

Already listed

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 5 1982
DATE ENTERED	

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

1 NAME *Ford's Theatre National Historic Site*

HISTORIC

Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House where Lincoln Died

AND/OR COMMON

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

511 & 516 Tenth Street, N.W.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

VICINITY OF
CODE

11

COUNTY

CODE

001

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

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(if applicable)* National Capital Region/National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

District of Columbia Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

May 1, 1962

DC-82

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ford's Theatre is a three story brick structure covered by a gable slate roof. The west facade of the theatre has five arched doorways at street level, painted gray. A cast iron beltcourse runs along the top of this level. Six brick pilasters with cast iron caps and bases extend the height of the second and third levels, dividing the facade into five bays. Between the six pilasters are two rows of five casement windows, providing light and air for the lobbies of the dress and family circles. Their cast iron lintels have foliated console ends. The sills are also cast iron with small consoles as brackets. The heavy cornice applied across the facade has a brick architrave and frieze with modillions, fascia and moldings in wood. The peak of the gable roof acts as the pediment and is also decorated with modillions. The cornice and pediment remained unfinished until 1865, and in the historic Mathew Brady photograph the cornice and pediment lookouts jut out like sawteeth. Of the five arched doorways, four of them open into the lobby of the theatre and give access to the north ticket window, the orchestra and the dress circle. The fifth door known as the gallery door at the south end of the facade provides access to the gallery ticket window and stairwell leading into the family circle. The exterior walls are the only portions remaining of the nineteenth century theatre. The entire interior was reconstructed in the 1960's to recreate the theatre as it appeared on the night Lincoln was assassinated, April 14, 1865.

The rear of the building has a large barn type door in the center and a stage door entrance at the north end. Three wooden ventilators with slate hipped roofs rise above the main roof along the ridge line. A small four-story, L-shaped addition on the north side at the rear serves as dressing rooms. This area, not shown to the public, was renovated in the 1967 restoration for use by current productions. It has a copper shed roof.

In the same restoration the brick south addition (demolished 1930) was rebuilt to complete the external appearance of Ford's Theatre facade. Historically the building functioned as a lounge for the theatre and had connecting entrances on all floors, forming essentially one building. The first level was a bar (Star Saloon, 1863-65) and restaurant. Today the Star Saloon functions as the box office while the other two floors provide assembly space and restrooms. Until the late 1970's the third floor housed the Lincoln Museum which is now being stored in Union Station. The first level has three sets of glass double doors and one paneled door, all with transoms, separated by cast iron pilasters. A frieze of sheet iron and a wooden cornice runs across the facade above the pilasters. The upper two floors are unadorned, with jack arched windows, three to a floor. The "Star Saloon" has a slate ridged roof which slopes north and south. The interior of this building is not a restoration but was fitted to suit the needs of modern usage and tourist activity.

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The interior of Ford's Theatre has been rebuilt to approximate its appearance on the night of April 14, 1865. Historic photographs, drawings, woodcuts, and contemporary accounts were used to arrive at a careful reconstruction of interior furnishings and decorations.

The building had been converted to offices in 1865, then collapsed in 1892, and the rear wall was rebuilt at the time. The south wall was stucco plastered in 1930, when the original "Star Saloon" building was demolished. Also on the west or front facade all but the two casement windows in the south bay had been replaced by larger sash windows. The ventilators had also been removed and a large skylight installed. In the 1960's restoration all these later features were removed and the building was returned to its original appearance. The one major exception was the facade cornice, which was unfinished in 1865 and completed later while the building was under government ownership. The cornice was left in its completed form.

The Petersen House

The Petersen house, directly across the street from Ford's Theatre, was built in 1849. The house is a three story, flat-roofed, brick row house built over a raised basement. There are three double hung sash windows across each of the upper two floors. The first floor has two windows and an end door with a wooden frontispiece of doric pilasters supporting a frieze with a dentiled molding and a small projecting cornice. The door is reached by steps which curve out from the side of the platform in front of the door, with an iron banister which follows the curve and continues as a railing around the front stoop. The stairs and stoop are of Seneca sandstone. Under the stoop, which is supported at the far corner by a short Seneca sandstone doric column, stairs lead down to the basement entrance. There are also two windows at the basement level. At a date prior to 1865, a wing was added to the rear, about one-half the width of the house, which included a basement and a first floor. The original section has a long hall down one side with two rooms opening off it, on the first floor and basement levels. The second and third floors have an additional small room in the front hall area. The rear addition had two small bedrooms, and another small room on the first floor and two rooms in the basement, one of which contains a modern bathroom. A small boxed stairway in the center of the rear ell gives access from the basement to the first floor. The front and rear parlors on the first floor, the first floor hallway, and Willie Clark's bedroom in the rear ell where Lincoln died, all have been restored to approximate their 1865 appearance. The remainder of the house is used for storage. A later rear addition of 1871-2 was removed in the restoration of 1959. At that time the building was cleaned by sandblasting. New steps, platform, column, and support under the column were duplicated and the iron railing repaired.

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The Lincoln bedroom suffered from water damage, and in 1979-80 the house was closed again for repairs and complete restoration. At that time the parlors were recreated in a carefully researched high Victorian style, and the Lincoln deathroom was reconstructed more accurately from original drawings and an original photograph.

The Lincoln Museum and Library

The basis of the Lincoln Museum and Library is the Osborn H. Oldroyd Lincoln collection, which Mr. Oldroyd set up in the Petersen house in 1892. The collection contained over 3000 items, and was augmented by those artifacts related to the assassination used as state's evidence in the trial of the conspirators. Oldroyd maintained his collection in the Petersen house after the purchase of the house by the Federal government in 1896. The government purchased the collection itself from Oldroyd in 1926 for the sum of \$50,000. The collection continued to be exhibited in the Petersen house until 1932 when the Lincoln Museum was opened to the public in the Ford's Theatre building. When the theatre was restored to its 1865 appearance in the mid 1960's, a small portion of the collection was utilized in the assassination alcove in the new basement museum, and the remainder of the collection was stored in Ford's Theatre with the Lincoln Library, situated on the third floor of the "Star Saloon" portion of the building. In the late 1970's the collection and Lincoln Library were moved to the NCR Curatorial Vault at Union Station then in operation by the National Park Service as the National Visitors Center. Only those artifacts and books within the collection original to or historically associated with the Ford's Theatre and Petersen house site are to be included in this nomination.

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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES April 14-15, 1865

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ford's Theatre is significant because it was the location of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on the night of April 14, 1865, while the President and Mrs. Lincoln were attending a performance of the play, "Our American Cousin." Actor John Wilkes Booth, in this first assassination of an American president, removed Lincoln's effective leadership at a very crucial moment at the end of the American Civil War. Lincoln's successor attempted to carry out his predecessor's magnanimous policies toward the defeated south only to be overwhelmed by the Radical Republicans in Congress who demanded severe treatment for the former Confederate States. This policy of Military Reconstruction in turn augmented generations of bitterness between the two sections of the country. Lincoln's assassination in a theatre by an actor accentuated the disreputable image the American stage enjoyed in the late 19th century rural and small town areas.

The old Ford's Theatre building was first constructed as the First Baptist Church in 1833. In 1859 the structure was abandoned as a place of worship, and in 1861 John T. Ford, a theatre entrepreneur from Baltimore, leased the building for five years with an option to buy after that time. Despite a prediction by a member of the church board of a dire fate for anyone who turned the former house of worship into a theatre, Ford commenced theatrical performances. In 1862 Ford renovated the theatre and called it Ford's Atheneum. On December 30, 1862, the theatre burned to the ground leaving only blackened walls. In 1863 a more elaborate edifice was constructed to replace the burned out church building, and on August 27, 1863, Ford reopened Ford's New Theatre. A three story brick addition to the south was constructed in 1863, which became the Star Saloon and restaurant. Lincoln had attended Ford's Theatre eight times up to 1865. After the assassination the fate of the theatre remained dubious, and Ford attempted to stage another performance on July 10, 1865, after the hanging of the conspirators. However, that night theatre goers were confronted by a sign: "Closed by Order of the Secretary of War." Shortly thereafter the theatre was taken over by the government to be converted into a three story office building, and Ford was given a cash payment. In August 1865 the interior was stripped out, and the building was converted to the Army Medical Museum, which occupied the third floor. The Office of Records and Pensions, and the Adjutant General's Office used the second floor. When the Surgeon General vacated the building in 1887, the Adjutant General took over the entire structure. In 1893 a forty-foot section of the front of the building collapsed from the third floor killing 22 government employees and injuring 65 others. From 1893 to 1931 the building served as publications depot for the Adjutant General. In 1933, the Ford's Theatre building was turned over to the Department of the Interior and in 1932 the Lincoln Museum was opened on the third floor with the Oldroyd Collection being brought over from the Petersen House. Offices occupied the upper floors.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Olszewski, George J., Historic Structures Report, Restoration of Ford's Theatre,
USDI, NCR/NPS, 1963.
- Olszewski, George J., House Where Lincoln Died, Furnishing Study, NPS, USDI,
1967
- List of Classified Structures, Division of Historic Architecture, WASO, NPS

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 324280 4307020 B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Ford's Theatre is located at 511 10th Street, N.W., in downtown Washington, D.C., Federal Reservation 699. The Petersen House is directly across the street at 516 10th Street, N.W., Federal Reservation 698.

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

Gary Scott, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Capital Region, National Park Service

DATE

December 4, 1981

STREET & NUMBER

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20242

TELEPHONE

426-6660

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

N/A - Site already listed
Register

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Asst. Dir., Cultural Resources Mgmt.

DATE

12-23-81

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

William H. Bravham

DATE

1.21.82

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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In 1930 the south addition (Star Saloon) was demolished and replaced by a parking lot.

Senator Milton R. Young of North Dakota introduced in 1946 the first piece of legislation bearing on the restoration of Ford's Theatre. An amount of \$200,000 was provided in 1954 for a preliminary engineering report on the building. In June 1964, Congress voted funds for the full restoration of Ford's Theatre and the building to the south known as "Star Saloon." The interior was restored to its 1865 appearance and plans were made to reopen Ford's as a living theatre with live productions. The Lincoln Museum was redesigned and placed in the basement of the theatre. A restored Ford's Theatre opened on January 21, 1968. Since that time it has been the scene of many successful productions for the Washington theatre-going public.

Petersen House

The Petersen house is significant in that it is the house where President Lincoln died. At the time of Lincoln's death the house at 453 10th Street, N.W. (now 516) was owned by William A. Petersen, a German tailor. Petersen purchased the site for the house on February 9, 1849. Soon afterward he constructed the plain three story and basement red brick townhouse. The rear ell of the house was added sometime before 1865, and was extended in 1871-72. In 1871 William Petersen died followed four months later by his wife. In 1878 the Petersen heirs sold the house to Louis Schade and family who printed a German-American newspaper on the premises. So many tourists came to the house asking to see the room where Lincoln died that the Schades became annoyed and moved out in 1893. Under the provisions of the Sundry Civil Appropriations Act, approved June 11, 1896, Congress provided \$30,000 for the purchase of the house. Mrs. Louis Schade agreed to sell, and maintenance of the house was placed under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Also in 1896, Osborn H. Oldroyd was placed in charge of the premises. He moved into the Petersen House and placed his large collection of Lincolniana on display for public viewing. Oldroyd and his collection had actually been occupying the house after 1893, when the District of Columbia Memorial Association rented the house from Schade. As previously stated the government purchased the Oldroyd collection from Oldroyd in 1926. The collection continued to be exhibited at the Petersen house until 1932, when it was moved into the Lincoln Museum in Ford's Theatre. Both sites came under the auspices of the National Park Service in 1933. The Park Service has maintained the house as an historic house museum, re-creating the scene at the time of Lincoln's death.