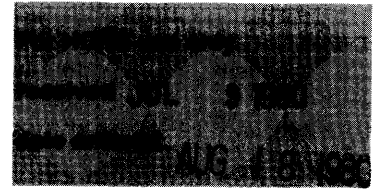


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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



**1. Name**

historic

and/or common Richland Center City Auditorium

**2. Location**

street & number 182 North Central Avenue \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Richland Center \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of 3rd congressional district

state Wisconsin code 55 county Richland code 103

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<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 City of Richland Center

street & number 182 North Central Avenue

city, town Richland Center \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Wisconsin 53581

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Register of Deeds

street & number 145 West Seminary Street

city, town Richland Center \_\_\_\_\_ state Wisconsin 53581

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

date 1980 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison \_\_\_\_\_ state Wisconsin 53706

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Richland Center City Auditorium is constructed of concrete and red brick, is rectangular in shape and dimensioned 77 feet long by 122 feet wide. It is three stories tall, flat roofed and relatively devoid of ornamentation, although there are some classical features: ionic decorations at the top of the entrance pilasters and dentils under the front facade molding.

The interior of the building contains offices throughout the front portions of the second and third floors with a large meeting room also on the third floor. Most of the rest of the building is given over to the auditorium. The auditorium consists of a sloping main floor and a cantilevered balcony, providing a total seating capacity for over 900 people. The stage, at the rear of the building, is a simple 20 x 30 foot opening in the rear wall, and has about 800 square feet of floor space. Twelve dressing rooms are behind the stage. Gold trim is used to decorate the stage proscenium, and there are some gold bas relief decorations on the side walls. In 1967, the City Auditorium was renovated with fresh paint; a new sound and lighting system was installed in the auditorium, but no alterations were made in the form of the building.<sup>1</sup>

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1) The Richland Observer, December 28, 1967.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1912<sup>1</sup> Builder/Architect Percey D. Bentley<sup>2</sup>

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Richland Center City Auditorium is significant as an innovation in local government and civic activity. It was necessary for the city of Richland Center to effect a change of state law, which had theretofore prohibited a city from operating an income producing auditorium.<sup>3</sup> Since its completion in 1912, the auditorium has been the governmental and social nexus of the city, contributing a large role to its history.

Social. In its first twelve months of operation, the City Auditorium held 51 public meetings and entertainments, from which the city took in a \$2000 profit.<sup>4</sup> Profit, however, took a back seat to the social and educational offerings presented at the auditorium over the years. Virtually every common form of entertainment has been presented on the auditorium stage: plays, concerts, Lyceum lectures, recitals and even minstrel shows. When the city had extensive train service, the auditorium shows drew hundreds of rural, as well as city, folks.<sup>5</sup> Until the growth of movie houses, the auditorium also showed films. Recently, increased use of other mediums for entertainment has led to a decline in performances at the auditorium. There are still a few concerts and recitals, however. When, in addition to the auditorium, the Center's meeting rooms and banquet facilities for various clubs are considered, it is little surprise that a visitor to Richland Center referred to the building as having "undoubtedly contributed...to the community spirit and democracy of the place."<sup>6</sup>

Government. Offices for the various city officials, including the mayor, city clerk and the common council have been located in the City Auditorium since it opened in 1913. Also, the auditorium itself has given these officials a convenient place for maintaining good ties to the citizens. During the Depression, for example, area farmers met there to discuss New Deal agricultural measures, from which emerged specific requests and complaints to Federal administrators.<sup>7</sup> Lectures at the auditorium have included political topics, and these have been delivered in the past by numerous elected representatives, and more famous speakers, including William Jennings Bryan and William Howard Taft. Naturally, the auditorium has been used many times for public meetings on civic issues.<sup>8</sup> After 67 years of service, the City Auditorium remains the focal point of Richland City government.

### Notes

- 1) Richland Center's Auditorium (1917); pamphlet in Richland Center City Library.
- 2) Ibid. See also the City Council Proceedings for March 18, 1911 at the city clerk's office.
- 3) Francis Brewer, Home for the Heart (1977), p. 213-214; Wisconsin Statutes, chap. 41, s. 937d (1913), p. 649.
- 4) Walter Dyer, "Richland Center and the Spirit of the Middle West," World's Work, August 15, 1915, p. 487.
- 5) Brewer, p. 216-232; Margaret H. Scott, Richland Center, Wisconsin: A History (1972), p. 17-174.
- 6) Dyer, p. 488.
- 7) Brewer, p. 228-232.
- 8) Scott, p. 174.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Francis Brewer, Home for the Heart (Typescript), 1971.  
 Walter Dyer, "Richland Center and the Spirit of the Middle West," World's Work,  
 August 15, 1915.  
Richland Center Auditorium, 1917.  
Margaret Scott, Richland Center, Wisconsin, Richland Center, 1972.

# 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 1.35  
 Quadrangle name Richland Center, Wis. UTM NOT VERIFIED  
 Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A	<u>15</u>	<u>7111</u>	<u>9510</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>011</u>	<u>21215</u>	B					
	Zone	Easting	Northing					Zone	Easting	Northing		
C							D					
E							F					
G							H					

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Located in the Northeast corner of block 6, of the original plat of Richland Center, as part of the Northwest 1/4 of the Northwest 1/4 of Section 21, Town 10 North, Range 1 East, in Richland County.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Terry L. Shoptaugh, Historian, Historic Preservation Division  
 organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 2/29/80  
 street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-3390  
 city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Richard Mearns*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 6/18/80

For HCRS use only

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

*W. Ray Luce*  
 Keeper of the National Register

date 8/18/80

Attest: *Kristin J. O'Connell*  
 Chief of Registration

date 8/8/80