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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Z.C.B.J. Opera House
other names/site number NeHBS #KX14-1; OHBIN #05-30-06

2. Location

street & number 4th Ave. & Main N/A not for publication
city, town Verdigré N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Knox code 107 zip code 68783

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Amelia Hanson May 16, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet. *Beth Boland* 7/6/88

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre;
music facility
Social: Meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social: Meeting hall
Recreation & Culture: Theatre;
music facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: One-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknown
walls Brick

roof Metal

other Tan brick trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Z.C.B.J. Opera House is located at the southwest corner of Main Street and 5th Avenue, in the heart of the downtown district. Constructed in 1903 by the Lodge Bila Hora #5 of the Z.C.B.J., this One-Part Commercial block opera house has a definite Baroque flavor (see photo #1). It is constructed of red brick, with bricks of a lighter tan decorating the front facade windows and around insets proclaiming "1903," "Rad Bila Hora" and "C.5.Z.C.B.J." A border of decorative red bricks follows the top of the building; an elaborately arched pediment is topped by a border of light pressed metal. The opera house has a pressed metal roof. Access to the auditorium is through double doors under a permanent porch-style awning in the center of the front facade. The lobby area, is under the balcony. The original dimensions of the building were 40 feet wide by 100 feet long. An addition was added to the rear in 1913, which became the stage area with lodge rooms above and a basement below. The addition was 30 feet long by 50 feet wide.

The auditorium is 69 feet, six inches long from the back wall to the edge of the proscenium opening. The room measures 37 feet wide between the side walls, both of which have five large windows. The balcony is reached by a stairway to the immediate right of the main double-door entrance to the auditorium itself. A low railing delineates the edge of the balcony area. This balcony is 37 feet wide by 16 feet, 6 inches deep. The wooden floor is in excellent condition. Modern restroom facilities have been added under the balcony area.

The elaborate, gilded proscenium arch, which resembles a massive picture frame, is 23 feet wide by approximately 15 feet high. The stage right wing is eight feet wide, while that on the left is only six feet, but the addition extends some 13 feet beyond this space. This has been divided into two rooms, which probably served as dressing rooms or properties storage. The stage is 28 feet from the curtain line to the back wall, with a two-foot apron containing boxes set into the floor for footlights rather than the usual trough. This stage includes a prompter's box at the center front. Access to the stage from the auditorium is through a door on the extreme stage right side. A snowy street scene curtain hangs unrolled at the back of the stage. The advertising curtain has been replaced by a dark velvet one.

The structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved.

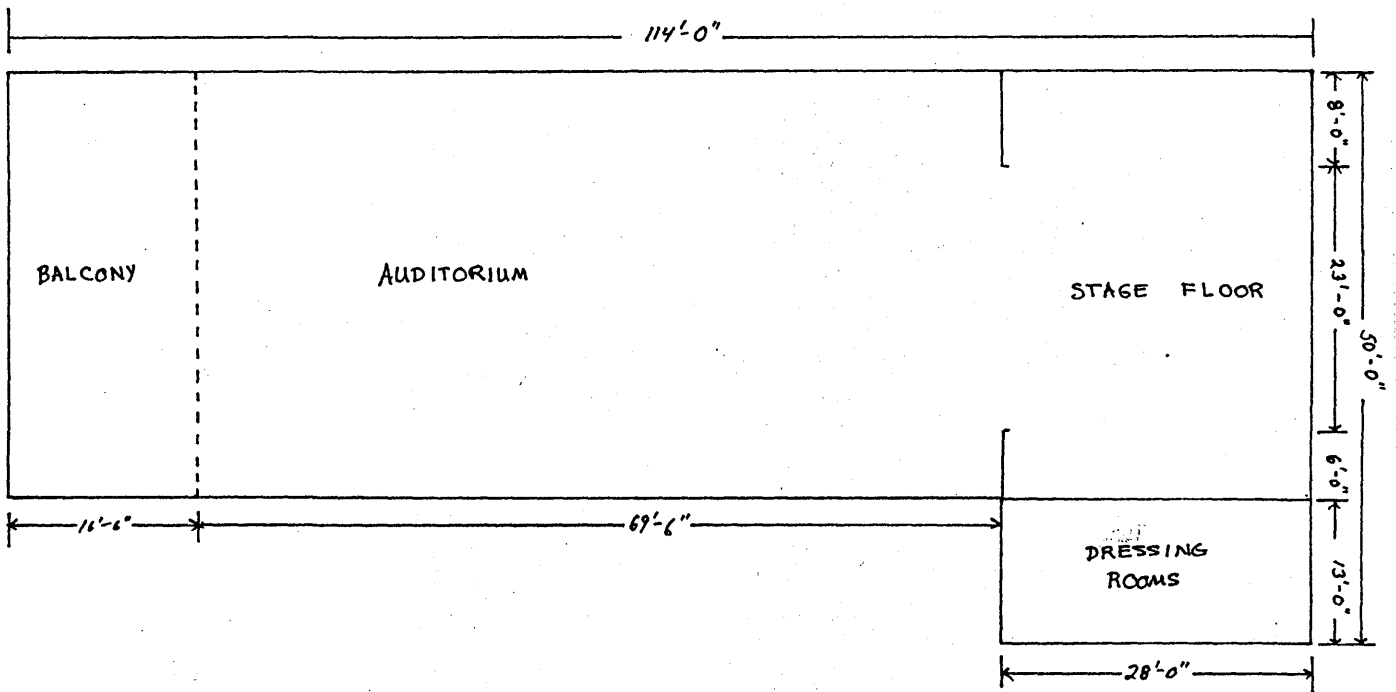
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Floor plan, Z.C.B.J. Opera House, Verdigre

← N



P. Leitner, Draftsman

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Performing Arts
Entertainment/Recreation
Social History

Period of Significance

1903-1917

Significant Dates

1903
1913

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Staviteli, first name unknown (architect)
Montford, W.C. (builder), 1913 addition

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Z.C.B.J. Opera House is significant for its association with and in reference to the historic context "Aesthetic Systems: Itinerant and Local Performing Arts in Nebraska" and the property type of "Opera House Buildings in Nebraska, 1867 to 1917." Under Criterion A, this opera house is significant in the areas of the performing arts; entertainment/recreation; and social history, on a state level, as a well preserved example of an opera house building in Nebraska. The building retains a high degree of historical integrity, possessing the physical and associative characteristics to make it an eligible member of its property type.

This opera house is significant in the area of performing arts for bringing a variety of entertainment to the community of Verdigre. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as band and other musical concerts, touring stock companies, classic plays like *Under the Harvest Moon* and *Monte Cristo*, and home talent productions. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1903-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole community could gather to attend dances, lectures, and speeches. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1903-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history, because it gave Verdigre a neutral, nonaffiliated location for sporting events, fraternal organization meetings, and agricultural judgments. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1903-1917.) In the days before radio, television, and sound movies, activities at the opera house were anticipated for days or weeks ahead of time. It provided a place for people to get together to have a good time and forget their troubles over crops, weather, taxes, the railroads, and the generally hard life of settling the Great Plains.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Maly, Jim. Telephone interview. Verdigre: 27 May 1987.
 ---. Personal interview. Verdigre: 30 May 1987.
 Pavlik, John. Telephone interview. Verdigre: 28 May 1987.
 Rakov, Madelyn N. Letter to the author. Verdigre: 1986.
Verdigre Citizen. 1 Oct. 1908 - 29 Nov. 1917.
Verdigre Progress. 23 Mar. 1905.
 Z.C.B.J. Opera House. Verdigre site visit. 30 May 1987.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

D. Layne Ehlers (see below)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one [] [] acre

UTM References

A

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as Lots 1 and 2 in Block 17 of the Original Town of Verdigre, Knox County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lot(s) that have been historically associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Layne Ehlers, Principal Investigator
 organization OHBIN Study date April, 1988
 street & number 2302 South 11th telephone [402] 435-6946
 city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68502

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The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building, 1903, by the Rad Bila Hora lodge of the Z.C.B.J. Czech Fraternal Organization. It continues through 1917, the year considered to signal the end of the opera house era in Nebraska, based on declining numbers of touring companies nationally and rising numbers of movie houses and automobiles. The local opening of the Empress (Movie) Theatre c. 1915 took considerable business away from the Pospeshil Theatre, while limited offerings doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events.

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Z.C.B.J. Opera House, Verdigre
Representative Entertainments, 1903-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Social History

Nov 1909 Wrestling, "Big Ben" Pavelka vs. Gardner Taylor, the Burke Giant
Dec 1913 Boxing Exhibition, Jimmy Kane of Sioux City vs Jerry Vakoc of
Verdigre
Nov 1915 Corn Contest

Entertainment/Recreation

Oct 1908 Grand ball, music by Pavlik's Brass Band
Nov 1908 Ladies of Degree of Honor Dance, music by Verdigre Orchestra
Oct 1909 Dance, music by Verdigre Orchestra
Nov 1909 Dance, music by Verdigre Orchestra
Oct 1911 Lecture by Robert L. Kemple
Oct 1912 Z.C.B.J. Dance, music by Verdigre Military Band
Nov 1912 Thanksgiving dance, music by Verdigre Military Band
Oct 1913 Festival of St. Venceslaus dance, music by Verdigre Military Band
Nov 1913 Thanksgiving Ball, music by Verdigre Military Band
Dec 1913 New Years Ball
Nov 1914 E. St. Vraz lecture with stereopticon pictures on the Great War
Thanksgiving ball
Oct 1915 Firemen's Ball, music by Verdigre Military Band
Nov 1915 Thanksgiving Ball, music by Verdigre Military Band
Oct 1916 Leap Year Dance, music by Verdigre Military Orchestra
Catholic Turners Dance, music by Verdigre Military Band
Nov 1916 Equal Rights Dance, music by Verdigre Military Orchestra
Thanksgiving Ball, music by Pleasant Valley Concert Band
Speech by Mary Rokar from the University of Nebraska on *The
Relation of the Homemaker to the Community*
Nov 1918 Stereopticon views of European war; dance afterward

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Representative Entertainments, 1903-1917

DATE	EVENT AND PERFORMERS
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Performing Arts

Oct 1908	Band concert by Lenger's Niobrara Band, and grand ball <i>The Texas Cattle King</i>
Nov 1908	<i>Hans Hanson</i>
Oct 1909	Blind-born Louis and Barbara Tremmel concert <i>The Perrys in Kidnapped for a Million</i>
Nov 1909	Emperian Concert Co. Concert by the Kryls
Nov 1911	The Emperian Concert Co. <i>Finger of Scorn</i> <i>Under the Harvest Moon</i>
Dec 1911	Elwin Strong Co. in <i>The Cub and the Boss</i>
Nov 1912	Omaha String Quartette Concert Co.
Jan 1914	<i>The Eleventh Commandment</i> by the Samberk Dramatic Club <i>The Corner Grocery</i> with Boyd Burrowes
Oct 1914	St. Venceslaus dance, music by Verdigre Band
Nov 1914	Great Celebration home talent play, <i>Mistr Bedrnik a Jeho Chasa</i> <i>Johnny Jones</i>
Oct 1915	Elwin Strong Co. in <i>Monte Cristo</i>
Nov 1915	Ladies of Degree of Honor ball, music by Verdigre Military Band <i>Palackeho Trida, Cislo 27</i> , home talent by Samberk Dramatic Club

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

North zone
Latitude 41° 35' 48"
Longitude 98° 1' 58"

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Photographs

Section number _____ Page _____

The following information is the same for all Verdigre photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY: Z.C.B.J. Opera House
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Verdigre, Knox, Nebraska
NehBS SITE No.: KX14-1
OHBIN SITE No.: 05-30-06
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Verdigre #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-30-87 (8705/7:37)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking southeast at the west (front) and north facades.

PHOTO NUMBER: Verdigre #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-30-87 (8705/7:28)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking east at the stage.

PHOTO NUMBER: Verdigre #3
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-30-87 (8705/7:27)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west at the auditorium area and the balcony.

PHOTO NUMBER: Verdigre #4
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-30-87 (8705/7:29)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west southwest at the balcony and the stairway leading to the balcony.