

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED	DEC 11 1979
DATE ENTERED	JAN 24 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Steयर Opera House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

102-104 W. Water Street

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Decorah

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

2

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Winneshiek County

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Frank Miller

STREET & NUMBER

Middle Calmar Road

CITY, TOWN

Decorah

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 52101

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Winneshiek County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Decorah

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This three-story commercial block was built in 1870, with an additional 3 bays (for a total of 10) added on the east side in 1875. The ground floor houses small businesses; the second, apartments; while the third contains the remains of the stage and auditorium.

The first story has been extensively modernized, although the pilasters on each end of the facade are still intact. This story originally featured two storefronts, with cast-iron columns, tall plate glass windows and recessed entrances. Between them was (and is) the entrance to stairs leading to the floors above. The easternmost three bays (the 1875 addition) featured similar storefront treatment, but in addition were sheltered beneath a small flat roof enlivened with a wrought iron balustrade.

The upper floors are characterized by tall, segmentally-arched windows, with 4/4 d.h.s. (extant only on the third story; second story windows have been closed up to accommodate small aluminum windows and air conditioners). The third story windows are taller than those of the second. All windows have keystone hoods and narrow sills with diminutive "brackets". The front facade then rises to a plain brick parapet that replaces a prominent cornice with paired brackets.

The third floor auditorium, although long unused, retains a remarkable number of original features and is today the most significant element of this building. The walls and coved ceilings are covered with tin, pressed in a variety of decorative patterns and still displaying (though faded) a color scheme of white, blue, gold and pink. To each side of the proscenium is a doorway, framed by thick, paneled pilasters and topped with a broad architrave which is arched in the center. A number of painted floats, the work of local artist Harry Dessell in 1875, are still extant. The balcony around 3 sides dates from a major renovation in 1875.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1870; 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT F.G. Brant, Dubuque

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The chief element of significance here is the third floor auditorium and stage, which present a rather fine example of Iowa's 19th century opera house design and decoration. The lavish use of pressed tin, in a variety of floral and geometric patterns, the whole gaily covered, is particularly noteworthy, as are the handsome architraves over the doorways flanking the stage. Potential for restoration is very good, as little has been done to alter the auditorium, and some of the original (1875) flats are still extant.

The opera house block was built in 1870, designed by F. G. Brant of Dubuque. The original owner, Joseph Steyer, came to the U.S. from Luxembourg in 1852. He was a stonecutter by trade, and worked in Ohio, Minnesota, and perhaps other states of the upper midwest, before settling in Decorah in 1865. In Decorah, he opened a saloon, and was later a stockholder in the First National Bank. Five years after his Opera House opened, Steyer had an addition made to the east end, and the auditorium was extensively redecorated and the balcony added. The Opera House was host to professional and amateur theatricals, as well as assorted community events.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Decorah Republican, November 11, December 2, December 30, 1870;
 May 21, September 3, October 16, 1875; April 14, April 20, 1877.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME La Crosse, Wisconsin

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:250,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 59 18 2 10 10 4 7 9 5 10 10 10

B

ZONE EASTING

NORTHING

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 1, Block 3, in the NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4. Sec. 16, T 98 N, R 8 W.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

M. H. Bowers, Historian

September, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

319-353-6949

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

Iowa 52240

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL ✓

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Adrian S. Anderson

TITLE Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE December 3, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Paul D. Shan

DATE 1-24-80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *William H. Brubaker*

DATE 1-27-80

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION