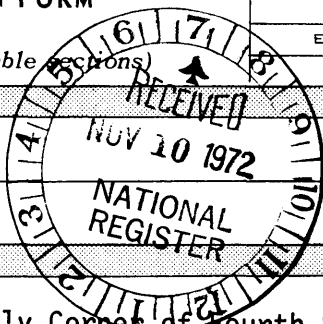


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Iowa	
COUNTY: Dubuque	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	NOV 14 1972



1. NAME

COMMON:  
Orpheum Theatre and Site

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Majestic Theatre

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
405 Main Street (Northwesterly Corner of Fourth Street)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Dubuque

STATE: Iowa CODE: 14 COUNTY: Dubuque CODE: 061

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" 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 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:  
City of Dubuque

STREET AND NUMBER:  
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN: Dubuque STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Dubuque County Recorder

STREET AND NUMBER:  
720 Central Avenue (Dubuque County Courthouse)

CITY OR TOWN: Dubuque STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
NONE

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
NOV 14 1972 ENTRY NUMBER  
FOR NPS USE ONLY  
DATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

 Excellent
  Good
  Fair
  Deteriorated
  Ruins
  Unexposed

(Check One)

 Altered
  Unaltered

(Check One)

 Moved
  Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present structure is the third to stand on this site. The first theater was built in 1840 and was known as the Athenaeum Theater. It was enlarged, remodeled and renamed the City Hotel in 1846. The City Hotel continued as a site for theatrical performances, as did its successor, the Peosta House. In 1877 the Peosta House was torn down and the 4th Street or Dubuque Opera House was built on the site. The Opera House was remodeled and became known as Bartell's Vaudeville House in 1896. In 1903 it was renamed the Coates Opera House, and in 1904 its name was changed to the Bijou. In 1909 the Bijou was extensively remodeled and renamed the New Bijou in 1910. The New Bijou stood less than six months, as it burned down in early 1910. In 1910 the Orpheum was built. At that time it was called the Majestic Theater and later the Spensley. The Orpheum Theatre of today looks much the same as the Majestic of 1910.

The present building was designed by C. W. ✓ and George L. Rapp, Chicago architects, as a music hall or vaudeville house. ✓ It is an original design in the ✓ Flemish Renaissance style and bears similarities to such famous Paris theaters as the Marigny, the Trianon Lyrique, the Moulin Rouge and the Olympia. ✓

✓ The facade of the building is ornately designed and decorated with Bedford stone and pressed brick. The exterior contains decorative stone panels and columns with arched openings as well as period lighting fixtures at the second floor level. From the mansard roof to the ground level floor there is stone sculptured ✓ and designed to appeal to the eye but not to distract from the overall beauty of the structure.

The interior of the building is also ornately sculptured, elaborately decorated and scrolled to create a feeling of the fashionable elegance of a bygone era. The interior contains arched openings, decorative columns and paneling. A canvas ceiling mural although painted over is still in place.

The theater house includes an orchestra section, a dress circle (mezzanine boxes), a balcony and a gallery with the original wood benches. The gallery has its own street level entrance and stairway. There are tiered proscenium boxes on either side of the stage. The seating capacity is approximately 1000 persons. The distance from the floor of the stage to the grid is approximately 65 feet and there is approximately eight feet head room from the grid to the roof. The fire curtain is fully rigged and is interconnected with fire doors throughout the stage house. There are two scenery docks on stage left and one counterweight dock on stage right. The orchestra pit has been floored and there are 14 lower level dressing rooms beneath the stage area. Although the theater is now used as a motion picture theater, many of the features in the stage area have been left undisturbed. The acoustics throughout the theater house are excellent.

The interior of the theater remains basically the same today as originally constructed. Exterior changes include the installation of a marquee, vertical sign and replacement windows of glass block and aluminum sash tilt-out windows. It is feasible to restore the exterior to its original appearance. A longitudinal section of the theater is on an attached page.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

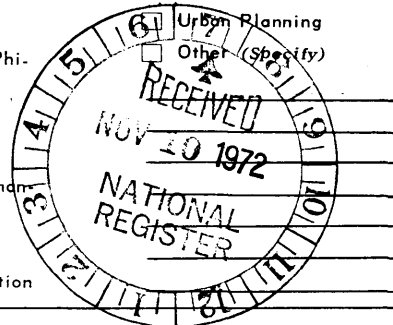
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) ~~1840~~ 1910

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <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 type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The northwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets in Dubuque is the oldest site in Iowa to continuously house a theater, opera house, vaudeville house and/or public entertainment house. The present Orpheum Theatre maintains the 132 year tradition of theater in Dubuque on the site which began in 1840. The site has seen a number of buildings on it, the present one being built in 1910 as one of the finest theaters in eastern Iowa.

A galaxy of stars have walked the boards displaying their great talents and entertaining a host of Dubuquers for generations. Such notables as Edwin Booth, the great Shakespearean actor (and brother John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin); Sarah Bernhardt, one of the world's greatest leading ladies; great leading men, such as Lawrence Barrett and Joe Jefferson; Oscar Wilde; vaudevillians like Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor and George M. Cohan; boxing champions who appeared on tour as vaudevillians, like John L. Sullivan, Jess Willard and Jim Corbett; William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and many others of lesser fame have entertained Dubuquers these past 132 years.

Denys Peter Myers, Principal Architectural Historian for the Historic Buildings Survey for the National Park Service describes the Orpheum Theater.

"The building has great potential as a preservable example of its period. It is an ornament to the city and has an outstandingly attractive interior. Most important, it has a potentially viable future as a theater and concert hall of historic importance in connection with the proposed civic center, since there is a large legitimate stage and the acoustics are excellent."

Mr. Paul Dufournet, Archivist of the Academy of Architecture in Paris, France, in his correspondence referring to this theater has written.

"You are quite right in wanting to preserve this theater and we congratulate you for it. The monuments of the past are the certificates of a city's nobility, and this one is well worthwhile. We fully approve of your action and hope that it will be successful." Translated by the Reverend A. J. Creighton, Professor of French, Loras College, from the original letter written in French.

A. Craig Morrison, a theater architectural historian, in examining the premises has indicated that the theater is one of the early theaters designed by the firm of C. W. and George L. Rapp. The Rapp brothers completed a three year apprenticeship in 1908, and opened their own office in the same year. They reached their climax in the late teens and the twenties and have to their credit a number of noteworthy achievements.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

The Early Theater in Eastern Iowa, Joseph S. Schick, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1950.

The History of Dubuque County, Iowa, Franklin T. Oldt, Editor-in-Chief Western Historical Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1880.

Palimpsest, The State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, January, 1950, Volume XXXI.

**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	° ' "	° ' "		42°	29'	52"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		90°	39'	55"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

NO UTM  
CD

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Gent M. Wittenberg, Director**

ORGANIZATION: **City of Dubuque, Iowa**  
**Department of Housing & Redevelopment**

DATE: **August, 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**10-B Fischer Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Dubuque** STATE: **Iowa** CODE: **14**

**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 Adrian D. Anderson

Title State Liaison Officer

Date 31 October, 1972

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

Robert G. Ziegler  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 11/14/72

ATTEST:  
William J. Muntz  
Keeper of The National Register

Date 11-13-72

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Iowa	
COUNTY	
Dubuque	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
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(Number all entries) 8. Significance

Baraboo

Al Ringling Theater

Cedar Rapids

Majestic

Chicago

Chicago  
Majestic  
Olympia  
Oriental  
Palace (Bismarck)  
San Soucie Park  
Tivoli  
Uptown

New York

Paramount

Omaha

Orpheum  
(Under restoration)

Brooklyn

Lowe's King

Des Moines

Majestic

Detroit

Michigan

Jersey City

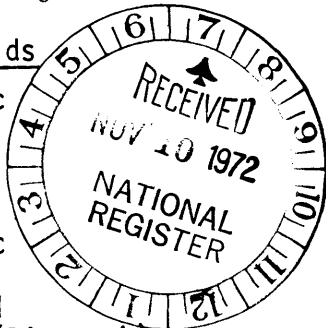
Lowe's Jersey

Pittsburgh

Lowe's Penn  
(Heinz Hall)

Toledo

Paramount



Mr. Morrison has been retained by the Five Flags Center Fund (more fully described on a following page) as a special consultant to advise and to collaborate with the principal architect retained to develop (1) the restoration program for the theater, (2) the design for the attached exhibition-arts building, and (3) the necessary site plan for the balance of the block. Mr. Morrison is presently associated with the Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and is also the Archivist of the Theatre Historical Society of America.

The Five Flags Center Fund established a Historic Registration Committee to assist in the preparation of this application and to assure the authenticity of the restoration work. Their membership includes the following persons, all of whom are members of the Dubuque County Historical Society.

Dr. Kenneth Hazlet, Chairman  
Mr. Howard Higley  
Mr. John McDonald

Mrs. Helen Mercer  
Mr. Thomas Schrup  
Mr. Robert A. Sullivan

The Orpheum Theatre was purchased by the City of Dubuque as a part of the Downtown Urban Renewal Project, Iowa R-15, for the purpose of demolishing the improvements and combining the cleared land with additional cleared land in the same block for sale for redevelopment by private or public interests.

An Iowa non-profit organization known as the Five Flags Center Fund was

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Iowa	
COUNTY	
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(Number all entries) 8. Significance

organized to restore this theater while it was under threat of demolition. Additionally, this organization proposes to construct adjacent to and in connection with the theater, a large year-round public assembly hall. The completed project would then be donated to the City of Dubuque for use as a community center for a wide variety of public functions and activities.

The Governing Body of the City of Dubuque by resolution has endorsed the total project, and demolition of the theater has been cancelled. A copy of this resolution together with copies of special market reports by Real Estate Research Corporation of Chicago are enclosed as supporting documentation.

The attached exhibition-arts building will consist of a two level public use facility containing 20,000 square feet of exhibit area with dividers for multipurpose usage; meeting rooms; an art gallery housing a permanent collection; galleries for touring collections; special exhibits, photo, craft and hobby shows; and individual studios and workshops for group and self-expression in the arts and crafts.

A public solicitation campaign is currently under way to raise the necessary funds to restore the theater and to construct the additional proposed improvements. The Five Flags Center Fund has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service and contributions to the funds are tax exempt to the donor.

The total estimated cost of the project is 1.3 million dollars as itemized below, and to date the Five Flags organization has raised in excess of \$660,000. It is further proposed to apply for restoration funds through the appropriate federal agency.

Public Use and Arts Building	\$ 700,000
Theater Restoration	165,000
Equipment	110,000
Site Acquisition	200,000
Site Improvements	60,000
Administrative Expenses	65,000
	<hr/>
	\$1,300,000



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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NOV 14 1972	

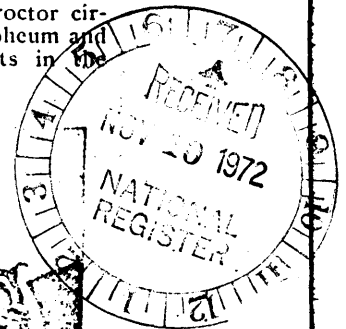
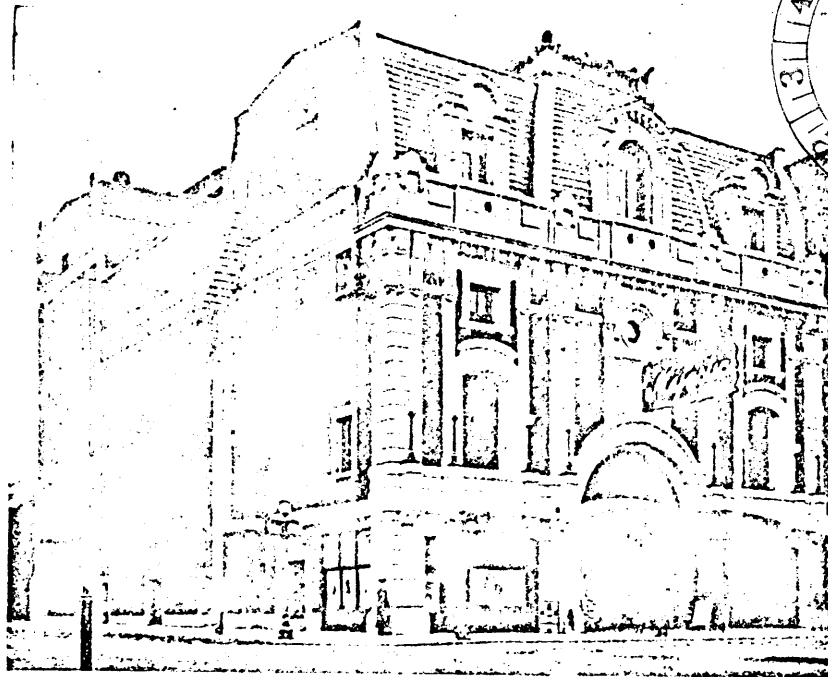
(Number all entries)

8. Significance

DESCRIPTION FROM 1911 PUBLICATION  
OF GREATER DUBUQUE INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION

Majestic Theatre

On the evening of November 16, 1910, the initial performance was given at the New Majestic Theater. The opening of this beautiful playhouse proved an innovation to Dubuque theatergoers as well as a source of pride to the city and a satisfaction to the owner and manager, Mr. Jake Paris, long considered one of the handsomest in the French capital. According to the statement of experts who have examined the building, it is as fire-proof in every respect as possible. The Majestic Theater is affiliated with the Keith and Proctor circuits in the east and the Orpheum and the Kohl and Castle circuits in the



Rosenthal. The newly built structure stands upon the site of the old Bijou, which was destroyed by fire less than thirteen months ago. The architects and contractors who had the building in charge have produced the most beautiful and safest theater in Iowa at a cost of \$90,000. Architecturally, the Majestic is replica of a theater in west, and as these cover the entire Advanced Vaudeville field from New York to San Francisco, the management has first and exclusive call on the services of all leading stars and specialties. Patrons may therefore be assured that they will enjoy the best of attractions in the world of varieties.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

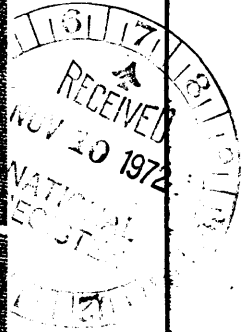
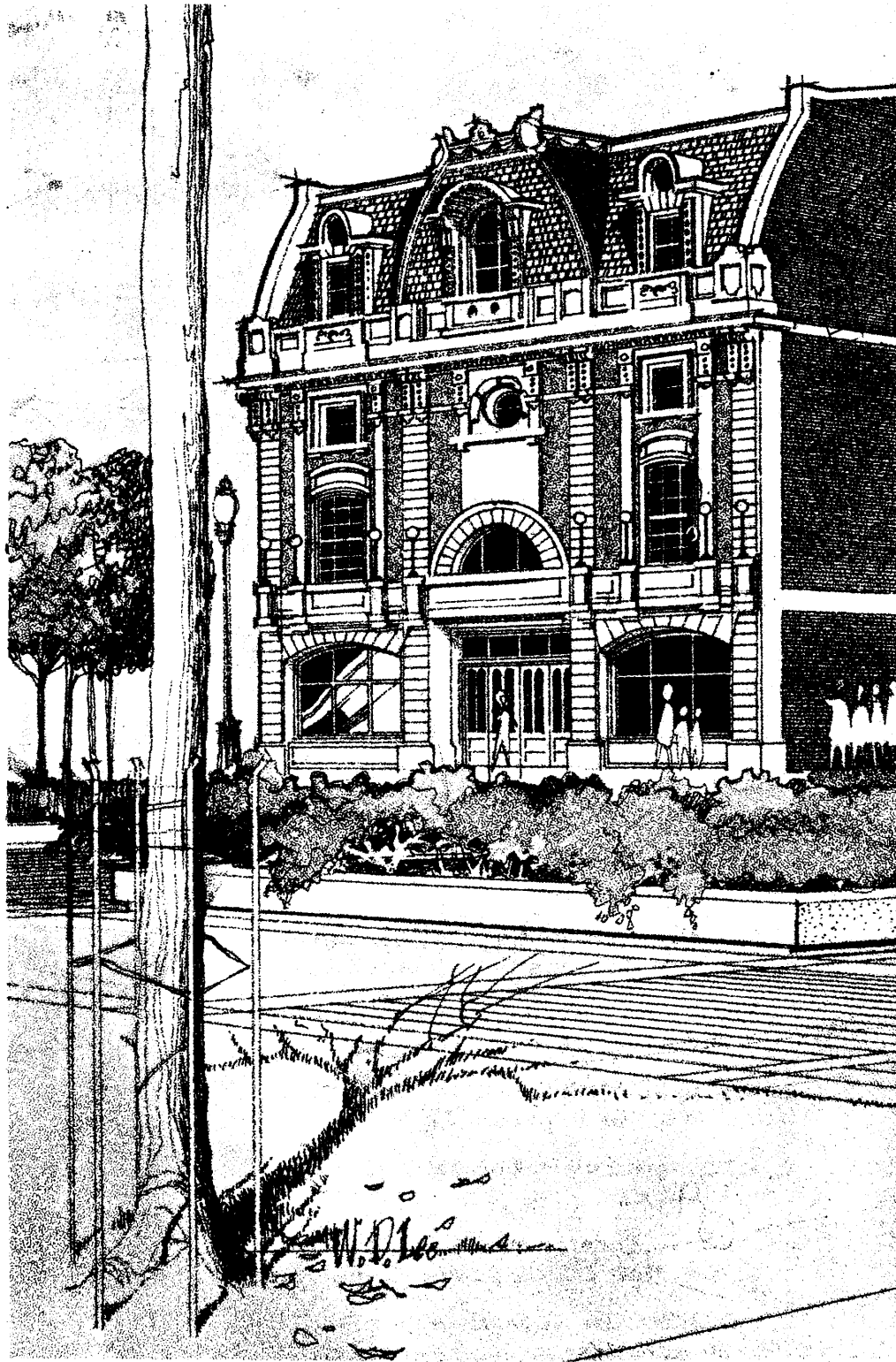
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STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	NOV 14 1972

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

PROPOSED FRONT EXTERIOR FACADE RESTORATION





NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
NOV 14 1972	

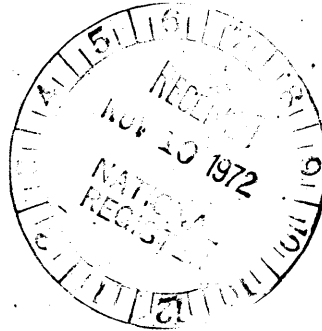
(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References Continued.

Legal Abstract of Title to Southerly 63'7" of Lot 68 in the City of Dubuque, Iowa  
Daily Express and Herald, Vol. IX., J.B. Dorr & Co., Main and 5th Street,  
Dubuque, Iowa

The Telegraph-Herald, 8th Street and Bluff Street, Dubuque, Iowa

Notes from Doctoral Dissertation - Charles Geroux

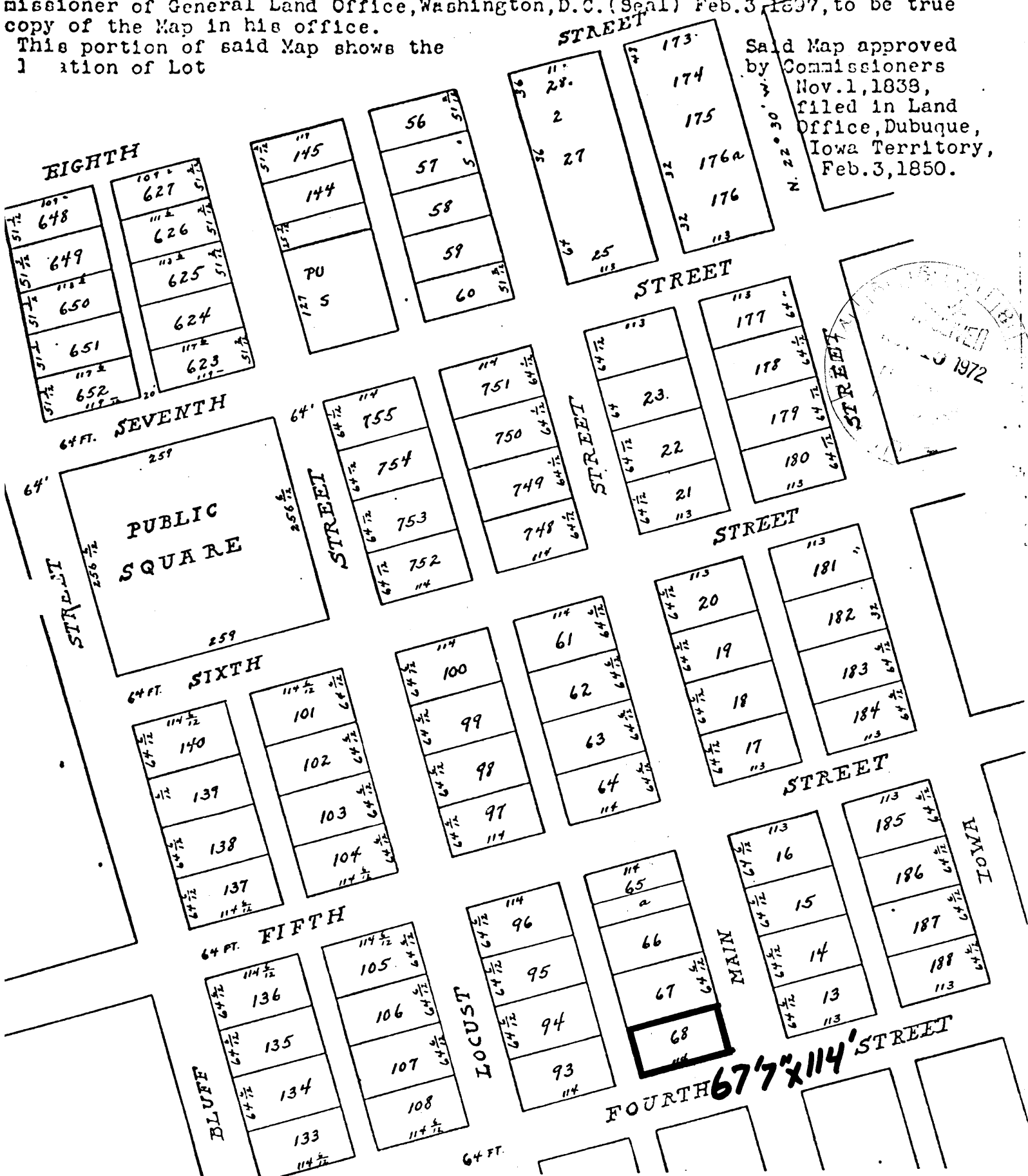


\*\*\*\*\*

Mch. 23, 1897, filed in office of Recorder, Dubuque County, Iowa, copy of United States Commissioners' Map of "Town of Dubuque", certified by Commissioner of General Land Office, Washington, D.C. (Seal) Feb. 3, 1850, to be true copy of the Map in his office.

This portion of said Map shows the location of Lot

Said Map approved by Commissioners Nov. 1, 1838, filed in Land Office, Dubuque, Iowa Territory, Feb. 3, 1850.



EIGHTH

648
649
650
651
652
627
626
625
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623

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SEVENTH

PUBLIC SQUARE

SIXTH

140
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101
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FIFTH

136
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LOCUST

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FOURTH

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67
68

MAIN

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

STREET

IOWA



