

NHL

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NOMINATION FORM

(Complete all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE North Carolina	
COUNTY Orange	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

★ Playmakers Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Smith Hall

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Cameron Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Chapel Hill (Fourth Congressional District)

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

37

COUNTY:

Orange

CODE

135

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input 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"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
University of North Carolina

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Chapel Hill

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

ADDRESS OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION:
Orange County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Margaret Lane

CITY OR TOWN:
Hillsborough

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

6. RELATIONSHIP IN EXISTING SURVEYS

NAME OF SURVEY:

TYPE OF SURVEY:
 Federal State County Local

AGENCY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

SECTION NUMBER:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

North Carolina Orange

STATE: _____ COUNTY: _____ DATE: _____

(Check One)

<input type="checkbox"/> Erect	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruined
(Check One)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Destroyed	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Auditorium further is a temple-form building, of rusticated stucco or brick, with a prostyle tetrastyle Corinthian portico on the front (east) side. The fluted columns display an individualized rendering of the Corinthian order with full Attic bases and elaborate capitals composed of embossed corn, wheat, and tobacco. The central entrance contains a large paneled double door surmounted by a five-light transom and framed by a crocketed architrave. The flanking windows, which have lost their original sash, now serve as a ticket window and a billboard for the Playmakers Theatre which occupies the building. The portico has a most interesting entablature which is quite simplified from the usual Corinthian ones, being embellished only with widely spaced stylized modillions. The entablature carries around the building.

The north and south sides have fourteen bays separated by pilasters above a high stucco water-table. Each alternate bay is accented by a large window with nine-over-nine sash. There is a side entrance under the window in the seventh bay on either side.

The pedimented rear facade has a central entrance which is like that on the front, except that there is additional paneling above the double door instead of a transom. The doorway is flanked by pilasters like those along the sides of the building.

The interior retains little evidence of its original arrangement, for when the building, designed as a ballroom, was adapted for use as a library, a bath house, the school of law, and a theater, various alterations were made. At present the interior consists of a transverse hall with the theater beyond. At either end of the hall is a stair which rises to the balcony. The auditorium, entered through two doors located on the west wall of the hall, features a steep sloping floor and plaster walls. The walls are divided by molded stringers with fourteen bays separated by attenuated paneled pilasters which support an entablature. Each third bay contains a large window with the glass painted to keep out light. Dominating the west wall of the auditorium is the proscenium opening which is surrounded by heavy moldings with an ornamental cartouche in the center of the top.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

PERIODIC DATES (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aborigine | <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 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

In 1848 the Di and Phi Literary Societies petitioned the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina to erect a building to be used for dances and alumni meetings. The building is thought to have been designed by A. J. Davis, of the New York architectural firm of Town and Davis, who had designed the Capitol in Raleigh (1833-1840). The contractor for the structure was John Berry of Hillsborough, designer and builder of the Orange County Courthouse, built in 1844. The new building was completed in 1850 at a cost of \$10,363.63 and was named Smith Hall in honor of former Governor Benjamin Smith, who had given the university 20,000 acres of land.

During the century that followed, Smith Hall was used for a wide variety of university activities. By 1885, since another building had been provided for dancing, the library was moved into Smith Hall, and a chemistry laboratory was set up in the basement. In 1893 the building became the University Bath House, serving 500 students. The University of North Carolina School of Law, the next occupant of Smith Hall, remained there until 1925. On November 23, 1925, Smith Hall was dedicated as the Playmakers Theatre, the home of the Carolina Playmakers to the present. Among the notable alumni of this group are novelist Thomas Wolfe, actor Andy Griffith, editor and writer Jonathan Daniels, dramatists Paul Green and Kermit Hunter.

The Playmakers Theatre's superb inventive order is quite important architecturally in that it varies from tradition by having capitals decorated with wheat, corn, and tobacco, rather than the usual acanthus leaves or other classic motifs and employs an entablature with only minimal detail. The building is one of the oldest on the campus of the University of North Carolina and houses the nationally recognized Carolina Playmakers.

Henderson, Archibald (ed.). Flourishing: A People's Theater. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945.

Lefler, Hugh and Paul Wagon (eds.). Orange County: 1752-1952. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The George DeMunroe, 1953.

Spearman, Walter. The Carolina Playmakers: The First Fifty Years. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES			
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"	
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"	
				35°	54'	43"	79° 03' 09"

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: April 7, 1971

STREET ADDRESS: 109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina COUNTY: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER'S 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 reviewed according to the criteria and procedures set forth in the National Reg. Serv. Reg. The recommended significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

[Signature]
 Director, State Department of Archives and History

1971

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

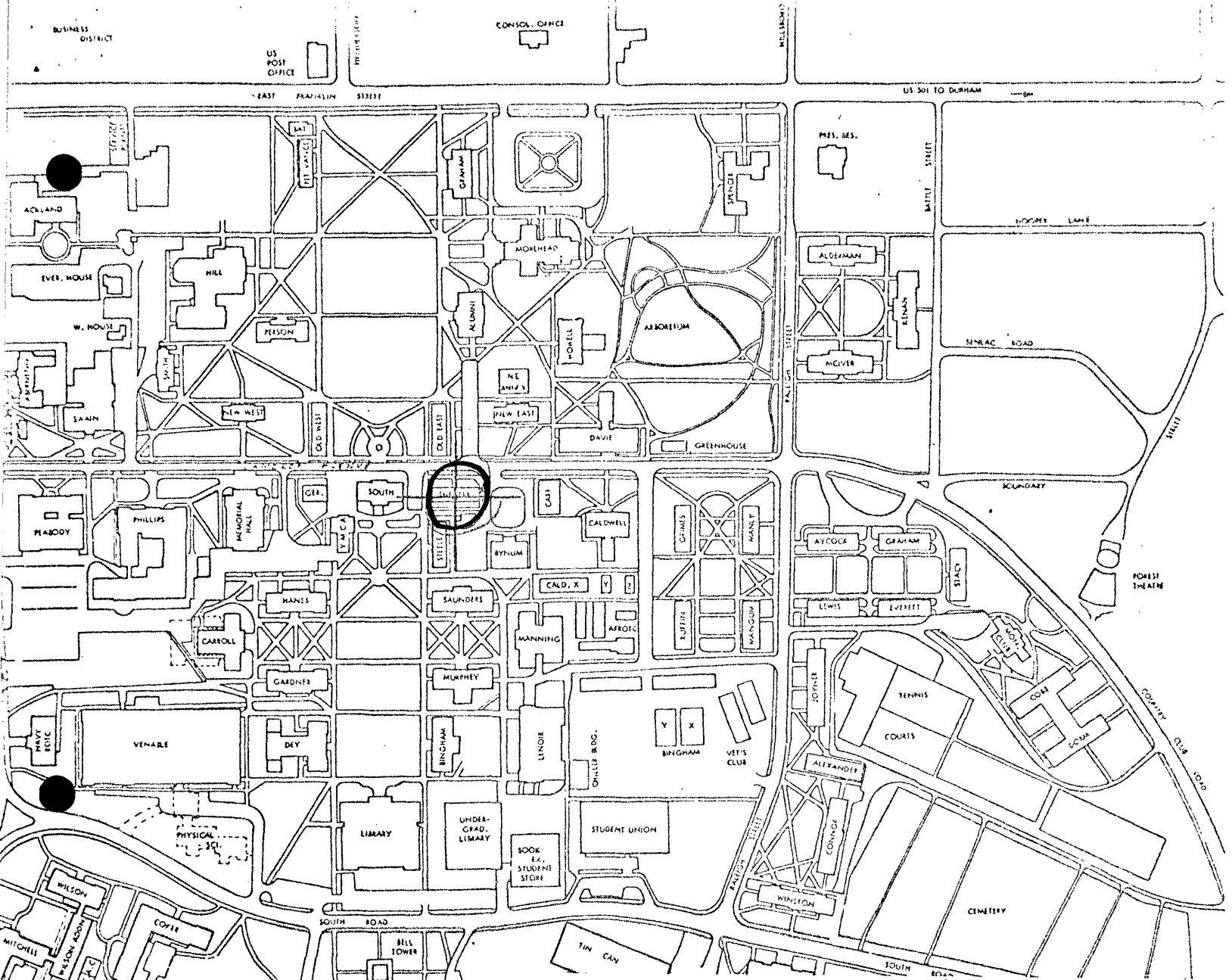
Date: _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date: _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



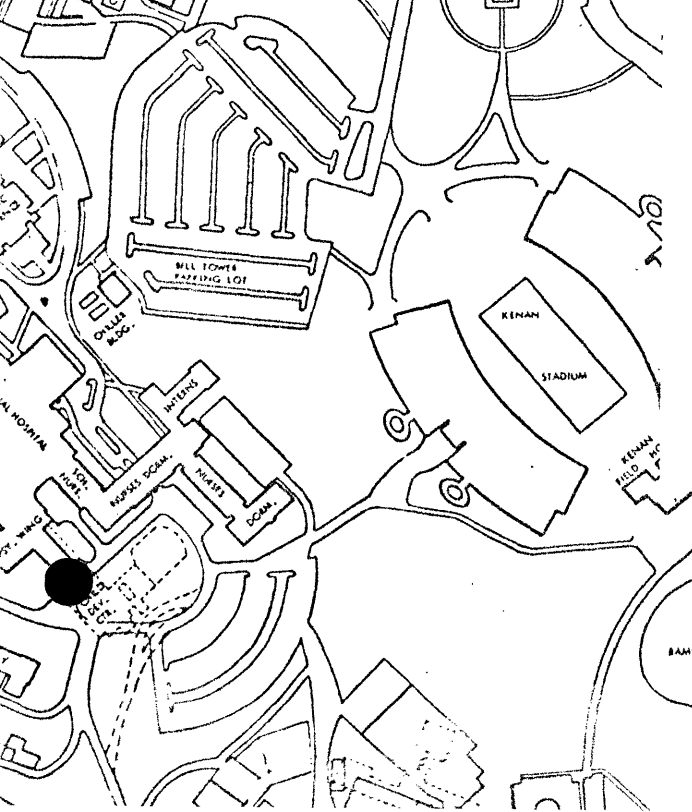
Playmakers Theatre
 Cameron Avenue
 Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The University of North Carolina
 at Chapel Hill, North Carolina
 (Office of the University Engineer)
 Scale: 1"=400 feet
 June, 1968



Latitude Longitude
 degrees minutes seconds degrees minutes seconds

35° 54' 43" 79° 03' 09"



The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Playmakers Theatre (Smith Hall), University of North Carolina, Cameron Avenue, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Playmakers Theatre (Smith Hall) is of national architectural significance as a small but monumental essay in a personalized Greek Revival style by Alexander Jackson Davis. Davis's association with the University of North Carolina extended over nearly a decade and played a primary role in shaping the young campus; the impact of his work is still evident in the composition of the central campus.

Previous construction on the campus had included Old East and Old West, South Building, Person Hall, and Gerrard Hall, all rather plain, functional buildings. The presidency of David Swain inaugurated a period of campus development and improvement. A. J. Davis had been associated during the 1830s with the building of the State Capitol in Raleigh, and in 1843, the same year he terminated his association with Town, he was engaged to enlarge the Old East and Old West buildings; also included in his duties as supervising architect was "the preparation of comprehensive plans for the campus." As Talbot Hamlin wrote, "A. J. Davis of New York studied several of the buildings, altered them, and built a new library building in an effort to weld the whole group into an impressive and monumental scheme." He designed a portico for the rather plain Gerrard Hall and enlarged and embellished Old East and Old West; he also worked closely with President Swain in evolving a scheme of landscape architecture to enhance the campus.

Most important, however, was Davis's work on the one-story building to accommodate a library and to serve the two Literary Societies that played a vital role in campus life. Davis was engaged for the work in 1849 and, as historian Archibald Henderson noted, "The documentary evidence makes it abundantly clear that careful study and analysis of the various problems involved, affecting both buildings and grounds, were made by the architect in consultation with Swain, Battle, and the Trustees." Preliminary drawings were submitted in the autumn of 1849, and a May 31, 1850, letter from Davis to Swain reports:

I was obliged to redraw the whole, but the result has been to improve the plan, so as to make it such as would be creditable to any University, as a specimen of Classical taste, its general character, and proportions, whatever defects there may be in the details, or execution.

A post-script states

The two capitals to the columns of your Hall I wish to have carved here with foliage of Maise, wheat and tobacco; and the shaft should be reeded, with or without a base as I shall determine here after.

In these capitals, wrote Talbot Hamlin, "native corn and tobacco replace the Roman acanthus leaves with even more skill than that with which Latrobe had made a similar experiment in the United States Capitol nearly forty years before."

(Continuation Sheet)

Playmakers Theatre (Smith Hall), University of North Carolina, Cameron Avenue,
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The structure is a simple temple of stuccoed brick, with bays of sides and rear separated by antae carrying an entablature with bracketed cornice. The prostyle tetrastyle portico features fluted columns with the naturalistic capitals beautifully modeled. The interior has been altered somewhat to serve a succession of purposes, but the important elements survive. The wall treatment features pilasters separating the bays and carrying a simple entablature. Especially interesting are the plastered exposed ceiling trusses sketched and explained by Davis in a March 4, 1850, letter as being "the cheapest mode of breaking up the flat surface of the ceiling and . . . more in the pure Greek style than the arch." The Playmakers Theatre, a small temple-form building of excellent proportions accented by rich and inventive detail, is of national architectural significance as a work of Alexander Jackson Davis. It was the product not of a published drawing, but of lengthy and well-documented individualized attention to every detail of an evolving design-- the culmination of Davis's vital role in the architectural development of the University of North Carolina.