

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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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 Table Rock Opera House

other names/site number NeHBS #PW08-17; OHBIN #11-29-05

**2. Location**

street & number Houston St.  not for publication

city, town Table Rock  vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Pawnee code 133 zip code 68447

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> Total

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.

James A. Hammon May 16, 1988  
Signature of certifying official Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Beth Boland 9/28/88  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre;  
music facility  
Social: Meeting hall  
Health care: Medical business/office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Museum  
Commerce/Trade: Specialty shop  
Health care: Medical business/office

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Two-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknown

walls Brick

roof Unknown

other Concrete ledges above and  
below windows

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Table Rock Opera House is located on the west side of the Table Rock town square, on Houston Street. Constructed in 1893 by G. R. "Rice" Martin, a local merchant, this Two-Part Commercial Block structure measures about 45 feet wide by 70 feet long. The flat roof has been protected by layers of tar. The facade is quite plain for a Nebraska opera house built in the nineteenth century, having only stone window ledges, simple stone decorations above the windows, and a section of bricks raised above the roof level on the front facade, reminiscent of the line of a false front. Access to the second-floor auditorium is through double doors between two retail establishments on the ground floor and through another set of double doors into the opera house itself. No ticket window remains. Retail space also existed on the second floor under the balcony on each side of the theatre's entrance.

The auditorium is 44 feet wide between side walls and 38 feet, six inches deep from the proscenium opening to the back wall of the auditorium. The sharply raked balcony extends 14 feet behind the auditorium's back wall. It is reached by narrow stairs along both auditorium walls. Four windows in the east wall provide natural lighting into the balcony, as does a skylight above the center of the auditorium. The wooden floor is in good condition.

The wooden proscenium arch measures 20 feet wide by about 14 feet high. There are ample twelve-foot wings on each side of the stage. The proscenium wall angles away from the proscenium opening (see floor plan continuation sheet 7.1). This triangle-shaped space has built-in storage for wooden folding chairs on the stage side of the stage right wing. No dressing rooms exist backstage, although there is ample space. Access to the backstage area is through doors on the proscenium wall near the outside walls of the auditorium. A three-foot apron curves away from the proscenium opening. The stage is 15 feet deep from the curtain line to the back wall. Wainscoting decorates the front of the stage below the level of the stage floor. One trap door is located center stage. One of the most unusual features of this opera house is the presence of two complete sets of original stage scenery, set up and operational in the on-stage grooves.

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

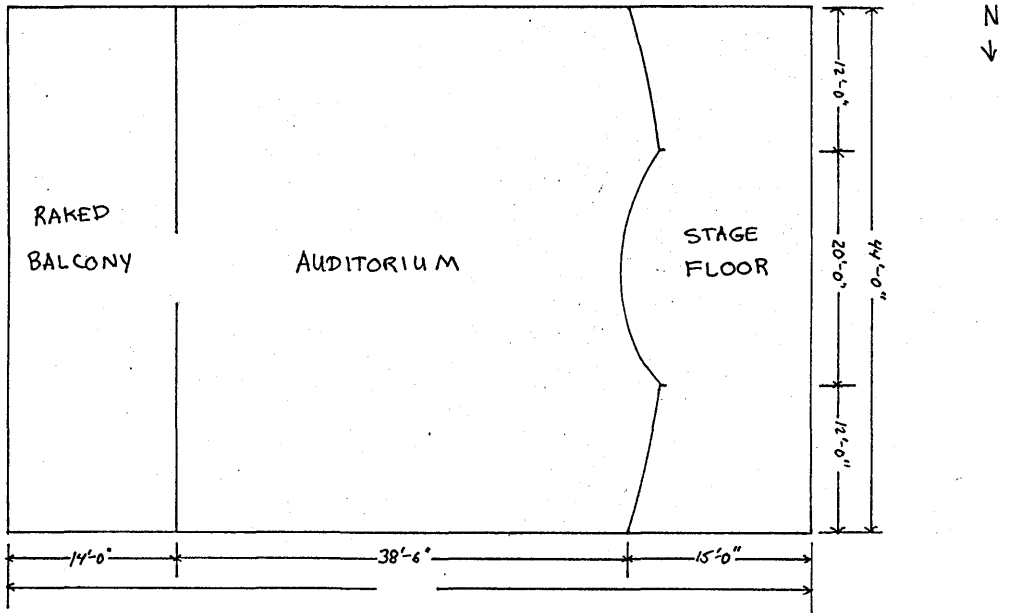
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Floor plan, Table Rock Opera House, Table Rock



Credit: P. Leitner, Draftsman

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The three-story brick rectangular building has a flat roof with a "false-front" stepped parapet wall. Fenestration consists of double-hung window units with one over one pane arrangement. Window hoods and sills are of stone. The double store features an original cast iron storefront with double-door entry on the main (east) facade, south side. The north storefront has been modernized with plate glass windows, new brick and single door entry. The center double door entry with large transom, leads to the second level opera house. Except for these storefront alterations, the building remains in good condition.

The building, now owned by the Table Rock Historical Society, originally housed retail businesses, including a drug store, on the first level and professional office space, including a dentists office, at the front of the second level. The first floor presently houses a drug store and appliance shop, and the opera house space is used as the Old Opera House Museum.

## 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

Unknown

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

The Table Rock 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 Table Rock. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as musical concerts, comic opera, minstrel shows, touring stock companies, magicians, and home talent productions. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1893-1917.)

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, lectures, and moving pictures. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1893-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history, because it gave Table Rock a neutral, nonaffiliated location for lodge celebrations, political speeches, fundraisers, suffrage meetings, and school recitals. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1893-1917.) 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**

- Besom, A. *Pawnee County, Nebraska: As It Was, Is, and Is To Be, with a New County Map and Directory.* Atchison, KS: The Immigrant Union, 1878.
- Brand Irons, comp. *Bicentennial Album of Pawnee County.* McPherson, KS: Brand Irons, 1976.
- Fellers, Ellen L. "Table Rock, Nebraska 1858 to 1958." Unpublished ts., Nebraska State Historical Society Library, 1958.
- Fike, Duane. "The Table Rock Opera House, a Small-Town Community Center." Unbound ts. Prof. Tice L. Miller files, U of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1983.
- Souvenir Book of Pawnee County.* Photostat. N.p.: W.E. Hassler, 1897.
- Stehlik, Nettie. Letter to the author. Table Rock: 1986.
- Stehlik. Personal interview. Table Rock: 29 Nov. 1986.
- Table Rock Opera House. Table Rock site visit. 29 Nov. 1986.

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 [1] acre

UTM References

A [1,4] [7,4,7] [2,4,0] [4,4] [5,1] [4,2,5]  
 Zone Easting Northing

C                              

B                                
 Zone Easting Northing

D                              

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Commencing 45'-6" North of the southeast corner of Lot 8, Block 29, thence running north 22 ft., thence west 75 ft., thence south 22 ft., thence east 75 ft. to the place of beginning, in the Original Town of Table Rock, Pawnee County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire town lot that has 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, 1893. It continues 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 local opening of the Pastime Theatre, circa 1916, took considerable business away from the Table Rock Opera House. Limited choices in the Table Rock Opera House doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events.

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Representative Entertainments, 1893-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

## Social History

Jul 1893 I.O.O.F. celebration  
 Sep 1893 Knights of Pythias celebration  
 Oct 1896 Republican Club meeting  
 Oct 1898 Political speech by E. J. Burkett  
 Nov 1898 Cemetery Association dinner and supper on election day  
 WSA Banquet  
 Hon G. M. Lambertson political speech  
 Dec 1898 Musical entertainment by Miss Emma Clema and music class  
 Oct 1899 Speeches by Chaplain Mailley & Hon. C. F. Reavis  
 WSA Suffrage Convention  
 Nov 1899 WSA entertainment  
 Musical entertainment by Miss Clema  
 Dec 1899 Woodmen Banquet  
 Nov. 1900 School entertainment  
 Nov 1901 Cemetery Association chicken pie dinner and oysters, election day  
 Republican political speech by Hon. H. M. bushnell  
 Nov 1902 Revival meetings, conducted by Evangelist Andrew McMurtry of  
 Oakland, California  
 Nov 1904 Political speech by Hon. E. J. Burkett  
 Nov 1906 Musical recital by Miss Nellie Cotton and music class  
 Dec 1909 School entertainment  
 Dec 1911 School entertainments

## Entertainment/Recreation

Jul 1893 Fourth of July ball  
 Oct 1896 Taylor & Harrison, 'The Boy Tramp Orator'  
 Nov 1896 Lecture by Dr. H. D. Fisher of Topeka on 'Quantrell's Raid'  
 Lecture by Bishop Bowman on 'Travels in India'  
 Dec 1896 Band entertainment  
 Nov 1897 'A Mother's Boy' lecture by Ewing Herbert  
 Nov 1898 Bohemian dance  
 Dec 1898 Lecture by Rev. A. B. Whitmer on 'Things That Make Me Tired'  
 Nov 1900 Entertainment by Mrs. J. O. Jeffrey of Wymore



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Table Rock Opera House, Table Rock  
Representative Entertainments, 1893-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Entertainment/Recreation, cont'd.

Nov 1901 Lecture by Prof. J. W. Bowlus on 'Electricity'  
Illustrated songs and pictures  
Grand ball, music by Table Rock Orchestra  
Mandolin Club entertainment

Nov 1903 Thanksgiving dance

Dec 1903 Lecture by Capt. Alberti on 'Russia and Siberia'

Dec 1904 Lecture series by G. B. Swartz

Jan 1906 Lecture by Dr. Marshall Lowe

Mar 1906 Mrs. Bess Gearhart Mouston, lecture

Nov 1906 Monologue, 'The Lion and the Mouse' by Edward Elliot

Nov 1909 Edith Bartlett, reader, monologist, and impersonator

Nov 1911 Moving pictures, Saturdays

Feb 1912 N. W. Gaines, humorist

Nov 1912 Harold Morton Kramer, lecture

Nov 1913 Moving pictures

Nov 1914 Robert O. Bowman character portraits

Oct 1915 Picture show

Oct 1916 Dance, music by Lincoln Dance Orchestra

Nov 1916 Lecture by Dr. Bixby, Harry Huntington, and Mr. Hardy

Nov 1917 Lecture by Miss Sumayah Attiyeh, 'Turkish Life and Customs'

Dec 1917 Lecture by John R. Boardman, 'Psychology of Leadership'

Performing Arts

Jul 1893 Concert by Miss Irene Slayton of Elk Creek

Nov 1895 *Pinafore* by home talent

Nov 1896 Band entertainment and concert

Dec 1896 Andrews Opera Co. in *The Mikado*  
Pond-Berlin theatrical co.

Oct 1898 Lewis Carnival of Wonders

Dec 1898 Lew Hall's Georgia Minstrels

Nov 1900 Medicine Concert Co.  
Pawnee Concert co.

Dec 1902 *Because I Love You* by home talent  
The Steelsmiths in *A Man of Mystery*  
Bohemian home talent play

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Representative Entertainments, 1893-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

## Performing Arts, cont'd.

Nov 1904	<i>Was She to Blame?</i> The Hartford Entertainers
Nov 1905	Bohemian Male Quartette Winchell Jubilee Singers
Dec 1905	Magician Joseffy Alabama Jubilee Singers
Feb 1906	Bissing Concert Co.
Nov 1908	Jubilee Singers Dubinsky Brothers, <i>Pickings from Puck</i>
Nov 1909	<i>Kidnapped for a Million</i> Davis Concert Co. <i>The Belle of Japan</i> <i>Old Dan Tucker</i>
Dec 1909	<i>The Town Sport</i> <i>Eli and Jane</i> <i>Ole Peterson</i>
Nov 1910	Brown's Minstrels
Nov 1910	Metropolitan Stock Co. with Miss Dorothy Reeves
Oct 1911	Giddings Family Concert Co.
Nov 1911	Alva Green, humorist
Dec 1911	Totten Co., Magician, 'An Evening of Magic' <i>King of Tramps</i> Hillman's Stock Co. <i>A Chinese Puzzle</i>
Jan 1912	The Morrison Entertainers
Nov 1912	<i>The Girl and the Gawk</i> <i>Rebecca's Triumph</i> , Humboldt home talent
Jan 1913	New York Male Quartette
Mar 1913	Weller Trio Carter's Jubilee Singers
Nov 1913	Herald Square Entertainers
Nov 1914	<i>Under the Laurels</i>
Nov 1915	Edna Earl Crum Concert Co. Mutual Stock Co.
Sep 1916	<i>The Girl from the U.S.A.</i>
Nov 1917	Hillman Stock Co.

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Photographs  
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The following information is the same for all Table Rock photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY: Table Rock Opera House  
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Table Rock, Pawnee, Nebraska  
NeHBS SITE No.: PW08-17  
OHBIN SITE No.: 11-29-05  
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Table Rock #1  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 11-29-86 (8611/5:26)  
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society  
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking southwest at the east (front) facade.

PHOTO NUMBER: Table Rock #2  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 11-29-86 (8611/6:2)  
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society  
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west at the stage.

PHOTO NUMBER: Table Rock #3  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 11-29-86 (8611/5:32)  
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society  
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west northwest at the stage area from the balcony.

PHOTO NUMBER: Table Rock #4  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 11-29-86 (8611/6:1)  
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society  
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking east at the auditorium area from the stage.