

PH0670545

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 9 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUL 21 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC **

Wessington Springs Opera House

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

111 Dakota Avenue No.

CITY, TOWN

Wessington Springs

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

STATE

South Dakota

VICINITY OF

CODE

46

COUNTY

Jerauld

CODE

073

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
- OTHER: storage

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Wessington Springs

STREET & NUMBER

116 No. Wallace

CITY, TOWN

Wessington Springs

STATE

South Dakota

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jerauld County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

205 S. Wallace Street

CITY, TOWN

Wessington Springs

STATE

South Dakota

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

South Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historical Preservation Center

CITY, TOWN

Vermillion

STATE

South Dakota

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The construction of the Wessington Springs Opera House occurred between August 3, 1905 and November 3, 1905. Its main structural features include an off-white stucco facing and a stepped false front with a semi-elliptical design element at center. This front hides a gable roof which has two single stack chimneys, one on each slope. The structure rests upon a concrete basement that is only slightly visible from the front but entirely from the back. A Palladian window adorns the front facade along with three doors of various sizes, two of which are for vehicles. Along the sides are flat-topped and rectangular windows that appear to have been lowered about eighteen inches. The rear has one four paneled door that once had steps leading to it and a vehicle entrance in the basement section.

The building's rather deteriorated appearance does not represent its physical condition, which is sound, with joists measuring 12" by 122" and 18" center to center. The city put new roofing on the Opera House in recent years in order to protect the ceiling from water damage. The stage remains in good condition as do the steps leading to it.

Originally, the Opera House was thirty-two feet by seventy feet with nineteen and a half feet between the ceiling and floor, and a baggage room, twelve feet by eighteen feet, to the rear. The stage was and is thirty-two feet by sixteen feet and three feet from the floor. The stage had a parlor setpiece and three curtains that displayed a forest scene, a street scene, and a "Bay of Naples" backdrop.

Although the stage remains intact, the seating area which once held four hundred people, with 256 in regular opera chairs and the balance in folding, has long since disappeared, as has the front porch and vestibule with its cement floor and steps leading to it. Entry ways once appeared on each side of the theater with double doors, swinging both in and out, at the center. The interior featured a decorative red-colored coping of a semi-circular design.

In 1920 the city moved the Opera House one block to the west because the former owner made it a stipulation of the sale. There it served as the city's fire hall for many years and later became a storage place. Recently, the Jerauld County Historical Society obtained a lease and plans to restore the structure to its original appearance.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES November 3, 1905

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

At the beginning of this century, many small towns erected opera houses, and those were invariably the center of culture in each community. Many of these have long since disappeared; however, a small opera house in Wessington Springs still exists in South Dakota. This structure is significant locally in the area of music, education, and theater, for it provided a cultural center where people could be informed as well as entertained. The building is also significant as an example of the architecture employed in small town opera houses across the country.

Work began on the Opera House on August 3, 1905, with William Brimmer, the builder, laying the foundation, and he finished the structure in early November. From the third of that month until 1912 it was the scene of live entertainment only. Travelling troupes performed on its stage, running the gamut from musical presentations through lectures, three act plays, Chautauqua, dramatic readings, etc. Some of Wessington Spring's residents today recall seeing a transient group of actors present plays that they would have never been able to see had it not been for the Opera House. Also, politicians held their rallies on its stage, local talent shows were presented there, as well as dances, box socials, country fair exhibits and band concerts.

From 1912 until 1917, the Opera House served as a silent movie theatre and from then until its closing in 1920, it became a roller skating rink. At this time, the city purchased the structure and moved it one block to the east where it became the local fire station. In recent years the local government used it to store old fire department hose wagons. However, a local historical committee has been making plans to restore the structure to its original purpose and appearance and has obtained a twenty-five year lease with an option.

The building had obvious significance to Wessington Springs, especially in the areas of music, theatre and education. Along with this and the desire to restore it, the Opera House represents an example of a type of structure that is gradually being lost in small towns throughout this country. For these reasons the building should be nominated and accepted on the National Register.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Barkdull, Tom, "Historic Vignettes", in the Wessington Springs Independent 17 April, 1975.
2. Dunham, Fred, A History of Jerauld County, South Dakota: From January 1st, 1901 to December 31st, 1961 Fifty-Two Years of Progress, Wessington Springs, 1963
3. Dunham, N.J., A History of Jerauld County, South Dakota, From Earliest Settlement to January 1st, 1909, Wessington Springs, 1909.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2

UTM REFERENCES NONE

latitude longitude

44°04'42" 98°33'36"

34 18"

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Tom Barkdull, Chairman,

ORGANIZATION

Jerauld County Bicentennial Committee

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 345

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Wessington Springs,

STATE

South Dakota

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

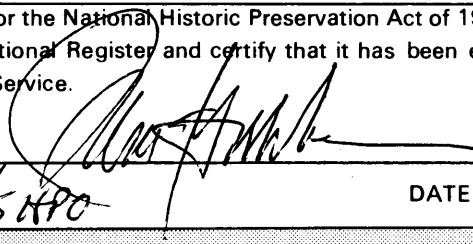
NATIONAL

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



TITLE

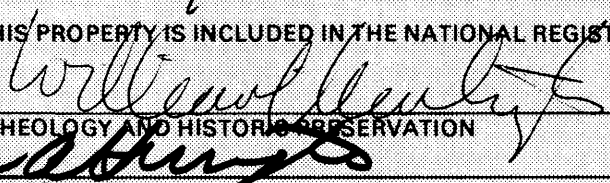
Act Pres Director / SHPO

DATE

3-4-1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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



DATE

2/21/76

ATTEST: DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

5-12-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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True Republican Wessington Springs, November 9, 1905.