

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: South Carolina	
COUNTY: Abbeville	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 70-7-41-0014	DATE 7/1/70

1. NAME

COMMON:
~~The~~ Abbeville Opera House

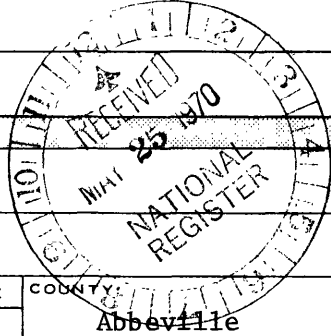
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Court Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Abbeville

STATE: South Carolina CODE: 41 COUNTY: Abbeville CODE: 01



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Theatre</u>
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
City of Abbeville

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Abbeville STATE: South Carolina CODE: 41

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Abbeville County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
Court Square

CITY OR TOWN: Abbeville STATE: South Carolina CODE: 41

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
South Carolina Survey of Historic Places (Preliminary)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
S.C. Department of Archives and History

STREET AND NUMBER:
1430 Senate Street

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 41

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on Abbeville's Court Square in the City Municipal Building. This building is part of a government complex that was built in 1904 and also included the county Court House next door.

Brick building, three stories; unusual brick work on main floor includes brick sunburst around keystones; elaborate entrance crowned by large diminishing stone slabs; masonry quoins; large entablature with dantils and fretwork; parapet above has raised central portion.

Opera House interior is on three levels: orchestra section, balcony and upper gallery. Box seats on each corner of proscenium reach from orchestra floor to ceiling and are flanked by Corinthian columns. Stage area is 7,500 square feet with a full "fly loft," cat walks around stage area and from dressing room area to orchestra pit; 12 dressing rooms. Completely new lighting system (the old lighting panel is still in the building as a conversation piece). Restoration project started in May 1968 and still in progress, has repaired most of the structural decay and provided modern staging facilities. Present seating capacity is 420: 300 seats in orchestra, 120 in first balcony and boxes. Potential seating is 1,000. Elaborately decorated: seats upholstered in red; red carpeting; red velvet curtain with gold trim. Gilt trim conforms with turn of century rococo tastes.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As well as being a plush reminder of the period when Old Abbeville was the center of culture for this entire Piedmont district, the restored Abbeville Opera House provides a historic setting for a modern community theater which involves a wide surrounding area. Restored and renovated in an exceptionally distinguished manner, the Opera House is a valuable memento of a colorful and typically American era. One of the very few such opera houses remaining in South Carolina, its value is increased both by the integrity of its restoration and its modern usage.

The Abbeville Opera House first opened in 1904 with a production of "The Clansman," and during the heyday of circuit theater, shows like "The Great Divide" and "Ben Hur" (with horses) played continuously. American theater's most prominent attractions — such as the Ziegfield Follies, George White Scandals, Jimmy Durante, Fannie Brice — played here. For the traveling road companies, on the way from Richmond to Atlanta, Abbeville Opera House was a regular one night stand. It was the only theater in the area which could accomodate the elaborate productions. (Its companion, the Opera House in Columbia, was demolished long ago). Theatrical nights in Abbeville were gala, white-tie, evening-gown affairs; the Southern Railroad ran special trains to accomodate the hundreds of patrons who came from surrounding towns.

In addition to the theater, Abbeville Opera House was a center for other major Abbeville events. According to local sources, William Jennings Bryan spoke from this stage during a campaign for President of the United States.

The Abbeville Opera House is now the home of the Abbeville Community Theater, which produced eight major shows during its first 1968-69 season in the building. Ranging from Shakespeare's "King Lear" to "Sound of Music," the year's roster included two productions from nearby colleges: Lander College in Greenwood and Erskine College in Due West. This indicates its district importance. The newly renovated facilities also enabled the Community Theater to host the American Community Theater Association Festival for the 10 Southeastern States in 1969. The American College Theater, also representing 10 southeastern states, will hold its Drama Festival there in January, 1971.

Location of the Opera House on the Town's historic Court Square further solidifies its importance as part of Abbeville's heritage.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Erskine College Library, Due West, S.C., Files on operation of Abbeville Opera House.
 Newspaper clippings on restoration: The State (Columbia, S.C.); The Greenville News (Greenville, S.C.); The Anderson Independent (Anderson, S.C.). 1968, 1969.
 Abbeville Opera House, Abbeville, S.C., South Carolina Magazine (S.C. Electric Cooperative publication). Old playbills.

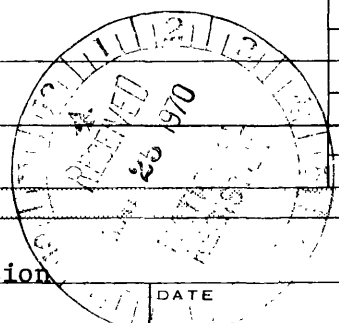
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	34	10	40
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	82	22	42
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Mrs. James W. Fant, Historic Resources Division

ORGANIZATION: S.C. Department of Archives and History DATE: May 16, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 11,188, Capitol Station 29211, 1430 Senate St.

CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 41

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Charles E. Lep

Title Director, S.C. Department of Archives and History

Date 5/19/70

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest Allen Connolly
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date JUL 1 1970

ATTEST:
William J. Smiley
 Keeper of The National Register

Date JUN 12 1970

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE South Carolina	
COUNTY Abbeville	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 70.7.41.0004	DATE 7/1/70

(Number all entries)

The Abbeville Opera House

- 6. Representation in Existing Surveys
 - Abbeville County Fine Arts Commission
 - May 1968 Local
 - The Opera House
 - Court Square
 - Abbeville, South Carolina

