



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

January 18, 2011

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This is due to the fact that the publication of our Federal Register Notice: "National Register of Historic Places: Pending Nominations and Other Actions" was delayed beyond our control to the point where the mandated 15 day public comment period ended after our required 45 day time frame to act on the nomination. If the 45<sup>th</sup> day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day. The nomination is technically adequate and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation, and thus, automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1142



# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Florence Opera House  
other names/site number 115-1790-00006

## 2. Location

street & number SW Corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main  not for publication  
city or town Florence  vicinity  
state Kansas code KS county Marion code 115 zip code 66851

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Patrick Zetter 12/1/10  
Signature of certifying official Date  
DSHPO  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Joe Edson H. Beall 1.18.11  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(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	
	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
1	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**RECREATION/CULTURE: Music Facility**  
**COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store**

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**VACANT/NOT IN USE**

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate**

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: **Limestone**

walls: **Limestone**

roof: **Composition**

other: **Wood Framing**

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary**

The Florence Opera House is an imposing six-bay-wide three-story Italianate building that dominates the southwest corner of Fifth and Main in the rural Flint Hills community of Florence, Marion County, Kansas (pop. 596). The building is located on the north end of the downtown's most fully developed block, between Fourth and Fifth Streets. To the south, the commercial row continues with four two-story Italianate buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Farther south are one-story, one-part commercial buildings built ca. 1920s. The east side of the 400 Block is less intact. A one-story concrete-block auto-related structure dominates the southeast corner of Fifth and Main; three two-story buildings, one of them a former movie theater, fall to its south. An empty lot/park marks the former location of the Horner Hotel, the town's only other three-story commercial building. To the north, a small restaurant occupies the historic location of the two-story Florence Hotel.

Like most of the historic buildings in downtown Florence, the opera house has native limestone as its principal exterior material. The building's footprint measures approximately 50' X 100', with the front elevation facing east toward Main Street. A recently constructed metal lean-to addition to the rear elevation provided storage for the grocery store. Through most of its history, the full width of the first floor was been occupied by a single business. The upper two stories, historically accessible via stairs off the north and east elevations, housed an opera house and storage. The building has been vacant since the town lost its grocery store a few years ago. Distinguishing features include 2/2 double-hung wood windows, a pressed metal cornice, and pressed-metal ceilings.

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### **Narrative Description**

#### **Exterior**

##### Front (East) Elevation

The storefront level on the east elevation was modified over time, most recently in the ca. 1970s/80s when the first floor was occupied by a grocery store. On the south side, a door that historically opened to a stair to the second floor is covered over. A deep blond brick bulkhead stretches from this enclosed opening on the south to an aluminum storefront-type door located near the center of the façade. The brick bulkhead, which continues north to a blond brick pier on the north end, is capped with a header-coursed sill. Above this, on each side of the centered door, is a truncated multi-pane storefront window. Above the truncated storefront windows, at the historic transom level, is a shingled shed awning whose construction likely coincided with that of the storefront modifications. The ca. 1970s/80s features are interrupted by ca. 1950s brick piers.

Like many nineteenth-century commercial buildings, the Florence Opera House is a two-part commercial block, designed to serve two distinctive uses. As such, the second and third stories of the front elevation are identical. The principal material on the upper stories is rough-faced square-cut limestone laid in regular courses. There are six windows on each of the upper stories. Although the original 2/2 windows are intact, they have been covered with metal. Details, including stone sills, triangular hood-type lintels, and quoins, are dressed limestone. This elevation is capped by a decorative pressed-metal cornice. The cornice has prominent brackets at the corners. Six modillions interrupt the frieze and support the cymatium. Atop the cornice proper is a decorative triangular pediment stamped with the word "OPERA."

### Side (North) Elevation

In comparison to the front elevation, the side elevation, which faces Fifth Street, is very simple in design and materials. Here the principal material is rough-cut rubble limestone of various sizes laid in regular courses. The windows have cut stone sills and rubble limestone arched lintels. There are only three openings on the first floor, all toward the back of the building: a covered narrow window, the historic opera house entrance with transom, and a wider dock-type entrance. There are seven window openings on the upper levels, with two stacked windows on the east end that match the proportions of those on the front elevation and five taller evenly spaced windows from the center to the west end.

### Rear (West) Elevation

The rear elevation, also constructed of rubble limestone, is parged with stucco. There are no extant window openings on the upper level. A metal shed addition, which housed grocery storage, extends west from the north half of this elevation. A wood lean-to equipment shelter extends from the south side of this elevation. An enclosed window opening on the main building is visible from above the metal roof of the equipment shelter.

### **Interior**

The interior is divided into two main spaces, the store on the first floor and opera house on the second and third floors. When it was discovered that the finish floor and floor joists on the first floor were rotted, they were removed in preparation of reconstruction. Because the floor is missing, the basement is visible from the first-floor entrance. The foundation is limestone laid in regular courses. Stone piers support massive wood beams. Cast-iron columns that rise from the stone piers to the wood beams above support the ceiling and provide for an open floorplan. There are plaster walls, remnants of suspended acoustical tile ceilings, and partially exposed pressed-metal ceilings.

The west end of the north elevation houses a wide stair that leads to the second floor. Near the top of the stair is small pair of shutter-type doors that open to a stair that leads to the balcony, which occupies the west end above. The balcony overlooks the two-story-high auditorium to the east, designed to seat eight hundred spectators, with its plaster walls, wood floors and tall/narrow windows. On the east end, past the north/south wall that was likely the rear wall of the stage. This area was also accessible via a stair rising from the south end of the storefront. Beyond this wall is a stair that leads from the auditorium floor to the third floor/mezzanine space built for dressing rooms and storage.

**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 and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Entertainment/Recreation**

**Performing Arts**

**Social History**

**Period of Significance**

**1884-1917**

**Significant Dates**

**1884, 1891**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**John M. Anderson (builder)**

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Florence Opera House stretches from its completion in 1884 until the opera house's final performance in 1917. With the exception of changes to the storefront, the building's overall exterior appearance conveys this period. Interior character-defining features also reflect this time period.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

### Introduction

The Florence Opera House is being nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation, Performing Arts, and Social History as an example of the Opera House Property Type under the Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas Multiple Property Documentation Form. Like many nineteenth century examples, the Florence Opera House was designed to house commercial space on the first floor and a performance hall on the upper stories. Although the first floor is in deteriorated condition, the building's intact upper stories allow it to meet the registration requirements set forth by the MPDF for the Opera House property type.

### Florence

Florence is located in the heart of the Flint Hills, at the junction of Doyle Creek and the Cottonwood River. The town was platted in 1870 and soon became a key point along the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail line. It was known for its railroad eating house, built in 1876 and purchased in 1877 by Fred Harvey as one of the first Harvey Houses on the Santa Fe.

Early on, Kansas rail heads terminated the legendary cattle trails that brought longhorns from Texas. The Flint Hills offered nutrient-rich prairie grasses for fattening up the herds before shipping east. Over time, however, ranchers brought in permanent herds, which filled an ecological niche formerly held by bison – in a rocky region not particularly well-suited to farming.

In 1880, just three years before the Florence Opera House was built, the population of the fledgling community was 100; 1295 lived in the Doyle Township. By 1886, Florence was firmly established as the “railroad center of Marion county, and an important division station of the great Santa Fe system,” with the railroad employing 500 of the city's residents.<sup>1</sup> The railroad brought immigrants to Florence – among them French immigrants who responded to railroad promotions in the late nineteenth century and Mexican immigrants, who came to work for the railroad beginning in 1905.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1900 and 1910, Doyle Township grew from 1478 to 1686. The population of Florence remained steady at about 1400 in 1920 and 1930. Today, the city's population is 671, making it the fourth largest city in Marion County after Hillsboro, Marion and Peabody.

### French Immigration to Kansas

The construction of the Florence Opera House was possible with capital from “wealthy French gentlemen.” The cultural contributions of many immigrants who made homes in Kansas in the nineteenth century – particularly the Germans, German-Russians, Czechs and Swedes – have been well-documented. The story of French settlement, however, has often been overlooked. Like their better-known counterparts, most French immigrants arrived in Kansas during the three decades following the early territorial period. A first wave of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Board of Trade of Florence, Kansas* (Chicago: H. S. Reed and Co., 1886).

<sup>2</sup> See “French Immigration” below. There was a substantial Mexican-American population in Florence by the 1940s. In fact, 52 Mexican Americans from Florence (whose population at the time was about 800) volunteered for service in World War II. See “Hispanics in Kansas,” <http://www.kshs.org/portraits/hispanics.htm>.

French immigration in 1857 brought twelve families to the Flint Hills. By 1885, fifteen years after the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad announced plans to cross the Cottonwood River, sixty French families had settled in the Cottonwood Valley communities of Cottonwood Falls, Marion Centre and Florence.<sup>3</sup>

Many of these settlers, including those who built the Florence Opera House, were recruited by family members. Others were lured by railroad companies who leveraged land grants to finance a frenetic transcontinental network. Among these was the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, which announced plans in 1871 to ford the Cottonwood River. The announcement prompted investors, including former Governor Samuel Crawford, to plat a town site at Florence.

The original group of French immigrants who settled in Doyle Township encouraged family members and friends to move to Florence.

### **Francis Ayril, Gustave Caze and Emile Firmin**

The Florence Opera House was the joint effort of Gustave Caze, Emile Firmin and Francis Ayril, French immigrants to the Cottonwood Valley. Of the three, the least is known about Francis Ayril. Ayril and his wife Ernestine immigrated to the United States and came to Kansas in about 1881.<sup>4</sup> In 1883, the year before the opera house was completed, Francis fell ill and the couple returned to France, where he died soon thereafter.

In 1884, after Francis Ayril's death, Ernestine Ayril returned to Florence and married his business partner and Florence pioneer Gustave Caze.<sup>5</sup> Caze was born in France in ca. 1852. In 1875, the same year his brother-in-law Emile Firmin is documented to have read a promotional brochure about Kansas, Caze (then 22) and his sister Leonie (then about 25) arrived in nearby Doyle Township. In 1880, Caze was living in Doyle Township with his sister Leonie (then 30) and another female relative, Genette Caze (23), who was listed as a servant in the household. Gustave Caze achieved U. S. citizenship on April 29, 1881. By 1883, when he helped lay plans for the Florence Opera House, Caze had succeeded in ranching, retail and community pursuits. When his brother-in-law Emile Firmin moved to the area in 1881, the two became business partners. In support of Firmin's efforts to lure other French immigrants to the area, Caze helped organize a society of French immigrants who helped fund the printing of promotional pamphlets.<sup>6</sup>

Caze's brother-in-law and fellow French native Emile Firmin appears to have been the creative force behind the Florence Opera House. Before immigrating to the United States, Firmin received a law degree from the Paris Law School and served as a lieutenant during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). He later worked as an attorney in Chanac, France.<sup>7</sup> Encouraged by a promotional pamphlet and the Caze's success, the Firmans arrived in Marion County in 1881. Together, Firmin and Caze owned and managed large tracts of land in both the Cottonwood Valley and in Rush County.<sup>8</sup> They were known for their purebred Hereford Cattle and for their devotion to improved farming methods.<sup>9</sup>

In the late 1880s, Firmin drew on a growing number of business and political connections in a campaign to be appointed the state's commissioner to the Paris Exposition of 1889 (forever symbolized by the Eiffel Tower). As part of his effort to lobby the legislature, Firmin prepared a promotional pamphlet touting the merits of

<sup>3</sup> Alberta Pantle, "History of the French-Speaking Settlement in the Cottonwood Valley," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 19 (Feb.-May, 1951): 12-49 and 174-206.

<sup>4</sup> No one with the surname "Ayril" was recorded in the 1880 U. S. Census.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Kansas to potential French immigrants.<sup>10</sup> The Firmins arrived in Paris on April 28, 1889, too late to formally participate in the agricultural exhibition. Still, Emile spent a year distributing 50,000 pamphlets, corresponding with and speaking to geographical societies, and responding to thousands of inquiries for more information about Kansas. He sought advice from French agricultural experts who shared information about new irrigation systems. When the Firmins returned to Kansas after a year, they did so without their young son, who died in France.

Despite Firmin's best efforts to encourage French immigration to Kansas, financial and political circumstances curbed immigration. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, railroad overexpansion and drought wreaked havoc on the Kansas economy. The situation only worsened during the nationwide Panic of 1893. In the years following Firmin's trip to France, only five or six additional French families settled in the Cottonwood Valley.<sup>11</sup>

In 1892, the Firmins moved to town (Florence), first to a downtown building, then to a house in the "Firmin and Caze Addition" a residential subdivision they developed. During his years in town, Firmin focused on his artistic interests. That year, he wrote his first play, "Col. Granger," and hired a professional theater company to produce it. The production, which satirized military pensions, organized religion, and politics, was highly controversial and, as a result, survived only one performance. His second play, a comedy entitled "Marriage in Chicago" was more successful.<sup>12</sup>

In 1904, Firmin and Caze sold 190 Hereford cattle, farmland, and town sites. The Firmins and sister Leonie Caze moved back to France. After a short stay in Kansas City, Gustave and Ernestine Caze reunited with the Firmins in France. They used their business experience in a manufacturing plant that produced powdered milk. Emile Firmin died in 1914.<sup>13</sup>

### **John M. Anderson**

Ayral, Firmin and Caze hired Emporia contractor John M. Anderson to construct their opera house. Anderson was born in Scotland in 1847 and immigrated to Canada at the age of twelve, when he began working as a carpenter. In 1869, after short stints in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, Anderson moved to Emporia, Kansas. In the years that followed, Anderson was awarded contracts for the construction of a number of substantial buildings – from schools to courthouses to residences. His commissions included the Riley County Courthouse in Doniphan, Missouri (NRHP).<sup>14</sup>

### **Kansas Opera Houses**

In the late nineteenth century, opera houses were symbols of permanence in fledgling Kansas communities competing to attract both settlers and capital from eastern investors. The property type was made possible through a burgeoning railroad network, which brought touring companies from New York and Chicago through Kansas and set off a major real estate boom. In an era when the term "theater" conjured up negative moral connotations, creative Victorian speculators embraced a term they believed to be more civilized: "opera house." Most of these venues, which hosted theater troupes and community meetings, occupied the second or third floors of commercial buildings. Similar Italianate opera house buildings can be found in Oskaloosa, Enterprise, Barnes, Frankfort, Downs and Eureka. However, the Florence Opera House is one of the earliest and the largest of the examples. Other well-known late nineteenth-century opera houses - including the Grainfield, McPherson and Junction City Opera Houses - feature Queen Anne and Richardsonian

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 46-49.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>14</sup> *Biographical Sketch of Central Kansas*, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1902), 1298.

Romanesque details. The history of Kansas theaters and opera houses is thoroughly documented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled *Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas*.

### Italianate Architecture

The Florence Opera House is a good example of Italianate Architecture, a popular style used for many of the state's first permanent commercial buildings built in the 1870s and 1880s. Character-defining features include tall narrow windows, prominent cornices, and symmetrical massing. Like many Kansas buildings, particularly those in the Flint Hills Region, the Florence Opera House was built of native limestone.

### The Florence Opera House

An 1886 commercial publication boasted that the Florence Opera House's "imposing height and ornamental finish give grace and dignity to the entire architecture of the town." Gustave Caze, Emile Firmin and Francis Ayrat completed their plans for the Florence Opera House in 1883, four years before the height of the real estate boom that inspired similar investments in other communities in the state. The building was completed just six months later at a cost of \$15,000.<sup>15</sup>

The building's first floor was designed for commercial use, with access via two cast-iron storefronts (with "French plate glass") on the front elevation. The second floor was built to house both the opera house, accessible via an entrance on the west end of the north elevation, and offices, accessible via a stair off the south end of the front elevation. The third floor, at the front of the building, was used as a stage and dressing rooms. And there was a balcony at the back.

The original occupant of the first floor was the Tucker and Chandler Dry Goods Company. Frank Tucker was born in Massachusetts in ca. 1851. By 1880, he was living in Doyle Township with his wife Florence, son Guy, and brother Arthur. John Curtis Chandler was born in Ohio in ca. 1845. By 1870, he was living in Marion County's Centre Township, where he was employed as a farmer. Chandler was working as a "laborer" in 1880, when he was living in Marion with his wife Mary Louisa, and their three children. Before the Florence Opera House was built, Tucker and Chandler operated their dry goods business at another location, announcing in early January 1884 that their "new store building is nearing completion."<sup>16</sup> By 1885, Tucker and Chandler had dissolved their partnership. Chandler settled in Newton and Tucker partnered with Michael Graham, a self-proclaimed capitalist from Peabody.<sup>17</sup> With its new influx of capital, the firm boasted "The largest stock of goods in the county."<sup>18</sup> Graham and Tucker still occupied the first floor in 1908.<sup>19</sup>

The opening of the Florence Opera House on January 24, 1884 was touted as a "grateful triumph for the drama loving people" and "an important epoch in the history of Florence."<sup>20</sup> The opening gala began with an address by state legislator J. Ware Butterfield, an attorney from Marion County.<sup>21</sup> The theater season began the following day, with a performance of the "Linwood Case," a play written by Scott Marble. On January 19, 1884, just days before the opening, the *Florence Herald* made the "dramatic announcement" that the "managers of the Florence opera house" had secured the Louie Lord Dramatic Company to perform during the opera house's opening season. Louie Lord was a Chicago-based theater troupe that took the name of its lead actress, known for her long blond locks and unequalled "artistic and emotional power." The troupe, which also

<sup>15</sup> *The Board of Trade of Florence, Kansas*.

<sup>16</sup> 1880 U. S. Census; *Florence Herald*, 5 Jan. 1884.

<sup>17</sup> 1900 and 1910 U. S. Census; February 7, 1885; Graham was the only Graham in the County in 1880

<sup>18</sup> *Board of Trade...*

<sup>19</sup> The store's sign is visible in a 1908 photograph in the collection of Wichita State University Special Collections, MS 92-97.

<sup>20</sup> *Florence Herald*, 2 February 1884.

<sup>21</sup> *Wichita Eagle Magazine*, 24 Feb. 1957.

included Louie's husband James Lord, performed throughout the state from the 1870s to the 1890s. During the Florence Opera House's first season, the troupe offered productions of the "Linwood Case," "Mad Cap Peggy," and "Once Upon a Time."

The opera house building inspired the founding of a local drama club. Their first production was "We're all Teetotalers," a temperance drama published by playwright George Melville Baker in 1876.<sup>22</sup> For thirty-four years, the opera house hosted not only dramatic productions, but also community events and balls.<sup>23</sup>

Like that in many early opera houses, the stage of the Florence Opera House was lit by oil-fueled footlights.<sup>24</sup> And like other opera houses, the Florence Opera House did not escape the ravages of fire. During the facility's first year, the stage caught on fire when a donkey in a production of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" knocked over a footlight. After a heroic and successful community effort to extinguish the fire, the show went on. A second fire on May 12, 1891 proved more devastating – destroying much of the building's wood-framed interior. The opera house was back in business within a few weeks.<sup>25</sup>

Although the opera house continued to operate after Firmin and Caze left for France, it closed in 1917. By then, a movie theater had opened across the street.<sup>26</sup> It was last operated by Raymond Gear, a Florence newspaper publisher and businessman. Later, it was converted to an intermittent movie house.<sup>27</sup> Most recently, the second floor was used for storage. The building is now vacant.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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*Biographical Sketch of Central Kansas*, vol. 2. New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1902.

*The Board of Trade of Florence, Kansas*. Chicago: HS Reed and Co., 1886.

*Century of Pride: 1872-1972*, Florence, Kansas.

*Florence Herald*.

Pantle, Alberta. "History of the French-Speaking Settlement in the Cottonwood Valley." *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 19 (Feb.-May, 1951), 12-49; 174-206.

Rosin, Elizabeth, et. al. *Historic Theaters and Opera Houses in Kansas*. National Register Nomination, Multiple Property Submission.

Shortridge, James. *Peopling the Plains: Who Settled Where in Frontier Kansas*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995.

U. S. Census.

*Wichita Eagle Magazine*.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.; *Century of Pride: 1872-1972*, Florence, Kansas.

<sup>23</sup> Pantle, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Rosin, et. al., National Register Nomination. *Historic Theaters and Opera Houses in Kansas* (MPS), 10.

<sup>25</sup> Pantle, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Sanborn Map, 1915.

<sup>27</sup> *Wichita Eagle Magazine*.

Florence Opera House  
Name of Property

Marion County, KS  
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

**Primary location of additional data:**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: **Kansas Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): KHRI 115-1790-00006

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 14 681449 4234720  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated property is Lot 421 Less the South 4' and all of Lot 423, Main Street, Florence, Kansas.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The above is the legal description for the parcel on which the opera house sits. The property is bounded on the north by 5<sup>th</sup> Street, on the east by Main Street, on the west by an alley, and on the south by the adjacent property.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Christy Davis  
organization Davis Preservation date 6/10/2010  
street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7 telephone 785-234-5053  
city or town Topeka state KS zip code 66612  
e-mail cdavis@davispreservation.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Florence Opera House  
**City or Vicinity:** Florence  
**County/State:** Marion County, Kansas  
**Photographer:** Christy Davis

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

Except for Photo #1, all photos were taken 5/12/2010 by Christy Davis.

- 1 of 15 1908 photo of downtown Florence, opera house on right.
- 2 of 15 Exterior, Overall view of downtown Florence, opera house on right.
- 3 of 15 Exterior, Front (east) elevation, looking west.
- 4 of 15 Exterior, North elevation, looking south.
- 5 of 15 Exterior, North and west elevation, looking southeast.
- 6 of 15 Exterior, West elevation, looking northeast.
- 7 of 15 Exterior, Close-up of pressed-metal cornice.
- 8 of 15 Interior, Overall view of 1<sup>st</sup> floor, showing limestone foundation and missing floor, looking east toward storefront.
- 9 of 15 Interior, 1<sup>st</sup> floor looking southeast, showing pressed-metal ceiling above remnants of suspended ceilings.
- 10 of 15 Interior, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, overall view of auditorium.
- 11 of 15 Interior, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, stair to balcony.
- 12 of 15 Interior, balcony, looking east.
- 13 of 15 Interior, balcony, looking northwest.
- 14 of 15 Interior, stair from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> floors.
- 15 of 15 Interior, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, looking southeast toward original 2/2 windows on east elevation.

**Property Owner:**

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name DC Merc, LLC attn: Judy Mills  
street & number 101 Main Street telephone 620-878-4567  
city or town Florence state KS zip code 66851

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or 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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Florence Opera House

MULTIPLE NAME: Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas MPS

STATE & COUNTY: KANSAS, Marion

DATE RECEIVED: 12/02/10      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/04/11  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/19/11      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/17/11  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10001142

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: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    1.18.11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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.



250 MAIN ST FLORENCE KAN.







NO U  
TURN

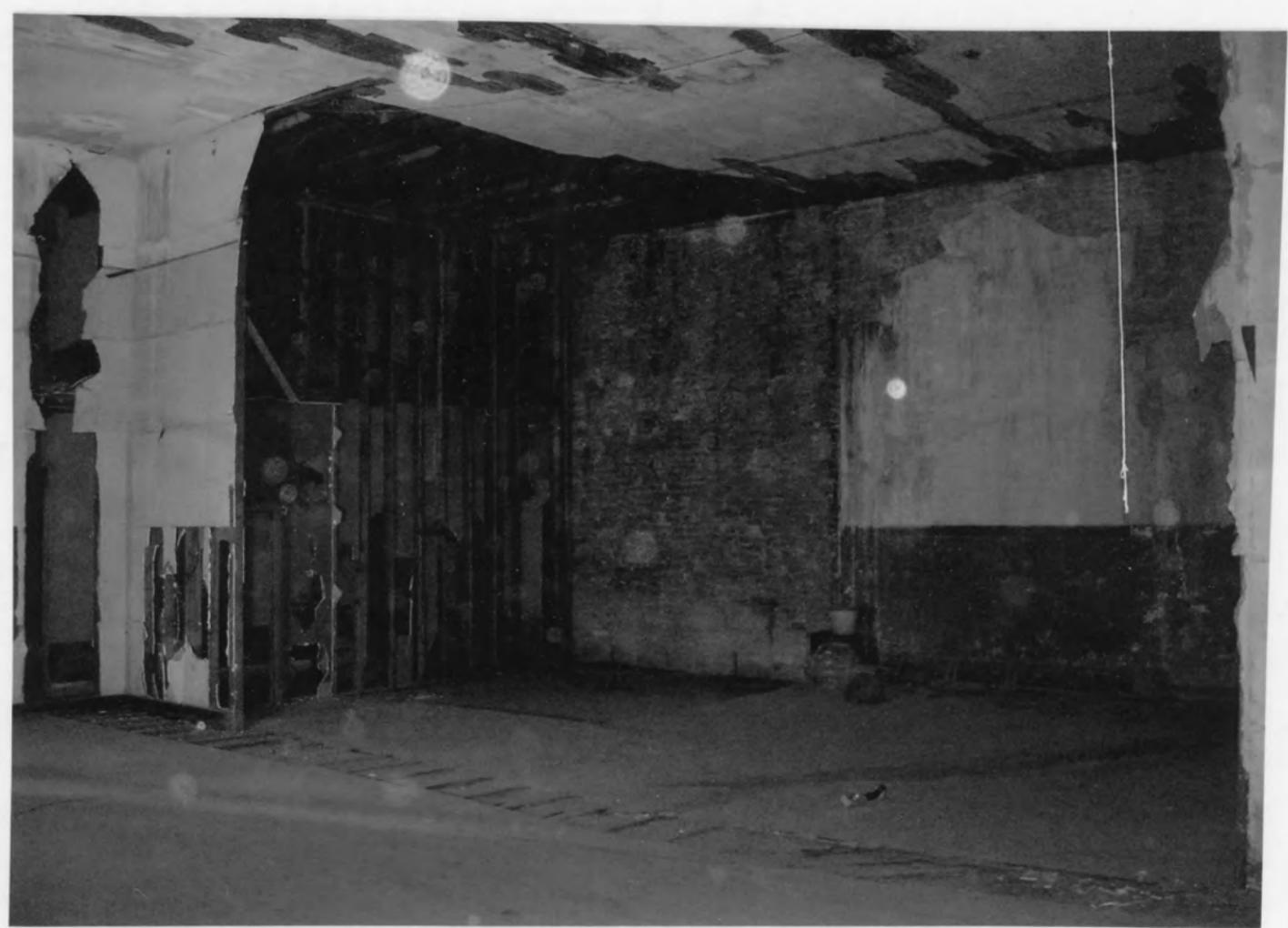






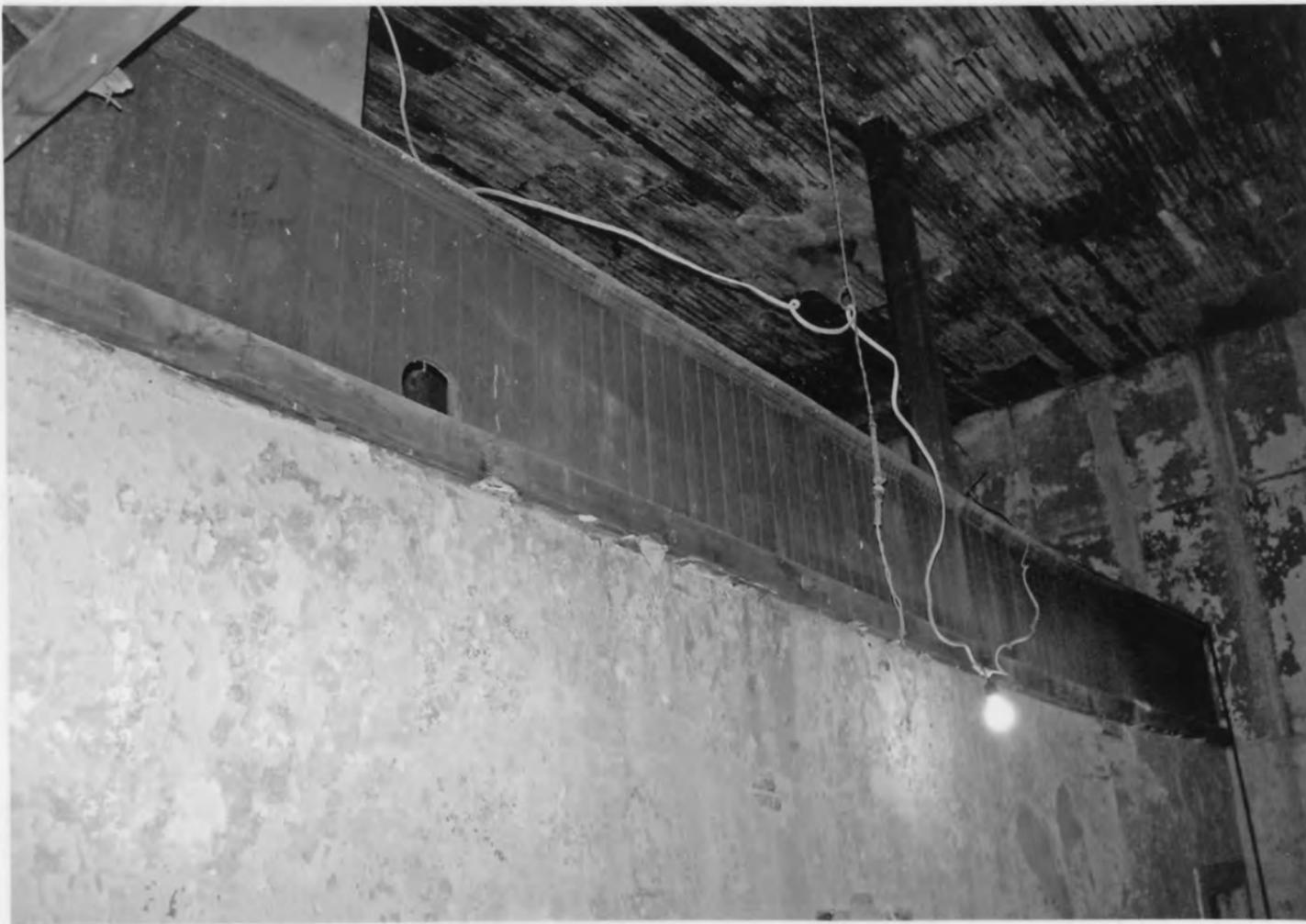












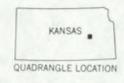
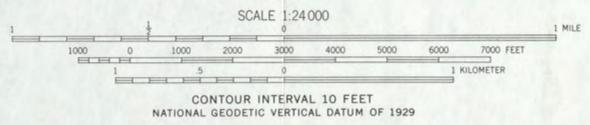
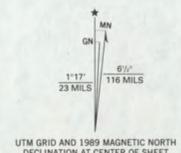




Florence Opera House  
Marion County, KS  
Zone 14 68149 E 4234720 N



Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
in cooperation with State of Kansas agencies  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1956. Field checked 1957. Revised from aerial photographs  
taken 1986. Field checked 1989. Map edited 1989  
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Kansas coordinate  
system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 14  
1927 North American Datum  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983,  
move the projection lines 1 meter north and  
26 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND KANSAS GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, LAWRENCE, KANSAS 66044  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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38096-B8-TF-024  
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