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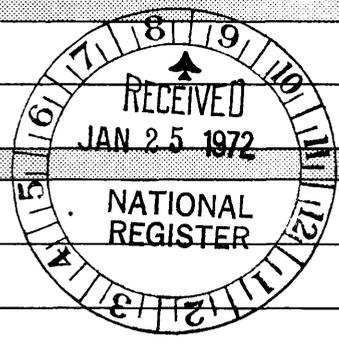
Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Colorado	
COUNTY:	Gilpin	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
	JAN 18 1973	



1. NAME

COMMON:
CENTRAL CITY OPERA HOUSE

AND/OR HISTORIC:
CENTRAL CITY OPERA HOUSE

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Eureka Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Central City

STATE Colorado	CODE 08	COUNTY: Gilpin	CODE 047
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC		
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
University of Denver

STREET AND NUMBER:
University Park

CITY OR TOWN:
Denver

STATE:
Colorado

CODE:
80210

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:
Eureka Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Central City

STATE:
Colorado

CODE:
80427

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Little Kingdom Council Survey,

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971

Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
State Historical Society of Colorado Library

STREET AND NUMBER:
200 Fourteenth Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Denver

STATE:
Colorado

CODE:
80203

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Colorado

COUNTY: Gilpin

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" 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

The Opera House is of Renaissance Revival architectural style. Its walls are four feet thick and made of stone except for the use of brick near the roof of the building. The condition of the building is good and little changed from the original except for new furnishings and the touching up of the interior paintings.

The north facade features a double pitched shed roof, a false mansard roof, flanked by two hipped roofs. Centered is a hooded, labeled oculus-shaped vent with crown. The roof has boxed cornices and the words "Opera House" are centered near the roof of the building.

The facade is symmetrical. There are four arched double hung 4/4 windows with radiating voussoirs at the balcony level. A curved wooden balcony is centered, supported by 3 elaborately cut out brackets. It has a wooden balustrade with turned balusters and five posts with onion-shaped finish.

The ground slopes downward from west to east, creating the need for additional steps at each of the four doors. The center portion above the balcony is set in slightly, while the center section below the balcony projects slightly. The two centered double-door entrances with lunettes are set into semicircular Roman arch vaults with radiating voussoirs and keystone. There are wrought iron lamps on either side. The side wings have double doors set into segmental arched vaults, also with radiating voussoirs and keystone.

A courtyard is enclosed on three sides by the west face of the building and an L-shape wing added in the late 1940s. The west face is a windowless stone wall except for the brick construction beginning about ten feet from the roof. There is a fire door at the balcony level. A wooden three-landing staircase with simple turned wooden balustrade leads to the ground from the balcony. Elaborate cut-out brackets support the upper landing. Another fire door is near the center at ground level.

A rock flowered courtyard is found at the east side of the building. There are two long balconies on the east face of the building for fire doors, one at balcony level and one on the "ground level" of the building (which is above the ground due to the slope of the land). The two balconies are connected by a one-landing staircase and a short stairway to the ground. The stairs and the balconies have a wooden post balustrade. The wider upper balcony is supported by eight cut-out curved brackets while the slightly narrower lower balcony is supported by six similar brackets. There are two small windows servicing the back stage area and a small stage door to the rear of the building, accessible by a small stairs.

The Interior:

In the five ceiling multicolored paintings by Mr. Massman of San Francisco classical motifs are worked into a large-scale geometrical pattern around a central medallion that dominates the ceiling. The central medallion features the sky. Architectural moldings are simulated in the painting. Four smaller circular medallions have acanthus leaf roundels.

The ceiling has been restored by Allen True, a prominent Colorado muralist. Centered is a large, early style chandelier, not the original.

The corner interstices have classical foliate motifs. On the front ceiling above the stage are two putti flanking a cartouche. Large scale foliate forms border the stage with three diamonds with stylized classical

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Colorado	
COUNTY Gilpin	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE JAN 17 1972

(Number all entries)

Description: (continued)

motif. On each side of the stage, set apart from the border are two classical draped figures with Pegasus on one side.

The curtain is not the original, and appears representative of early 1900 movie house style. It has painted folds and tassels with a symmetrical garland and putti among swags, stars, and a central gate.

Entering the narrow lobby, the visitor faces the underside of the staircase to the balcony level which is approached by two short flights on either side. The small lobby also includes ticket office, wide step, entrances to the main floor, and sculptures.



4. 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input 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

This sturdy stone structure is the oldest and the first permanent opera house in the state. It was built by funds raised through the Gilpin County Opera House Association, a county citizens' group, whose immediate objective was to erect an edifice which would permit the proper staging of grand opera. Opening night was March 4, 1878, and Central City became the cultural capital of Colorado until 1881 when the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver was completed.

After that, a group of Little Kingdom subjects kept the opera house (which never was a money-maker) open by luring important theatrical companies to Central City after they had played at Denver. Thus prominent nineteenth century actors including Fannie Barlow, Edwin Booth, Madame Januschek, Joseph Jefferson and others sang and spoke their parts within its walls.

The building was repaired in 1896 (when electric lights were installed) and was renovated in 1903, through the efforts of Peter MacFarlane, one of its original contractors, no structural changes were made. On July 4, 1910, MacFarlane, who was by then the principal owner of the building, opened it as a motion picture theater and used it in that fashion until it closed in January 1927.

In May 1931, MacFarlane's heirs presented the old opera house to the University of Denver, and it was restored throughout the following year by the newly formed Central City Opera House Association. It opened again on July 16, 1932, with Lillian Gish portraying Camille before a host of Colorado cultural enthusiasts, music lovers, and socialites. Since that time it has served as the hub for a nationally recognized summer opera and theater festival, and many of the greatest names in those areas have played to its audiences.

Its unique and colorful architecture makes it one of the most popular attractions in "The Little Kingdom."

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bancroft, Caroline. Gulch of Gold: A History of Central City, Colorado. Denver: Sage Books, 1958.
 Fossett, Frank. Colorado Its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms and Stock Ranges, and Health and Pleasure Resorts. New York: C. G. Crawford, 1880.
 Perrigo, Lynn. The Little Kingdom: A Record Chiefly of Central City in the Early Days. Boulder, Colorado: The Author, 1934.
Daily Central City Register, October 8, 1870 - August 14, 1872, passim.
 Axford, H. William. Gilpin County Gold: The Life and Career of Peter B. McFarland, unpublished thesis, University of Denver.

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	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 48' 4.5" N	105° 30' 47.5" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Approximately an acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Liston E. Leyendecker, Historian & Research Associate : Perry Eberhart : Research Associate
 ORGANIZATION: Little Kingdom Council, c/o Central City Opera House Association : State Historical Society of Colorado : DATE: Dec. 7, 1971
 STREET AND NUMBER: Suite 636 University Building : Colorado State Museum :
 910 - 16th Street : 200 - 14th Avenue
 CITY OR TOWN and State: Denver, Colorado 80202 : STATE City and State: Denver, Colorado 80203 : CODE: 08

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

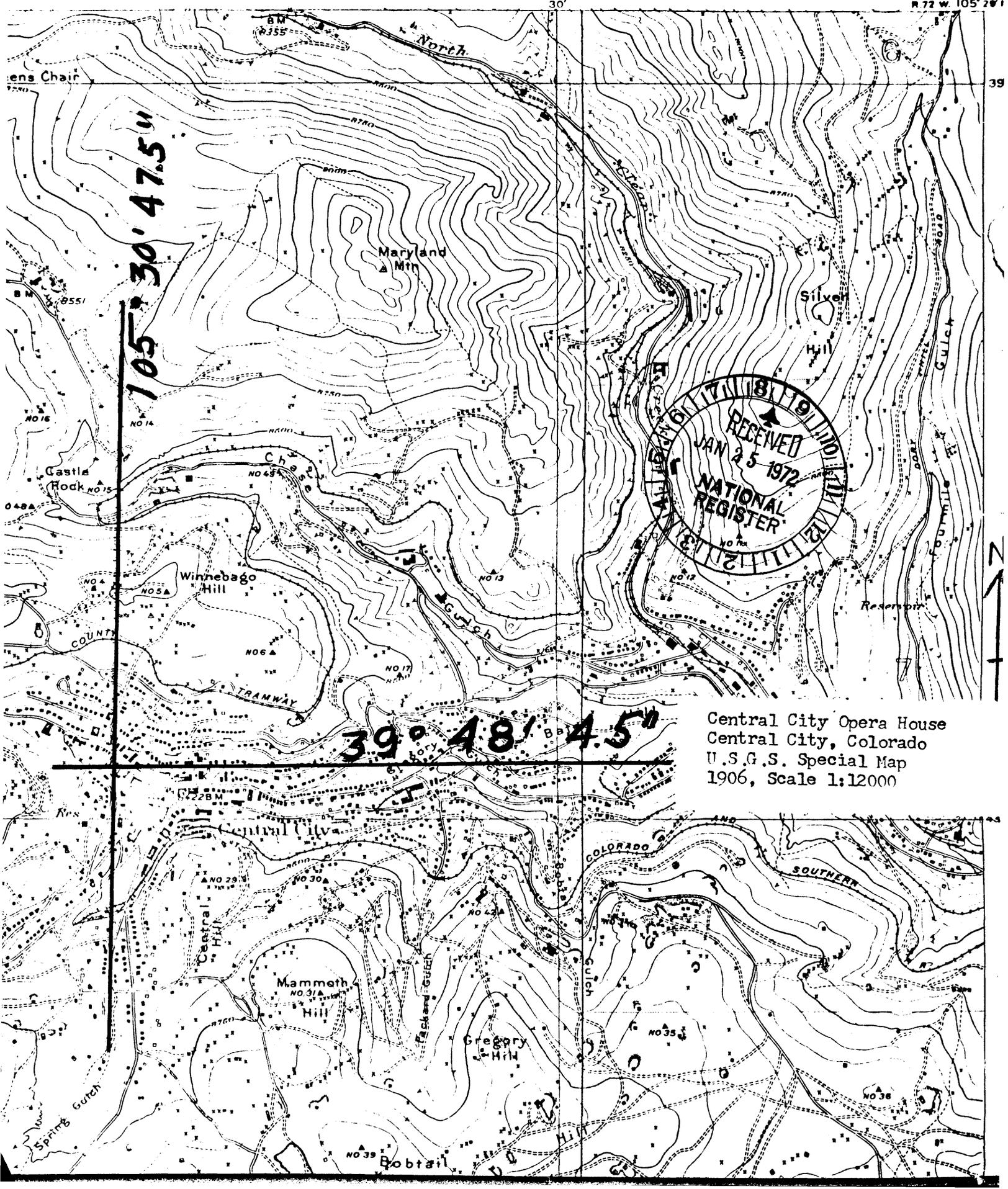
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:
 National State Local
 Name: Stephen H. Hart
 Stephen H. Hart
 Title: Colorado State Liaison Officer
 Date: 7 December 1971

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.
Peter Van Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date: 1/18/73
 ATTEST:
Wm. Sweeney
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date: 1.9.73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

COLORADO
CENTRAL CITY SPECIAL MAP

R 72 W 105° 29' 1



105° 30' 47.5" W

39° 48' 45" N



Central City Opera House
Central City, Colorado
U.S.G.S. Special Map
1906, Scale 1:12000