allison Circle.

She said the amount of the bond was determined to provide extra money in case of any unforeseen problems in the renovation. Unused proceeds will be applied toward bond payments.

The 960-seat World, 494 S. Wabasha St., was built in 1910 as the Sam S. Shubert Theater for dance shows and musicals.

It became the World in 1933 when it was remodeled to show movies. The World closed in 1977, but reopened the following year when the "Prairie Home Companion" arrived.