

PH0011304

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

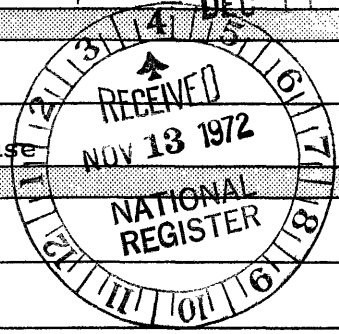
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Delaware	
COUNTY: New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 11 1972

1. NAME

COMMON:
The Masonic Hall and Grand Theater

AND/OR HISTORIC:
The Masonic Temple and Grand Opera House



2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
818 North Market Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Wilmington

STATE Delaware	CODE 10	COUNTY: New Castle	CODE 003
-------------------	------------	-----------------------	-------------

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"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	Includes
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	Masonic	theater, shops,
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	meetings	offices & meeting

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Masonic Hall Company of Wilmington

STREET AND NUMBER:
818 North Market Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Wilmington

STATE: Delaware	CODE 10
--------------------	------------

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Registry of Deeds, Public Building

STREET AND NUMBER:
11th and King Streets

CITY OR TOWN:
Wilmington

STATE: Delaware	CODE 10
--------------------	------------

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:	CODE:
--------	-------

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DEC 11 1972

7. DESCRIPTION

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

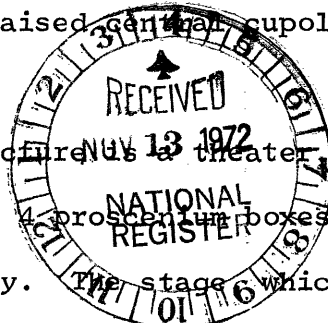
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The architect of the Masonic Temple was Charles L. Carson of the firm of Dixon and Carson of Baltimore. Carson designed a Second Empire style building which closely follows the European models then popular.

The entire facade is of cast iron, secured to a structural steel framework. Almost all the cast iron remains intact. Only the columns on the first floor are covered by modern store fronts. Originally all the iron facade was painted a light cream (almost white) and was lighted by gas lamps.

The fourth floor was capped by a slate mansard roof, which has since been oversimplified by renovations. The bronzed and gilded iron crestings were removed, along with a raised central cupola and flagpole.

Inside the 92' by 211' four-story structure is a theater, which originally contained 1,418 seats, including 4 proscenium boxes, a dress circle, a parquet circle and a gallery. The stage which is still intact except for the orchestra pit, is 37' deep and 75' wide backstage. The proscenium opening is 40' wide and 26' high. In 1871 it was reported to be the second largest stage in the country, surpassed only by the Hippodrome in New York City.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Decorations included a stage back curtain depicting a colorful Italian suburban scene, a paneled gallery partition with a fan-shaped stained glass window at the top, fluted iron columns under the graceful horseshoe gallery, frescoed wall panels and a frescoed, domed ceiling depicting the Muses. Two curved stairs provide access to the gallery.

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 11 1972

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION (continued)---

Heating was accomplished by warm air ducts; perforations in the plaster ceiling provided ventilation.

Dressing rooms, a "drop" room and a carpentry shop were located under the stage.

Other floors include offices and Lodge meeting rooms, all still in use. Also still in use is a large banquet hall. The various floors are served by a main staircase, an elevator and fire-stair tower. Adequate fire-exit doors and fire escapes exist. There is a full basement under the building.



SIGNIFICANCE

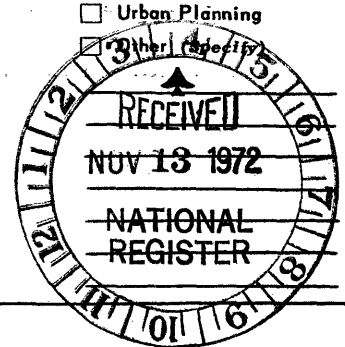
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input 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) 1871

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

The Masonic Temple of Wilmington is of both architectural and historical significance. Not only is the building one of the finest remaining examples of 19th century cast iron architecture in America; it is also associated with some of the major events and personages in the past one hundred years of Delaware history. Above all, it is famous for its rich theatrical associations, having been a significant showplace during the heyday of the American theater in the last quarter of the 19th century.

With the completion of the Masonic Temple in December of 1871, Wilmington could finally boast of an excellent theater for public entertainments. The stage was reputed to be the second largest in America. Following a gala opening "Promenade Concert", John T. Ford booked a series of performances by Caroline Richings and her Company.

Other famous performers who played on this stage throughout its history include Mlle. Carlotta Patti, Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Davenport, Madame Janauschek, Mrs. James A. Oates, Maggie Mitchell, Edward A. Sothorn in Our American Cousin, Edwin Booth, Edwin Forrest, Maude Adams, Ethel Barrymore, Chauncey Olcott, George M. Cohan, Junius Brutus Booth and Joseph Jefferson. Sarah Bernhardt was scheduled to appear in Camille but was forced to cancel because of small advance

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Conrad, Henry C., History of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware, by the author, 1908, 3 vol.
 Chance, T. Elbert, A History of Theatre in Delaware, unpublished Senior Thesis, University of Delaware, 1952.
Federal Writers' Papers, Typed articles in bound volumes at the University of Delaware Memorial Library.
 Green, Charles E., History of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware, Wilmington, Del., William N. Cann, 1956.

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	° ' "	° ' "		75°	32'	59"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		39°	34'	36"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **One-half**

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:
Robert Dick Stoddard, Jr., Project Coordinator

ORGANIZATION: **Grand Opera House Project** DATE: **July 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:
Suite 1320, 300 Delaware Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: **Wilmington** STATE: **Delaware** CODE: **10**

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: **E. Berkeley Tompkins**
Dr. E. Berkeley Tompkins

Title: **Director, Div. of Historical and Cultural Affairs**

Date: **11-3-72**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: **12/11/72**

ATTEST:

Larry D. Greer
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: **12/11/72**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

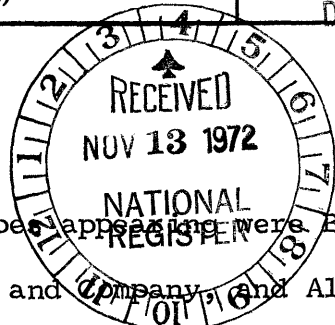
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Delaware	
COUNTY	New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		DEC 11 1972

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)---
ticket sale.



Among the many minstrel troupes appearing were Bryants, Thatcher, Barlow and Wilson, Lew Dockstader and Company, and Al G. Field. Several times Buffalo Bill Cody turned the theater into the Wild West in his ever popular Scouts of the Plains.

President Ulysses S. Grant attended a "Fair" held in the opera house under the auspices of Company A, First Delaware State Volunteers, on February 6, 1873. Local musical organizations such as the Millard Club (later the Philharmonic Society), the Tuesday Club and the Wilmington Dramatic Club performed Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and oratorios in the house.

The annual balls of the Washington Steam Fire Engine Company were held there on Washington's birthday. Extra trollies ran to the opera house for all these events.

In 1889 Lieutenant (later Admiral) Robert E. Peary spoke in the opera house on the subject of the Arctic region and his search for the North Pole. The State Republican and Democratic conventions were also held in the Grand. It was also the scene of numerous flower shows and lectures on religion and temperance. The first motion picture in the Grand was projected by an Edison Vidascope on February 8, 1897. In 1906 a motion picture projection booth was constructed and movies were shown on a regular basis. By 1914 they had completely replaced live performances. Warner Brothers took over management from 1930 to 1967. The theater was again reopened for weekend movies in April of 1969.

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER DEC 11 1972	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued - 2)---

Throughout these hundred years the building has continued to serve as the central meeting place for the Masonic Lodges in the area.

To commemorate the opening of the opera house a "Centennial Gala" was held on December 22, 1972. The event served to test public support for renovating the opera house (which now shows second run movies on weekends) and once again making it Delaware's center for the performing arts. Judging from the turnout for this event and a subsequent lecture by James Reston, there is overwhelming interest and very substantial public support in preserving and restoring this Delaware landmark.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 11 1972

(Number all entries)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)---

History of Temple Lodge, No. 11 AF&M, Wilmington, Delaware, 1967.

Montgomery, Elizabeth, Reminiscences of Wilmington, Wilmington, Delaware, Johnston and Bogia, 1872.

Neeson, Jack, The Devil in Delaware, unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1959.

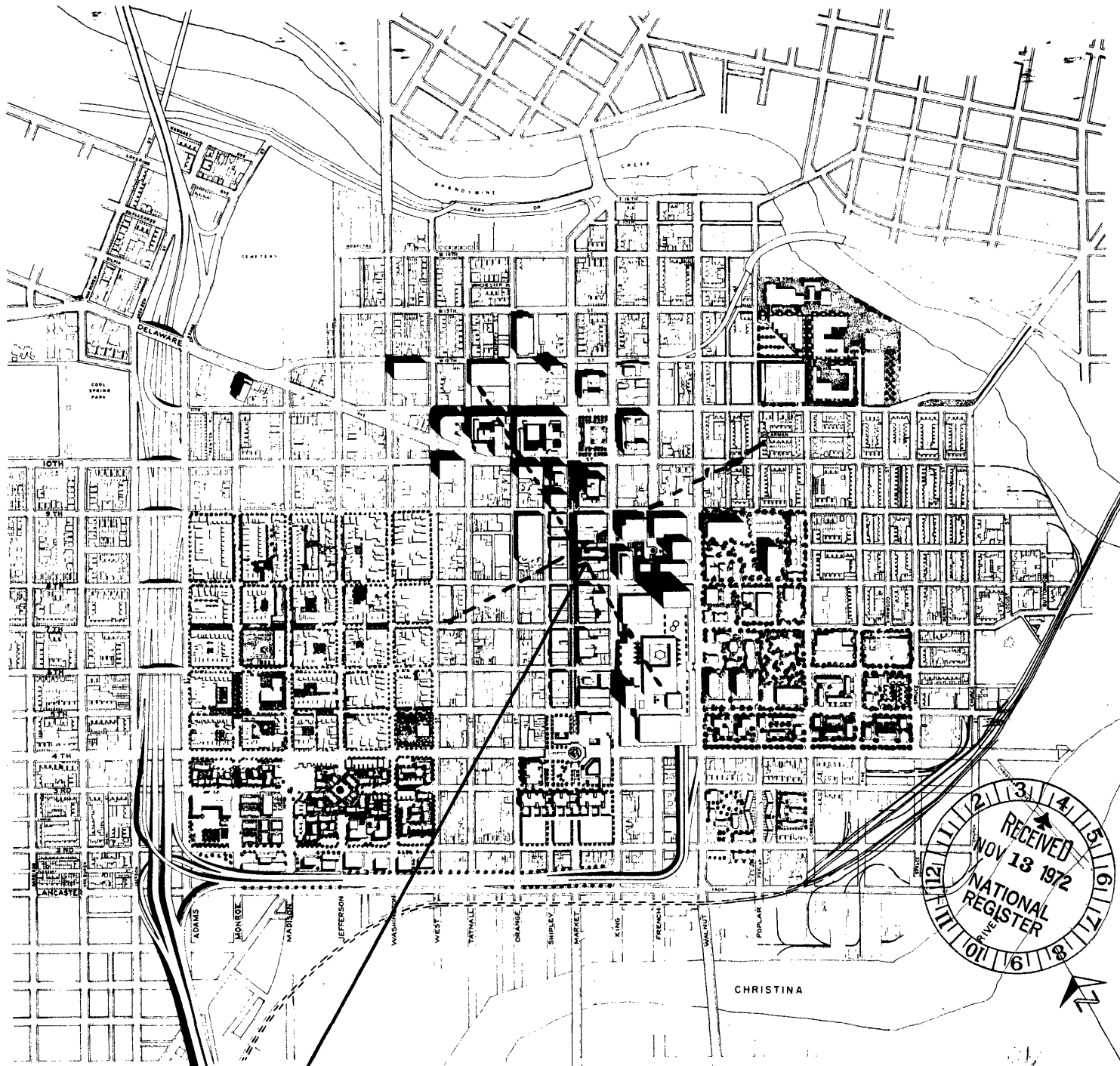
Proceedings of Temple Lodge No. 11 of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of Delaware, Wilmington, Temple Lodge No. 11, 1917.

Scharf, J. Thomas, History of Delaware, Philadelphia, L. J. Richards and Co., 1888, 3 vol.

Withey, Henry R., and Rathburn, Elsie, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), Los Angeles, California, New Age Publishing Co., 1956.

Chance, T. Elbert, "The Great Days of Wilmington's Grand Opera House," Delaware History, vol. XII (1958-59), p. 185.





Masonic Temple and Grand Opera House
DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON SITE PLAN

SCALE 1" = 200'

JAN. 3, 1972

----- = 75° 32' 59" latitude 39° 34' 36" longitude (approx.)

