

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New Mexico
COUNTY: Socorro
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE AUG 13 1974

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
The Garcia Opera House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Southwest corner of Terry Avenue and California Street; north-

CITY OR TOWN:  
east corner of old plaza

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

Socorro

STATE: New Mexico CODE: 35 COUNTY: Socorro CODE: 53

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>storage</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Holm Bursum, III

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Socorro

STATE:  
New Mexico

CODE:  
35

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Socorro

STATE:  
New Mexico

CODE:  
35

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties

DATE OF SURVEY: March 24, 1970  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
New Mexico State Planning Office

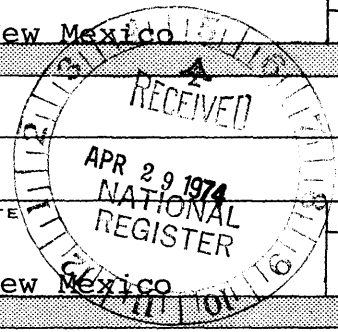
STREET AND NUMBER:  
200 W. DeVargas Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Santa Fe

STATE:  
New Mexico

CODE:  
35

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

ENTRY NUMBER: AUG 13 1974

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Garcia Opera House is a long, rectangular adobe structure with a pitched roof. A unique open-trussed roof system spans the 40-foot wide interior space. As the truss reaches the wall it forms a slight curve so that the whole profile is a gentle arch. The foyer is not part of the main building as shown by the different roof level, but was added later. Two double doors with the former ticket window between them, lead from the foyer to the hardwood dance floor-audience area which was formerly lined on two sides with a raised "duena" platform, for the benefit of chaperons, and was further set off by railings. The stage, entered from a low doorway and short stairwell on either side, occupies one third of the floor space.

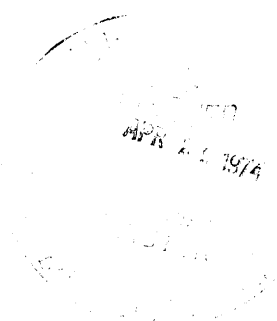
Three identical paneled double-doors with transom divide the six framed double-windows into three sets along the north and south walls. The top of each door frame is decorated with a floral design at the corner and center, and painted in a combination of gold, yellow and green. Single, carved geometric designs decorate the lower corner of the door frames.

The plaster has fallen from the ceiling. Cream-painted plaster walls are stipled in blue and red. Old photographs reveal chandeliers hung from the ceiling and single lamps backed with reflectors spaced along the wall, all of which have disappeared.

The proscenium arch curves to both sides and is there supported by four white, fluted columns. Five panels, painted blue in colour with gold designs decorate the underside of the arch. Contemporary wallpaper formerly covered the walls of the proscenium surrounding the arch.

The Garcia Opera House is in a deteriorated condition due to the fact that it has long been used for a warehouse. However, the unique building is structurally sound although the south and west walls, as well as the roof truss need reinforcement and stabilization. The roof will be replaced and the interior refurbished. The original floor plan is intact and the building can be repaired, renovated and stabilized to serve a necessary civil purpose as well as an historical reminder to the visitor of Socorro's prosperous, late Nineteenth Century past.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Loring, L. Spitler and Al Galves. New Mexico Bicentennial Meeting Houses, December, 1973.  
 Nieman, Charles L. Spanish Times and Boom Times: Toward An Architectural History of Socorro, New Mexico, IV, 1972.  
 Phillips, David R. The West An American Experience, 1973.  
Socorro Chieftain, February 16, 1901; December 14, 21, 1907; March 14, 1908.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

OR

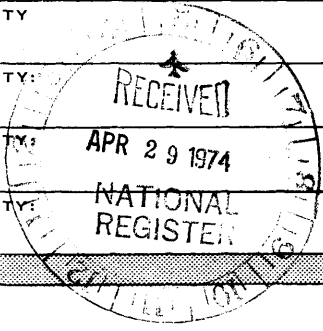
N34 03 30 W106 53 29

U TM  
12/225462  
2170040  
(1)

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: / -

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Michael McCachren, Archivist I

ORGANIZATION: State Record Center and Archives DATE: 2/26/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 404 Montezuma

CITY OR TOWN: Santa Fe STATE: New Mexico CODE: 35

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: David W. King  
 Title: STATE PLANNING OFFICER  
 Date: APRIL 24, 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

Al Waerhusen  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 8/13/74

ATTEST:

W. H. [Signature]  
 Keeper of the National Register

Date: 8/1/74

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1886**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the 1880's the village of Socorro witnessed a boom period resulting from silver mining production and the coming of the railroad. New settlers into the Territory of New Mexico brought with them the cultural values and architectural styles from other parts of the Union with which they were familiar. Operatic performances by traveling troupes were popular forms of entertainment in many boom towns throughout the West. The Garcia Opera House, built to accomodate such entertainment is an excellent example of the Neo-Greek architectural revival which had flourished in midwestern towns before finding its way to the frontier.

The Opera House was built in 1886 by Francisca G. Garcia, a leading citizen of Socorro, descendant of a family long identified with the history of the area, and the widow of Juan Nepomuceno Garcia, also a descendant of a pioneer Spanish family. The property had been deeded her by her late husband who had purchased it prior to their marriage on December 1, 1868.

As a part of the Garcia property, the Opera House was first mortgaged under a deed of trust on November 19, 1888 as collateral to guarantee the payment of debts. Several similar transactions followed, all for the same reason, and can be traced through the legal actions of Francisca Garcia who was later remarried, first to Charles G. Duncan and then to Francis F. Towle. She deeded the property to Abran Abeyta before her death in 1911 after all mortgages had been paid. The Opera House was renamed for the new owner but returned to its original name after it was acquired in December, 1911 by Holm O. Bursum, well-known political figure and Socorro civic leader who later served as U.S. Senator from New Mexico, 1921-1925.

Although Señora GARCIA had hoped that traveling opera companies might be attracted to perform in the new cultural building, no record has been located describing such an operatic production. However, for some fifty years the structure was used for theatrical performances by traveling troupes; concerts such as those given by the Wilbur Starr Concert Company on December 21, 1907; masked balls, one of which is shown in an 1887 photograph, and other dances; numerous school programs by the girls from Mount Carmel School; commencement activities; and later, even college basketball games. The Opera House remained a community center far past

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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(Continuation Sheet #1)

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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE Continued:

the boom period of Socorro's history into the 1940's when such activities ceased. Afterward it was used for storage by the B&M Feed and Supply Company and was later converted into a general warehouse. Plans are presently being discussed by city officials and the Historical Society of Socorro in cooperation with Holm Bursum III, present owner and grandson of the former senator, to obtain the structure so that it might be rehabilitated and again used for civic purposes. Support for the restoration of the Opera House has also been voiced and actively worked for by the Chamber of Commerce, the local Art League, the Garden Club and other civic organizations.

