

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Tennessee	
COUNTY: Davidson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 71.5.47.0015	DATE 5/6/71

1. NAME

COMMON:
Ryman Auditorium or Grand Old Opry House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Union Gospel Tabernacle

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
116 Opry Place (5th Avenue, N.)

CITY OR TOWN:
Nashville

STATE: Tennessee CODE: 047 COUNTY: Davidson CODE: 037

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" 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"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
National Life and Accident Insurance Company

STREET AND NUMBER:
8th and Union

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville STATE: Tennessee CODE: 047

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Register's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:
Davidson County Court House

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville STATE: Tennessee CODE: 047

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

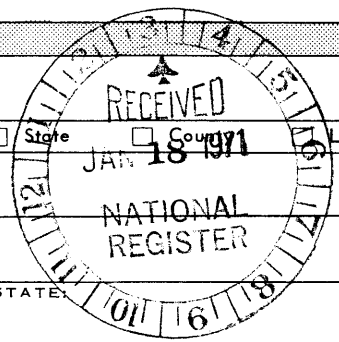
TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

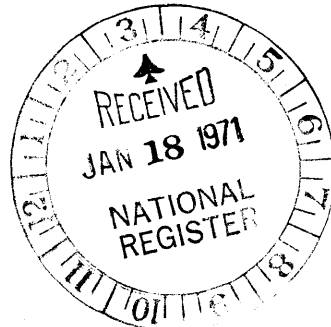
A large red brick structure with a Gothic influence covers approximately a quarter of a block on 5th Avenue or Opry Place as it is called today. The structure was built in 1891 and has had few changes made until the present. Originally, the huge building had only a ground floor, lined with hardwood church-like pews that cost a reported \$50,000. At first there was no stage whatever, just a small rostrum from which the speaker would address the multitude of people. Later a stage was built; then it was enlarged to become one of the biggest in American show business. The "Confederate Gallery" or balcony was added in 1897 especially to care for crowds at the annual Confederate Veterans convention. It is anchored on steel columns extending to the basement. Today the auditorium will seat around 3,000 persons.

Soundly planted on a hand-cut limestone foundation the brick structure has lancet windows at regular intervals and a buttress effect at the corners and down the sides. The original pews and wood floors remain.

In 1957 the building had a face-lifting when aluminum and glass doors replaced the old wooden ones that had hung there. The outside was also sandblasted and cleaned while a new ladies' dressing room for the artists was built.

In 1963 the property was bought by National Life and Accident Insurance Company. Some minor improvements were made such as the addition of some new offices alongside the stage, a new gas furnace, and some fresh paint was applied.

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

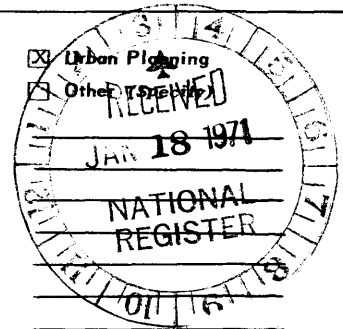
- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1891

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <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 type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Union Gospel Tabernacle, or Ryman Auditorium, as it came to be called, had its beginnings in 1885 when Sam Jones, a Georgia revivalist who regularly held tent meetings in Nashville, came here for his 13th revival. Among his converts was Tom Ryman, a riverboat captain on the Cumberland. Legend has it that Ryman's roustabouts enjoyed, as a major recreation on land, the roughhouse breaking up of tent meetings. On this occasion, the captain was in on the fun, but put an end to the festivities when he realized the sermon was on a subject dear to his sentimental heart - mother.

Following his conversion, Ryman began an ardent campaign to build an auditorium for Jones whose powerful and emotional sermons against the sins of the city drew tremendous crowds to his tent.

Ryman gave generously of his own money and worked tirelessly to raise more from other sources. Construction of the tabernacle was started in 1889, and though Jones preached in the unfinished building in 1891, he and Ryman were hard put to raise enough money to finish with their project.

Ten years later the State of Tennessee issued a charter of incorporation to the Union Gospel Tabernacle as "strictly religious, nonsectarian, and nondenominational, and for the purpose of promoting religion, morality, and the elevation of humanity to a higher plane and more usefulness."

When Ryman died in 1904, Jones came up from Atlanta to preach his funeral in the Tabernacle Hall on Christmas Day. He praised the captain's tenacious 15-year effort to make the building a reality, and suggested that its name be changed to Ryman Auditorium. "All those in favor stand" and 4,000 mourners rose to their feet in unanimous tribute and approval.

In the early 1900's a stage was built to replace the pulpit, and within a few decades, Ryman audiences had heard the Chicago, Boston, and New York Symphony orchestras as well as Sousa's band and the Marine band.

The year 1901 saw the Metropolitan Opera's production of "Carmen" and "The Barber of Seville." With the popularity of lyceums and chataugas in 1904, the auditorium's trustees contracted with the

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Henderson, Jerry, "Nashville's Ryman Auditorium," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXVII (1968) No. 4, pp. 305-328.
 Manuscript from WSM "History of the Grand Ole Opry House."

Handwritten notes:
 1/10/71
 5/17/70
 6/18/70

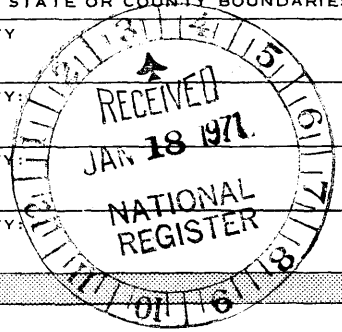
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	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			
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	36	09	39	86	46	44
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"						
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **May Dean Coop Eberling**

ORGANIZATION: **Tennessee Historical Commission** DATE: **12-10-70**

STREET AND NUMBER: **403 7th Avenue, North**

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville** STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: **047**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>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:</p> <p>National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>Stephen S. Lawrence</u> Title: <u>Executive Director Tennessee Historical Commission</u> Date: <u>1/14/71</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Grant A. Connelly</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation MAY 6 1971</p> <p>ATTEST: <u>William M. ...</u> Keeper of The National Register APR 18 1971</p>
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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STATE	Tennessee	
COUNTY	Davidson	
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(Number all entries) 8

Rice Lyceum bureau for a series of lectures, music, reading and entertainment.

During the Ryman's great years Nashville saw all the famous ones of the world of culture and entertainment, Victor Herbert conducted his orchestra for the May Music festival of 1903, and two separate attractions brought Paderewski and William Jennings Bryan in 1907. Carrie Nation lectured on prohibition to a full house that year, and Emma Calve came twice.

Russell H. Conwell and Booker T. Washington lectured and Louise Homer, the prima donna of the Metropolitan was booked at the Ryman. Helen Keller and her teacher appeared there in 1913 and Pavlova, Tetrzina and Alma Gluck made 1914 a memorable year. Galli-Curci thrilled the city in 1918, and in 1919 Paul Ryman, tenor, created considerable interest when he appeared in concert in the auditorium named for his father. 1919 was a great year for the Ryman and Nashville, as Caruso sang on April 29 followed on April 30 by Galli-Curci. Seats sold for \$2 to \$6 each with box seats on stage bringing \$10 each.

Mischa Elman played the Ryman in 1920, and so did Billy Sunday, though in another fashion. And since that time Marice Evans, Helen Hayes, Katherine Cornell, Maud Adams, Otis Skinner, Marian Anderson, Arthur Rubinstein, Bob Hope, Doris Day, and many other famous people have entertained on this stage.

The Grand Ole Opry was formed in 1925, but did not make the Ryman its home until 1941. Since that time, for many at least, the Ryman's claim to fame has been the fiddling and picking, singing and joking of the Saturday session at "Thuh Ryman."

As the Union Gospel Tabernacle, the Ryman had its beginnings the same year as New York's Music Hall, whose name later became Carnegie Hall. The two have in common also fine acoustics and a lustrous roster of performers. It might be noted that the Ryman had a performance by the Metropolitan Opera in 1901, something Carnegie Hall has never had.

On September 27, 1963, the Ryman became the property of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. Shortly afterward the name for the auditorium became officially the "Grand Ole Opry House." Since that time some improvements have been made on the structure. It has been made suitable for the taping of the Johnny Cash Show each week with a removable stage in the center and special lighting. Officials of the Opry have been very careful in altering the structure lest the colorful atmosphere of the Opry House be lost. After all, a part of the charm of the Opry lies in its unique setting located in the old brick barn-like structure located in the heart of thriving downtown Nashville.