

040368334

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 3 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 7 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
Bismarck Civic Auditorium
AND/OR COMMON
City Auditorium

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
201 North Sixth Street
CITY, TOWN
Bismarck
STATE
North Dakota
VICINITY OF
1
COUNTY
Burleigh
CODE
038
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1
CODE
015

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
City of Bismarck
STREET & NUMBER
609 East Thayer Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Bismarck
STATE
North Dakota
VICINITY OF
58501

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Burleigh County Court House
STREET & NUMBER
514 East Thayer Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Bismarck
STATE
North Dakota
58501

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
State Historic Sites Survey
DATE
1976
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
State Historical Society of North Dakota
CITY, TOWN
Bismarck
STATE
North Dakota
58505
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

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

The Bismarck Auditorium measures 70 feet X 124 feet, with the following elevation heights: facade (Sixth Street or west elevation), 44 feet; sides, 43 feet; rear (including pent house or stage fly loft), 56 feet. The ground floor includes lobby, foyer, parquet separated by four aisles, orchestra pit, stage with proscenium, dressing rooms, and rest rooms. The second floor is divided into balcony and gallery, with dressing rooms flanking the stage; the fly loft is above it. The basement houses additional dressing rooms as well as the heating and ventilation systems. Footings, piers, foundation and area walls, and basement floor are of concrete, and the lobby and parquet floors are steel-reinforced concrete slabs. Load-bearing masonry walls are comprised of a backing of hard burnt local brick (the so-called "Penitentiary" grade) faced with pressed cream-colored brick on the facade and south elevation, and molded yellow brick on the east and north elevations. The main roof is carried on five steel trusses with lateral timber bracing, and the stage roof on three steel "I" beams. The steel plate girder of the balcony is built into the brick walls at each side and is also supported by two ornamental cast iron columns, one in each outer aisle of the parquet. Additional structural steelwork, chiefly in the form of girders and lintels, is incorporated in the foyer partition, the 32 foot X 20 foot proscenium arch, and other openings and recesses throughout the building. Timber framing (pine and fir) is utilized for studs, sills, and plates of partitions and for floor and ceiling joists, trusses, and string of the balcony and gallery. Flooring and roofing are hemlock, the finish floors are maple, and other interior and decorative finish is highly varnished oak and gum. The main ceiling is plaster over metal lath, and secondary ceilings and partition walls are plaster board.

The exterior appearance of the auditorium is nearly as built, one minor exception being the installation of aluminum frames on the five Sixth Street doorways during a renovation program in the early 1950's. The original beveled plate glass door panels and transom lights set in triangular brass muntins remain, however. The middle three doors open into the lobby, while that on the north gives street access to the balcony and to the Boy Scouts of America headquarters which occupies an office beneath the balcony. The south door leads to an enclosed space originally intended as a store or smoking room but presently housing the Burleigh County Civil Disaster Preparedness Agency. The recessed entrances give eye-level emphasis to the 5-part division which is the chief distinction of the auditorium facade. Fenestration on the second floor repeats the rhythm, with the middle three windows highlighted overhead by galvanized metal shell motifs filling semicircular arches. The treatment over the end windows, and beneath all five, consists of rectangular brick panels with a shaped inner design. Pilasters with tooled, light brown Kettle River sandstone bases, bond stones, and heraldic-device capitals channel the facade verticality up to the Ionic-type frieze, which is also supported by brick corbels. The word AUDITORIUM centered in bold lettering, wreaths, dentils, and egg-and-dart molding enrich the frieze, above which projects a cornice on carved modillions. Like the window shell motifs, the frieze and cornice are galvanized metal. The stepped parapet roof is crowned with a copper ornament consisting of a crested shield mounted on a cartouche. The roof coping, forming volutes framing the ornament, is Kettle River sandstone, as are remaining elements of the facade composition such as doorway lintels, window sills and lintels, and spring stones and keystones of the window arches.

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The facade frieze continues around the south or Broadway Avenue elevation, bearing the words BISMARCK AUDITORIUM beneath the flat-top parapet roof. Corbels and panels are also repeated, as well as pilasters which are supported on a 7-tiered water table of orange brick. The stage fly loft occupies the eastern-most one-fourth of the roof of the south (and correspondingly, the north) elevation, thus extending across the rear. The wall of the latter and that on the north contrast with the two more visible elevations in that both the fabric and the diminished detail (pilasters and corbeling only) are executed in lesser grade brickwork.

Parts of the interior of the auditorium, like almost the whole of the exterior, have been very little changed since the time of construction. The lobby, for example, retains its ceramic tile floor in mosaic design; ticket window with marble shelf and pediment; and doors to street and foyer with casings delineated by egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel moldings and inlaid ebony banding. The foyer too is still embellished with such detail as a frieze with multiple moldings (egg-and-dart, bead-and-reel, talon, dentil, and fret); a plate glass partition mounted on a paneled wooden base and framed by square, fluted Ionic columns; and stairways with turned balusters and square Ionic columns for newels. The parquet lost much of its architectural character, including the double tier of boxes flanking the proscenium, in the remodeling which occurred during the early 1950's. However, there currently appears to be a measure of popular and official support for restoring the auditorium interior, which would be feasible at least from a design standpoint since the original drawings exist. These show the boxes framed with columns and pediment, hung with draped and fringed portieres, and enclosed by brass railing atop bombé aprons. The former visual impact of the main interior is also suggested by a gilt and rose-colored frieze, all that remains in place of the ornamental metal ceiling, and a pair of large ceiling ventilator grilles cast in an intricate acanthus and anthemion design.

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 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

1914

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Arthur Wesley Van Horn

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bismarck Auditorium has since its completion in 1914 served as the city's principal theater of the performing arts. Its seating capacity (1500), superior acoustical qualities, and location within the urban focus of the southcentral portion of North Dakota have contributed to its status as one of the foremost facilities in the region for the presentation of artistic and public events. Thus it was viewed at the time of its construction not only as a local achievement but also as a tangible symbol of the capital city as cultural center. It continues to make that physical statement because its external appearance remains virtually unchanged. Both the exterior and interior exhibit a consistency of structural and decorative features (particularly classical motifs, in the latter case) which impart a unity to the whole. The significance of the design is further augmented by the fact that it was a major commission of Arthur Wesley Van Horn (1860-1931), a Bismarck architect whose practice was one of the most prolific in the state during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A preliminary association with the project by the architectural firm of Reed and Stem, St. Paul, Minnesota, also appears to have influenced the design concept.

Reed and Stem were employed by the Bismarck city commissioners in February, 1912, to produce a design for and supervise the erection of a fireproof 80 foot X 130 foot auditorium. A local election had determined that the building was to be partially financed by the sale of \$45,000 in negotiable city bonds and by taxation. It is not clear from the minutes of meetings of the city commissioners whether or not complete plans and specifications were ever sent by Reed and Stem, although reference is made to the receipt of plans for the basement. However, a rendering by Reed and Stem in the E.A. Williams Papers, Manuscript Collections, State Historical Society of North Dakota, suggests that the building as eventually completed was perhaps derived from a design originated by the St. Paul firm. In any event, the association was terminated in the fall of 1912 after voters rejected the issuing of an additional \$40,000 in city bonds necessary to finance the auditorium as projected by Reed and Stem. In a settlement negotiated by their respective attorneys, the city commissioners paid \$1125 to the firm, with the latter assuming the cost of a plaster model of the auditorium.

Turning to the task of erecting an auditorium with the funds available, the commissioners in December, 1912, employed Arthur W. Van Horn of Bismarck to furnish plans, specifications, and supervision for a building not to exceed a cost of \$45,000.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bismarck. Board of City Commissioners, City Hall. Minute Book I. 1912-1913.
 Bismarck Weekly Tribune. "Auditorium Opens January 19." January 9, 1914, p.7.
 Cushing, Mrs. W.F. Bismarck, Capital City of North Dakota. Bismarck: Bismarck Commercial Club, 1916.
 Maddox, Dawn. Personal inspection, April 10, 1976.
 Ritterbush Associates (successor to Van Horn & Ritterbush), 209 North Seventh Street, Bismarck, North Dakota 58501: measured drawings and specifications of Bismarck Auditorium

by Arthur Van Horn

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,4	36,4	0,2,0	5,1	8,5	0,1,5	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dawn Maddox, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of North Dakota

DATE

April 26, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

Liberty Memorial Building

TELEPHONE

(701) 224-2666

CITY OR TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota 58505

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Jane E. Sherry

TITLE North Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE April 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>[Signature]</i>	DATE <u>6/7/76</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
ATTEST: <i>[Signature]</i>	DATE <u>5.28.76</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
RBR for WJM 5/28/76	

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Construction began the following spring and was completed by the end of the year. On opening night, January 19, 1914, the New Amsterdam Theatre of New York City presented the 1891 comic opera Robin Hood by Reginald de Kove and Harry B. Smith. Ten days before, the local press had proudly proclaimed the inauguration of "Bismarck's new and brilliant opera house," noting that

The opera chairs for the entire interior have arrived and will be placed within in the next few days and with the hanging of the draperies the last finishing touches of the most magnificent show house west of the eastern metropolitan centers will be completed. The electrical effects and the lighting system is the most elaborate that could have been installed and a complete dazzling spectacle awaits the people of this community and surrounding towns.... ("Auditorium Opens January 19," Bismarck Weekly Tribune, January 9, 1914, p.7.)

Within two years after its completion, the auditorium was being promoted as "one of the handsomest and best appointed play houses in the Northwest," a municipal asset which had attracted to Bismarck the "productions of the greatest musical artists in the country through grand opera, soloists, and orchestras... and all the larger traveling theatrical companies..." (Bismarck, Capital of North Dakota, by Mrs. W.F. Cushing. Bismarck: Bismarck Commercial Club, 1916, pp. 15, 35.) A mass political rally of the Nonpartisan League (an outgrowth of the agrarian reform movement) was held at the auditorium in April, 1916, and the following December it housed the first state convention of the North Dakota Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union. On September 17, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson spoke there in support of his League of Nations campaign. Other notables who have appeared at the auditorium over the years have included Al Jolson, Will Rogers, Fritz Krisler, Marion Anderson, John F. Kennedy, Hubert H. Humphrey, and Eugene McCarthy. The building has been the setting for services conducted by religious groups, plays presented by the local high school, jazz concerts sponsored by Bismarck Junior College, and a decade-long public lecture program benefiting nearby Mary College. The Bismarck Community Concerts are also held at the auditorium, the 1976 series having just concluded with 1776, its salute to the Bicentennial.

The Bismarck Auditorium thus continues to function, as was intended by the city commissioners who envisioned it, the architect who executed it, and the citizens who paid for it, as a public facility, both theater and forum, dedicated to the cultural and social well-being of the local and the larger community which it serves.