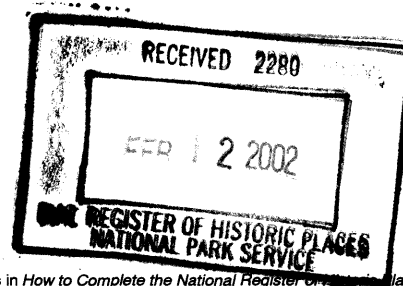


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Wayne Municipal Auditorium

Other names/site number WY05-056

## 2. Location

Street & number 222 North Pearl Street

Not for publication

City or town Wayne

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Wayne

Code 179

Zip code 68787

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

2/4/02  
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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

## 4. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 3/28/02

[Signature]  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	NA	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
- SOCIAL/Clubhouse and civic

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
- SOCIAL/clubhouse and civic

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Art Deco

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Foundation Concrete
- Walls Brick Veneer
- Roof Composite
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B Removed from its original location.
C A birthplace or a grave.
D A cemetery.
E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F A commemorative property.
G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1935-1951

Significant Dates

1935 - completion of construction.

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George Grabe, Architect

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	663440	4677125	3.			
2.				4.			

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Jill M. Ebers/Historic Buildings Survey Coordinatororganization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Officedate November 30, 2001street & number 1424 P Streettelephone (402) 471-4773city or town Lincoln, Nebraskastate Nebraska zip code 68501**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title City of Waynestreet & number 306 North Pearl Streettelephone (402) 375-1733city or town Waynestate Nebraska zip code 68787

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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Continuation Sheet**

**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

County and State

**Section 7 Page 1**

The Wayne Municipal Auditorium is located on a brick street one block west of Main Street. The Art Deco building was constructed in 1935 in a project funded by the Public Works Administration, in an effort to bring employment opportunities to Wayne during the Great Depression. The building has a large auditorium space and two meeting spaces that have served Wayne as a community meeting place, a gymnasium, a playhouse, a movie hall, and a commencement hall for many years.

The Art Deco auditorium is a rectangular, three-story structure with a flat roof. It has a concrete foundation and decorative stone and brickwork on the main façade. There are eight pilasters of decorative brickwork, four on either side of the main entrance. Between two of the pilasters on each side of the entrance, the builders have included a zigzagging brick pattern. The tops of these pilasters are crowned with cast concrete caps with diamond-shaped lozenges, and other stylized geometric patterns. The pilasters emphasize a sense of verticality. Windows are located between the pilasters, and over the marquee above the entrance. The first and second floors have double hung, one-over-one windows, while casement windows are located on the third floor. Above the third floor windows, and centered on the front façade, is a large, geometrically-shaped white Bedford stone inset that reads, "AUDITORIUM." The main entrance includes four substantial oak doors with large glass panels within the doors themselves and glass transoms above. Directly above the main entrance is a marquee made of wood, and finished underneath with pressed tin panels. It also displays several geometric finials at the corners of the marquee. There are three additional entrances to the building on the main façade. An entrance to the north allows access to the Women's Club meeting room on the first floor. A door to the south of the main entrance allows access to a similar room that was originally intended to be a meeting room for the American Legion. A third door is situated between the door to the American Legion meeting room and the main entrance, and allows access to the third floor apartment that used to house a building caretaker. Each of these doors is a more modest example of the same style of door, with glass panels and transoms.

Entering the building, one enters a sizable foyer with a multi-colored terrazzo floor in a pinwheel pattern and an oak ticket booth. The ticket booth is self-contained, and has a small door for entering the booth from the right. A large glass window separates the ticket salesman from his customer, with a cutout arc to facilitate the exchange of money and tickets. A brass railing keeps the customers in a straight line. The cornice of the booth mimics the cornice of the façade outside, with geometric shapes crowning both.

A corridor with a multihued terrazzo floor, in shades of yellow, green, red, black and gray, leads into the auditorium space from the entrance foyer. The main space is cavernous, with the roof and walls supported by steel trusses, eliminating the need for support columns. As the Wayne Herald announced proudly, "by using large steel trusses and good wall construction the plan is to eliminate posts which so often obstruct view in auditoriums."<sup>1</sup> The auditorium space seats approximately 1400 people, with 670 tiered seats and approximately 730 folding chairs that were stored in large cabinets under the stage and in the hallway. The stage lies toward the rear of the building, and has dimensions of 24 feet deep and 44 feet wide. The maple floor of the auditorium also serves as a basketball court. Exterior doors on the northern and southern elevations of the auditorium provide outside access to two locker rooms that are located downstairs under the stage. There are also stairs on either side of the stage that provide access to the locker rooms. The utilitarian locker rooms have marble shower partitions and simple benches and clothes hooks for storage. At the top of the tiered concrete bleachers opposite the stage is a projection room that enabled the auditorium to serve as a movie theater as well.

In the front part of the building under the seating are two community rooms. The room on the northeast corner of the building was established as a meeting room for the Women's Club. This area was set aside exclusively for the use of the

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Herald, 31 August 1933.

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**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

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**Section 7 Page 2**

club, which donated \$6000 toward financing the building. The room is 29 feet by 34 feet, with a high ceiling that is achieved by lowering the floor several steps below the floor of the main part of the building. It has a separate front entrance on the main façade. At the rear of the room are three graceful notched archways. The room also has access to the kitchen, which is also located under the tiered stadium seating of the auditorium. A pass-through from the kitchen allows for the service of food from the kitchen into the Women's Club meeting room. The kitchen is lined on both sides with long counters for workspace and cabinets for storage. Three steps lead to a Dutch door, and food is easily served to the corridor leading to the auditorium space through the open half of the Dutch door.

The southeast corner of the auditorium houses another public meeting room. Though there were plans at one time to put the city clerk's offices in that room, the room appears to have been designated as a meeting room for the American Legion. The room is similar in size to the room provided for the Women's Club, and now houses gym equipment for the Wayne Police Department. A modest apartment on the third floor was provided for the caretaker of the building. The apartment contains a bedroom with a bath on the southeast corner, and a living room and kitchenette on the northeast corner, connected by a narrow passage between the two rooms.

There have been no significant alterations to the auditorium. The building is a source of pride to the community, and has been fairly well maintained over the years. The city is currently undertaking some needed repair and updating projects, such as reroofing the building, installing a new furnace and rewiring the building electrically. Repair to the marquee is also planned. The only alteration they have proposed is an enlargement of the public restrooms to make them handicap-accessible, which is an appropriate change. The restroom alteration has been sensitively planned with thought to the historic nature of the corridor space.

The Wayne Municipal Auditorium remains a lovely example of an Art Deco public building. It contains the sharp, angular and zigzag surface forms and ornaments that typify this style of architecture. Vertical roof projections provide a sense of height and formalism, and other decorative elements display stylized geometric figures common to Art Deco.

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**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

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The Wayne Municipal Auditorium is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. It is eligible under criterion A for its association with public work projects as means of alleviating widespread poverty during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is also eligible under criterion C as an excellent example of the Art Deco style that was popular during the same time period.

Criterion A:

While the stock market crash in October of 1929 created a crisis in America's business and industry, agricultural areas throughout the United States had been in a depression for most of the decade of the 1920s. Farm prices that spiked during and after World War I fell as drastically as they had risen. As prices fell in mid-1920, farmers were faced with debts they were unable to pay. Farmers' incomes did not keep pace with inflation, and a devaluation in land prices contributed to their financial problems. Suffering in the agricultural economy caused economic problems for the rest of Nebraska at large. Black Tuesday was simply another devastating blow to an already depressed economy. As the authors of *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* described the Depression,

"The condition of the farmers affected Nebraska merchants, lumber dealers, realtors, school teachers, laborers, and artisans. Housewives stocked their pantry shelves with the simplest essentials; construction lagged; school administrators curtailed their programs as tax receipts went down; day laborers, formerly sure of a place on Nebraska farms and in Nebraska industries, began the long trek of the unemployed."<sup>2</sup>

By December of 1932, farm prices were the lowest in Nebraska history. In addition, Nebraska, and the rest of the Midwest, was suffering from a severe drought that caused valuable topsoil to erode, damaged crops and reduced agricultural production. Nation-wide, there were more than 12 million people unemployed and in need of assistance. Twenty-five percent of the American labor force was jobless.<sup>3</sup> State governments were incapable of supporting the vast numbers of destitute citizens who required help. The Federal government was forced to intercede, and with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932, the New Deal was instituted. Roosevelt's New Deal policies came in many manifestations, from the Social Security Act that provided monthly pensions to the elderly to direct relief payments from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and perhaps most importantly public work relief projects that provided jobs to America's able-bodied unemployed. Some of these projects took the form of road construction, sewer repair, ditch digging, reforestation projects, and the construction of public buildings, among many other projects.<sup>4</sup> Throughout much of the Roosevelt administration, from 1933 to 1940 when public assistance was most required, billions of dollars were spent on projects intended to provide the working man with an opportunity to work. Under the Public Works Administration, programs administered by various administrations including the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, led to the construction of 11,000 public buildings, including courthouses, firehouses, hospitals, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and schools, as well as over 100 airfields and 800 parks. They made repairs and improvements on more than 30,000 other pre-existing buildings, laid out 40,000 miles of public roads and repaired 150,000 miles of roads. They constructed 1,400 athletic fields and 1,800 swimming pools, and reforested 20,000 acres with trees and bushes.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Works Progress Administration, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (1939; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 67; quoted in James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 313.

<sup>3</sup> Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Page Smith, *Redeeming the Time: A People's History of the 1920s and the New Deal* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), 598.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 814.

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Wayne Municipal Auditorium

Name of Property

Wayne County, Nebraska

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The Wayne Municipal Auditorium is one such project. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 created the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works for the purpose of giving employment and enabling local and state governments to undertake public construction works that had been on hold during the early depression years.<sup>6</sup> According to a study of work relief projects completed at the close of the Great Depression, public works projects were provided

"not primarily as a test of willingness to labor but rather as a means of conserving the skills, work habits, and morale of the able-bodied unemployed. Work-relief projects...are not conceived of merely as a means of frightening off applicants for relief. True work-relief undertakings therefore, cannot be selected in a haphazard fashion, emphasis is placed, rather, on securing projects which when completed will be of value to the community."<sup>7</sup>

FEAPW, under the Public Works Administration, provided grants to local governments for public works projects. The PWA provided 30% of the cost of labor and materials on qualifying projects. When this opportunity for assistance in public building became available, the Wayne Women's Club proposed the need for a community building in Wayne, Nebraska. To further support their proposal, the Wayne Women's Club promised a donation of \$6,000 toward the construction of such a building, a sizable sum in such difficult economic times. By August 1933, preliminary plans had been drawn and an architect, George Grabe of Fremont, was selected.<sup>8</sup>

Plans had to be submitted to Nebraska's Industrial Recovery Committee, which was in charge of selecting worthy projects. Nebraska's committee consisted of John Latenser Jr. of Omaha, Dan Stephens of Fremont, and James Lawrence of Lincoln. The committee agreed that they could not forward Wayne's application to the Federal government for approval without some action on the part of the community that would guarantee Wayne's financial support of the project. Wayne agreed to hold an election for a \$25,000 bond issue in September 1933. The bond issue required 60% voter approval in order to be passed. The *Wayne Herald* actively promoted the benefits of passing the bond issue and committing the community to build such a public building. It called on all Wayne businesses and civic clubs to rally their support for the initiative.<sup>9</sup> Editorials celebrated the virtues of such a project and proclaimed it the civic duty of Wayne's citizens to see that the project go forward. "As the government is urging municipalities to create such building projects to aid the unemployed, local groups deemed it a patriotic duty to comply, and also an advantageous move to help Wayne."<sup>10</sup> Construction of the auditorium was expected to provide Wayne-area unemployed with 26,000 hours of work, or employment for thirty men for 108 days. The September vote was met with overwhelming voter approval. Eighty percent of Wayne voters agreed to back the bond initiative. This was an enormous show of support for a project that would so heavily strain the city's coffers and create more taxes for the public to pay.

Roosevelt was convinced that public works projects were far better for America's morale than public relief, or "the dole", because such projects were not simply handouts to the needy. They were a means of providing the unemployed with a way to help themselves. The project, as it was intended to do, provided not only employment for a group of deserving men, but also bolstered Wayne's citizens with civic pride and a renewed self-confidence. The *Wayne Herald* extolled the community's virtues for having been so enterprising as to support the project.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur E. Burns and Edward A. Williams, *Federal Work, Security, and Relief Programs* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 3 August 1933.

<sup>9</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 17 August 1933.

<sup>10</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 31 August 1933.



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Wayne Municipal Auditorium

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"The heavy vote for the enterprise testifies to Wayne's public spirit. It reminds one that Wayne is an exceptional town. It is exceptional because its people are actuated by vision, because it is the seat of a growing state teachers college and because it is surrounded by a farming area of unfailing crops and the finest type of citizenship. Wayne voted to take advantage of an opportunity to provide an important improvement and at the same time to extend employment. It will help the town directly. Also it emphasizes Wayne as a live and progressive community."<sup>11</sup>

The project proposal was forwarded to the Industrial Recovery Committee for approval, and then sent to the Federal government for federal approval and the release of funds. The Federal government took nearly a year to approve the project. An article in the *Wayne Herald* on 23 August 1934 announced the approval of the project. The auditorium would be built at a cost of \$70,000, which would pay for the lot, the construction of the structure and furnishings. The cost of the building was paid for through a number of sources. The FEAPW provided a grant of \$19,000 toward the total cost, the city passed the bond issue for \$25,000 and provided another \$20,000 out of the city's general funds. And finally the Wayne Women's Club provided the \$6,000 they initially had promised.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, delays in accepting bids and receiving the funds from the Federal government again delayed the project, but the building was substantially completed by August of 1935.<sup>13</sup> Interior spaces were finished in time for the first public performance in the building; Handel's *Messiah* was performed to a packed house on 15 December 1935. The auditorium was formally dedicated on 17 January 1936.<sup>14</sup>

Criterion C:

The Art Deco style emerged out of the Paris Exposition Internationale Des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925. Having emerged from a bitter, modern war just seven years before, the goal of the Paris Exposition was to announce the coming of a new modern age by determining a new, international modern style of architecture and decorative arts. Much like Art Nouveau almost four decades before, proponents of Art Deco rejected decorative vocabularies of the past and chose new geometric and streamlined motifs rather than the classical columns, architraves and pediments of previous styles.

The Wayne Municipal Auditorium was designed in the Art Deco style. While it is not as exuberantly and excessively decorated as many examples of Art Deco architecture found elsewhere in the country, it is a product of its time and its location. The lean years of the Great Depression would not tolerate such excesses. Still, the building exhibits many features that distinguish it as an example of this style. The geometric features of the finials on the marquee as well as the emphasis on the buildings verticality with the close spacing of brick pilasters and an almost-crenelated cornice on the front façade signify its associations with Art Deco. Its cast-concrete lozenges and diagonal brickwork also are typical of the style. Inside, various decorative elements, such as the ticket booth, the light fixtures, the multi-hued terrazzo floor in geometric shapes, the decorative "A" above the stage and the notched columns in the Women's Club meeting room all contribute to a unified style.

<sup>11</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 7 September 1933.

<sup>12</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 23 August 1934.

<sup>13</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 15 August 1935.

<sup>14</sup> Dorothy Huse Nyberg, *History of Wayne County, Nebraska* (Wayne: The Wayne Herald, 1938), 112.

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**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

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The Wayne Municipal Auditorium is an exceedingly significant building worthy of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is a lovely example of an Art Deco public building, a style that is relatively rare in Nebraska. The auditorium is even more significant for its association with Federal relief programs that sought to alleviate the extreme poverty of the American public during the Great Depression. The citizenry of Wayne committed themselves to higher taxes in order to bring this building opportunity to their town. Many jobs were created in a community that sorely needed them, and a lovely facility was constructed that has contributed to the livability of Wayne as a charming mid-sized community for the last sixty-five years. In an article in the *Wayne Herald* that publicized the possibility of this project to the people of Wayne, the columnist announced that "the councilmen hope to make the structure one that will serve the community for many years."<sup>15</sup> The goals of the city councilmen who pursued this opportunity were realized.

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<sup>15</sup> *Wayne Herald*, 31 August 1933.

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**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

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*The Wayne Herald*. 3 August 1933 - 26 December 1935.

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**Wayne Municipal Auditorium**

Name of Property

**Wayne County, Nebraska**

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Lots 11 and 12, block 11 of Crawford Brown's Subdivision.

**Boundary Description:**

The boundaries of the property encompass only the lots occupied by the building.