

RECEIVED JAN 22 1979  
DATE ENTERED MAR 7 1979NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Opera Hall Block

AND/OR COMMON

The Opera House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

516 Second Street

CITY, TOWN

Hudson

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Third

STATE

Wisconsin 54016

CODE  
55COUNTY  
St. CroixCODE  
109**3 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  
 COMMERCIAL  
 EDUCATIONAL  
 ENTERTAINMENT  
 GOVERNMENT  
 INDUSTRIAL  
 MILITARY  
 MUSEUM  
 PARK  
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 RELIGIOUS  
 SCIENTIFIC  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Burt Nordstrand

STREET &amp; NUMBER

2465 Londin Lane, Unit 410

CITY, TOWN

St. Paul

VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota 54119

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

St. Croix County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Hudson, Wisconsin 54016

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1978

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison, Wisconsin 53706

STATE

# 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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Opera Hall Block is a two-and-one-half story frame building with a full basement. It faces west and is connected to two-story Victorian commercial buildings on both sides. The main and rear facades of the building are veneered with red pressed brick. Being taller than its flanking buildings, it is clapboarded on the upper portions of its sides. The building has a slightly-pitched roof.

The main facade is dominated by seven arched windows on the second-floor level. These are organized into three bays: two with three windows each and a third with a single window. Arches are semicircular with keystones. Arches and sills are of light grey stone and are connected by horizontal courses of stone within bays. The bays are recessed into the facade and are capped with tiny brick corbels. The main floor contains two plate glass storefronts, each within a three-window bay. Above the storefronts are overlights of small-paned glass which are now concealed beneath a sign panel. The single-window bay used to contain the entrance to the stairway which led to the opera hall level. This entrance has been replaced with a plate-glass window.

Opera Hall Block was substantially unaltered until 1961 when it was remodeled as a Ben Franklin store. At that time the cornice was removed, as were the entrance and stairway to the second floor, and a partition which separated the two first-floor stores. Other alterations include replacement of the original plate-glass storefronts with modern plate-glass doors and windows, placement of unarched double-hung sash in the arched window openings, and painting of the first-floor brickwork and of the entire rear facade of the building.

The main floor interior of the building remains substantially unaltered. The space is punctuated with original pillars, and the ceiling is of pressed metal, which is in excellent condition. The opera hall level of the building is essentially empty space. Its stage and seating were removed in 1901 when it was remodeled into an Elks' lodge.<sup>1</sup> The original unornamented balcony, however, survives.

In his adaptive-reuse project, the owner plans to restore the appearance of the main facade as closely to the original as is practicable. He intends chemically to remove the paint on the first-floor level brickwork. The small-paned glass overlights will be once more revealed. The entrance and wide stairway leading to the second floor will be reconstructed. Arched sash like the original will be installed in the second-floor windows. The owner also hopes eventually to reconstruct the cornice. The interior of the first floor will be used for commercial space. Original fabric will be retained, including the pressed metal ceiling. The original wood floor will be exposed if possible. The interior of the second floor will be partitioned into office and commercial space, retaining the original fabric where possible.

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1. 50th Anniversary of Hudson Lodge No. 640 (Hudson, 1951).

# 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/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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	key social center
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES     1880                                     BUILDER/ARCHITECT     Daniel C. Hill

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Opera Hall Block is significant to the history of Hudson as a key focus of social life in the community during the last decades of the nineteenth century. During its heyday Opera Hall Block served Hudson as the most important public gathering place for entertainment, cultural, political, and educational events, religious functions, and all manner of social occasions. Although the building has lost some of its stylistic embellishment, it retains the feeling both of its period of significance and of its original use.

Opera Hall Block was built in the summer and fall of 1880 for William Henry Crowe, a prominent Hudson businessman, at a total cost of some \$10,000. The building was not architect designed, but was built by a contractor, Daniel C. Hill of Red Wing. Hill was responsible for many of the commercial buildings of the region, and he probably designed the Opera House in cooperation with Crowe.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1880 William Crowe announced his intention to build a new commercial block in Hudson and almost immediately received suggestions from Hudson citizens that he incorporate an opera hall/social gathering place into his plan. Crowe evidently liked the idea and agreed to build a large two-story building with commercial space on the first floor and an opera hall on the second. Since the citizens of Hudson had so vociferously requested the opera hall, he requested that they contribute the necessary scenery and seating. Through the rest of the year Crowe's building project was big news in Hudson.

As the opera house took shape it became the object of considerable civic pride, particularly when Crowe installed modern plate glass windows in the storefronts. On November 19 the Hudson Star and Times commented that "the plate glass fronts in Opera Hall Block look decidedly metropolitan."<sup>2</sup>

In December 1880 the opera hall was complete, and on 27 January 1881 the appreciative citizens of Hudson paid tribute to William Crowe. In an open letter seventy-six prominent Hudson citizens lauded Crowe for his "public spirit in providing our community with so commodious a place for social and literary entertainments. This was a need long felt. . . ." At the testimonial banquet for Crowe, Major David Fulton raised a toast to "The new Opera Hall: A credit to Hudson and an honor to its worthy founder. May the objects of the former and public spirit of the latter be fully appreciated by our citizens."<sup>3</sup>

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA See continuation sheet

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.2

QUADRANGLE NAME Hudson, Minn.-Wis.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A 

ZONE	EASTING										

B 

ZONE	EASTING										

C 

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D 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot three (3), block I, in Willow River, now a part of the City of Hudson, St. Croix County, Wisconsin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David Donath, Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

October 1978

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-3390

CITY OR TOWN

Madison, Wisconsin 53706

STATE

# 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

*Richard Boney*

TITLE Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 1/8/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3-2-79

ATTEST:

CLERK OF REGISTRATION

DATE 3-5-79

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

In following decades Fulton's high hopes for the opera house were realized as it brought a lively train of entertainment and cultural events to Hudson. Theatrical productions performed there included The Hidden Hand, Esmeralda, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Swap the Yankees, The Gypsy's Oath, Caste, Bold Boy of '98, Yakie, Our German Farmer, Karl, the Peddler, Ten Nights in a Bar Room, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, Among the Breakers, Ole Olson, Two Orphans, Forget Me Not, Our Best Society, and Shooting Crapps. Among the musical groups that appeared there were Hi Henry's Superb Operatic Minstrels, the Nashville Colored Church Choir, Madame Fry's Concert Company, the Vescelius Grant Concert Company, the Royce Swiss Bell Ringers, the Carleton College Glee Club, the Swedish Concert Company, the Beethoven Conservatory of Stillwater, the Scandinavian Unitarian Society, the Stewart Grand Concert Company, Beach and Bowers Minstrels, Muldoon's Picnic, the McKablass Colored Musical Comedy Company, the Noxx Jollities, and the Swedish Ladies Concert Company. Lectures and other public meetings included Ignatius Donnelly speaking on Populism, Private E. T. Cressy, a Civil War veteran, speaking on the Battle of Chickamauga, a rally of the Knights of Labor, a taxpayers' meeting protesting a proposed sewage system for Hudson, and a grand memorial ceremony on the occasion of the death of General Ulysses S. Grant.<sup>4</sup>

In 1884 the County Republican Convention was held in Opera Hall Block. The convention served one of Hudson's favorite sons, John C. Spooner, as a springboard for a successful campaign for the U. S. Senate. In 1890 the Republican Party of the Eighth Congressional District held its convention there. In 1885 the Northwestern (Wisconsin) Medical Society convened there, and in the same year the first annual Farm Institute drew agriculturists from all over the state to the Hudson opera house.<sup>5</sup>

A variety of local social functions also took place in Opera Hall Block. Religious societies used the hall for church socials, suppers, cultural programs, and Christmas pageants. The Hudson Choral Society, as well as other local groups held benefits, programs and meetings there. Through the 1880s and 1890s Hudson High School held its commencement exercises in the opera hall. After 1900 the Hudson Lodge of the Elks Club held its meetings in the hall.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of its completion Opera Hall Block housed the businesses of Sam Roe & Co., grocer, and Horace Barlow, dry goods merchant. The first floor has been occupied as commercial space continuously up until only recently, and it promises to continue in that use after the building is rehabilitated.

Today, plans exist to return Opera Hall Block to its position of prominence in downtown Hudson. A local developer has acquired the building and is planning an extensive rehabilitation project which will restore the building's facade and renovate the interior. The owner is concerned that the project work be done in sympathy with the

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

building's historic fabric, and requests nomination to enable him to take advantage of the provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1976. Many citizens of Hudson, including the St. Croix County Historical Society, have given this plan and the nomination their enthusiastic support.<sup>7</sup>

1. Hudson Star and Times (18 Jun. 1880); collections of the Goodhue Co. (Minnesota) Historical Society.
2. Star and Times (1880, passim).
3. Ibid. (4 Feb. 1881).
4. Ibid. (1881-1900, passim).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.; 50th Anniversary of Hudson Lodge No. 640 (Hudson, 1951)
7. See for example The Hudson Star-Observer (1 Jun. 1978).

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

- Cahall, Clarence. Interview, May 1978  
Day, Genevieve Cline. Hudson in the Early Days. Hudson, 1932.  
Easton, A. B. The History of the St. Croix Valley. volume I. Chicago, 1909.  
Erickson, E. Wilfred. Hudson's Heritage. Hudson, 1974.  
50th Anniversary of Hudson Lodge No. 640. Hudson, 1951.  
Goodhue County (Minnesota) Historical Society. Collections.  
Haugen, Mrs. William. Interview, Jun. 1978.  
Hudson Star and Times, 1880-1900 passim.  
Kremer, G. Fred. Interview. May 1978.  
Miller, Willis H. Hudson's Distinguished Men and Women. Hudson, 1970.  
\_\_\_\_\_. Interviews, May, Jun., Jul. 1978.  
Nordstrand, Burt. Interview, Jul. 1978.  
St. Croix County Historical Society. Collections.  
Schreiber, Glenn C. Hudson: A Rail-River Town. Hudson, 1976.  
Washington County (Minnesota) Historical Society. Collections.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (continued)

Glenn Schreiber  
804 Wisconsin Street  
Hudson, Wisconsin 54016

August 1978  
715/386-9333

Burt Nordstrand, owner  
2465 Londin Lane, Unit 410  
St. Paul, Minnesota 54119

August 1978  
612/738-0101

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

latitude and longitude (USGS quad with UTM ticks not available):

N 44° 58' 30"

W 92° 45' 23"