

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received APR 26 1984

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Porter County Memorial Hall

and/or common Memorial Opera House

2. Location

street & number 104 Indiana Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Valparaiso N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 017 county Porter code 127

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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 type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Porter County Commissioners, as Trustees

street & number Porter County Court House

city, town Valparaiso N/A vicinity of state Indiana 46383

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Porter County Court House
Porter County Auditor

street & number Porter County Court House

city, town Valparaiso state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The 1893 Memorial Opera House, located at the edge of downtown Valparaiso, can only be termed "eclectic" in its styling. Although symmetrically arranged, the details and massing are most closely associated with the Queen Anne style. The use of broad arches at the entrances and some side windows, however, reflect the influence of perhaps Louis Sullivan or H. H. Richardson, both of whom were active in nearby Chicago in the years surrounding the construction of the Opera House.

The main facade of the two-story red brick Opera House features a slightly projecting, two-story central bay, with a jerkin-head gable. The ground floor of the bay is almost entirely occupied by a broad, low-springing arch, formed by seven header courses of brick. Springers are rock-faced limestone. The arch frames the main entrance, consisting of two pairs of multi-light doors. The tympanum is filled by eight radiating lights. At the second story above the entrance is a slightly recessed panel with a stone sill, in which is placed a panel with the inscription, "1883, Memorial Hall, A monument to the Soldiers and Sailors of 1861-5." The top edge of the recessed panel is formed by a limestone sill which underscores a fanlight. The fanlight, with stained glass at its center and outer border, is set within another seven-course brick arch. A coved vergeboard outlines the edge of the jerkin-head gable, and is decorated by rosettes.

Flanking the central bay is the main body of the building, with one bay on either side. Ground floor double-hung windows are segmentally arched, with stone sills at the same level as the springers of the central arch. Double-hung windows at the second floor have stone sills, and a stone belt course that serves as the lintels. Above the second story is a parapet with rounded "shoulders," and a stone cornice above corbelled brick (interrupted by the jerkin-head).

At both corners of the main facade are round, two-story towers. Rectangular windows at the ground floor have a stone string course forming the sills, again on a line with the springers of the central arch, and a rock-faced belt course forming the lintels. Second story windows on the towers have individual sills, and a stone belt course continuous with that previously described on the main body of the building. Above the belt course are eleven courses of brick detailing, followed by a floriated frieze, then a modillioned cornice. Roofs of the towers are steeply pitched, with a slightly convex profile, and are topped by scalloped curbs.

The rest of the two story building has a pitched roof, interrupted by hipped roofs where slightly projecting bays occur. The wall surface is interrupted by round-arched windows, repeating the treatment on the main facade, and shallow buttresses. Most windows on the sides, however, are segmentally arched and double-hung.

The interior still features the orchestra pit and side boxes, the boxes being framed and supported by turned posts, and the railings being decorated with elaborate, applied ornamentation. Lattice work connects the posts at the tops of the boxes, not unlike the treatment that would be seen on the front porch of a Queen Anne house. The rectangular proscenium arch is framed by bay leaf garlands.

A new floor and seating were installed in 1967, and improvements were made to the orchestra pit. About \$250,000 was spent to renovate the building at that time.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1893

Builder/Architect Charles F. Lembke

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Valparaiso's Memorial Opera House has served as a center of cultural activity for the community, and is also a well-preserved, little altered, local example of a Victorian era public building.

In 1893, the Porter County Memorial Hall was completed and dedicated as a memorial to the county's Civil War veterans. The idea of erecting a memorial hall was initiated by the Valparaiso Chaplain Brown Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, who started a public subscription drive to secure the necessary funds. The lot and additional funds were provided by the County Commissioners. The G.A.R. sponsored patriotic rallies, concerts, and lectures in the building, but these were evidently not financially successful, and in 1901 the Post's debts and control of the building were assumed by the County.

The building was then leased to Albert F. Heineman, who brought minstrel troupes, traveling theatrical companies, political figures, and vaudeville to the city. William Jennings Bryan delivered his famous "Cross of Gold and Crown of Thorns" speech from the Opera House stage two years before delivering it at the Chicago nominating convention. Theodore Roosevelt appeared here amid great fanfare in 1900, while campaigning for Vice President.

The performing arts flourished at the Opera House until the 1920's, when the movie industry began to dominate the entertainment industry. Some films were shown at the Opera House, in addition to performances by local theatrical groups during the 1920's, 30's and 40's, but the Opera House was vacant much of the time during this period. Demolition of the Opera House was discussed during the 1950's, but in 1957 the Community Theatre Guild was formed, having as an express purpose the renovation and preservation of the Opera House. The Guild leased the building from the County Commissioners, and proceeded with making repairs and providing an outlet and stage for local amateur talent. Work on the building peaked in 1967, when a \$250,000 renovation project was undertaken. The Guild continues to operate and upgrade the Opera House.

The building itself skillfully combines elements typical of the 1890's into a gracious composition most easily described as Queen Anne. The building has remained remarkably intact, providing an excellent example of this type of facility from the Victorian era.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Hahn, Anthony Wayne. A History of the Porter County Memorial Opera House; an unpublished research report, 1971.
Vidette-Messenger, March 25, 1960.
Post Tribune, December 26, 1982 and December 9, 1983.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Valparaiso, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	9	5	0	7	0	4	5	9	0	3	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot #3, Block 29, Original Survey of Valparaiso, Indiana

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert F. Bennett

organization Community Theatre Guild

date February 1, 1984

street & number 103 Erie Street

telephone 219/462-1505

city or town Valparaiso

state Indiana 46383

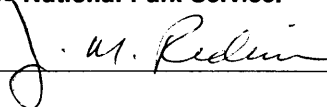
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-19-84

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 5/24/84

for 
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration