

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>California</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Yolo</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>71.11.06.0073</b>	DATE <b>11/5/71</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Woodland Opera House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Woodland (Hershey) Opera House**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**320 Second Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Woodland**

STATE <b>California</b>	CODE <b>95695</b>	COUNTY: <b>Yolo</b>	CODE <b>113</b>
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	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 type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" 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 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) <b>None</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Davidella Hershey**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Saint Johns Retirement Village**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Woodland**

STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE <b>95695</b>
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Yolo County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Woodland**

STATE <b>California</b>	CODE <b>95695</b>
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Woodland Opera House**

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Yolo County Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**P.O. Box 1447**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Woodland**

STATE: <b>California</b>	CODE <b>95695</b>
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" 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 Woodland (Hershey) Opera House was built in 1895-96, to replace the first Woodland Opera House which was erected at the same location in 1885 and burned in 1892. A spacious, simple and tasteful two-story red brick building, it runs 104 feet along Second Street and parallels Main for 60 feet, incorporating the east and west exterior walls of the previous theatre. The roof of the auditorium is about 35 feet above street level; the stage house which burned in 1937, originally rose to a height of 60 feet at the north end of the building on the west side of Second Street between Main and Dead Cat Alley. The main facade is divided into seven equally wide sections by quasi-buttresses. The asymmetrically placed windows of the second story are tall, narrow and similar in shape to a small and large window and a door of the first story. In sharp contrast is the heavy arch framing the main entrance on the south end (forming a stylistic link with the adjoining Richardsonian-Romanesque Elliot building built in 1893); it now dominates the facade, but was probably balanced by the tall stage house over the northernmost two of the seven sections. Two parallel corbeled brick bands run the whole length of the building and are located directly above the sign "Woodland Opera House" painted over the main entrance. Higher above a string course is curiously interrupted by the second story windows, while a third corbeled band immediately above them runs over only five of the seven sections, reinforcing the impression that the north end of the structure was treated as an architectural unit.

Comparison with extant pictures of its predecessor shows the Hershey Opera House to have incorporated the east wall in a creative fashion; the focus originally provided by a small gable was shifted to the center of the five south sections, giving a rectangular shape and reinforced by two flanking second story windows and a centered first story one. The facade is almost void of decoration; it is imposingly serene. It does not adhere to any clearly definable architectural style; many of its intriguing features have yet to be explained.

Of the rectangular interior, the 25 foot deep stage occupies one end, from which the auditorium is separated by a proscenium arch with a 25 foot square opening through which the forestage protrudes five feet into the auditorium. The stage, bigger than those of most contemporary California theatres, is four feet above the auditorium floor; its three traps open into the dressing room area below.

The auditorium attractively combines the parterre and the horseshoe balcony of traditional 19th Century American play houses with uninterrupted semi-circular seating arrangements and large orchestra of Italian Renaissance theatres. The orchestra contained 86 seats, while one slightly raised stall or box on either side of the proscenium held sixteen. Behind the orchestra are the 224 individual seats of the dress circle, the most expensive area of the house. Directly above, supported by four slender decorated castiron or steel columns, is the balcony. It extends to the proscenium arch and accommodates 300 spectators on wooden benches. Total capacity was 644, almost 15 percent of Woodland's contemporary population,

S E E I N S T R U C T I O N S

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**7. Description**

*(Continuation Sheet)*

*(Number all entries)*

an unusually high figure. Also unusual is the proportionate size of the dress circle, an indication of local wealth.

Note: See enclosed booklet of interior and exterior detail.

**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)

1895-96

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music       |   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Woodland Opera House was a remarkable theatre when it was built in 1896, a monument to local pride in the community's level of culture. Today it is one of four 19th Century buildings in California designed to be used as a theatre and still intact for that use. As such, it represents the end of the richest era of theatre history, one that was closed by the success of the movies. The significance of this theatre is increased by the fact that over 120 pieces of its original stock of scenes, including the original drop curtain and a spectacular Rocky Mountain panorama survive in good condition. These hand painted scenes, now the property of the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of California at Davis, would be available for future use should the opera house be restored.

Located in downtown Woodland, the Woodland Opera House was built with the financial backing of David Newcomer Hershey (1818-1903), a California pioneer of 1853 who developed extensive agriculture holdings, served in the California State Assembly (1879-83) and was a prominent civic leader in the Woodland community. Having held a partial interest in an earlier opera house, which was built in 1885 and burned in 1892, Mr. Hershey took upon himself the task of financing construction of a new cultural center. In this effort he was supported by a syndicate that promised to underwrite losses of the new opera house. This group of civic minded citizens included R. H. Beamer, L. Dietz, Leithold and Elston, Dr. Thomas Jackson, Chalmers Brothers, McGriff Krellenberg and Sons and Edward E. Leake, many of whom have descendants still carrying on family business interests.

The history of this theatre and its pioneer benefactor is commemorated in two recent illustrated publications by Douglas McDermott and Robert K. Sarlos of the University of California at Davis, Dramatic Art Department. The Woodland (Hershey) Opera House, Booklet Series No. 2, 1969 Yolo County Historical Society; and The Woodland "Hershey" Opera House, Quarterly Journal of the California Historical Society, Volume 48, No. 4, December, 1969, 291-306. The authors in both of these two publications state "A potential living monument to the Hershey family and to the prosperous history of Woodland, Yolo County and California, the Woodland Opera House should be declared a historical landmark. Hopefully, it will also be restored and turned into an operating theatre again. Such restoration would serve both the historical and creative interests of the citizens.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Woodland Daily Democrat  
Yolo Semi Weekly Mail  
History of Yolo County, California (Los Angeles, 1913) Tom Gregory  
The Illustrated Atlas & History of Yolo County (San Francisco, 1879)  
 DePue & Co.  
History of the Sacramento Valley (New York, 1961) Joseph A. McGowan  
History of Yolo County (Woodland, 1940) William O. Russell, Editor  
The Woodland (Hershey) Opera House (Yolo County Historical Society, 1968)  
 Douglas McDermott and Robert K. Sarlos

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	° ' "	° ' "		38° 40' 40"	121° 46' 16"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **0.5 Acres ±**

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

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Earl A. Balch, Park Director**

ORGANIZATION: **Yolo County**      DATE: **July 7, 1970**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**660 Sixth Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Woodland**      STATE: **California 95696**      CODE: **06**

**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 State Liaison Officer

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date July 7, 1971

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

*Ernest Allen Connolly*  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date **NOV 5 1971**

ATTEST:

*J. Bradford*  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date Oct 7 1971

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8. Significance

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

Moreover, the restored Opera House, one of some 20 structures lying within the boundaries of a proposed 'historic zone', could serve as a focus for civic regeneration, in the course of which many of Woodland's historic homes could also be preserved." The Yolo County Historical Society Board of Directors and the Yolo County Board of Supervisors Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee are in unanimous agreement that the Opera House should be given first priority. Imminent settlement of the Hershey Estate makes the need for funds to acquire this historical theatre of critical importance.