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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

MAY 24 1988

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name I.O.O.F. Opera House other names/site number NeHBS #HM03-12; OHBIN #02-07-03

2. Location

street & number North Third & "B" Sts. city, town Hampton state Nebraska code NE county Hamilton code 081 zip code 68843

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917 Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: James A. Hanson, Director, Nebraska State Historical Society. Date: May 16, 1988.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: State or Federal agency and bureau.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:). Signature of the Keeper: Beth Boland. Date of Action: 5/28/88.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre;
music facility

Social: Meeting hall

Commerce/Trade: Financial institution

Commerce/Trade: Specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Two-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Decorative brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The I.O.O.F. Opera House is located at the southwest corner of North Third and "B" Streets at the edge of the downtown section of Hampton. As of this writing, it is the only two-story building in the retail area. The property was leased to the Star Lodge 112 of the I.O.O.F. in 1893 by the owners, James M. and Joshua Cox, who ran the retail space below. According to the lease, the lodge would pay 40 percent of the taxes and assessments. The red brick, Two-Part Commercial Block structure is decorated with interesting raised brickwork in three rows spanning the top of the building, and a raised portion at the center front with the numbers "1893" in light stone. It has a flat asphalt roof. The building is approximately 40 feet wide by 65 feet long. Access to the second floor auditorium is through a single door on the north side of the building. No ticket window or box office remains.

The auditorium is 29 feet wide by 45 feet, 6 inches long from the back of the theatre to the proscenium opening. There is no balcony. Three rooms on the stage left side of the auditorium were converted to an apartment at some time in the past, but probably functioned as lodge space originally. The ceiling and walls show extensive water damage.

The dark wooden proscenium arch measures 12 feet, 9 inches wide by approximately 10 feet high. The stage right wing is eight feet, 6 inches, wide, but that on the left is 19 feet wide, extending behind the small rooms and containing small makeshift wooden dressing rooms. Access to the backstage area from the auditorium is through a doorway on the stage left side of the proscenium wall. The stage measures 15 feet deep from the proscenium opening to the back wall, which contains boarded-over windows overlooking 3rd St. A covered footlight trough adorns the outer edge of the three foot apron. One trap door is located center stage. A vintage teaser, illustrated by a small nude wearing one garland of flowers and swinging from another, includes an excellent representation of tassles and fringes (see photo #3). No indication of the artist remains.

The structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved.

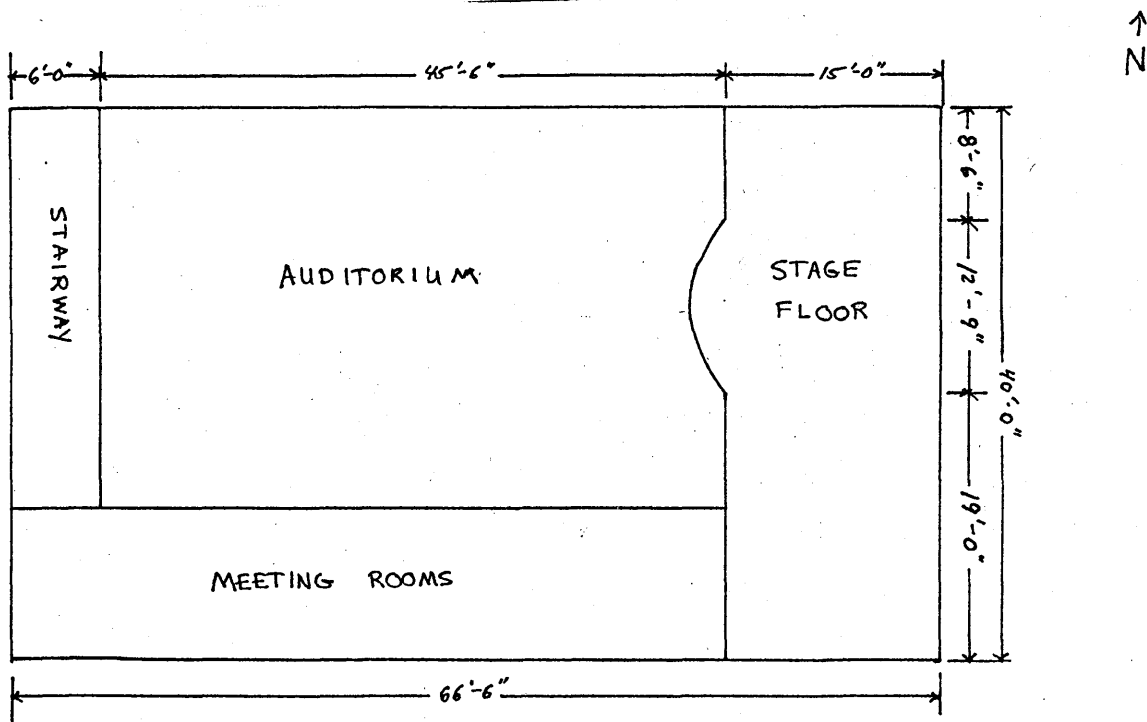
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Floor plan, I.O.O.F. Opera House, Hampton



Credit: P. Leitner, Draftsman

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The first level retail space originally housed the First National Bank and a grocery store. The second level served as a combination opera house and lodge hall. The entire building is presently vacant. Alterations to the building's exterior are minimal and include the boarding up of windows, brick infill of an entrance (east facade), and the modernizing of the storefront on the east (front) facade. The first story level on the building's exterior has been painted. The opera house space on the second level is in near-original condition and possess a high degree of architectural and historical integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Performing Arts

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Period of Significance

1893-1917

Significant Dates

1893

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cox, James M. (architect)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The I.O.O.F. Opera House is significant for its association with and in reference to the historic context "Aesthetic Systems: Itinerant and Local Performing Arts in Nebraska" and the property type of "Opera House Buildings in Nebraska, 1867 to 1917." Under Criterion A, this opera house is significant in the areas of the performing arts; entertainment/recreation; and social history, on a state level, as a well preserved example of an opera house building in Nebraska. The building retains a high degree of historical integrity, possessing the physical and associative characteristics to make it an eligible member of its property type.

This opera house is significant in the area of performing arts for bringing a variety of entertainment to the community of Hampton. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as musical concerts, medicine shows, vaudeville, minstrel shows, classics like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *East Lynne*, and *Weary Willie Walker*, touring stock companies, dialect comedies, and home talent shows. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1896-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole community could gather to attend dances, box socials, and edifying lectures. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1896-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history because it gave Hampton a neutral, location for political meetings, fraternal lodges, and Farmers' Institutes. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1896-1917.) In the days before radio, television, and sound movies, activities at the opera house were anticipated for days or weeks ahead of time. It provided a place for people to get together to have a good time and forget their troubles over crops, weather, taxes, the railroads, and the generally hard life of settling the Great Plains.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Allen, Gwen. Letters to the author. Aurora: 1986, 1987.
Aurora Republican. 14 Sep. 1894-23 Nov. 1894 and 10 Sep. 1897-28 Nov. 1917.
Feelhaber, Carl T. Letter to the author. Ft. Dodge, IA/Hampton: 1987.
Hamilton County Register. 16 Dec. 1893 - 24 Nov. 1894.
Hamilton County Register of Deeds. Hampton Opera House public records. 4 Sep. 1987.
Hampton Opera House. Hampton site visit. 7 Feb. 1987.
Hampton Times. 19 Apr. 1895 - 30 Apr. 1897.
Klute, Laverne. Personal interview. Hampton: 7 Feb. 1987.
Wall, Vi. Letter to the author. Hampton: 1987.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

D. Layne Ehlers (see below)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one [] acre

UTM References

A [1][4] [5][9][3][8][7][5] [4][5][2][5][7][5][5]
 Zone Easting Northing

C [] [] []

B [] [] []
 Zone Easting Northing

D [] [] []

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as the north 18 feet of Lots 1 and 2 of Block 3, Original Town of Hampton, Hamilton County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lots that have been historically associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Layne Ehlers, Principal Investigator

organization OHBIN Study date April, 1988

street & number 2302 South 11th telephone [402] 435-6946

city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68502

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The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building, 1880, which coincided with the founding of the town. It continued through 1917, the year considered to signal the end of the opera house era in Nebraska, based on declining numbers of touring companies nationally and rising numbers of movie houses and automobiles. The proximity of the larger towns of Aurora (6 miles) and Grand Island (26 miles), both of which had large auditoriums able to offer major entertainments, and moving picture theatres by 1917, meant that as more Hampton residents bought cars, activities in those nearby cities became a viable option. Limited choices in the I.O.O.F. Opera House doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events, primarily significant under the categories of social history and entertainment/recreation.

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I.O.O.F. Opera House, Hampton
Representative Entertainments, 1896-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Social History

Sep 1896 Political issues discussion by Prof. R. H. Langford of N. Platte
Mar 1897 Woodmen banquet and entertainment
Oct 1899 Populist speaker
Oct 1904 Lectures by Congressman Hinshaw and Candidates Epperson &
Cunningham
Oct 1906 Populist meeting, music by the Glee Club
Nov 1906 Republican meeting
Oct 1915 Banquet for members of the Masonic Lodge
Nov 1915 Farmers' Institute and Stock Show
Oct 1917 Farmers' Institute and dinner

Entertainment/Recreation

Dec 1895 Social ball
Dec 1895 Christmas ball, music by the Hudson Dever Hunt Orchestra
Jan 1896 Dance by local dancing club, music by Charley Hudson and J. B. Hunt
Jan 1897 Grand ball
Feb 1897 Oddfellows Ball
Nov 1897 Thanksgiving dance
Dec 1897 Grand ball
Feb 1898 Grand ball
Dec 1898 Christmas ball
Dec 1899 Masquerade party
Nov 1902 Entertainment and box social
Dance by Hampton Dancing Club
Dec 1902 Dance
Oct 1903 Professor Zwicky, master of art
Nov 1903 Masquerade ball
Dec 1903 Lecture by James Clement Ambrose
Social dance by club boys, music by Harp Orchestra of York
Christmas ball, music by York Orchestra
Nov 1904 Masquerade ball, music by the Lushton Band
Dec 1904 Christmas ball, music by the York Harp Orchestra
Dec 1905 Lecture by Prof. Snow
Social hop by the Odd Fellows

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I.O.O.F. Opera House, Hampton
Representative Entertainments, 1896-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Entertainment/Recreation, cont'd.

Nov 1906 Masquerade ball, music by the Becker Bros. Orchestra of
Grand Island
Dec 1906 Dance under auspices of Hampton Cornet Band, music by the
Aurora Harp Orchestra
Nov 1907 Dance under auspices of the Band Boys, music by York Orchestra
Oct 1909 Dance
Nov 1910 Dance, music by Gilmore Orchestra of York
Oct 1911 Dance, music by York Orchestra
Oct 1912 Dance under auspices of F. Powers & P. Youst, music by Beaver's
Orchestra of York
Oct 1913 Dance, music by Beaver's Orchestra of York
Nov 1913 I.O.O.F. dance
Oct 1914 Dance and supper, sponsored by the Rebekah Lodge
Oct 1917 Lecture by Dr. K. F. Nance from the Hordville Lecture Course

Performing Arts

Oct 1896 *Imogene* by Aurora Dramatic Co.
Nov 1896 Buckskin Charley's Indian Combination
Dec 1896 Three Coons, itinerant players
Apr 1897 Aurora Delsarte home talent entertainment
Dec 1898 *Union Spy*, Aurora home talent
Oct 1902 Bixby and His Plymouth Quartette
The Greatest (or Biggest) Liar Unhung by the Aurora Dramatic Club
Dec 1902 Brose & Clemens
Nov 1903 Madrigal Ladies Quartette
Dec 1903 Beckler Family
Nov 1904 Harry Kimmell Co. doing *Could You Blame Him?* with Claud Hudson of
Hampton
Dec 1904 Blackbird Medicine Show
Nov 1906 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Oct 1907 Lewis Stock Co.
Nov 1909 *East Lynne*
Under the Harvest Moon

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Section number 8 Page 4

I.O.O.F. Opera House, Hampton
Representative Entertainments, 1896-1917

DATE	EVENT AND PERFORMERS
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Performing Arts, cont'd.

Nov 1910	Hampton home talent musical <i>Weary Willie Walker</i>
Oct 1911	<i>The College Chum</i> <i>Thy Neighbor's Wife</i>
Nov 1911	Vaudeville and trained animals Ole Swanson
Oct 1912	McCabe's Georgia Troubadours Hugo & Applegate Co.
Nov 1912	Protean Concert Co.
Oct 1913	Brown's Minstrels
Nov 1913	Harry Green Co. with <i>The Town Fool</i>
Oct 1914	Mohammed Co.
Nov 1917	<i>Pygmalion and Galatea</i>