

PH0011
-11

DATA SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	IOWA
COUNTY:	HARDIN
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	FEB 20 1975

1. NAME

COMMON:
Met Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Metropolitan Opera House *use this*

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
515 Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Iowa Falls

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Third

STATE Iowa	CODE 14	COUNTY: Hardin	CODE 083
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
E. M. Garbett, A. E. Thiele, Virginia Mill (Iowa Falls Amusement Company)

STREET AND NUMBER:
1123 High Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Des Moines

STATE:
Iowa

CODE:
14

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Hardin County Courthouse, Recorder's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Eldora

STATE:
Iowa

CODE:
14

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
"Windshield Survey" - State Historic Preservation Program

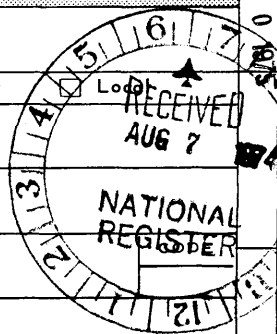
DATE OF SURVEY:
 Federal
 State
 County

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER:
DATE:
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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Metropolitan Opera House was built in 1899. The basic building shell and structural fabric is typical of that period, but the three story facade is done in one of the popular late nineteenth century modes, Italian Renaissance. This facade is rich in the detailing of the style: the facade is quined from grade to the frieze, the frieze is garlanded and topped with a bracket supported cornice, fenestration consists of three types of windows on the second and third stories (four rectangular windows with heavy jambs and bracket supported hoods and finials flanking a series of three rectangular windows between engaged columns on the second story, and four round windows flanking a series of four rectangular windows between engaged columns on the third story; the engaged columns on the second and third stories support their own friezes and cornices). The first story is simpler. Two storefronts typical of turn-of-the-century style flank a corbeled arch that serves as the theatre entrance. This arch is decorated with a carved bust of Shakespeare on the keystone and musical emblems and the masks of comedy and tragedy on either side. This entrance is now concealed by a marquee and theatre front that were added to the building about 1944. At that time the original lobby of Tennessee marble and polished oak was covered as were other architectural features of the lobby and theatre auditorium. However, all of these features and materials are reported to be extant behind the more contemporary surfaces and finishes.

The main floor of the theatre once seated 441 and the balcony seated an additional 390. The stage is 66 feet wide and 30 feet deep. The stage has large wings to either side, fly space above it with the grid approximately 50 feet above the stage floor. The second and third floors at the front of the building are occupied by offices and a ballroom respectively.

The entire building, exterior and interior, is in excellent condition with little evidence of either wet or dry rot, the masonry all appears sound as do the timber floor joists and roof trusses. All exterior and interior trim that has not been concealed by later remodelings is complete and in good condition.



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8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1899

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 | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The design and construction of the Metropolitan Opera House was commissioned by one of Iowa Falls' most noted citizens, Eugene S. Ellsworth. At the time of its opening at the turn of the century, the theatre was considered the most attractive and complete opera house in the state. Attendance at the grand opening performance was 800 making the evening the "biggest social event in the history of Iowa Falls." The theatre soon gained a reputation as "the big time theatre in a little town". Patrons came from miles around for the productions staged here, such as, Faust, Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Merchant of Venice. John Phillip Sousa's band performed more than once on the stage. By the late 1920's vaudeville and the silent movies had become the House's stock-in-trade and the first sound system was installed in 1930. From that time until about 1952 Ellsworth College drama productions, high school plays, dance recitals, and concerts were still performed between movie programs.

Not only was this theatre well equipped (it is one of the very few in the country to have "stage grooves"), but it had, according to the singers and musicians who performed on its stage excellent acoustics. In addition to its physical facilities, the theatre houses a sizable collection of memorabilia in the form of photographs, posters, magazines, playbills, etc. that cover a sizable part of the history of drama, vaudeville and the movies of this century.

The theatre is still in daily use as a movie house.

Architects of the building were: O'Meyer and Thori of St. Paul, Minnesota.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nichols, Ira, Pioneer Days in Iowa Falls; Messinger Printing Co., Fort Dodge, Iowa
 Brown, Dave, "Movie Theater Obscures Ornate Met Opera House"; Waterloo Daily Courier, December 17, 1972, Waterloo, Iowa
 "A Thespian Temple," Iowa Falls Sentinel, December 27, 1899.

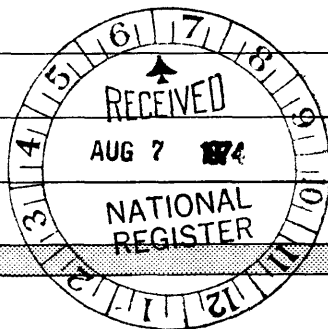
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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	° ' "	° ' "		42° 31' 28"	93° 15' 43"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

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:
 Richard M. Powers

ORGANIZATION: William Nowysz & Associates DATE: February 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
209 1/2 East Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN: Iowa City STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

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 Adrian D. Audemont

Title Historic Preservation Officer

Date 6/25/74

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

A. K. Mortensen
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 2/20/75

ATTEST:
Charles A. Starnes
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 2.19.75

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	IOWA	
COUNTY	HARDIN	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		FEB 20 1975

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION continued

The storefronts flanking the theatre entrance are in nearly the original condition. Drawings made at the time of the building's construction show them as they are now, except for the fact that over the years some of the glass has been overpainted and some minor changes (replacement of doors, etc.) have been made. Original signs on the glass are still visible through the overpainting, tile on entryways is still extant, and, on the whole, there is little exterior change in seventy-five years of use.

The original theatre seats were removed from both auditorium and balcony, presumably in the 1944 renovation. They were not disposed of, but were stored in the third floor ballroom until the late 1960's. At that time they were sold to the public in small numbers (one or two to six or so at a time, generally still ganged together). As far as we know, most of the seats were purchased by residents of Iowa Falls and nearby communities. Therefore, it may be possible to retrieve many of these seats in a restoration project. (It should be noted that not all the seats were sold. Presumably, some were beyond repair even before they were removed from the theatre and were never saved. In addition, there are still a number of seats in the third floor ballroom which, because of their poor condition, were simply not attractive enough to buyers to have been sold.)

