

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name MAHAIWE BLOCK

other names/site number MAHAIWE THEATER, MAHAIWE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

2. Location

street & number 6-14 CASTLE ST. & 314-322 MAIN ST. not for publication ☐

city or town GREAT BARRINGTON vicinity N/A

state MASSACHUSETTS Code MA county BERKSHIRE code 003 zip code 01230

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

July 11, 2008
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register
☐ removed from the
National Register
☐ other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

9/12/2008

MAHAIWE BLOCK

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE COUNTY, MA

County and State

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ Public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	building
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Theater
 COMMERCIAL & TRADE: Financial Institution
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Business
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Specialty Store
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Restaurant
 DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling
 SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Theater
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Business
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Specialty Store
 COMMERCE & TRADE: Restaurant
 DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH C. REVIVALS:
 French Renaissance Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone
 walls BRICK
 STONE: Marble (trim)
 roof STONE: Slate; ASPHALT; SYNTHETICS
 other METAL: Pressed metal cornices and trim
 WOOD: Windows and doors

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(Please refer to continuation sheets)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

Section number 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Mahaiwe Block at 6-14 Castle St. and 314-322 Main St. is a three-story downtown commercial building that incorporates the Mahaiwe Theatre at its western end. Completed in 1905, the Mahaiwe Block is one of a cluster of mid 19th-century and early 20th-century masonry buildings in the central business district of Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

The town of Great Barrington, located in the southwestern corner of Massachusetts, is framed by mountains and bisected by the Housatonic River. Great Barrington's location at a crossroads along the historic Boston-Albany road resulted in its development as a commercial center in southern Berkshire County. The town's development pattern consists of four small 19th-century industrial/commercial villages distributed along the Housatonic Valley and confined by the Berkshire Mountain Range.

Great Barrington's central business district is concentrated on Main and Railroad Streets. Commercial buildings are set close to the street, with adjoining party walls and aligning facades creating a continuous wall of two- to four-story 19th- and early 20th-century masonry buildings. Storefronts are well-maintained with modest 20th century alterations. Signage complements the scale and style of the historic buildings, and street amenities such as park benches make the downtown area pedestrian-friendly. Rows of Bradford pear trees along Main and Castle Streets provide shade and attractive landscaping. The downtown area maintains a high degree of historical and architectural integrity and was designated a Local Historic District (M.G.L. Chapter 40C) in 1995.

The Mahaiwe Block is situated at the southern end of the central business district and defines the northwest corner of Castle and Main Streets with its continuous expanse of brick and marble. It is bordered on the north and east by the downtown commercial blocks of Railroad and Main Streets, respectively. On the south side of Castle Street a small tree-shaded park accommodates the Town Hall (1876), the community bandstand, and the Civil War Memorial. Directly west of the Mahaiwe Block are the old fire station (1899) and the adjacent railroad tracks that separate downtown Great Barrington from the residential neighborhoods.

EXTERIOR APPEARANCE

The three-story Mahaiwe Block is a long rectangular building with primary elevations on Main Street (east elevation) and Castle Street (south elevation). The building is faced with salmon-colored, Pennsylvania-pressed Roman brick trimmed with belt courses of marble, marble detailing at the windows, and pressed metal entablatures above storefronts and at the roofline. The marble trimmed windows and marble stringcourses, as well as continuous cornices at both storefront and roof levels, visually unite the building's separate functions, while differences in door and window placement and ornamentation distinguish the theatrical, banking, and retail portions of the building from each other.

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Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

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A broad, highly detailed, pressed-metal entablature crowns the building. Dentils and egg-and-dart molding run across the entablature's lower edge, while modillions alternate with rosettes in the cornice. This heavy cornice juts out slightly across the façade of the neighboring Parks Block on Main Street. A broad, pressed-metal entablature with denticulated cornice crowned by a marble stringcourse runs across the building between the first and second floors.

The Main Street façade is nine bays wide and incorporates two glass-fronted storefronts on the northernmost bays and a glass doorway leading up to the second- and third-floor offices and apartments. Rusticated brickwork delineates the corners of the building's Main Street façade. A marble Art Deco entryway to the space originally occupied by the National Mahaiwe Bank (now a retail store) takes up the Castle/Main Street corner of the building. The pressed-metal entablature over the storefronts is broken by the Art Deco entrance to the former bank, which provides a contrast in color and texture with the salmon brickwork of the rest of the building. On either side of the stone bank entrance are recessed arched windows with marble sills and springlines, and brick voussoirs outlined in molded brick. (photograph 12)

The bank entrance is three bays wide and flanked by rusticated stone piers in relief (these piers appear to have been part of the original 1905 bank façade). Traces of the lettering from the bank's former occupants (first the National Mahaiwe Savings Bank, then the First Agricultural National Bank of Berkshire County) have weathered into the stone above the doorway. Constructed during a 1929 bank remodeling, this entry replaced a set of arched doors and windows deeply recessed behind a pair of Tuscan columns. The new entryway of random ashlar marble brought the bank entrance flush with the main facade of the Mahaiwe Block. Windows exhibit 6/6 framing and heavy lanterns are symmetrically placed on either side of the door, with circular medallions showing an eagle in relief centered over each window. The door itself is framed in a compound arch that is almost Oriental in feeling. The outermost arch is made up of a spiraling rope molding, with the arch itself springing from a pair of Corinthian capitals. The inner arch is heavily ornamented with diamond-shaped panels and flowers. Inside the arch is a panel in bas relief showing a Native American man and woman with a basket of fruit and flowers, a bee skep between them, and cornucopias overflowing with flowers and fruit to either side. This motif of agricultural bounty is mounted over a series of square panels containing rosettes, which separate the decorative bas relief from the double doors below. Two sets of double doors lead into the building: a pair of glass-paned wooden doors and a distinctive set of bronze-paneled doors. The interior of the bank lobby and office space has been renovated for retail use, but the bank vault remains intact and is presently occupied by an art gallery.

The upper two stories of the Mahaiwe Block are delineated by stringcourses of marble, that serve to visually unite the building. These stringcourses run along the sills of the 1/1 second-and third-story windows and along the lintels of the third-story windows. At the same time, courses of marble along the second-floor window lintels visually echo the functional divisions of the first-floor bank and stores. Upper windows are grouped in alternating sets of one and three, with a single window centered over each end bay, then a set of three windows with linked marble lintels positioned over the bank entry and over the storefront area. A single window separates

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Mahaiwe Block
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these two sets of linked windows. (Although fitted with modern aluminum-framed replacement sash installed around 1990, the upper floor windows on the building's primary and rear facades retain their original size, configuration, and exterior appearance.)

The Castle Street façade is divided into three distinct sections: a series of arched windows that originally lit the National Mahaiwe Bank, a group of three glass-plated storefronts, and the Mahaiwe Theatre. The Castle Street façade shares the heavy first-floor and roofline cornices of the Main Street façade, and the second- and third-floor stringcourses of marble continue along this side of the building. Windows in the upper floors are grouped in patterns that reflect the divisions of the ground-floor businesses. (photograph 1)

The first floor of the Castle Street façade begins with a series of five arched, first-floor windows similar to those framing the bank entrance on the Main Street facade. The end windows in this series are set off slightly from the center three, which are grouped close together. The windows are slightly recessed with marble lintels and brick voussoirs in relief springing from a marble stringcourse that links the three center windows. Second- and third-story windows are similarly grouped, with a group of three regularly spaced windows over the three linked first-floor windows and sets of paired windows over the arches on each end. Continuous stone lintels serve to visually group the second-floor windows in pairs and threes. Between the first floor's second and third arched windows is a marble plaque that reads: "Mahaiwe Block built in 1905 replacing a building lost to a fire in 1901. Designed by architect Joseph McA. Vance."

A recessed arched doorway leading to the Mahaiwe Block's second floor provides a visual break between the row of arched windows and a trio of storefronts. Single second- and third-floor windows with marble lintels and sills are aligned over the door. Rusticated brick piers delineate the three storefronts, the arched doorway that leads to the building's upper floors, and the building's corners. The three storefronts appear to have retained many of their original details. The center storefront's display windows and door are aligned with the building's façade, while the two on either side have recessed entries with slanting plate-glass windows. All have central doors framed by fluted pilasters and surmounted by denticulated cornices and transoms.

Rusticated brickwork at the first-floor level marks the division between the Mahaiwe Theatre and the adjacent retail space. The rustication is repeated at the building's southwest corner and on either side of the theatre's massive central arched entryway, as well as along the inside edge of the arch. The theatre's façade is symmetrical, dominated by a central arch that rises from the first-floor cornice to the sill level of the third floor windows. This massive arch frames the theatre's three sets of double glass-paned doors. These French doors were added during a 1930 renovation. A wide entablature of pressed metal with stylized voussoirs carries the arch out over the sidewalk, so that it projects over the entry like a hood. Long, narrow windows fill the space between the arch and the denticulated cornice over the entry doors. A pediment resting on scrolled foliate brackets caps the center pair of doors. Wooden poster frames decorated with Corinthian spiral pilasters and swags are mounted on the marble-capped rusticated piers that stand in relief on either side of the entrance. On either side of these piers, the first-floor bays are slightly recessed, lit by small windows with three-part transoms. The easternmost window

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presently holds a poster frame similar to those described above. The upper floors of these end bays have a round window at the second-floor level and a recessed panel framed with molded brickwork at the third-floor level. Five third-floor windows are centered over the entry.

The 1930 metal, canopy-style marquee has recently been restored and reinstalled over the main theatre entrance. The rectangular marquee is suspended by a pair of chains set into the brick façade above the main arch. Each face of the marquee is bordered by electric lights with a scrolled flourish at the top. On the long (south) face, individual bulbs outline the name MAHAIWE in relief letters set in a low arch against a blue panel background with "PERFORMING ARTS CENTER" painted below the theatre name. On the east end of the marquee, neon letters spell out MAHAIWE at the scrolled top of the panel while a four-line, changeable panel below allows for the announcement of coming events. On the west end of the marquee, neon letters spell out MAHAIWE with the tops of the letters conforming to a slight arch. (photographs 2, 3)

A narrow alley separates the Mahaiwe Theatre from the neighboring fire station. The wall along this alley and the other nonpublic exterior walls are faced with plain red brick laid in common bond. The alley wall (the west, or side wall of the theatre) is a windowless expanse with square brick piers in relief marking off the bays containing doors leading into the auditorium. The roofline and walls at the rear of the theatre portion of the building step up in two progressively higher sections, with steep roof slopes on either side clad in thick slate shingles. The alley leads to a tiny service area that allows access to the rear of the commercial buildings on Main, Castle, and Railroad Streets and places a viewer at the inside angle of the L-shaped Mahaiwe Block.

At the rear, the Mahaiwe Block is tiered, with a one-story service bay for the businesses extending from the three-story main block. The one-story extension has a flat roof clad with asphalt roofing coated with a rubberized membrane (the building's main flat roof is similarly finished) and surrounded by a high parapet wall. Windows at the rear are 1/1, with marble lintels and topped with segmental arches. (Although fitted with modern aluminum-framed replacement sash, which were installed around 1990, the windows retain their original size, configuration, and exterior appearance.) Metal fire escapes lead from the upper floors to the alleyway below.

INTERIOR APPEARANCE

The Main Street entrance and stairway leading to the upper floors of the Mahaiwe Block are completely modern in finish, probably as a result of renovations after a 1985 fire. However, the Castle Street entrance retains most of its original features. From Castle Street, an arched doorway with heavy wooden molding leads into a small brick-walled vestibule area floored with buff octagonal tile bordered by squares of black, red, and white tile. A glass transom, sidelights, and large plate-glass windows over panels of wood frame the heavy doorway (now fitted with a modern door), separating the vestibule from the first-floor hallway.

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Like the vestibule, the hallway is floored with buff octagonal tile bordered with black, red, and white square tile. Dark flushboard wainscoting and a simple chair rail line the walls, continuing along the staircase and up to the second floor. The ceiling is divided by heavy beams running east to west, giving a half-timbered effect. All woodwork in the hallway and stairway appears to be original and seems to have retained its original finishes. A staircase with a massive newel post, heavy ball finial, and a plain square balustrade makes one turn on its way to the second-floor offices. At the landing are paired newel posts with pyramidal caps. Another simply capped newel post ends the stair railing at the second-floor level. Small pendants hanging from the bottom of the newels are visible from the first-floor hallway. **(photograph 10)**

With the exception of modern suspended ceilings and light fixtures and some newer hollow-core doors, the second-floor hallway has retained much of its original appearance. Dark wainscoting lines the hall, and the heavily molded door lintels and jambs have retained their original transoms. Many original doors with frosted, rippled glass and tilt-in transoms remain intact. Some offices have retained their original fireplace mantels. The former assembly hall on the third floor of the Mahaiwe Block has been converted to private apartments and is not accessible to the public. **(photograph 11)**

While the office areas of the Mahaiwe Block are appropriately business-like in appearance, the interior of the theatre displays a degree of ornamentation that is Baroque in its exuberance. Architect Joseph McArthur Vance and interior designer John L. E. Pell achieved a theatrical effect that manages to be both flamboyant and elegant. The result is a visual and acoustical delight.

Three sets of glass-paned double doors—installed as part of the 1930 renovation—lead through the massive arched entryway into the lobby. The center pair of doors is crowned by a denticulated pediment supported by heavy scrolled brackets with floral motifs. The pediment's central shield-shaped medallion displays the letter "M" in relief and is flanked by cornucopias and stylized leaves. Doric pilasters with recessed panels frame the doors. A heavy entablature with denticulated cornice runs around the lobby at the level of the door lintels. **(photograph 4)**

At the eastern side of the wide lobby, an arch overshadows a deep recess for the box office. This area is crowned with a central medallion nestled in foliage and flowers.

The west side of the lobby is also framed by an arch, but is not recessed. An entry door framed by pilasters is set to one side. The remainder of the wall is divided into three panels with a central arched mirror. Each panel is framed by spiraling columns with Corinthian capitals, and the whole wall is crowned by an entablature decorated with swags in relief.

An elaborate chandelier with floral motifs lights the area. The floor is laid with small octagonal and square tiles in red, black, and white, with a wide baseboard of charcoal-gray marble marking the junction of wall and floor.

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The original rose-and-ivory color scheme of the lobby has been restored. The color scheme is continued in the auditorium, with stencilwork in rose and ivory, and with varying shades of ivory and buff used to draw out the details of the plasterwork in relief. The auditorium's color scheme reflects the 1930 renovation that also added the theatre's French doors and metal marquee.

Three sets of French doors lead from the lobby to the auditorium, in mirror image of the street entrance with its heavy pediment, brackets, and "M" medallion. The auditorium, which originally seated 1,000 people, is efficiently laid out with steeply raked seating areas in orchestra, mezzanine, and balcony, allowing the placement of the maximum number of seats in the least amount of space, while at the same time affording ideal sight lines from nearly every seat in the house.

Performance and viewing areas and ornamental motifs are delineated in a series of arches, ovals, and curves, creating a softness at edges and corners and transitional areas, and contributing to the theatre's exceptional acoustics. From the stage, the auditorium walls curve around to the back of the theatre, so that the hall has an overall oval shape. Ceilings and walls meet in gentle curves rather than sharp angles. The curve of the balcony's front wall follows the curve of the auditorium walls, creating a sense of an oval-within-an-oval. (photograph 8)

The deep stage is set behind a high proscenium arch, which is articulated by alternating courses of molding and stencilwork to create the effect of a massive compound arch. The first course consists of a heavy plaster molding decorated with flowers and leaves in relief. The arch is further delineated with a course of stencilwork running parallel to the molding, in a foliate design painted in ivory and rose. Another thin molding divides this first course of stenciling from yet another course of stencils in a pattern of quartered circles in light rose on an ivory background. The second course of stenciling springs from Doric pilasters that flank the proscenium arch. These pilasters have recessed central panels decorated in relief with eight different motifs of angels, urns, foliage, and cornucopias, none of them repeating. Triglyphs decorate the architrave over the pilasters, which are topped by shield-shaped medallions painted ivory and rose. A heavy denticulated cornice runs from these pilasters around the auditorium to the balcony, creating a visual link between performance and viewing areas. Pilasters and cornice are painted ivory, standing out from the general background color of the walls, which are painted a deep rose.

The stage apron curves out at the front, cantilevered slightly over the orchestra floor, with a denticulated cornice running along its edge. Wainscoting topped with a denticulated molding runs from the stage to a pair of arched openings leading to the stairs that go up to the box seats and balconies.

The proscenium arch is flanked by a pair of arches framing the box-seating areas. These arches spring from the pilasters on either side of the proscenium to end at a similar set of pilasters separating the box-seating area from the main balcony. A heavy rope molding with central shield-shaped medallion delineates each arch. The soffits of these arches are punctuated with rose-shaped lighting fixtures mounted in square recessed panels. A pair of elaborately detailed balconies containing the box seats curves out at each side of the auditorium, their outer walls rounded. (photograph 5)

(continued)

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These small balconies are cantilevered over massive brackets decorated with swags of flowers and foliage, and staggered so that the front balcony is lower than its companion. The exterior of each small balcony is heavily decorated with swags in relief, a central shield-shaped medallion in rose and gold, and floral rope molding running around the base. On the underside of each balcony is a huge plaster rosette with a central acorn-shaped pendant. The box seat and main balcony areas are entered through a recessed arched doorway centered between the two box-seat balconies. Pilasters with plain recessed panels flank this doorway, with the heavily molded arch springing from a wide entablature ornamented with triglyphs. This entablature continues as a molding course running across the recess that contains the box seats. (photograph 6)

Heavy pilasters similar to those flanking the stage mark the division between the orchestra and the mezzanine and main balcony areas. A massive arch springing from these pilasters extends across the width of the auditorium, echoing the curve and decorative motifs of the proscenium arch with alternating courses of molding and stenciling, and creating the effect of an arch-within-an-arch, with the proscenium arch framed by this larger arch. Stenciled quartered circles in rose and ivory repeat the stenciled patterns over the proscenium arches. In the corners of the wall above this arch are stenciled medallions. This arched panel acts as a soundboard, which amplifies and projects the sound from the stage, contributing to the hall's exceptional acoustics.

The massive brackets supporting the box seat balconies are echoed by those underneath the main balcony, which is supported by thin Corinthian columns, which also serve to separate the orchestra seating area from the mezzanine. Another set of Corinthian columns supports the balcony toward the rear of the auditorium. At the rear of the mezzanine, a low wall of simple wooden paneling topped with a brass rail separates the mezzanine from the entry area leading from the lobby to the main auditorium. Sheathed in flat-paneled wainscoting with a molded chair rail, the rear wall of the auditorium is more gently curved than the rest of the theatre. From this area, two side doorways framed with denticulated cornices open onto broad stairways leading to the balcony. (photograph 9)

The front of the balcony is ornamented with swags, shield-shaped medallions, and rope moldings like those of the box-seat balconies. The rear and side walls of the balcony seating area are painted deep rose, with ivory plaster moldings continuing the lines and motifs from the box seat area, but in simplified form. The heavily ornamented pilasters that mark the division between the orchestra and the balcony areas are surmounted by another set of plain pilasters, with a wide molded entablature running from the capitals of each set of pilasters around the balcony area. Piers in the balcony's side walls are articulated simply in relief, with unornamented arches, also in relief, linking them. (photograph 7)

Elaborately painted and stenciled ceilings over the orchestra and balcony areas continue the fanciful decorative motifs of the Theatre's elaborate plasterwork. The ceiling that curves over the orchestra seats displays a stenciled central motif outlined by a double border of burgundy and yellow framing a buff interior with vases, flowers, and foliage in shades of ivory, buff, yellow, and pink. Over the balcony, the ceiling is painted ivory with rose geometric stencils in patterns of large and small circles and *fleurs-de-lis*.

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Under the supervision of restoration architect Hugh Hardy, the exterior and interior of the Mahaiwe Theatre have been undergoing a five-year-long restoration that involved repair and upgrading of structural systems and infrastructure, improvements in accessibility for handicapped patrons, recreation of the original stencil designs, and the restoration of the theatre's auditorium and lobby to their 1930 color scheme.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known on the Mahaiwe Block property, sites may be present. Ten ancient sites are located in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for Native American settlement and subsistence activities. The Mahaiwe Block is located on a level to moderately sloping stream terrace and outwash plain west of the Housatonic River. The river is located over 1,000 feet from the Mahaiwe Block; however, the river's floodplain is located within 1,000 feet of the nominated property. Local tradition and secondary sources state there was once a Native settlement near the site of the Great Bridge and a fording place used by both Native Americans and European settlers. Both of the latter areas lie outside the limits of the nominated property. In general, however, the potential for locating significant ancient Native American resources on the Mahaiwe Block is low. Construction of the Whiting Store (1785), the Leavenworth Building (1805), the Mahaiwe House (1846), and the extant Mahaiwe Block (1905) on the small lot (less than one acre) would have destroyed any ancient resources located on the property. The extant building on the Mahaiwe Block has a full basement level and covers nearly the entire block and nominated property.

There is also a low potential for locating significant historic archaeological resources on the Mahaiwe Block property. While at least three buildings preceded the extant Mahaiwe Block on the property, construction of the existing building would have destroyed any earlier structures or features located on the property.

(end)

MAHAIWE BLOCK

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE COUNTY, MA

County and State

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant & distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
COMMERCE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
PERFORMING ARTS

Period of Significance

1905-1958

Significant Dates

1905

1929-30

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

VANCE, Joseph MacArthur (architect)
PELL, John L.E. (interior designer)
SHAW, Edward Hoyt (masonry contractor)
LORRAINE, E.R. (carpentry/contractor)

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office (MA)
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1905 Mahaiwe Block possesses a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. It meets National Register Criterion A at the local level as a prime example of Great Barrington's downtown development boom in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It also meets National Register Criterion C at the local level as a commercial block designed by a local architect (Joseph MacArthur Vance) in the French Renaissance Revival style and as one of the few extant theatres remaining in Berkshire County.

The Mahaiwe Block includes the Mahaiwe Theatre, Great Barrington's first and only theatre. The Mahaiwe has the distinction of having remained in continuous operation since its opening in 1905, even through the course of a recent five-year-long restoration project. Described by historian Bernard Drew as "the entertainment and cultural heart and soul of Great Barrington" (Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 3), the theatre has been a major venue for theatrical, cinematic, and musical entertainment in the Southern Berkshires and it continues its role as a performing arts center today.

Throughout its history, the Mahaiwe has been a cherished part of the Great Barrington community. Concerns about the theatre's fate served as the impetus for historic preservation activity in town, leading to the establishment of Great Barrington's first historic district ordinance (1995). The building's role in Great Barrington's commercial and cultural history meets Criteria A in the areas of Commerce, Entertainment, and Performing Arts. Its richly detailed exterior and elaborate Baroque interior are fine examples of the work of Pittsfield architect Joseph McArthur Vance and Great Barrington interior designer John L.E. Pell, meeting Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Geography

The town of Great Barrington, located in the southwestern corner of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, is framed by mountains and bisected by the Housatonic River. The geography and natural resources are diverse and include the fertile floodplains of the Housatonic, Green, and Williams Rivers, the extensive mixed deciduous and conifer forests on the mountains and deep quarry deposits of native marble and blue dolomite limestone.

The town's location at a crossroads along the historic Boston-Albany road made it the focus of more intense industrial and commercial development than its neighbors. Areas of fast-running water along the three rivers were exploited to power gristmills and sawmills, textile and paper factories, and hydroelectric plants. Great Barrington's historic village center and the outlying industrial villages of Housatonic, Van Deusenville, and Risingdale grew up along these waterpower sites.

Much of Great Barrington's present economy revolves around tourism. While many small town central business districts struggled and faded during the mid to late 20th-century, the tourist economy and strong local support have kept Great Barrington's downtown vibrant, with the Mahaiwe Block and Theatre serving as key elements in that success.

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Colonial Period, 1694-1776

The area that became Great Barrington first attracted the notice of European settlers during King Philip's War, when a group of about 200 Narragansett Indians were pursued west by a party of Connecticut Militia under Major John Talcott. Talcott and his party ambushed and routed the Indians on the banks of the Housatonic, near the old fording place.

Situated near both the New York and Connecticut borders, this corner of the Berkshires Hills was originally home to the Housatonic Indians, members of the Mahican tribe of the Algonquin nation. The earliest travel route was a path frequented by native peoples from Westfield to Kinderhook in New York. (This path eventually became the Boston-Albany Road, which roughly follows the route now taken by Routes 23 and 71.)

Minister Benjamin Wadsworth's 1694 account of a journey through Massachusetts to Albany describes the Great Barrington area as "a place called Ousetonuck formerly inhabited by Indians" having "on each side some parcels of pleasant, fertile intervale land" in the midst of the "hideous, howling wilderness" of the Berkshires (cited in Taylor, pp. 46-47). Ousetonuck, or Housatonic (translated as "the river beyond the mountains"), appears to also have been called "Mahaiwe" or "Neh-hai-we," translated as "valley under the hill" or "place down stream" (Drew, *Great Barrington*..., p. 517; Taylor, p.53).

Over the next thirty years, Dutch settlers from New York and English settlers from central and eastern Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island staked claims to those pleasant, fertile intervale lands along the Housatonic River. In 1705, a decade after Wadsworth's trip, the New York colony granted the "Patent of Westenhook" to Albany traders Peter Schuyler and Derrick Wessells. Westenhook (the Dutch version of "Housatonic") encompassed much of the Housatonic Valley in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Although there does not seem to have been any immediate settlement activity as a result of the land grant, there appears to have been some trade activity between Dutch traders from New York and native peoples along the Housatonic.

Matthew Noble of Westfield was the first European to establish a permanent settlement in the Berkshires, when he established his home in the Sheffield or Great Barrington area in the fall of 1725. Others, both English and Dutch, quickly followed suit. By 1736, the Great Bridge (no longer extant) had been erected in the Great Barrington area to facilitate settlement and commerce on both sides of the Housatonic River.

The area along the Housatonic floodplain south of the Great Bridge and near the historic Indian fording place provided an ideal combination of agricultural and industrial opportunities. The rapid flow of the Housatonic in the area between the Great Bridge and what is now Bridge Street made it an excellent spot to harness the river's waterpower. To the north and south of this area, the Housatonic floodplain spreads out in a broad expanse of meadowland. The gristmills and sawmills needed to support agricultural development could be centrally located between the areas of richest farmland.

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Around 1745, the road that became Main Street was laid out on the west side of the river from Bridge Street north to the Great Bridge, and in 1747, Castle Street was opened. It appears that the first settler in the part of town that eventually became the central business district was David King of Westfield, who built a house (no longer extant) near the present corner of Main and Bridge Streets in Great Barrington.

Great Barrington was formally incorporated as a separate town in 1761. The town took its name from Lord Barrington, England's Minister of War. At the time of incorporation, Great Barrington included small portions of the towns that would become Lee and Alford. The new town became the shire town for Berkshire County. Its residents included tanners, carpenters, blacksmiths, tavern keepers, millers, and shoemakers, as well as farmers.

The town's settlement pattern began to change in the years immediately following the town's incorporation. The area south of the Great Bridge along the west side of the river started to attract residents and businesses. The construction of the county courthouse on the southwest corner of Main and Castle Streets in 1764 created a southern anchor for the area that was to become the central business district.

Revolutionary & Federal Periods, 1776-1830

In 1774 a group of Berkshire County delegates convened to adopt resolutions opposing the British monarch's policies toward the colonies and calling for a boycott of imported British goods. Reacting to the tightening of British military rule, a crowd of 300-500 men prevented the Court of Common Pleas from sitting at the Great Barrington county courthouse in August, 1774. A year later, Great Barrington volunteers mobilized in response to the Lexington alarm within two days of the battle—in those days, an amazingly quick reaction to news of a battle that had happened a hundred miles away.

Great Barrington's position on the Boston-Albany road meant that troops and military supplies frequently came through the town. In the winter of 1776, Henry Knox and his convoy of captured artillery from Fort Ticonderoga passed through on the way east to relieve Washington in Boston. Almost a year later, Burgoyne's captured army also trooped through Great Barrington, with several deserting Hessians deciding to stay behind and take up residence.

It was in Great Barrington's county courthouse that slavery was first declared unconstitutional in Massachusetts. In 1781, Elizabeth Freeman had run away from Sheffield resident John Ashley. Freeman and another Sheffield black named Brom sued for their freedom. Great Barrington Judge Theodore Sedgwick's ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

In 1786, when disconsolate Massachusetts citizens were beginning to rebel against their postwar burdens of debt, Great Barrington's Court of Common Pleas was shut down by a group of angry citizens determined to

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make their complaints heard. A few weeks later, the Supreme Judicial Court was similarly closed. Support for Shays' Rebellion was not widespread, however, and several clashes between insurgents and local militia over the winter of 1786-1787 culminated in a skirmish that was the final blow to the rebellion.

The earliest indication of commercial activity on the eventual site of the Mahaiwe Block dates from 1785. Samuel Whiting ran a store on the northwest corner of Castle and Main Streets, sharing the site with his brother, Dr. Abraham K. Whiting (1770-1852), who seems to have been an apothecary as well as a physician. A handbill printed for the Whitings in 1785 advertised "a handsome little assortment of dry goods and groceries" (cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 4).

Yale president Timothy Dwight was not particularly impressed by Great Barrington when he rode through in 1798. According to his description, the town (with a population of 1,373 in 1790) was hardly the image of prosperity. Dwight wrote of the community: "The houses are in many instances decayed; the Episcopal church is barely decent; the Congregational ruinous. Few places can boast of a better soil, or more delightful situation, yet I suspect few have been less prosperous or less happy." (cited in Drew, *Great Barrington*, p. 210).

Through the early decades of the 19th century, new transportation routes provided additional links between Great Barrington and surrounding communities. By 1800, the town's population had grown by nearly one-fifth, to 1,754. In 1819, Great Barrington became a stop on the Hartford-Albany stagecoach route.

In 1803, Great Barrington became the site of Berkshire County's first carding mill. Before that time, Great Barrington's mills primarily supported the community's agricultural activity, grinding locally grown grain and cutting lumber for local construction. With the new mill, the town began a gradual transformation from a primarily agricultural community to a town whose economy depended on a triad of agriculture, industry, and commerce.

While there was little population growth from 1800 to 1810 (only thirty new residents were added on the 1810 census), the community grew steadily from 1820 onward, with a population of 1,908 in 1820, 2,264 in 1830, and 2,704 in 1840. The 1820s saw the construction of a series of textile mills at several sites along the Housatonic and Williams Rivers.

By 1829, Great Barrington's central village included two taverns, four stores, two tanneries, a grist mill, a plaster mill, and several craftsmen's shops. An 1830 map of the town shows the most concentrated areas of settlement at Van Deusenville and along Main Street between the Great Bridge and running south to just below Castle Street. With a population of 2,264 (according to the 1830 census), Great Barrington was establishing itself as the manufacturing center of southern Berkshire County.

The Main and Castle Street corner changed along with the community. In 1805, another pair of brothers, Dr. David and Isaac Leavenworth, took down the Whiting brothers' store and built a new one that became the town's principal retail shop. The brothers Leavenworth included the town's first social assembly hall (as opposed

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to religious or governmental meeting places) in their establishment. The Leavenworth Building became a center for balls and other social gatherings, and for the meetings of local fraternal organizations. The Leavenworth Building also housed Great Barrington's post office, with Increase Sumner (1801-1871) as postmaster.

The whole center village totaled about forty-two dwellings, two churches, one hotel, and three stores, including Leavenworth's. ("Our Village Fifty Years Ago," 27 Dec 1866, cited in Drew, *Great Barrington*, pp. 211-212). Strategically situated across from the town's principal tavern (the old Sheldon tavern, no longer extant), the Leavenworth store was the largest in town. Its prominence led to a shift in commercial development south from the Great Bridge to the lower bridge across from Castle Street.

Early Industrial Period, 1830-1870

For all its new industry, however, Great Barrington remained essentially an agricultural town with pockets of industry and commerce. Its dual agricultural/industrial identity was exemplified by the organization of the Housatonic Agricultural Society in 1841. The next year, the Society bought a parcel of land south of the central village and created a fairground that became home to a county-wide agricultural show that became Berkshire County's biggest annual event until ending in 1999.

The Agricultural Society's inaugural cattle show also marked the arrival of the railroad in Great Barrington. The line opened in September of that year, just in time to bring a load of passengers to see Berkshire County's first agricultural fair. The first shipment of freight from town consisted of goods from the Berkshire Manufacturing Company. While fairgoers celebrated the farming life, the business community was embracing new technology.

In 1839, the Leavenworth Building at Main and Castle Streets burned down. By 1846, local businessman Silas Sprague (1794-1865) had purchased the site and built a new wooden business block that he christened the Mahaiwe House. The new building was a 2½-story, hip-roofed building with a cupola or belvedere on top and a two-story columned portico extending across the building's Main Street façade. It included space for offices as well as shops.

The construction of the railroad in the 1840s brought a new group of residents to town: Irish immigrants who had laid the railroad tracks and sometimes stayed to take jobs in local industries. Irish immigrants and other new residents increased the town's population by 500 for each decade from 1840 to 1880 (1850 – 3,264 residents; 1860 – 3,871; 1870 – 4,320; 1880 – 4,658).

The telegraph followed on the heels of the railroad. In 1848, a telegraph line running from Bridgeport, Connecticut to Bennington, Vermont, passed through Great Barrington, only four years after the first successful telegraph line was laid between Baltimore and Washington. The town's first telegraph office was located in the Mahaiwe House on the corner of Castle and Main. This line was abandoned within a few years, but in 1857, the

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American Telegraph Company opened a new line of communication with Pittsfield, extending service to Bridgeport in 1862.

Great Barrington's first bank was incorporated as the Mahaiwe Bank in 1847. The bank soon moved into its own building: a temple-fronted Greek Revival structure next door to the new Mahaiwe House. Wilbur Curtis was the bank's first president, followed by John L. Dodge (1814-1904). In 1865, the bank gained a national charter, becoming the National Mahaiwe Bank.

The appearance of the center village took on a new face starting in the 1850s. The business community was building substantial blocks in brick and stone with shops on the ground floor and offices and apartments in the upper stories. From a street of scattered wooden structures, Main Street was evolving into a row of masonry business structures bracketed at the north and south by the two stone churches.

Late Industrial Period, 1870-1910

After the Civil War, a new element was added to Great Barrington's economic mix: tourism. With proximity to the New York and Connecticut borders and good rail connections, the Berkshires became a magnet for well-to-do vacationers to escape the heat of the cities. The scenic vistas and cooler and cleaner mountain air made Great Barrington and the towns around it an inviting retreat, not only for wealthy businessmen and their families, but for writers and artists.

In 1869, the Great Barrington Savings Bank was incorporated with Egbert Hollister (c. 1817-1889) as president. Hollister started his business career as a clerk in the Russell brothers' Long Stone Store. In 1848, he decided to run his own store, in partnership with Benjamin E. Durant as Durant, Hollister & Company. After Durant retired, Hollister partnered with Charles J. Taylor, then Richard H. Moore before becoming involved in banking. Hollister served in both state and town government as a state legislator and Great Barrington town treasurer. In addition to his position at Great Barrington Savings, Hollister was president of the Berkshire Railroad and a director of the National Mahaiwe Bank. In 1883, Great Barrington Savings set up its offices on Main Street near the National Mahaiwe Bank and the Mahaiwe House.

By 1876, Great Barrington's population of 4,320 included 831, or nearly 20%, foreign-born residents, most of them Irish who worked in the town's factories. There were also a few German, French, Dutch, Swiss, Welsh, and Scottish residents, but not in significant numbers. The post-Civil War years also saw the birth of Great Barrington's best-known native son, civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963).

In 1876 Great Barrington's new Town Hall was constructed at the southwest corner of Main and Castle Streets, on the site of the original county courthouse. The new Greek Revival building incorporated both town offices and the Southern Berkshire County Registry of Deeds.

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In 1879, the town's first telephone lines were installed, and in 1883 Main Street had its first electric streetlights. Local inventor William Stanley became a pioneer in the field of electricity, patenting a "self-regulating transformer," which provided electric lighting for Main Street stores in 1886.

The 1883/84 business directory also comments on the town's attractions to summer residents: "Great Barrington is one of the finest inland summer resorts in the United States. ...Here, in the summer time, come hundreds of people, fleeing from the toil of hot cities." (*Great Barrington Directory, 1883-4*, pp. 7-8) Boston lawyer Henry Parker Fellows described the community as "a rare combination of New-England thrift and New-York opulence." (cited in Drew, *Great Barrington*, p. 439) A new railroad station in the center village, completed in 1872, provided a more suitable welcome for the town's new arrivals.

In 1887, the town had its own electric light company with the organization of the Great Barrington Electric Light Company. The company eventually became the Southern Berkshire Power & Electric Company, which began renting offices in the Mahaiwe Block in 1920.

At the turn of the 19th century, population figures show a brief pause in growth, with a slight decrease on the 1890 census (4,612, compared to the 1880 figure of 4,648), followed by a 20% increase in 1900, to 5,854.

Some time before 1887, Charles Burget (d. 1900) and Ward Lewis (1836-1898) opened Burget & Lewis, a hardware store in the Mahaiwe House, which they rented from Silas Sprague's heirs, Silas and Edith Parks. In 1891, the partners bought the Mahaiwe House from their landlords, and it became known as the Burget & Lewis Block. Business tenants in 1895 included druggist G. William Platt; Joseph W. Curtiss, realtor, surveyor, and civil engineer; Herbert C. Joyner, lawyer, insurance agent, and investment broker; Lane Bros. Berkshire Portrait studio, which advertised itself as "the leading photographers" in Berkshire County; and W.W. Langdon, auctioneer and collector. The building also included apartments, or at least rooms for rent. William B. Bennett, a steam fitter at Parrish Bros., was renting at the time.

Burget and Lewis expanded their commercial building westward down Castle Street around 1890. An 1884 bird's-eye view and 1884 and 1889 maps show a row of detached gable-roofed (possibly Greek Revival) houses running up Castle Street behind the Mahaiwe House. By 1892, the residential structures attached to the rear of the Mahaiwe House had been taken down and replaced by a meeting hall for the Grand Army of the Republic and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

This three-story Italianate wooden structure served as an annex to the Burget & Lewis Block, quite different in style and scale from the earlier Mahaiwe House. The new block had meeting halls in the upper stories and retail space on the first floor, including a bicycle shop and piano store (Leveille, p. 53). In 1898, Burget and Lewis bought an adjoining parcel of land on Castle Street from Maria Manning, perhaps in anticipation of further expansion. However, the partners died before taking any action on the property.

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A series of fires in the 1890s and early 1900s devastated the downtown area and inspired the syndicate that would create the Mahaiwe Block and the Mahaiwe Theatre. In 1895, a fire damaged the Berkshire Block, across the street from the Mahaiwe House. In October 1896, a blaze wiped out most of the wood-frame commercial buildings along Railroad Street. Twenty-two buildings, housing thirty-six businesses and more than a dozen families, were destroyed. As a result of these fires, the town adopted a bylaw prohibiting the construction of any new wooden buildings in the business district. Over the next twenty years, the street was rebuilt with two- and three-story masonry blocks.

In March 1901, only five years after the Railroad Street disaster, fire swept through the Mahaiwe House, which "...was obliterated in about two hours time..." according to the *Berkshire Courier*. Searles Castle owner Edward Searles had recently purchased the block and had not yet insured it. Displaced businesses included: Dr. Benjamin, Dr. H. Ben Ober (dentist), J. W. Curtiss (surveyor), Mary Maloney (dressmaker), A. H. Sanford (tailor), and F. N. Hughes (photographer). The neighboring Odd Fellows and GAR Building was also destroyed. Stationed just around the corner on Castle Street, the Great Barrington Fire Department was able to respond quickly and prevent the fire from spreading any further. The fire was one of a series of three Main Street blazes that were attributed to a young arsonist. The young arsonist was caught and sent to reform school, and local business owners set about regrouping and planning for reconstruction.

The Mahaiwe Block

In August 1904, the *Berkshire Courier* announced that a syndicate of local businessmen was buying the entire corner of Main and Church Streets, including the Mahaiwe House and National Mahaiwe Bank sites and a large piece of property on Castle Street east of the fire station. Between July and November 1904, the syndicate purchased six separate parcels of land, including the Mahaiwe House property, the adjoining Eastland parcel on Castle Street, the National Mahaiwe Bank site, the Great Barrington Savings Bank site, and parcels at the rear of Railroad Street's Hotel Waverly, along with an assortment of related easements and rights-of-way. The paper described the transaction as "probably the largest real estate deal ever carried through in Great Barrington." "[T]he 'Aching Void' at Castle Street corner [would] be covered at last," the *Courier* proclaimed. Plans were underway for construction of a three-story brick building "equipped with all the convenience of the modern business block," which would include a bank, stores, offices, and a "first-class Theatre, something which [Great Barrington] has never had."

Previously, musical and theatrical performances in town, whether staged by local groups or touring entertainers, had taken place in various upper floor assembly halls in buildings such as the Town Hall, the Sumner Block (located two buildings north of the Mahaiwe Block, c. 1860), and Housatonic's Central Hall. In addition to the theatre, the building would have its own assembly hall for social gatherings and dances (cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 5-6). The assembly hall didn't last long, however; by 1910, it was divided up for more lucrative uses as apartments and offices. The syndicate that pulled off the task of consolidating the properties and planning the

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new structure consisted of industrialist John Henry Coffing Church, attorney Frank H. Wright, businessman Frank Curtiss, and Curtiss's son Roy.

Great Barrington native John Henry Coffing Church (1870-1946) studied architecture and engineering at MIT, an alma mater that he shared with Mahaiwe Block architect Joseph McArthur Vance. With Church only two years younger than Vance, it is possible that the two men became acquainted during their time at MIT. After finishing his studies, Church worked as a clerk for his father's company, Richmond Iron Works. Eventually, Church became involved in several of the town's key businesses. He was the chairman of the board of directors for Monument Mills in Housatonic, and served on the boards of three financial institutions: Union Trust of Springfield, the National Mahaiwe Bank, and Great Barrington Savings Bank. His involvement in both industrial and financial institutions made him a crucial player in the syndicate. Church also served as the Mahaiwe Theatre's first lessee, from 1905 to 1910.

Frank H. Wright (1852- 1918), a native of Canaan, Connecticut, began his career in Great Barrington as an assistant in M. E. Tobey's jewelry store. Around 1872, Wright began working for Judge Justin Dewey (1836-1900), serving a legal apprenticeship for nearly a decade. In 1881, Wright was admitted to the bar and opened his own practice. Wright broadened his business interests to include insurance and manufacturing. He became an associate in the insurance firm of Wright & Frein (later Wright & Stone), and vice president of Monument Mills. As attorney for Edward Searles, the owner of the Mahaiwe House site, Wright was in an ideal position to broker the deal.

Frank Curtiss (1838-1918), a native of the neighboring town of Sheffield, was educated in private schools, becoming a teacher in New Jersey at the age of eighteen. Returning to Great Barrington, Curtiss bought a distillery in the Seekonk neighborhood from his father and ran it for four years. Curtiss sold the distillery and moved to New York City, where he made his fortune investing in the city's new trolley system. He became president of the Belt Line and Sixth Avenue Street Railways in New York. By 1900, his investments in public transportation had made him a millionaire. Maintaining his principal residence in New York, Curtiss began summering in his home town of Sheffield. Like Church and Wright, Curtiss and his son Roy (1881-1923) also served on the board of the National Mahaiwe Bank. He became the largest shareholder in the Mahaiwe Block project. Curtiss also owned a partial interest in the Berkshire Block on the other side of Main Street.

The syndicate hired Pittsfield architect Joseph McArthur Vance (1868-1948), perhaps because of his involvement in the Berkshire Block reconstruction across the street and his recent Classical Revival design for the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield, a plush 1,200-seat auditorium built by the Sullivan Brothers in 1903 (restored and reopened in 2006). A few years later, Vance would also design the Majestic (a.k.a. Palace) Theatre in Pittsfield (1910, demolished in the 1990s).

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Born in Urbana, Ohio, Vance grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and attended Ohio's Urban University before going on to study architecture at MIT. After receiving his degree in 1891, Vance worked with Boston architect Francis R. Allen. In 1894, Vance moved to Pittsfield to oversee the construction of the Berkshire County Savings Bank.

Like many early 20th-century architects, Vance employed a variety of revival styles that had their origins in classical architecture. His career encompassed residential, commercial, institutional, cultural, and recreational structures, from single-family homes to the five-story Berkshire Insurance Company Building in Pittsfield (Renaissance Revival Style, Bank Row, 1918) and Mount Greylock's rustic English Revival Bascom Lodge (1935). Besides the Mahaiwe and Berkshire Blocks, Vance designed Great Barrington's Renaissance Revival Hotel Waverly (1897, just around the corner from the Mahaiwe Block on Railroad Street), the Colonial Revival Marble Block (at the northern end of the Main Street commercial district, 1902), and the Berkshire Record Building (aka First National Grocery Store, 271 Main Street, 1940). Like the Mahaiwe Block, the Marble Block was built by a syndicate of local businessmen.

Other commercial structures designed by Vance in Pittsfield include: the Kinnell-Kresge Building (47-51 North St, c. 1918), the Classical Revival England Brothers Department Store (85-89 North St, 1937 – façade changed in 1960s, demolished 1999), the Colonial Revival Melville Building (308-316 North St, c. 1899), and the Renaissance Revival Waite Building (338-346 North St, c. 1913; with George E. Haynes). Vance's institutional buildings in Pittsfield include the Classical Revival Registry of Deeds Building (a.k.a. Berkshire County Court House Annex, 24 Wendell Avenue, 1928), and the Classical Revival Masonic Temple (116 South St., 1914). Vance also designed the baseball stadium at Waconah Park (1919), one of the last remaining wooden grandstands in the country.

In Lenox, Vance designed the posh 400-room Aspinwall Hotel (1902, destroyed by fire in 1931), a sprawling Colonial Revival building that included the most modern conveniences, such as steam heat, long-distance telephone service, elevators, and a telegraph office. The hotel even had its own resident physician. In the eastern part of the state, Vance designed the Classical Revival Practical Arts Building at Fitchburg State College (1909).

In addition to his architectural talents, Vance was also an amateur actor. A member of the Pittsfield Theatre Company, he appeared in many productions at the Colonial Theatre. Described by historian Bernard Drew as "a ham at heart," Vance was a natural comedian. The Pittsfield composing team of Frederick J. Liddle and Edward Boltwood, who specialized in comic operettas in the manner of Gilbert and Sullivan, wrote at least one role with Vance specifically in mind (Drew, *Berkshire Eagle* 11 Nov 2000). Vance didn't confine his histrionic efforts to Pittsfield; he also performed in the Liddle and Boltwood operetta "Sunny Sicily" on the Mahaiwe stage in 1905 (Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 18; *Great Barrington*, p. 39).

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Vance first worked with Mahaiwe Block investor John H. C. Church in 1895, when Church hired the architect to remodel his home. For the Mahaiwe Block, Vance designed a French Renaissance Revival block of salmon-colored Roman pressed brick with marble, dolomite limestone foundation, and marble and pressed-metal trim. No doubt with the previous history of the site in mind, Vance was careful to incorporate the latest in fireproof construction technology.

Contractors on the project included mason Edward Hoyt Shaw (1849-1931), carpenter E.R. Lorraine, electricians Whitwell & Malloy, and heating contractor Leland Manufacturing Co. A Van Deusenville resident, Shaw moved to Great Barrington from New York State in 1875. According to his obituary, Shaw had "built practically all the larger business blocks that stood in the business section of Great Barrington. He had an enviable reputation as a building contractor of the highest integrity" (cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 10). E. R. Lorraine, the carpentry contractor, hailed from Canaan, Connecticut and worked in partnership with his son, S. E. Lorraine of Sheffield. A. Whitwell (1866-1938), of Whitwell & Maloy, stayed connected to the Mahaiwe for many years, renting office space in the Mahaiwe Block for about thirty years and serving as the theatre's house electrician.

On August 31, 1905, the *Berkshire Courier* published an architect's rendering and a lengthy description of the new block. The paper's praise was effusive: "The block as a whole equals in architectural appearance, modern arrangement, finish and solidity of construction anything in the state, though of course there are many larger ones." The article went on to describe the bank's white marble columned entrance and quarter-oak paneled lobby. Some woodwork and fixtures had been salvaged from the older bank block, which had been updated just before the fire. The bank's tiled floors, marble baseboards, fireplaces, and fireproof time-locked vaults were among the features highlighted in the *Courier's* description (Note: the following citations are all from Drew, *Mahaiwe*, pp. 9-13).

The first-floor retail tenants were to be Colden Sage's cigar factory and store and Charles M. Gibbs's clothing shop on the building's Main Street side. Both included "modern fittings," fireplaces, and skylights. Three stores, as yet untenanted, were located on the Castle Street side. On the second floor were twenty-one offices ranging from 13 x 20' to 20 x 22', seven of them with fireplaces. The offices were set up so that they could be rented either singly or in suites. The second floor was also to include a "club room." On the third floor of the Castle Street side of the building was the block's 59 x 51' assembly hall with "beam-finished ceilings," a reception area and restroom facilities. A piano was to be added so that the space could be used for dances and other social gatherings. The Main Street portion of the third floor was not partitioned or finished, and would be custom-finished once tenants were found.

Contractors were working overtime, the *Courier* reported, to get the theatre ready for a planned September 26 opening. The paper expected theatre-goers to find the new facility a wonder:

The Mahaiwe Theatre will be as up-to-date as any playhouse in the country. In size it will rank with many a so-called metropolitan theatre while in equipment, exits and decorative features it will have no superiors.... The architecture is French Renaissance, the decorative color scheme is a

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graduation of the mild varied tones of green and the appointments will be a series of delightful surprises to the patrons. The stage is as large as those of the large theatre stages of the country and in many instances is larger. Even the palatial Nile green playhouse, the Hudson theatre in New York, cannot boast of greater stage area than the Mahaiwe.... It is the widest stage in Berkshire county... This makes it possible to handle all the scenery of any production that is produced in New York or travels on the road. There are six large dressing rooms, ample to accommodate 20 principals, and two chorus rooms capable of taking care of from 50 to 100.

Vance had been careful to include a number of features to ease the minds of theatre-goers who might be nervous about the site's previous history. The *Courier* continued: "The house can be emptied in three minutes in case of any danger and the fire equipment, the best and newest in the country, works automatically with the asbestos curtain and the stage ventilators. The stage can be completely shut off from the auditorium in less than a minute by the system installed." Just in case readers were still concerned, the paper reminded them: "Besides, across the alleyway, the Great Barrington Fire Department acts as a permanent added safeguard."

Although some downtown buildings included assembly spaces which could be used as auditoriums, Great Barrington had never had a building constructed strictly for theatrical use before. The Mahaiwe would be Great Barrington's only theatre for either stage shows or motion pictures until the construction of a multiplex cinema on Railroad Street in 1995. At the time of its construction, the Mahaiwe boasted the largest proscenium stage in Berkshire County and could seat 1,000 people.

Interior designer John Leggett Everett Pell (c. 1876-1970) chose a palette of old rose and ivory for the lobby. In the auditorium, he used shades of green to highlight the plaster relief and stenciled designs of his exuberant Baroque interior. The *Berkshire Courier* described the planned color scheme:

The decorations are to be carried out in the graduation colors of restful green. The shades will run from the light pea-green to the deeper richness of the Nile green. The ceiling and side walls will be paneled with stenciled borders in mosaic effect and the curtains, draperies and carpets will blend in harmony. The stage curtain is Nile green plush with a deep generous fringe of the same. The draperies in the four boxes will be velour of the same shades as the stage curtain and the velvet carpet in the aisles and foyer will match the box draperies and the stage curtain.

The main entrance will have a glass front, which will filter light upon the ceiling and walls of the old rose and ivory-colored lobby. Mosaic borders in polished ivory colors will enhance the glow of the old rose and the scintillating play of 500 electric lights will transform the whole ensemble into a riot of charming color delightful to look upon.

Pell called for rich materials to give the theatre an air of grace and luxury. The *Courier* continued:

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There is to be a ladies' retiring room, furnished with all the luxury of oriental rugs, velvet-cushioned seats and all the dainty trappings which lend ease and comfort to women's charm and grace. Nor are the gentlemen to be forgotten. A smoking room is at their disposal, furnished with all the comforts loved by man. Here will he be able to mingle with his friends, to discuss the merits or faults of the play and obtain his necessary whiff of perfumed tobacco before rejoining the ladies.

The comfort of the patrons, in every detail, has been cared for without any regard to expense. The item of chairs, in orchestra, balcony and family circle, shows how the management have considered their future patrons. These chairs are upholstered in dark green leather and trimmed in mahogany. This is more than any Theatre in New York can boast.

Delighted with both Vance's gracious French Renaissance Revival exterior and Pell's plush interior, the *Courier* declared the Mahaiwe a "charming and perfect little theatre" (28 Sep 1905, cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 13). The new theatre's acoustics were spectacular, earning high praise from performers and Theatre critics alike throughout the Mahaiwe's history.

A historian and writer as well as a designer, John L.E. Pell worked in a variety of creative endeavors throughout his life. He began his career on the New York Produce Exchange before becoming an interior designer for New York's Bertine & Co. He went back into commerce as a sales manager for Gryphon Tire & Rubber before turning to the Theatre. He was not only involved in Theatre design, but in many aspects of production as well. In 1912, he wrote an operetta based on *Alice in Wonderland*. With the advent of motion pictures, Pell wrote "scenarios," as the screenplays for silent movies were then called. He adapted a story by Robert W. Chambers for the D.W. Griffith film "America" (aka "Love and Sacrifice") (1924), a historical drama set during the American Revolution. In 1922, Pell adapted a Sy Bartlett story into the screenplay for "Down to the Sea in Ships." Directed by Griffith protégé Elmer Clifton, the film is not only notable for a performance by a very young Clara Bow (before she became the "It Girl"), but also for its footage shot aboard the whaling ship "Charles Morgan," documenting the last whaling voyage from New Bedford. Invited by D.W. Griffith to work with him in Germany, Pell declined due to poor health. He stayed in movies, though, making educational films for Kodak's George Eastman.

In the 1920s, Pell dabbled in radio, writing the dramatizations "Forty Fathom Trawlers" and "George Washington" for NBC. Semi-retired in the 1930s, Pell spent his time restoring the 1740 Egremont Tavern in South Egremont and writing historical fiction. He partnered with local author Clay Perry (1887-1961) to write *The Canadian Doctor* (1932) and *Hell's Acres: A Historical Novel of the Wild East in the '50's*.

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Pell became one of the Mahaiwe Block's first tenants, leasing one of its second-floor offices. Other tenants at the opening included clothier Charles M. Gibbs and tobacconist Colden R. Sage. Born in Granby, Connecticut,

Colden R. Sage (1846-1929) began his career in Great Barrington's tobacco industry by working at William L. Bliss's thirty-man cigar factory on Railroad Street before striking out on his own. Sage earned a reputation for producing a high-quality product. In 1892, a local publication noted that Sage "manufactures strictly to order and his goods are in demand all over the country" ("Along the Housatonic Lines" Bridgeport Publishing, 1892, cited by Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 9). Sage had his new Mahaiwe Block store specially designed for him, with a back room where he manufactured the cigars he sold in his shop. A tobacconist's shop remained in this location until 1985. Successor tobacconists were Alfred S. Dorfman (in business circa 1916-1929), Philip A. Wilkinson (from 1929 to about 1938), Harold McCormick (from about 1938 to 1958), John Gerard (from around 1958 to about 1969), and Edgar "Ted" Blackwell, who operated the business as Ted's Smokeshop until a 1985 fire. After the fire, Ted's Smokeshop moved across the street to the Berkshire Block.

Charles M. Gibbs (1862-1945), locally known as the "dean of South Berkshire men's clothing merchants," was a newsboy on the Housatonic Railroad before going into the clothing business as a clerk at A.L. Hubbell's store in 1881. In 1890, he bought Ralph I. Taylor's business, and turned it into a shop that was described in 1892 as "one of the most elegant establishments outside of New York or Boston...." ("Along the Housatonic Lines" Bridgeport Publishing, 1892, cited by Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 9). In 1940, Gibbs retired, selling his shop to Eugene P. Scott and Harry B. Ogden. Ogden-Scott Inc. carried both men's and ladies' clothing at first. By 1943, A. Holland Bates (1888-1971) had replaced Scott as partner, and the shop became Ogden Bates Inc. By 1947, Bates and Gordon P. Ogden had split the men's and ladies' divisions between them. Ogden took over the women's clothing portion of the firm, establishing Ogden's Inc., while the men's department became Bates Men's Shop. The two stores operated side by side out of the 316 Main Street storefront. By 1963, Ogden's had been replaced by Mary Finn's dry goods store. Bates Men's Shop stayed in business until 1970, when Bates sold out to Jack Pevzner, owner of Jack's Department Store in Lee. Pevzner's Great Barrington store became Jack's Country Squire.

The Castle Street storefronts, untenanted when the building opened, were soon rented out. By 1910, occupants included electrician and contractor A.E. Whitwell (the Mahaiwe Block's electrical contractor), Helen Turner's Berkshire Tea Shop (later the Berkshire Grill & Tea Room), grocers Elias & Joseph, and William C. Howitt's "Star" moving picture showroom. By 1913, when Howitt was manager of the Mahaiwe, Danish immigrant Peter Hagen (1866-1954) was operating a printing and stationery business in Howitt's former place of business at 12 Castle Street. Hagen remained in business at this location for thirty-five years, selling to another printer, Edward A. Martin, in 1948. For a short time during the late 1950s, Martin seems to have shared retail space with the Knick-Knack Shop, a gift store run by Gertrude K. Hynes and Julia L. Gillett. In 1963, Siok's Barber Shop occupied the space.

Around 1916, Louis Eley took over the 10 Castle Street grocery business from Elias & Joseph. By 1920, the Southern Berkshire Power & Electric Company had converted the grocery store for its own offices.

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Whitwell's space at 6 Castle Street appears to have been taken over by the Mahaiwe Bank from about 1925 until 1937, when jeweler Adolph Straleau moved in. In 1940, another electrician, Culver R. Dorsey, rented the shop. In 1947, Dorsey was succeeded by electrical contractor Harland B. Foster. By 1951, Josephine Zanetti had opened a children's clothing store, Jo's Kiddie Shop, in the former electrician's office. Bob's Time Shop succeeded Jo's around 1959.

The Berkshire Grill & Tea Room at 8 Castle Street was displaced in 1929 when the Mahaiwe Bank was renovated. Willoughby's Grill took over the space in 1932, but stayed only a few years. By 1937, the New England Telephone & Telegraph Company's offices occupied the former restaurant's space. Today, the Castle and Main Street storefronts are occupied by retail stores and a café.

The National Mahaiwe Bank and the Great Barrington Savings Bank operated side by side in their plush new quarters for about ten years. Great Barrington Savings Bank moved out in 1916, relocating to the Berkshire Courier building (on Main Street opposite Church Street). In 1963, the National Mahaiwe Bank merged with the First Agricultural National Bank of Berkshire County. In 1985, the bank sold the building to Barrington Realty Associates (a successor firm, Barrington Associates Realty Trust, now owns the block), but stayed on as a tenant until 1996. Like many small banks in the 1990s, First Agricultural was taken over by BankBoston. The first floor banking space now houses a clothing store and an art gallery, which opened in 2004, making creative use of the bank's vault as a gallery space.

The upper two floors of the Mahaiwe Block were rented by a variety of business and residential tenants over the next century. Commercial tenants included realtors, lawyers, medical professionals, insurance agents, tailors, and beauticians. Very few families lived in the Mahaiwe's apartments. Most of the apartments had only one tenant. Single women, either unmarried or widowed, made up the majority of tenants. Only a few apartments had two or three occupants. The only large family that seems to have lived there was the household of the building's custodian, Mark Rathbun, which included six children. Residents usually worked in nearby shops and offices. Some had both their office and residential space at the Mahaiwe.

Arthur Ridgeway Ryan, the Mahaiwe Theatre's first manager, came to Great Barrington from New York City in 1902. His first job in Great Barrington was at the Stanley Instrument Company, where his father-in-law was treasurer and manager. Ryan had been involved in theatre since 1893 as a critic, manager, press agent, stage director, and actor. He had performed with Chicago's American Extravaganza Company, the largest theatrical organization in the country in the 1890s. He had also worked as associate manager of the People's Theatre in Minneapolis, and as a theatre critic for New York newspapers. His New York connections proved invaluable in booking top-of-the-line acts. He promised to "present only first class attractions. By this I mean that the productions of Broadway will be seen here in their original form" (quoted in Jul 1905 *Berkshire Courier*, cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 13). Charles H. Booth (1861-1918), cashier for both the theatre and the National Mahaiwe Bank, worked with Ryan as booking agent. Keeping close to both his jobs, Booth rented an apartment on the third floor of the Mahaiwe Block during the 1910s.

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George L. Taylor (1877-1950), a violinist and businessman, became the theatre's first musical director. A 1903 graduate of Williams College, Taylor had studied music in New York City and became a music teacher. Commerce proving more lucrative than music, however, Taylor became involved in the real estate and insurance business, forming a business partnership with Robert K. Wheeler. Wheeler's father's insurance agency, John C. Wheeler & Company, could trace its origins to an office established by Archie W. Selkirk in 1871. John's widow, Lucy Kellogg Wheeler, managed the firm after the death of her husband in 1898, a very unusual job for a woman at that time. In 1913, she took on George Taylor as a partner, and the firm became Wheeler & Taylor. Robert joined the business after returning from his studies at the Massachusetts Agricultural College. The firm Wheeler & Taylor is still active in Great Barrington today, making it the town's oldest insurance and real estate agency. In the 1920s, Wheeler & Taylor managed a number of enterprises from their offices in the Mahaiwe Block, including Pioneer Credit, South Egremont Water Company, the Berkshire Advertising Bureau, and the Western Mass. Finance Company. Taylor was also involved in the Housatonic Agricultural Society, Mountain Sand & Gravel, and he served on the boards of both the Great Barrington and National Mahaiwe Savings Banks. In 1928, Wheeler & Taylor moved out of the Mahaiwe Block for bigger quarters.

The first production at the Mahaiwe Theatre was "Happyland," a comic opera by Frederick Ranken & Reginald DeKoven, which stopped in Great Barrington on its way from Boston to New York. The show, which opened September 26, 1905, starred De Wolf Hopper (1858-1935) and Marguerite Clark (1883-1940), two very popular stage stars of their day. The program included an entr'acte recitation by Hopper of Ernest Lawrence Thayer's "Casey at the Bat," a piece that became Hopper's trademark. (Clark went on to star in silent films, while Hopper is now better known through his fifth wife, Hollywood gossip queen Hedda Hopper.) A hit in Great Barrington, "Happyland" went on to 136 performances on the New York stage (Drew, *Mahaiwe*, pp 14-18).

With his nearest competition twenty miles away at Pittsfield's Colonial Theatre, Arthur Ryan was able to fulfill his promise of bringing the best touring productions to the Mahaiwe's stage. With the railroad depot barely a stone's throw away from the theatre, the Mahaiwe was a convenient stop on the way to New York. Nationally known performers who appeared there included George Arliss, May Robson, Eddie Foy, Ed Wynn, John Philip Sousa, and Springfield's Julia Sanderson. William Gillette performed in his trademark role of Sherlock Holmes on the Mahaiwe's stage, and polar explorer Admiral Robert E. Peary lectured there in 1906. Berkshire County's large number of summer residents and transplants from New York City made for appreciative and discerning audiences. Performers were often feted at after-theatre parties in the homes of Great Barrington's cultural elite. In addition to hosting national touring companies, the Mahaiwe also provided a venue for concerts and community theatre productions.

The first two decades of the 20th century saw continuing improvements to the town's infrastructure and transportation networks and changes in its population. In 1901, the roadbed of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad in Great Barrington was raised, dead-ending Castle Street just beyond the new fire station. A pedestrian tunnel ran under the bridge, leading to the new Stick-Style train depot. In 1909, Main Street was elevated to improve drainage. Local transportation was modernized with the construction of the Berkshire Street

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Railway line from Pittsfield in 1902. The line was extended to South Egremont in 1910 and to Sheffield in 1911. In 1923, however, the trolley lines to South Egremont and Canaan, Connecticut, were abandoned. The entire Berkshire Street Railway trolley system ceased operations in 1930, with motorbuses replacing trolleys for public transportation.

Early Modern Period, 1910-1940

By 1900, Great Barrington's population had nearly doubled from its 1830 total, reaching 5,854. The turn of the 20th century brought new immigrant communities to town. Around 1895, the town's first Polish immigrants settled in Housatonic. Soon afterward, Italian immigrants came to work in Great Barrington's factories. The town's first Jewish residents also arrived around this time as well; by 1921, the Jewish community was large enough to need its own house of worship, converting a carpenter's shop on North Street into the Ahavath Sholom Synagogue.

In 1910, when John Coffing Church's five-year lease expired, the Mahaiwe Theatre began heading in a new direction. Motion pictures first came to Great Barrington in 1898, with a demonstration by Lyman H. Howe at a meeting of the Ancient Order of United Workmen. Later that year, Howe showed film footage from the Spanish-American war at the Town Hall. Howe screened a few more silent films at Town Hall and later at the Mahaiwe Theatre. Other early projectionists included Edwin J. Hadley and Charles S. Taylor.

In 1909, William C. Howitt moved to town, determined to make his fortune in the new entertainment medium. Howitt set up his Star "nickellette" moving picture house, showing "high class moving pictures" in one of the Mahaiwe Block's storefronts. With the lease for the 1,000-seat Mahaiwe Theatre up for grabs, Howitt seized the opportunity to add movies to the Mahaiwe's performance schedule. The *Berkshire Courier* reported: "Mr. Howitt does not believe that there is much call in Great Barrington for vaudeville, but realizing the way that the people from miles around attend first-class attractions at the Mahaiwe, he intends to confine the amusement times to the latter and to moving pictures. He will close his present moving picture quarters." (cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 23).

Howitt's 1910 *Berkshire Hills* ad promised "high-class motion pictures, depicting in a most realistic fashion every phase of life—from grave to gay, from lively to severe." At the Mahaiwe one may see entire dramas acted in pantomime—and acted well, too. There are comedy pictures; there are tragedy pictures. Both young and old find real 'entertainment' at the Mahaiwe, much of it being of that character which is at once agreeable and informing. The program is changed daily, there is continuous performance every afternoon and evening, and the admission, including seats, is but ten cents for adults and five cents for children. No wonder the Mahaiwe is liked by everybody!" (cited by Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 23) Howitt remained at the Mahaiwe only until the end of his own five-year lease. In 1916, he moved on to Pittsfield's Grand Theatre, vanishing soon afterwards in the midst of a scandal over the non-payment of vaudeville performers.

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In 1916, Great Barrington native Louis C. Raifstanger (b. 1856) became the theatre's third lessee, with his son Earl as manager. Raifstanger had a varied career before getting involved in the theatre. He'd been a grocer, a stationer, a deputy sheriff, a conductor for the Berkshire Street Railway, and chief engineer for the town's fire department. His son Earl, whose career as the Mahaiwe's manager lasted nearly forty years, had run a nickette theatre during his high school days. He'd also been a semi-professional baseball player and manager. After attending Union Business College in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Earl worked as a stenographer. Before managing the Mahaiwe, he'd run a Ridgfield, Connecticut, inn with his brother and managed the Cedar Hills Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut.

The Raifstangers ran the Mahaiwe as a venue for both movies and theatrical shows, contracting with the Metro, Paramount, World, Pathe, and Mutual film studios. Local musicians, and sometimes a live orchestra, would provide the background music for the silent pictures. In 1929, Great Barrington residents saw their first talking pictures, with the presentation of the all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing "Broadway Lullaby of 1929."

Earl Raifstanger was not only involved in showing films, but also dabbled a bit in production. In 1921, he attracted a movie troupe from newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst's Cosmopolitan Productions to make a silent film in the Great Barrington area. "Sisters" was filmed on location on Great Barrington's Main Street and at sites in North Egremont and Stockbridge. Several town residents appeared in minor roles or as extras, and the cast was given a hearty welcome that included a tour of the Stanley electrical works. The 1923 movie "Going Up" was also set in Great Barrington, though the only location shooting consisted of a flyover (Drew, *Mahaiwe*, pp. 29-30).

The Raifstangers continued to book vaudeville acts in the theatre until 1932, opening the balcony only for Saturday night shows. In 1922, they petitioned the town for permission to show movies on Sundays, promising to screen only films with the highest moral tone. The petition was denied; Sunday movies weren't approved until 1930.

In 1925, the syndicate that had built the Mahaiwe Block and Theatre decided to turn the building over to its two principal tenants. Earl Raifstanger bought the theatre portion of the building, and the National Mahaiwe Bank purchased the commercial space. A complicated set of easements were drawn up to cover the use of common alleyways and to ensure that Raifstanger retained the right to use dressing-room space that encroached on the party wall property boundary.

Throughout his career, Earl Raifstanger vigorously marketed the Mahaiwe, using a number of promotional gimmicks, including fiddle contests and Christmas and Thanksgiving turkey giveaways to get audiences to come to the shows. And come they did. Earl's son John recalled the theatre in the 1920s and '30s this way: "On Saturday nights they ran a double trolley car from Housatonic. If you didn't get there by twenty before seven, there were no seats available." (cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 41).

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While the Mahaiwe was adapting to the new technology of motion pictures, Great Barrington was also adapting to the new technology of the automobile. By 1921, the town had 8.7 miles of state highway. In the central village, from 1921 to 1928, the town paved South Main Street, upper Main Street, Castle, and Bridge Streets. The Humphrey (Bridge Street) bridge was reinforced to accommodate automobile traffic. Great Barrington's highway and fire departments added motorized vehicles to their equipment. The increasing mobility provided by the automobile also meant increasing development. In 1920, the town established a Planning Board to direct the town's future growth. In 1931, the town created its first building permit requirements, followed by a set of zoning bylaws in 1932 "to promote the general welfare of the inhabitants and to improve and beautify the town." (cited in Drew, *Great Barrington*, p. 504).

Just before the great stock market crash, the National Mahaiwe Bank upgraded its façade. In 1929, some of the banking facilities were temporarily moved to the Berkshire Grill & Tea Room at 6 Castle Street, and the bank's recessed Tuscan-columned entryway was replaced with a marble Art Deco entry that was brought out flush with the building's main façade, a set of double bronze doors replacing the columns as the bank's distinctive entry. An arched panel over the door depicting a native man and woman surrounded by fruits and flowers and a bee skep showed that, in spite of the modern façade, Great Barrington still retained a strong identity as an agricultural community.

The Mahaiwe Theatre seemed to provide a respite from the economic troubles of the Great Depression. Earl Raifstanger sold the theatre in 1930 to the Great Barrington Theatre Company (a holding company for Interstate Theatres), though he stayed on as manager until his death in 1953. With the change in ownership came a new look for the Mahaiwe. In 1930, renovations directed by Interstate Theatres president Edward Ansin involved the installation of a metal, canopy-style marquee over the grand arched entryway. Double French doors, new poster frames, and a concession stand were added to the lobby. Inside the auditorium itself, the variegated greens were repainted in ivory and rose. The green velvet seats were replaced with new ones, reducing the theatre's capacity from 1,000 to 750. A 1938 article that appeared in the *Berkshire Courier* described the results:

The inside of the Theatre auditorium displays a general panel effect of old rose, ivory and gold. The scheme has been followed throughout in perfect harmony of color. The panels have been designed with beaded border. The high ceiling is in mottled gray and there the outline is of reddish tan, with hand-painted ornamentation in various colors, the work of a master workman whose training in Frankfort and Munich, Germany, qualified him for this...The proscenium arch is in old ivory with red and ivory border. The balcony front and the decorations have been done over in white ivory with the shields in the ornamentation in rose and the balance in light and shade work. The stage is festooned in red velour of an attractive shade, and drapings at other parts of the Theatre are in conformation. New stage settings were designed by National Theatre Supply of Boston. The lighting system was replaced with ornamental wrought iron fixtures." (2 Apr 1938, cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe* p. 38)

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Modern Period, 1940-1957

During World War II, the Mahaiwe showed its support for servicemen by offering them half-price admission. Manager Earl Raifstanger contributed to the war effort by leading the town's Salvage Committee. A decade later, when the Cold War raised anxieties about security in Great Barrington, Mahaiwe manager Raifstanger took a leading role in supervising Civil Defense projects.

Live stage shows returned to the Mahaiwe Theatre in 1948, with the Barrington Players' performance of "You Can't Take it With You." Radio also came to the Mahaiwe when station WLCR of Torrington, Connecticut began broadcasting a weekly talent show, "The Great Barrington Varieties," featuring local performers, on Saturday mornings.

The Mahaiwe received another upgrade in the 1950s, though the changes were not as major as the 1930 renovation. A new panoramic screen was installed in 1953, and the interior was repainted in neutral colors that downplayed the flamboyant details of the auditorium's plasterwork.

In 1953, a third generation of Raifstangers took custody of the Mahaiwe when John T. Raifstanger (1925-2000) took over management upon the death of his father. John followed his father's lead, promoting the theatre with hula hoop contests in 1958 and a "most eligible bachelor" contest in 1961, long before the days of reality television (Drew, *Great Barrington*, p. 70). In 1960, he introduced foreign films to the Mahaiwe, showing them two nights a week. Like his father, John dabbled in other entertainment media, allowing the theatre to be used as a recording studio for the narration of "The Marshal Calls," a documentary about harness racing. The Mahaiwe was chosen because of its exceptional acoustics. (*Berkshire Eagle*, 24 Jan 1961 cited by Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 41)

Recent History (since 1957)

Great Barrington's population figures made their largest jump since 1900, with an increase of nearly 750 residents between the 1960 census (6,624) and the 1970 figures (7,372). The town's major arteries began to see an increase in strip developments competing with downtown businesses.

Along Main Street, the addition of new aluminum streetlights fixtures in 1960 brightened the evenings, but the new fixtures were a jarring contrast to the 19th-century architecture. Other downtown changes during the 1960s included a new bridge at Cottage Street and the construction of additional parking lots. In 1973, Main Street's utility lines were moved underground.

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While many historic theatres failed in the face of challenges from suburban multi-screen cinemas during the 1960s and 1970s, the Mahaiwe managed to avoid a similar fate. When John Raifstanger left the Mahaiwe in 1974 to concentrate on publishing his *Shopper's Guide* newspaper, he turned over management to Albert M. Schwartz. A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Al Schwartz grew up in New York State and studied marketing and finance at the University of Hawaii. He'd been manager of a country lodge in New York State when he decided to try his hand at theatre management. He announced plans to keep the theatre open seven days a week, showing a mix of mainstream movies, art films, and classics. He also wanted to bring live entertainment to the theatre again.

Saying he was "swept away by [the Mahaiwe's] beauty and potential," Schwartz felt that the Mahaiwe's luxurious auditorium would provide theatre-goers with an experience far superior to what they would find in the new suburban multiplexes. "We open our shows with the lights and the curtains and the fanfare...people are fed up with seeing films in shoeboxes with tiny screens and uncomfortable seats...Here we have the ambience of a true movie palace." (quoted in the *River Valley Chronicle*, 1980 cited in Drew, *Mahaiwe*, p. 44).

Like the Raifstangers, Schwartz used creative marketing to attract viewers to the Mahaiwe. He ran fall film festivals, which he promoted with a newspaper called *The Mahaiwe Gazette*, published from 1977 to 1984. He developed the "Mahaiwe Movie Memories Game," which was broadcast over WSBS radio. For his efforts, Schwartz won an award from the United Motion Picture Association for excellence in promotional campaigns. Schwartz not only marketed his theatre, but the Berkshires as well. He published three Berkshire promotional magazines: *Berkshire Magazine* (1974), *Of the Berkshires* (1975), and *Berkshire Litchfield Magazine* (1976).

In the 1980s, Great Barrington's selectmen embarked on a downtown revitalization campaign. The CARD (Commercial Area Revitalization District) was established, offering low-interest loans to downtown businesses. A grassroots organization called Main Street Action started a Berk-Shares program to bring an infusion of cash to local businesses. By the 1990s, Main Street was a successful and eclectic mix of antique and specialty stores, galleries, and restaurants.

At the Mahaiwe, Schwartz offered his own revitalization program, in the form of live musical, dramatic and dance programs as well as movies. Performers ranged from local performing arts groups, including the Berkshire Ballet, the Barrington Ballet, and the Olga Dunn Dance Company of Great Barrington, to nationally known jazz, folk, rock, and pop musicians like Chick Corea, Pete Seeger, Nanci Griffith, Livingston Taylor, Bonnie Raitt, and Beausoleil. In 1987, the theatre's Baroque interior was used as a backdrop for some of the opening sections of the local PBS station's "Hollywood Classics" movie series.

The sale of the Mahaiwe in 1988 to the Hoyts multiplex chain raised concerns that the theatre would be closed and abandoned, like so many of the picture palaces of the 1920s and 1930s. Great Barrington's selectmen promised they would not let the theatre be demolished. While the selectmen explored the idea of developing a historic district ordinance to protect the theatre, concerned citizens founded "Save the Mahaiwe" to raise money to buy the theatre.

(continued)

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Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

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Concerns over the Mahaiwe's fate became a catalyst in drawing community attention toward the surrounding historic properties along Main Street. In 1989, the town's first local historic districts were established. District "A" encompassed thirteen properties on Main, Railroad, and Castle Streets, including the Mahaiwe Block/Mahaiwe Theatre. The historic district ordinance regulated alterations, demolition, and new construction within the district (*Great Barrington Historical Society Newsletter*, #20 Summer 1992, p. 3). A third district was added in 1994, and District A was expanded to include the train station in 1994 and the First National Bank in 1995.

The Mahaiwe remained open through the historic districting process and the fundraising campaign. In 2000, the Berkshire Opera Company bought the theatre with plans for a three-year, \$15 million renovation project that would allow the Opera Company to expand its summer performance program to a year-round one. By September 2001, the Opera Company had raised \$2.75 million and had applied for a \$3 million state grant.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks put a number of state grant programs on hold, with the legislature debating whether to reallocate funds to upgrade security and anticipating an economic downturn that could reduce tax revenue. With the state grant still pending, some work was begun on the renovation project, which would eventually include a new orchestra pit, backstage facilities, seating, and reception areas as well as much-needed structural repairs and infrastructure improvements.

Hugh Hardy of the New York firm Hardy-Holzman-Pfeiffer was hired to oversee the project. Described by WAMC/Northeast Public Radio president Alan Chartock as the "prince of restoration architecture" (Alan Chartock Blog, 6 Jun 2005, http://www.wamc.org/archives/2005_06_06_archive.html), Hardy is nationally known as an expert in the restoration of historic theatres, with projects that have included New York City's Majestic, the New Victory, and the New Amsterdam. Hardy had a personal connection with the Mahaiwe, having attended movies there as a teenager.

The first areas tackled were the backstage and dressing rooms, which were completed in October of 2001. That same month, a federal grant of \$250,000 came through from the federal Save America's Treasures program. But in November, the project received a critical blow when the anticipated state grant failed to survive budget cuts. A capital campaign was planned for the following summer.

Concerts, plays, and movies continued to be shown in the theatre while the financial problems were sorted out. Marc Schafner and Deborah McDowell of Great Barrington's Club Helsinki produced a series of concerts that brought legendary jazz, folk, bluegrass, and ethnic performers to town. Local dance and musical companies presented concerts and shows, and the film festival continued its run. The Berkshire Opera Company scheduled Benjamin Britten's "The Turn of the Screw" for its first performance in the Mahaiwe in August 2002, the first full-scale operatic production on the Mahaiwe's stage.

(continued)

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In November, 2002, the Opera Company voted to turn the restoration project over to the newly formed Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center which planned to turn the theatre into a more broadly based, year-round performing arts venue. Berkshire Opera Company's chairperson, Lola Jaffe, became president and chair of the new organization, which finalized the transfer of ownership in January, 2003. That same year, the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, recorded a historic preservation restriction with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, stipulating that all alterations to the building must maintain its architectural and historical integrity.

The change in ownership provided the facility with a core management group dedicated solely to fundraising and renovation. By July, 2003, the new organization had raised more than \$1.6 million dollars in additional funds, bringing the first phase of renovation to completion. The theatre's infrastructure was upgraded with a new roof over the front of the theatre, a new fire alarm and sprinkler system, and handicapped-accessible restrooms.

The next phase of renovations began in 2004 with Historical Commission's approval of an air conditioning system and an access ramp for handicapped patrons. The project received a financial boost in the summer of 2004 with a combination of state and private foundation grants announced for the upcoming fiscal year. By fall of 2004, structural and mechanical repairs and upgrades were nearly finished, and painters had just finished restoring the ceiling's original stenciled designs. Toward the end of 2004, the project's future was finally looking optimistic. With the prospect of additional municipal and federal grant funds, the renovation project appeared to be on its way to the final stages of construction.

In October, 2005, the nonprofit Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center formed a separate for-profit corporation, Mahaiwe LLC, to take advantage of the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. A \$500,000 challenge grant from private donors rounded out the funding for the year. By April 2006, Lola Jaffe and her staff at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center had put together a total of nearly \$7.5 million in state, federal, local, and foundation grants and private donations. For her efforts on behalf of the Mahaiwe Theatre, Jaffe was named 2005 Person of the Year by the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce.

Over the winter of 2004, painter John Canning of Cheshire, Connecticut, began the long and painstaking process of restoring the Mahaiwe's rose and ivory paint scheme, which was completed just in time for the Mahaiwe's opening gala in June 2005. Under the leadership of board president Lola Jaffe, managing director Beryl Jolly and theatre manager Albert Schwartz, the restored Mahaiwe hosted its first full season of concerts, stage shows, and movies. Through the winter and spring of 2005-2006, stage rigging, seats, carpeting, and bathrooms were replaced, and the theatre's 1930 marquee was renovated. Additional upgrades included wheelchair accessible restrooms and seating areas and a wheelchair lift. The final façade repairs and interior restoration were completed in November, 2006.

Today, Great Barrington's turn-of-the-century downtown is a well-preserved collection of historic commercial blocks doing a brisk trade with local and tourist traffic. The Mahaiwe remains the "charming and perfect little theatre" described by the *Berkshire Courier* at its opening. Through the determination of a series of

(continued)

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Section number 8 Page 24

dedicated and creative managers, the theatre has remained open in the face of competition from suburban multiplexes, television, videotape, and video games. Reporting on the 2005 opening gala marking the Mahaiwe's centennial and the culmination of yet another phase in the five-year-long restoration struggle, the Berkshire Eagle's Jeffrey Borak described the restoration project as "a true gift to the community from a group of people determined to do things the right way" (2 Jun 2005).

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

Section number 9 Page 1

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Berkshire Eagle, (various articles on Mahaiwe Theatre and Block), 1997-2006.

Berkshire County South. Registry of Deeds records.

Chartock, Alan. Alan Chartock Blog, WAMC/Northeast Public Radio Web page:
http://www.wamc.org/archives/2005_06_06_archive.html, 6 Jun 2005.

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Drew, Bernard A. "Pittsfield's Gilbert & Sullivan," *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, MA), November 11, 2000.

Farmer, Gregory. Historic Preservation Certification Application for the Mahaiwe Theatre, Sept. 2004.

Great Barrington Bicentennial Committee. *1761 Great Barrington Bicentennial*. Great Barrington, Mass.: n.p., 1961.

Great Barrington Directory. New Haven, Conn.: Price, Lee & Co., 1884/85, 1893/94.

Great Barrington Historical Society Newsletter. Great Barrington, Mass.: n. p ., 1982-1996.

Leveille, Gary T. *Images of America: Around Great Barrington and Stockbridge*. Dover, New Hampshire: Arcadia Publishing, 1997.

Mason Library Postcard Collection. Great Barrington, MA

Parrish, James N. Massachusetts State Inventory Forms for Mahaiwe Theatre (MHC #129) and Mahaiwe Block (MHC #130), Mason Library Collection, Great Barrington, MA, 1985.

South Berkshire Directories, 1910-1969

Taylor, Charles J. *History of Great Barrington (Berkshire) Massachusetts 1676-1882*. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Berkshire Courier, 1928. [Annotated by Ralph Wainwright Pope & George Edwin MacLean, with Part II "Extension: 1882-1922" added by George Edwin MacLean]

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
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Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

Section number 9 Page 2

MAPS:

Berkshire Athenaeum Local History Collection: Great Barrington Map folders.

Beers, F. W. *County Atlas of Berkshire Massachusetts*. New York: R. T. White & Co., 1876.

Burleigh, L. R. *Great Barrington, Mass.* (bird's-eye-view). New York: Beck & Pauli, lithographers, 1884.

Great Barrington Assessor's Map.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1884-1947.

(END)

MAHAIWE BLOCK

Name of Property

BERKSHIRE COUNTY, MA

County and State

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property less than 1 acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. Zone 18 Easting 635080 Northing 4672220

See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

see attached

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

see attached

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Michele Plourde-Barker & Gregory Farmer (consultants) with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Directororganization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July 2008street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125-3314**Additional Documentation****Submit the following items with the completed form:****Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs** - Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**Property Owners (2)**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name MAHAIWE LLCstreet & number PO Box 690 telephone 413-644-9040city or town Great Barrington state MA zip code 01230name BARRINGTON ASSOCIATES REALTY TRUSTstreet & number 999 River Rd. telephone 413-789-0800city or town Agawam state MA zip code 01001**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing and determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property boundary begins at the southwest corner of Main and Castle Streets and proceeds in a northeasterly direction along Main Street on the southeasterly property line of 314-322 Main Street for 96 feet to the southeastern corner of adjacent property at 312 Main Street; then turning west runs along the northern property line of 314-322 Main Street for 98.38 feet; then turns north at the southwestern corner of 312 Main Street and runs along the northern line of 314-322 Main Street for 26.81 feet to the northwest corner of 312 Main Street. The line then turns west again, running along the northern property line of 314-322 Main Street for 17.25 feet, then turns south and runs along the westerly line of 314-322 Main Street for 7 7/8 feet, then turns west and runs along the northern property line of 314-322 Main Street for 17.25 feet to the northeastern corner of the property line of 14 Castle Street. The line continues running west along the northern property line of 14 Castle Street for 17.2 feet, then turns south, running along the eastern property line of 15-21 Railroad Street for 14.5 feet, then turns east, running along the southern boundary of 15-21 Railroad Street for 35 feet along a 9' right-of-way. The line then turns north and runs for 9 feet and turns east again, running 15.7 feet along the northern line of the right-of-way to the southwest corner of 15-21 Railroad Street. The line turns north again, running for 10 feet along the western property line of 15-21 Railroad Street, then turns east and runs 17.5 feet along the southern property line of 23 Railroad Street to the northwest corner of the property at 14 Castle Street. The line turns south, running 136 feet along the eastern property line of the Great Barrington Fire Department's property to Castle Street, then runs east along Castle Street 206.94 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries are the same as the property lines for 14 Castle Street and 314-322 Main Street and conform to the footprint of the Mahaiwe Block.

(end)

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Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

Section Attachments Page 1

ATTACHMENTS

Current Site Documentation

USGS Map: Great Barrington, Mass-NY (1:25,000 metric), 1997 edition.
Assessors Map: Great Barrington, MA, Sheet 19, Parcels 88 & 90.

Historical Site Documentation & Views

Beers Atlas of Berkshire County, Mass. (1876), Plate 91 – Great Barrington.
Beers Atlas of Berkshire County, Mass. (1876), Plates 96-98 – Main St., Great Barrington.
Burleigh's Birdseye view of Great Barrington, MA (1884).
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1884), Plate 1 – Main St., Great Barrington, MA.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1895), Plate 4 – Main St., Great Barrington, MA.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1903), Plate 5 – Main St., Great Barrington, MA.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1912), Plate 4 – Main St., Great Barrington, MA.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1923), Plate 2 – Main St., Great Barrington, MA.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1923 with 1947 revisions), Plate 2 – Great Barrington, MA.
Hill Engineers, Survey Plan for Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center (2004).
USGS aerial photo of downtown Great Barrington, MA (n.d., c. 1990).
Buell photograph of Main St., Great Barrington, c. 1875 (courtesy Leveille, p. 50).
Burleigh's Birdseye view of Great Barrington, 1884 (detail of Main & Castle St.).
Views of Main & Castle St., Great Barrington, 1891 & 1902 (courtesy Leveille).
Postcard views of Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, 1905-1920 (Mason Library Collection).
Postcard views of Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, 1910-1940 (Mason Library Collection).
Photograph of Mahaiwe Theatre marquee, c. 1946 (courtesy Drew).
Mahaiwe Theatre seating plan, 1932-34 (courtesy Drew).
Photograph of Mahaiwe Theatre interior from the stage, 1905 (courtesy Drew).
Photograph of Mahaiwe Theatre interior from the balcony, 1905 (courtesy Drew).



Great Barrington, Mass. Published & drawn by L. R. Burleigh. Beck & Pauli, litho., Troy, N.Y., c1884. Library of Congress panoramic map collection.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Mahaiwe Block
Great Barrington, (Berkshire) MA

Section Attachments Page 2

PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs by Michael Flower for the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, 2006.

- Photo 1: Mahaiwe Block, view of west and south elevations from Castle St.
- Photo 2: Mahaiwe Block, view of south elevation looking northwest from Castle St.
- Photo 3: Mahaiwe Theatre, view of south elevation, Castle St., Great Barrington, MA.
- Photo 4: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view of main lobby, looking northeast.
- Photo 5: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view of main stage from balcony, looking north.
- Photo 6: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view of opera boxes, east side of auditorium.
- Photo 7: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view of auditorium looking northeast from mezzanine.
- Photo 8: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view looking south from stage.
- Photo 9: Mahaiwe Theatre, interior view of lower lobby, looking northeast.
- Photo 10: Mahaiwe Block, interior view of commercial vestibule on Castle St.
- Photo 11: Mahaiwe Block, interior view of 2nd floor commercial corridor.
- Photo 12: Mahaiwe Block, view of east and south elevations from Main St.

Supplementary color photos:

- Photo S-1: Main St. façade, looking SW
- Photo S-2: Main St. façade, looking NW
- Photo S-3: Castle St. façade, looking NW at Main St.



Aerial photo of Great Barrington from USGS
Mahaiwe Block and Theater outlined above.



Main Street, Great Barrington, circa 1875. Burget & Lewis Block (aka Mahaiwe House) and National Mahaiwe Bank at far left (outlined). The brick building at right, the City Store (1853) is the only building in this image still standing. Published in Leveille, Gary T. *Images of America: Around Great Barrington and Stockbridge*. Dover, New Hampshire: Arcadia Publishing, 1997, p. 50 (O. Buell, photographer).



Great Barrington, Mass. Published & drawn by L. R. Burleigh. Beck & Pauli, litho., Troy, N.Y., c1884. Library of Congress panoramic map collection. Detail showing corner of Main and Castle Streets.

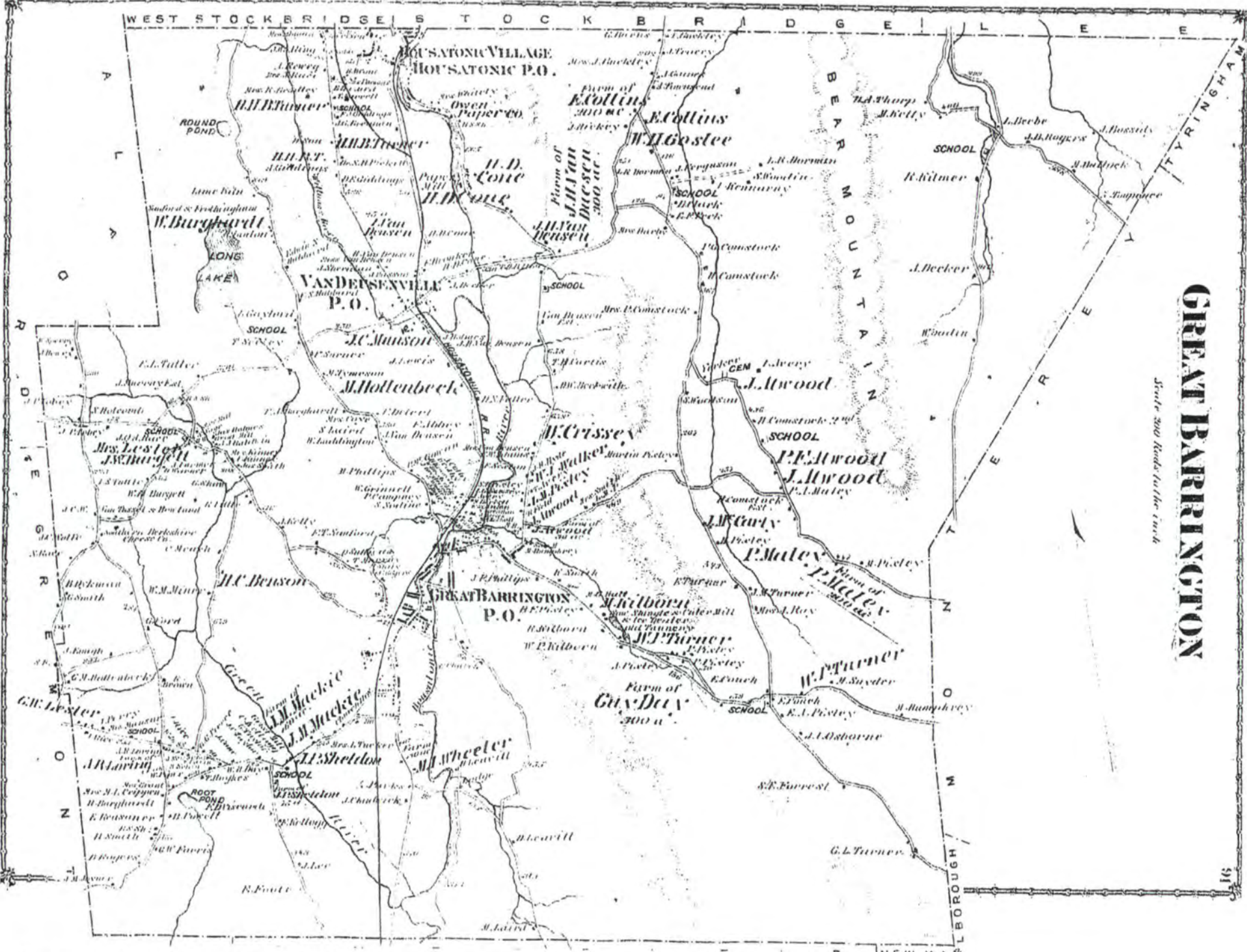
National Mahaiwe Bank located at #8 above; Mahaiwe House to left of National Mahaiwe Bank building.



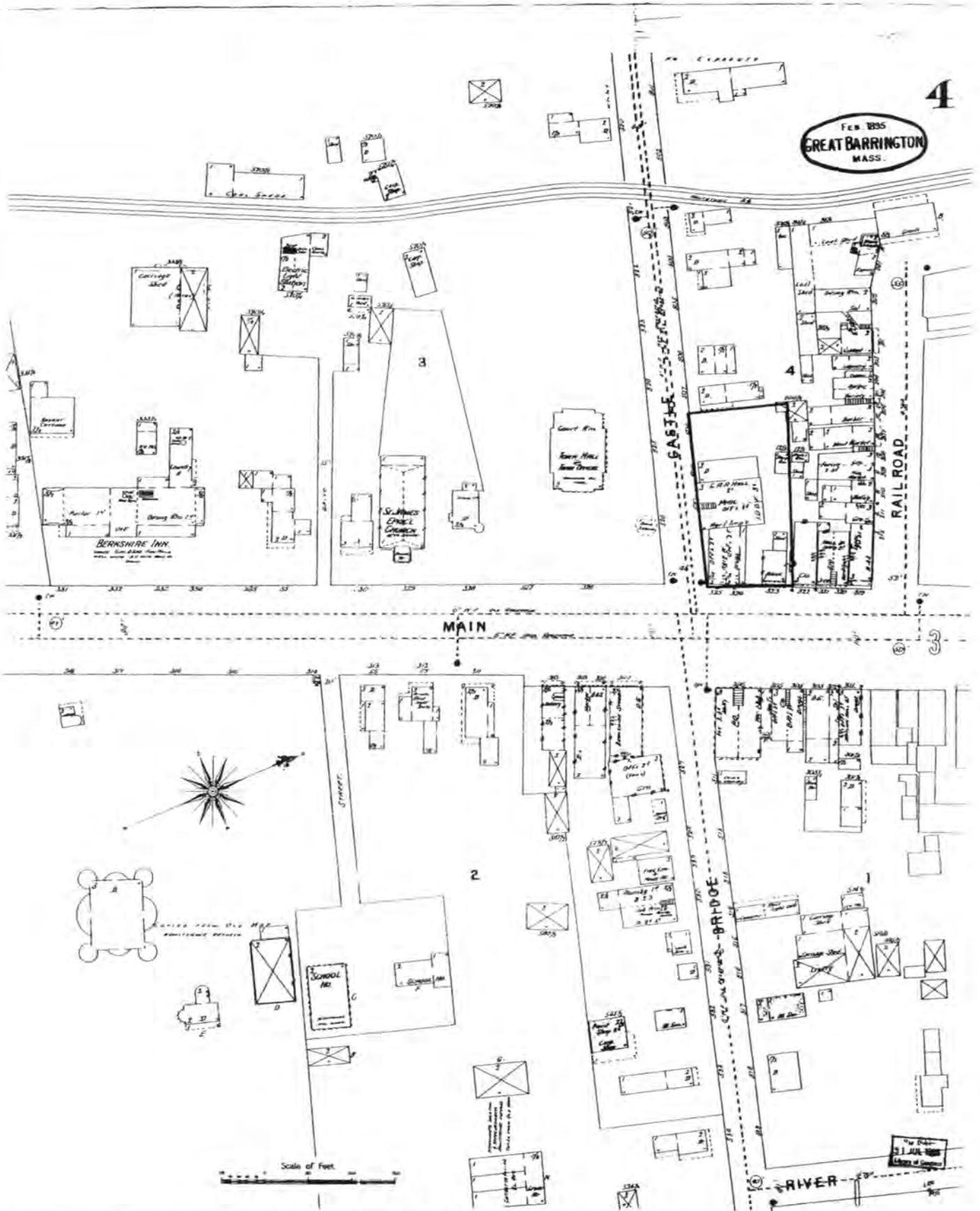
NOTE
These Maps Are Not Intended
For Use In Conveyancing

GREAT BARRINGTON	
SCALE 1" = 100'	SHEET NO. 19
GORDON E. AINSWORTH ASSOCIATES Surveyors, Engineers & Architects NEWFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS	

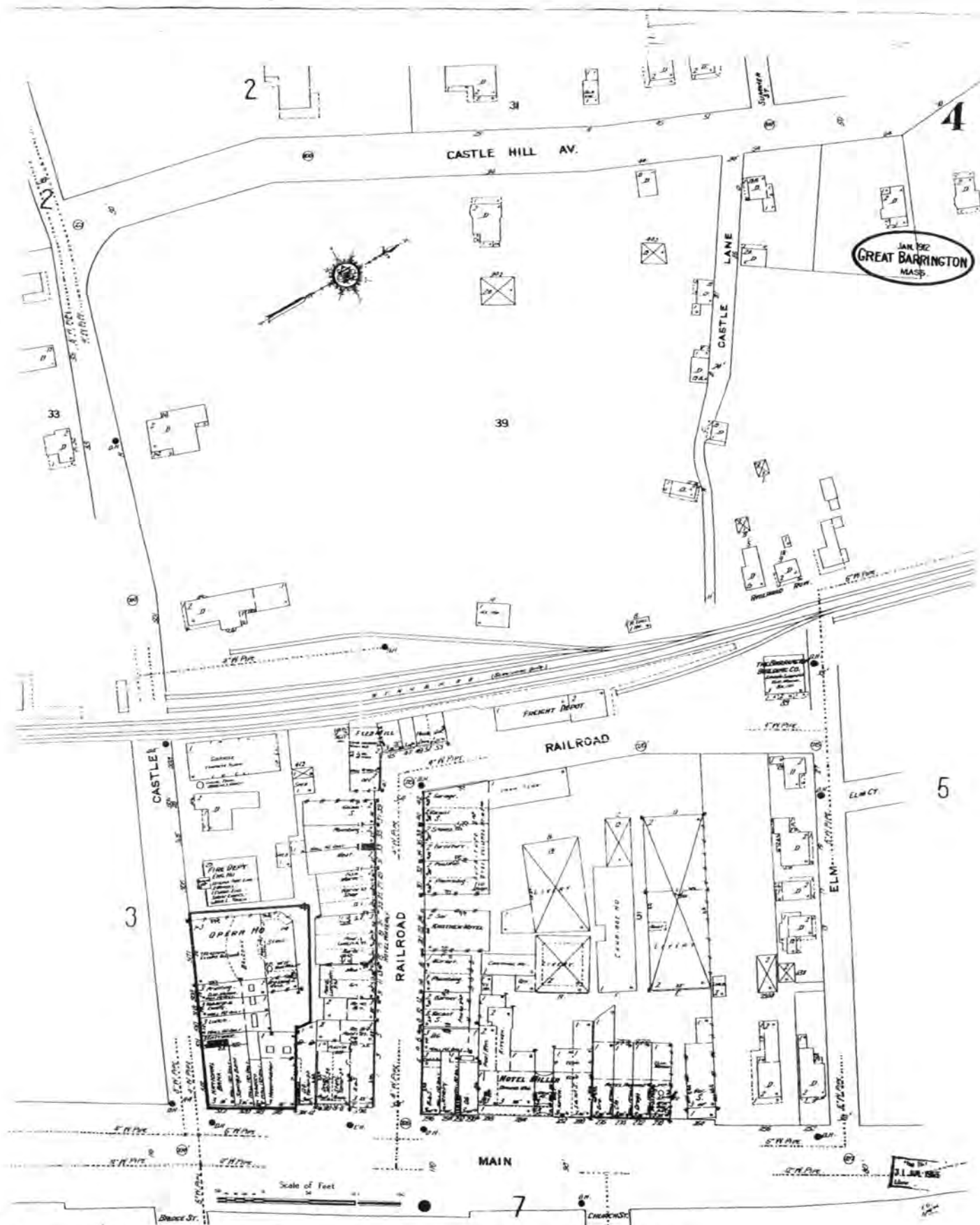
Great Barrington, Mass., Assessor's Map. Mahaiwe Block & Theater parcels outlined above.



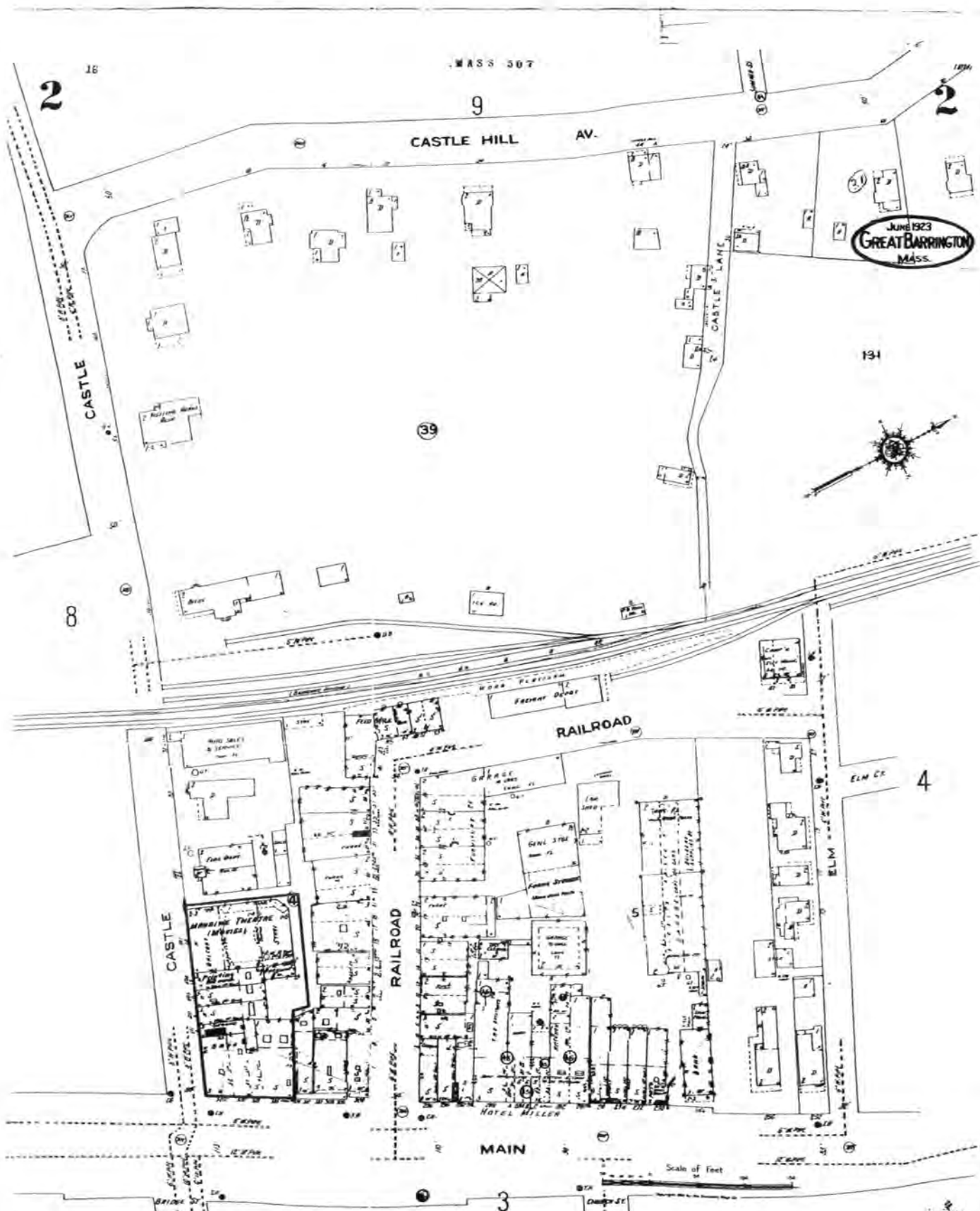
From F. W. Beers Atlas of Berkshire County, 1876, plate 91



Great Barrington, Mass., Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1895



Great Barrington, Mass., Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1912.



Great Barrington, Mass., Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1923 with 1947 revisions
 Mahaiwe Block and Theater outlined above.



PLAT FILE 19-41

APPROXIMATE MAGNETIC, 2001

APPROVAL OF THE GREAT BARRINGTON PLANNING BOARD NOT REQUIRED UNDER THE SUBDIVISION CONTROL LAW.

DATE: 10/10/2014
John W. Gorman
Professional Land Surveyor

ENDORSEMENT BY THE PLANNING BOARD HEREON DOES NOT IMPLY COMPLIANCE WITH THE MASS WETLANDS PROTECTION ACT OR APPLICABLE ZONING REGULATIONS.

LEGEND

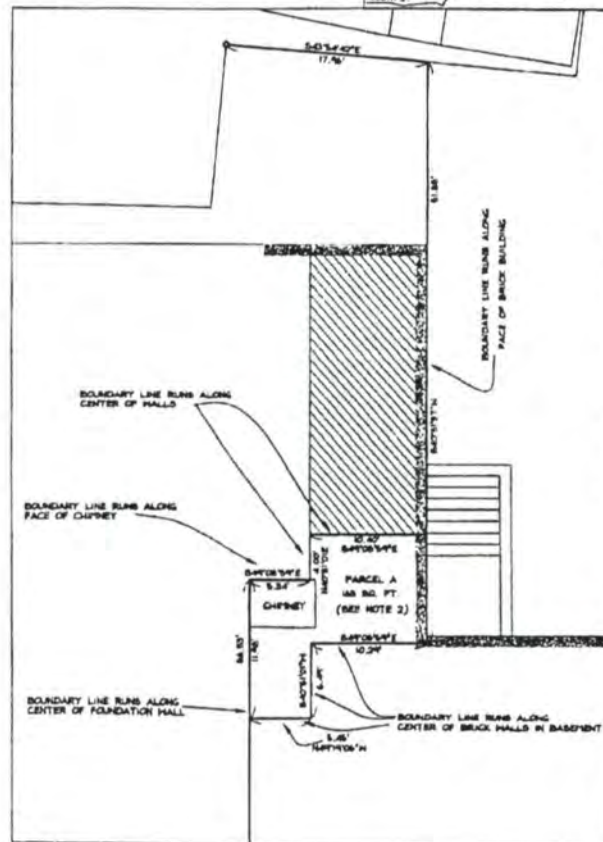
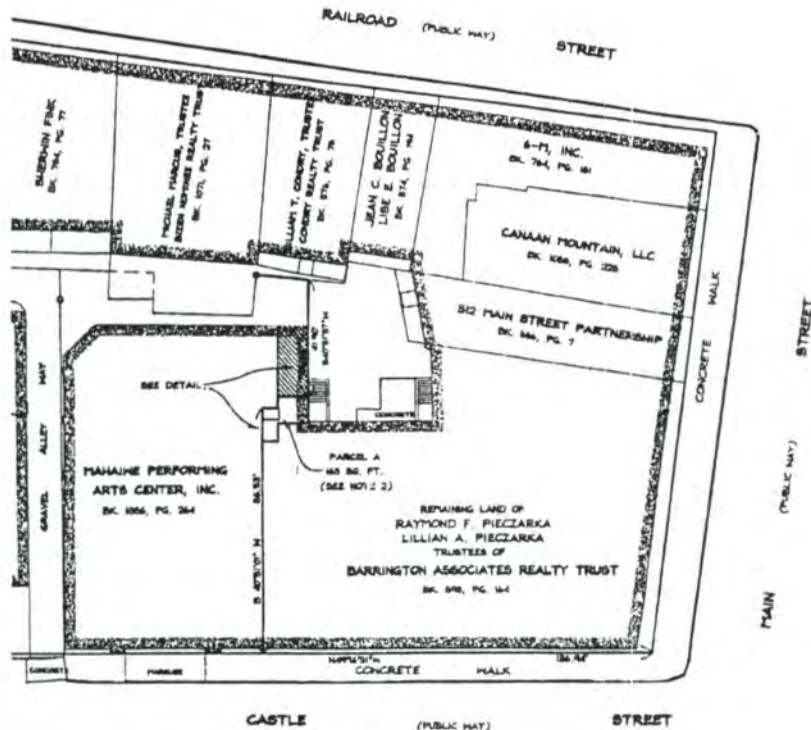
- IRON PIPE FOUND
- FACE OF BUILDING
- AREA CLAIMED BY BARRINGTON ASSOCIATES REALTY TRUST

NOTES:

1. PARCEL A SHOWN HEREON IS A PORTION OF THE SAID PREMISES DESCRIBED IN A DEED TO THE BARRINGTON ASSOCIATES REALTY TRUST, DATED JUNE 22, 1994 AND RECORDED IN THE BOOK 898, PAGE 144.
2. PARCEL A SHOWN HEREON, WHICH CONTAINS THE DRESSING ROOMS USED BY THE MAHAWE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, INC., DOES NOT CONFORM TO THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR A BUILDING LOT UNDER THE TOWN ZONING BY-LAWS AND, THEREFORE, SHOULD NOT BE CONVEYED AS SUCH. THE INTENTION IS TO CONVEY THIS PARCEL WITH THAT OF THE MAHAWE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, INC.
3. PARCEL A SHOWN HEREON MAY BE SUBJECT TO RIGHTS AND EASEMENTS AS CONTAINED IN THE VARIOUS DEEDS OF RECORD DESCRIBING SAID PREMISES. THE LOCATIONS AND EXTENT OF SAID RIGHTS AND EASEMENTS ARE NOT THE SUBJECT OF THIS SURVEY.

SCALE 1"=20'

I CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONFORMITY WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE REGISTER OF DEEDS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.
John W. Gorman 5-11-07
 PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR DATE



DETAIL SCALE 1"=10'

JOHN W. GORMAN
 41 Park Street
 Barrington, MA 01920
 (413) 743-0013
 www.jwg-survey.com

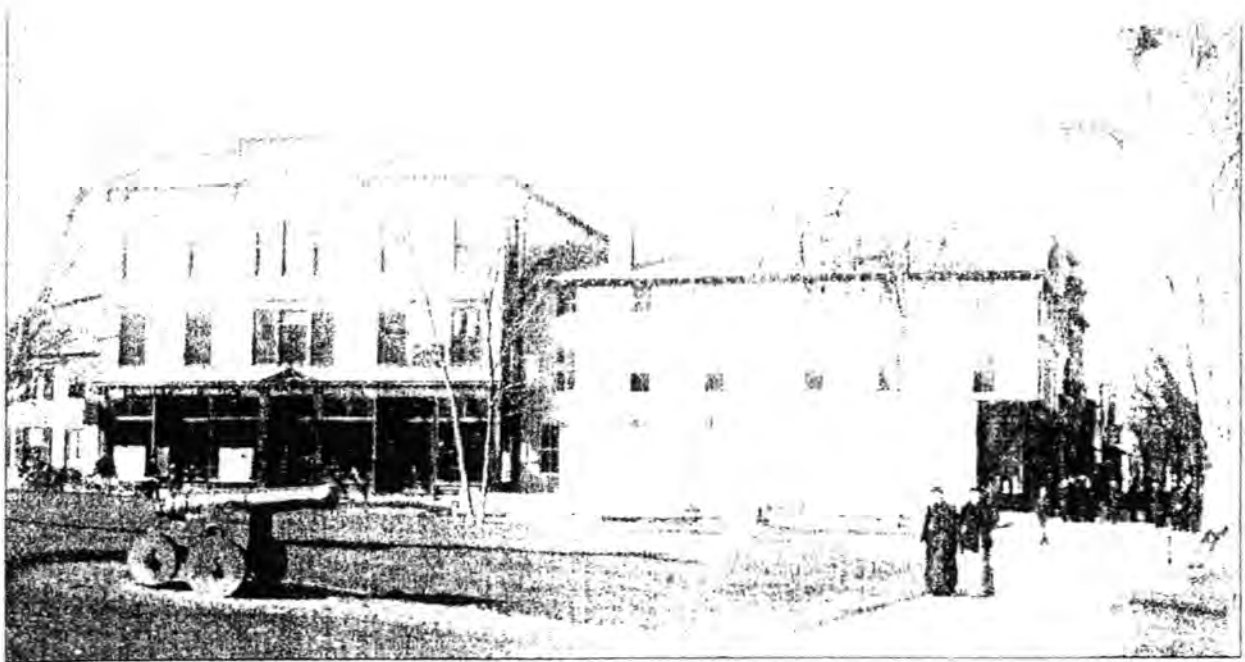


JOHN W. GORMAN

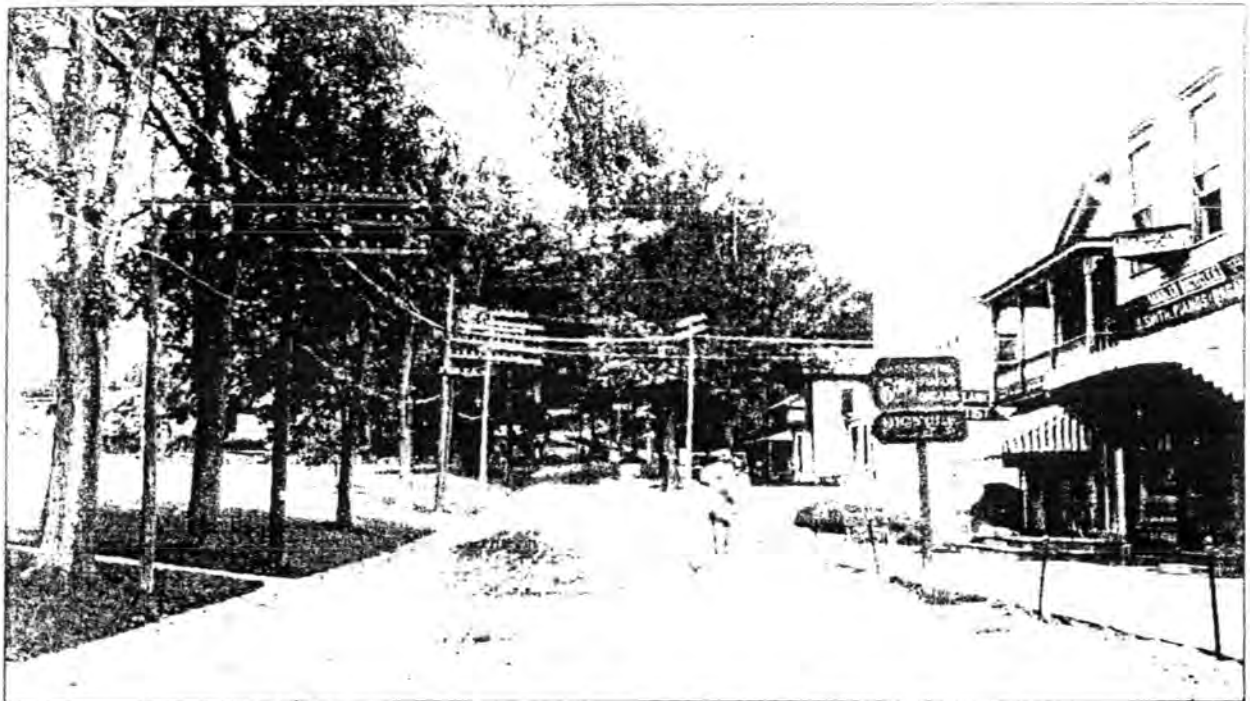
DATE	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	REMARKS
10/10/2014	MAHAWE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, INC.	CASTLE STREET	

MAHAWE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, INC.
 CASTLE STREET
 BARRINGTON, MA
 PROJECT DESCRIPTION: SURVEY PLAN
 APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED DIVISION OF LAND

BOOK 11 PLAT
 DATE 10/10/2014
 PLAN AS NOTED
 JOB NO.
 DRAWN BY: JWG
 CHECKED BY: JWG
 DATE: 10/10/2014
 OFFICE NUMBER: 101
 BOC-10-1



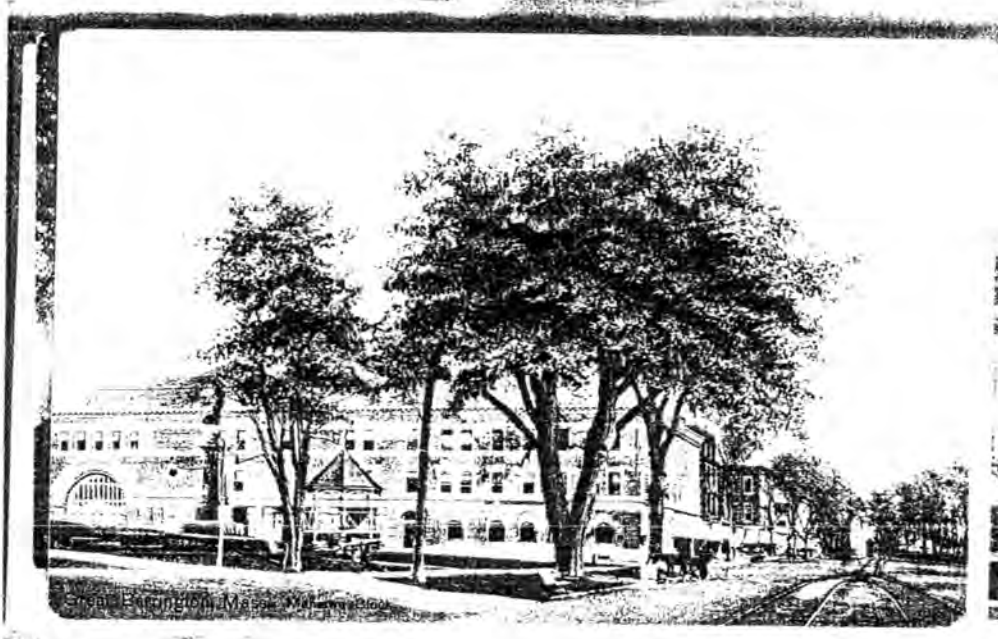
The corner of Main and Castle Streets in Great Barrington looked very different in 1892. A hardware store, drugstore, piano emporium, law office, photography studio, and other businesses were located here. After the buildings burned in 1901, the Mahaiwe Block and Theater were erected on the site. The cannon on the lawn of the town hall was known as "Old Macedonia." It was taken from a British frigate after the War of 1812. During World War II, the cannon was hauled away for scrap. (Lane Brothers photograph courtesy of Great Barrington Historical Society.)



This rare, one-of-a-kind photograph shows Castle Street in Great Barrington just before it was dead-ended by the railroad in 1901. When a new train station was built (a year after this photograph was taken), the railroad tracks were raised, Castle Street was cut off, and a pedestrian subway tunnel was built under the tracks. The Mahaiwe Theater now stands where the wooden building in the right foreground is shown. (Hughes photograph courtesy of Leveille Collection.)

From Leveille, Gary T. *Images of America: Around Great Barrington and Stockbridge*.
Dover, New Hampshire: Arcadia Publishing, 1997.

Mahaiwe Block Great Barrington, Mass.



Postcard views of Mahaiwe Block and Mahaiwe Theater, Great Barrington, Mass.
circa 1905-1920

From Mason Library Postcard Collection. Great Barrington, MA

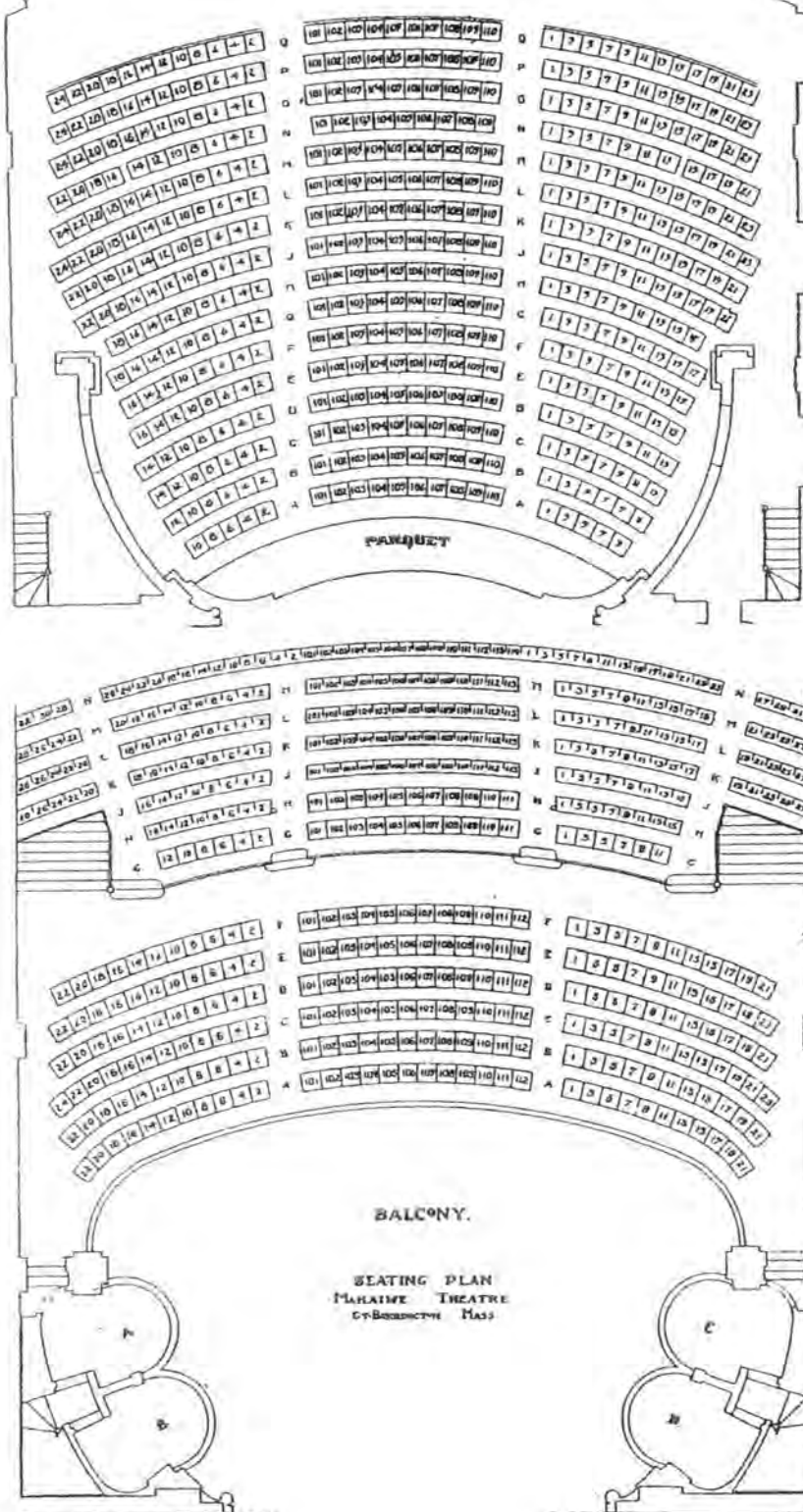
Main Street, Great Barrington, Mass. in the Berkshires—1



Postcard views of Main Street, Great Barrington, from Mason Library Postcard Collection. Great Barrington, MA
Upper view, circa 1940, showing remodeled National Mahaiwe Bank entrance.
Lower view, circa 1910-1929

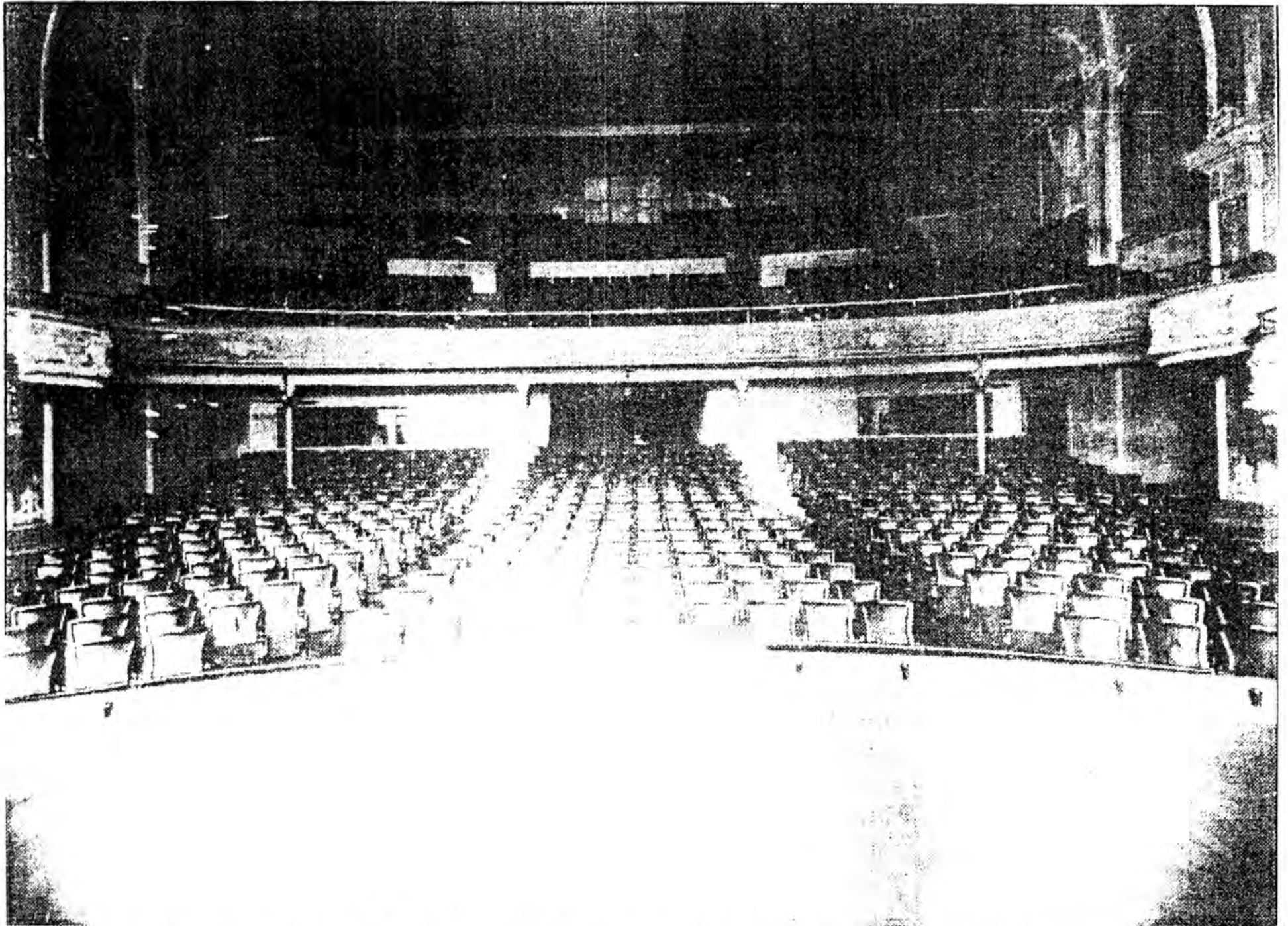


Mahaiwe Theater marquee, from Drew, Bernard A. A History of the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Attic Revivals Press, 1989

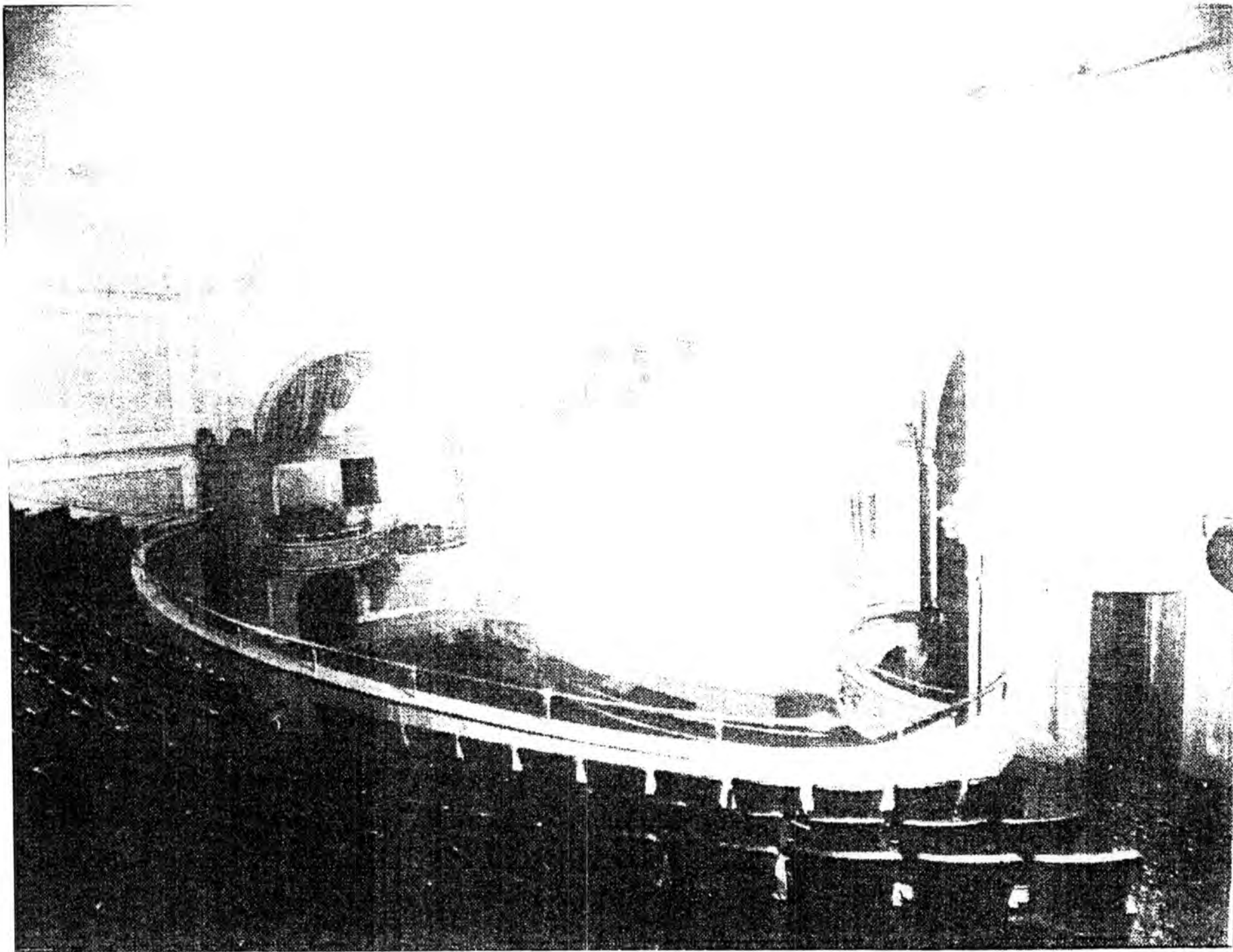


Mahaiwe Theater seating plan (South Berkshire Directory 1932-34)

From Drew, Bernard A. A History of the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Attic Revivals Press, 1989



Mahaiwe Theater interior, 1905. From Drew, Bernard A. *A History of the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts*. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Attic Revivals Press, 1989



Mahaiwe Theater interior, 1905. From Drew, Bernard A. *A History of the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts*. Great Barrington, Massachusetts: Attic Revivals Press, 1989

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Mahaiwe Block
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Berkshire

DATE RECEIVED: 7/30/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/14/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/29/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/12/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000898

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 9/12/2008 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A & C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 9/12/2008

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Berkshire County

Photo #1: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



Berkshire County

Photo #2: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



photo # 3: Mahiwee block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006

Berkshire County



photo #4: Mahiwa Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006

Berkshire County



Berkshire County

Photo #5. Mahaimo Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



Berkshire County

Photo #6: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



Photo #7: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006

Berkshire County



Berkshire County

Photo #8: Mahaine Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



Berkshire County

Photo #9: Mohaiwa Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006



Berkshire County

Photo #10: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006.



photo # 11: Mahine Block, Great Barrington, MA - 2006.

Berkshire County



MA - Berkshire County - Mahaiwe - 012

GREAT BARRINGTON, MAHAWE BLOCK

view looking NW from intersection of
Main + Castle Sts.

Peter Flower photo 2006

Photo # 12



MA - Berkshire County - Mahaiwe - 501
GREAT BARRINGTON, MAHAWE BLOCK

Main St facade looking SW

Michael Flower

Supplementary Photo #1



MA - Berkshire County - Mahaiwe - 502

GREAT BARRINGTON, MAHAWE BLOCK

Main St. facade looking NW

Michael Flouren photo

SUPPLEMENTARY PHOTO #2

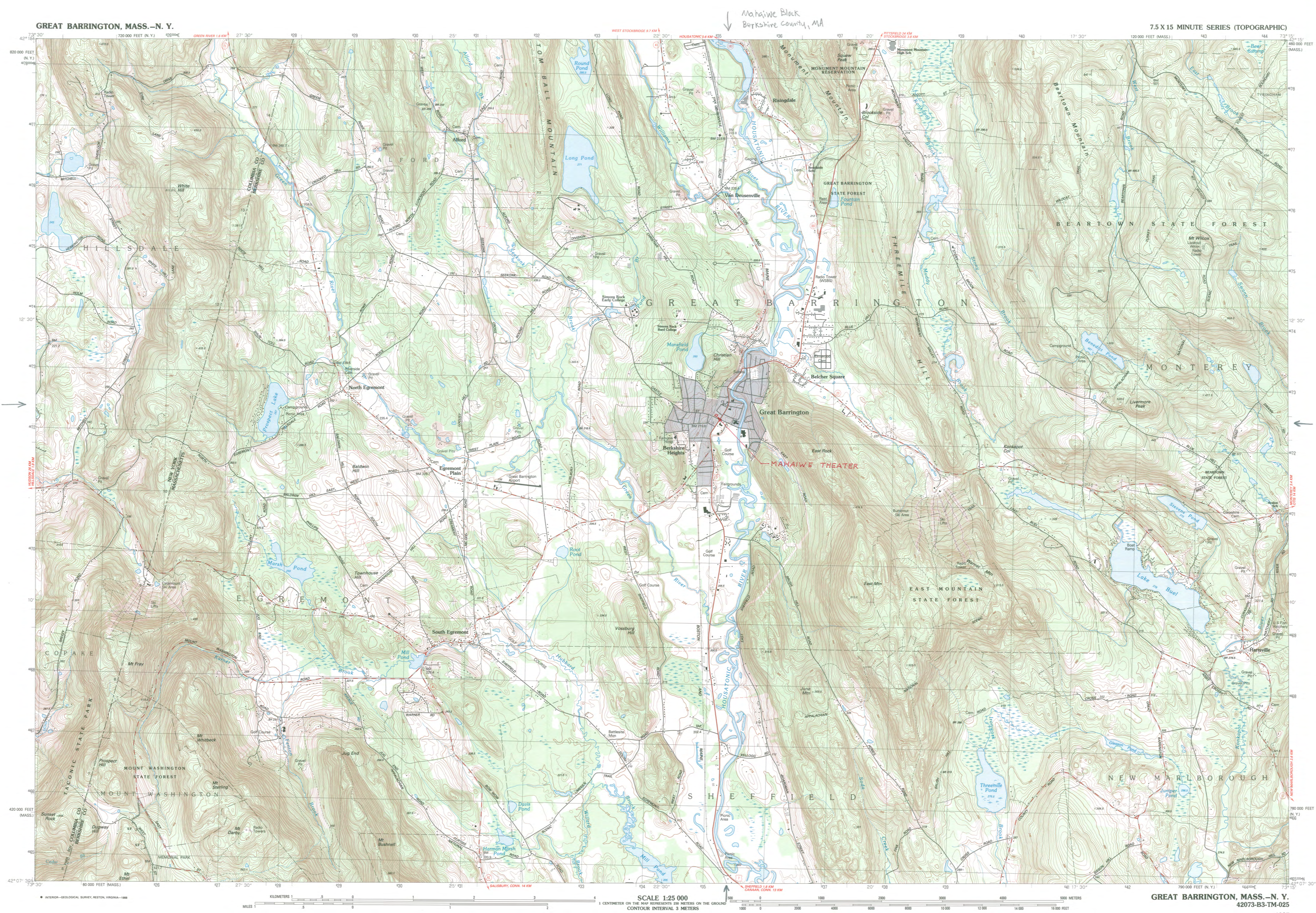


MA - Berkshire County - Mahawine - 503
GREAT BARRINGTON, MAHAWINE BLOCK

Castle St. facade, looking NW at Main St.

Michael Flower photo

SUPPLEMENTARY PHOTO #3



MAHAWE THEATRE
GREAT BARRINGTON
BERKSHIRE CO. MA

RECEIVED
Great Barrington
MASS.—N. Y. MASS. HIST. COM.

1:25 000-scale metric
topographic map

7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE
SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

1987

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies
Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1981. May edited 1987
Supersedes Egremont and Great Barrington 1:25,000-scale maps dated 1973
Projection and 1000-meter grid, zone 18
Universal Transverse Mercator
10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone, and New York coordinate system, east zone 1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 5 meters south and 36 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

CONVERSION TABLE	
Meters	Feet
1	3.2808
2	6.5617
3	9.8425
4	13.1234
5	16.4042
6	19.6850
7	22.9659
8	26.2467
9	29.5275
10	32.8084

To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808
To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048

DECLINATION DIAGRAM	
1° 1'	1° 1'
249 MILS	15 MILS

UTM grid convergence (RM) and 1987 magnetic declination (RM) at center of map
Diagram is approximate

ADJOINING MAPS		
1	2	3
4	5	
6	7	8

1 Chatham (7.5')
2 Southbury
3 East Lee
4 Willable (7.5')
5 Otis
6 Copake (7.5')
7 Ashley Falls
8 Tolland Center

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

Primary highway, hard surface	Secondary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface	Unimproved road; trail	Route marker: Interstate; U. S.; State	Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage	Bridge: drawbridge	Footbridge; overpass; underpass	Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown	House; barn; church; school; large structure	Boundary	National, with monument	State	County, parish	Civil township, precinct, district	Incorporated city, village, town	National or State reservation; small park	Land grant with monument; land section corner	U. S. public lands survey: range, township; section	Range, township; section line: location approximate	Fence or field line	Power transmission line, located tower	Dam; dam with lock	Cemetery; grave	Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument	Windmill; water well; spring	Mini shed; prospect; shed or cave	Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation	Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression	Distorted surface: strip mine, lava; sand	Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate	Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream	Rapids, large and small; falls, large and small	Swamp; marsh	Submerged marsh; land subject to controlled inundation	Woodland; scattered trees	Scrub; mangrove	Orchard; vineyard
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A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request

GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS.—N. Y.
42073-B3-TM-025
1987

JUN 18 2003

AK
JLG

MASS. HIST. COMM



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

SENATOR ANDREA F. NUCIFORO, JR.

BERKSHIRE, HAMPDEN, HAMPSHIRE
AND FRANKLIN DISTRICT

ROOM 213B, STATE HOUSE

TEL. 617-722-1625

FAX 617-722-1523

DISTRICT OFFICE:

74 NORTH STREET

PITTSFIELD, MA 01201

TEL. 413-442-6810

FAX 413-442-6927

COMMITTEES:

BANKS AND BANKING (CHAIRMAN)

SENATE WAYS AND MEANS

HUMAN SERVICES

AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS

LOCAL AFFAIRS

June 9, 2003

William F. Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission
State House Room 337
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Secretary Galvin:

I am writing seeking your assistance in expediting the Mahaiwe Theatre's application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission as they seek the designation of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As you are aware, being on the National Registry of Historic Places would offer a multitude of funding opportunities for the Theatre's rehabilitation. These funding opportunities would not be available otherwise, and in these difficult economic times important community development projects such as this need every advantage when competing for scarce resources.

The Mahaiwe Theatre, built in 1905, is Great Barrington's first and only stage theatre. It is located on Castle Street in the Downtown Historic District which also includes the Town Hall, the Civil War Monument, the fire station, the Russell House, the train station, as well as the Mahaiwe Block. It is a French Classic Revival and Beaux Arts Theatre designed to present original Broadway plays, and is one of the dozen oldest of its kind in the country. It is an architectural gem and once renovations are complete it will return to its full glory of offering a range of quality arts programming including theatre, music, film, and opera as the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.

I enthusiastically support the restoration of the Mahaiwe Theatre and I respectfully request that the application submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission be processed expeditiously so it may proceed to the federal government and approved for a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Thank you in advance and please contact me if I may be able to provide any further assistance in moving this forward.

Sincerely,

ANDREA F. NUCIFORO, JR.
State Senator

cc: The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center
cc: Congressman John Olver

RECEIVED



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission



September 17, 2008

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Historic Landmarks/National Register Programs
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Mahaiwe Block, Great Barrington (Berkshire), MA

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find corrections to a National Register nomination recently submitted to your office.

At the request of NPS staff, the following corrections and additional items are enclosed:

Section 8, page 1, is amended to eliminate the phrase "state level" in the opening paragraph.

An additional photograph (#12) is submitted to better illustrate the Main Street façade of the block. The photograph identification page (Attachments, page 2) has been changed to reflect this addition, and Section 7, page 2, also reflects this amendment.

Additional color photos have been submitted to supplement the photo coverage of the Main Street façade. These have also been added to the photo identification page.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission