

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received DEC 12 1982

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Antigo Opera House

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 1016 ^{5th} ~~Fifth~~ Avenue not for publication

city, town Antigo vicinity of

state WI. code 55 county Langlade code 067

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant |

4. Owner of Property

name Robert McCormick, Ernie Koprek, Ronald McNeil, Richard West, owners

street & number 522 Clermont P.O. Box 60

city, town Antigo vicinity of state Wisconsin 54409

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Langlade County Courthouse

street & number 800 Clermont

city, town Antigo state Wisconsin 54409

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records Wisconsin State Historical Society

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" 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

Located at the western end of Antigo's central business district, the Antigo Opera House is a Classical Revival structure, rectangular in shape and standing three stories above a raised basement. The large red brick structure, which is covered by a low gable roof, is characterized by a symmetrical facade dominated by two semi-circular arched openings. Centrally placed, these openings encompass, on the first floor, the main entrance and, directly above, a two-part window which lights the second and third floors. Pilasters frame the ground level entrance and are repeated in the upper portion of the structure where they architecturally unite two stories. The verticality created by the pilasters is balanced by the strong horizontal lines of water table, entablature, and cornice. Undistinguished double hung windows, two to each side of the center area, complete the composition.

In addition to the pilasters and stone arch which demark the building's main entrance, an over-sized transom light and narrow double hung windows located immediately to the right and left of the double door entry emphasize the central opening. Four double hung windows, set within wood frames, also punctuate the first floor. Extending beneath the windows is a stone stringcourse. This horizontal line is repeated by the water table below and the unadorned entablature that separates the first floor from the upper stoies. Small windows appear in the raised stone basement which stands approximately five feet above grade. The stone forming the facade is coursed ashlar; that found on the other three sides of the building is uncoursed rubble. The second and third floors of the opera house are distinguished by four Ionic pilasters which, rising from the first floor entablature to the building's metal cornice, divide the area into five vertical units. The center and largest unit contains, as mentioned previously, a semi-circular arched opening. Each of the other units contains two double hung windows which are separated horizontally by a wooden panel. (A similar panel divides the arched opening.) The third story window is accented by a wide stone lintel. A denticulated cornice and a stepped parapet that originally featured the building's name caps the structure.

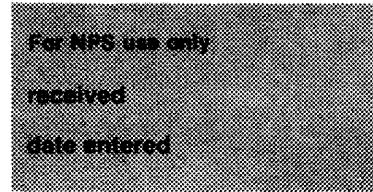
Stucco, applied in c. 1946, covers the soft Antigo brick on the east and west sides of the structure. The original openings, marked by stone sills, remain. The north (or rear) side of the building, which has not been stuccoed, features two small additions - one, frame and one, concrete block - and a narrow brick chimney which extends above the roofline.

In 1946 the building's rear addition, or scenery loft, was demolished. At the same time the building's interior, which had previously been "modernized" in the 1920s, was altered; the balcony and stage were

(continued)

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

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Antigo Opera House, Antigo, Langlade County,
Continuation sheet Wisconsin Item number 7

Page 1

removed, leaving a large open space that later served as a gymnasium and meeting room. The elaborate pressed tin ceiling is the most significant interior feature remaining.

Recently, the Antigo Opera House, vacant since 1977, was sold by the city to a group of local businessmen who plan a certified rehabilitation of the structure.

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/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Period of historical significance - 1904-28 Associated with the development
Specific dates 1904¹ Builder/Architect J.H. Jeffers & Co., of a locality
Wausau²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Antigo Opera House, a Classical Revival structure designed by J.H. Jeffers & Co. of Wausau, is an historically significant resource, recognized locally for its association with the cultural and social development of the city of Antigo. From 1904 to 1928 the opera house served as the community's cultural and social center, offering an array of professional and amateur productions, musical events, and speakers, in addition to housing public dances, political meetings, National Guard activities, athletic events, and a variety of exhibitions. Architecturally, the building is a recognizable example of Classical Revival architecture, however, the community does possess more significant illustrations of the twentieth century style.

Associated with the Development of a Locality

Antigo's first opera house, the Bijou, was constructed in 1889 and destroyed by fire in 1895. Initially, Music Hall, located on the second floor of a commercial building, replaced the Bijou, but in 1904 the newly constructed Antigo Opera House became the city's premiere cultural and social center. The facility, owned by the Antigo Opera House Company which sold shares for \$10, seated a total of 1100 people. A balcony, accommodating 350, stood twelve feet above the main floor. The stage measured approximately forty by sixty-three feet and provided ample space for up to fifty performers and two carloads (railroad cars) of scenery staging. A small bowling alley, a billard parlor, and a kitchen were located in the basement.³

The opera house opened in May, 1904, presenting Jack Hoeffler, a native of Antigo, in the play "The Secrets of the Russian Police".⁴ In the years that followed burlesque shows, Shakespearian plays such as "Hamlet" and "The Merchant of Venice", musical comedies, and the Winniger Brothers stock company from Wausau were featured. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was reportedly the most popular play performed. In addition to these offerings, local productions such as the annual talent show staged by the Elks Lodge, public dances, political meetings, and poultry and produce exhibitions were held at the opera house. Speeches, political and educational, were also attractions. Notable among those who addressed the Antigo community were Robert M. LaFollette and Booker T. Washington. When movies became popular, these, too, were added to the opera house's fare. D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" was one of the first productions shown.⁵

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Antigo Daily Journal, August 12, 1975.
Antigo Journal, April 30, 1903; May 10, 1904; May 24, 1904.
Hanus, Edmund. 1979. "A History of the Hanus Family's Asspciation with the Theater and Show Business". Unpublished manuscript available at Antigo Public Library.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than one acre
Quadrangle name Antigo, Wis. Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>16</u> | <u>330290</u> | <u>5000650</u> | B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 15 and 16 Block 31 Original Plat of the City of Antigo

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary E. Taylor/Consultant

organization N.A. date June, November 1983

street & number 8269 Doolittle Road telephone (715) 356-2555

city or town Minocqua state Wisconsin 54548

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]*

title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW date DEC. 5, 1983

For NPS use only

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

[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 1/12/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Antigo Opera House, Antigo, Langlade County,
Continuation sheet Wisconsin Item number 8

Page 1

In 1916 the opera house was rented for use by the Antigo militia. The main floor was used for drills and the basement remodeled for club rooms. Despite the additional use (which became permanent in 1917 when a local businessman, John Hanousek, purchased the structure for the Antigo National Guard), the building, now known as the Antigo Opera House and Armory, continued to present a variety of entertainment and to serve as a community social center. The end of the war and the increasing popularity of movies, which were shown at theatres such as the Palace, a 1916 addition to the city, reduced the need for the opera house/armory and in 1928 the building was sold to out-of-town interests who operated it under the name the New Antigo Theatre. When this venture failed within the year, members of the local Eagles Club acquired the building and it became "Our Club", a tavern and public hall. In 1951 the property again changed ownership with the National Guard purchasing the building to be used once again as an armory. In 1977, following the completion of a new National Guard facility, the opera house was sold to the city. In 1983 local businessmen acquired the vacant structure.

¹Antigo Journal, May 10, 1904, p. 3.

²Antigo Journal, April 30, 1903, p. 1.

³Edmund Hanus. "A History of the Hanus Family's Association with the Theater and Show Business", Unpublished manuscript available at Antigo Public Library, 1979.

⁴Antigo Journal, May 24, 1904, p.3.

⁵Hanus; Antigo Daily Journal, August 12, 1975, pp. 1, 14.