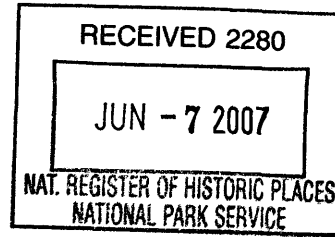


711

**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**



**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

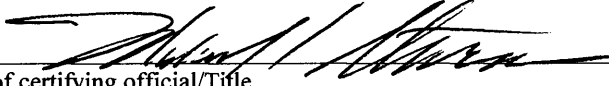
historic name **St. Croix Falls Auditorium**
other names/site number **Auditorium Theater**

2. Location

street & number **201 North Washington Street** N/A not for publication
city or town **St. Croix Falls** N/A vicinity
state **Wisconsin** code **WI** county **Polk** code **095** zip code **54024**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant _ nationally _ statewide locally. (_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title  Date **June 7, 2007**

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _ meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

ST. CROIX FALLS AUDITORIUM

POLK

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

7-20-07

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as
as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 structure
 site
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources
in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property
listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources
is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / theater

SOCIAL / meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / theater

EDUCATION / library

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls stucco

roof asphalt

other wood

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

Period of Significance

1918

Significant Dates

1918

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hartford, Ernest Myrick

Hausler, Charles Alfred

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

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:

X State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local government University Other Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Table with 4 rows and 3 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing. Row 1: 15, 527841, 5028625. Row 2: 2, blank, blank. Row 3: 3, blank, blank. Row 4: 4, blank, blank. Includes checkbox for 'See Continuation Sheet'.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

Table with 4 columns: name/title, organization, street & number, city or town, state, Date, telephone, zip code. Values: Warren White PE, W. White PE, PO Box 547, 239 Day Road North, St. Croix Falls, WI, May 19, 2006, 715-483-3010, 54024.

ST. CROIX FALLS AUDITORIUM

County POLK

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	City of St. Croix Falls	date	May 15, 2006
organization		telephone	715-483-3929
street&number	710 State Highway #35 South	zip code	54024
city or town	St. Croix Falls	state	WI

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Introduction

The St. Croix Falls Auditorium is a 45' x 117' three-story stucco clad, masonry building crowned with a clay tile parapet. The building displays decorative elements loosely drawn from the Craftsman style. The vaguely Spanish feel of the building was a popular stylistic vocabulary of theaters of the period. The principal architectural façade is the west wall facing the main street of St. Croix Falls and the St. Croix River. The building is flanked on the north by single-family housing and on the south by a masonry commercial building. The east side of the building is occupied by a loading dock permitting back stage access to the theater's performing stage by way of a city alley. The interior of the building reflects the original design in many of the spaces, while some spaces have been modified for various community and performing arts uses over the past 90 years. The original design incorporated considerable dark stained oak and maple woodwork with white walls. Modifications have retained this theme although not all walls and ceilings remain lath and plaster.

Type or form / setting

Originally constructed as a vaudeville theater for a small but progressive community in 1918, the Auditorium building has been a silent and audio movie theater, an emergency hospital, a community center, and a sewing plant for the war effort. These uses have gone full circle and it has been used since 1990 as a live performance professional theater venue 90 years after its construction for that purpose.

The building is located at 210 North Washington Street overlooking the St. Croix Falls Dam on the St. Croix River. A public observation deck for tourists and the National Scenic Riverway are within 300 feet of the site. The Auditorium building is enhanced as a historic prominence when observed from Washington Avenue, from the observation deck, or from the Scenic Overlook across the river in Minnesota. Washington Street occupies a geological bench squeezed between the St. Croix River and 350' high bluffs to the east.

A 22' setback from the Washington Avenue right-of-way line is occupied by a brick paved, landscaped courtyard/plaza constructed in 2002. This courtyard replicates the entry first sited in 1918. Careful, professional design has assured a historically appearing, albeit functional design which includes handicap access, plantings, outdoor seating, and safety railings.

General Characteristics

1. The building is 45' north/south x 117' east/west. Primary public entry is on the west with secondary entries on the north and south walls at several levels. Additional entries to the building are accessed on the north and south by steel stairway fire escapes. An exterior concrete ramp serves the second floor "mezzanine" space and the third floor auditorium space to ADA standards. It is located on the north exterior of the building.
2. The building is a series of split levels which, in elevation, would include:
 - Ground level: the theater lobby, restrooms, and public library
 - Up one flight: the Mezzanine Bistro Restaurant, which was originally a balcony over the library
 - Up three flights: performing space of the auditorium raked downward to the stage
 - Up five flights: office and costume shop spaces of the theater company
3. Whereas the exterior ground level on the east (back) side of the building is 10' higher than on the west (front side), floor levels at the east end of the building differ from those at the west end of the building.
4. Construction materials include concrete foundations, hollow vitrified clay block walls covered with stucco, and a gently

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 2

sloping asphalt roof surrounded by a 2' to 4' high parapet. Doors and windows are glass framed in oak, white pine, and birch as specified in the 1917 drawings for greatest durability as it was understood by the architect. Fire escapes and protective railings are of painted steel.

5. The building demonstrates two roof elements. On the east end, some 45' above grade, is the roof for the backstage fly space, essential in a 1918 performing theater. A lower nearly flat roof, covering the remainder of the building, is gently sloping from south to scuppers along the north edge. Both roofs are surrounded by a 3' high parapet capped with half circle vitrified clay tiles.

6. The structural system of the exterior of the building could be considered balloon frame as the roof is free-span from north to south. Interior structures of balconies and intermediate floors are supported with variations of posts and beams throughout. The support system of the sloping auditorium floor is an interesting application of 44' free-span beams.

In 2002, as part of a Main Street redevelopment, a one story, architecturally inappropriate 1961 movie theater lobby was removed to reveal, for the first time in 40 years, the original walls and entrances on the west facade. Following that removal, the west face of the building was repaired with stucco. The original upper floor windows were refurbished or rebuilt. The first floor doors and side windows were recreated.

The **western facade** which offers the primary public access to the building is the focus from the street. The elements of this façade include:

Several feet below the uppermost clay tile parapet, is a wood cornice. Slight returns of this cornice appear on the north and south walls. This cornice presents a continuous horizontal line with the appearance of support by 11 equally spaced elements. The cornice projects from the stucco background approximately ten inches. Four feet below this horizontal cornice are a series of 8"x 8" square tiles in a horizontal pattern which adorn a significant vacant space between the upper cornice and the lower cartouche arches.

The Spanish inspired theme of the west facade is next demonstrated with arches and tiles in relief over the windows. These windows are rectangular double hung wood frame under the masonry arches. Below the windows are four massive brick columns supporting a heavy concrete lintel, which bears the name AUDITORIUM, in relief, centered in a cartouche over the doors. The entire first story entrance projects 6" to 18" from the west facade.

The reddish stained central doors and side windows at ground level are new, having been reconstructed according to the 1918 blueprints, and fully operational. They serve the patrons of the public library as well as the St. Croix Festival Theatre. These doors were lost when the 1961 addition was built and have been recreated of pine, birch, and maple with multi-paned insulated glass.

The **south elevation** of the building is functional first and decorative secondly, with a four story iron fire escape, accessed by solid wood doors on three levels. Viewing this elevation, the half circle clay tile parapet is seen at the top. The principal upper story is occupied by three recessed windows flanked by four pilasters. These three windows have been covered with plywood for many years to accommodate daylight viewing of theatric and cinematic productions. It is speculated that prior to 1928 the windows did pass light and that heavy interior drapes prevented the entry of daylight when necessary. In all likelihood, the removal of the plywood would expose the original 90 year old windows which have been protected from the elements for the past 75 years.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Croix Falls Auditorium

St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 3

The **east elevation** also demonstrates function above decoration. This side being on a city alley, one sees air conditioning equipment on a backstage loading dock. Before air conditioning, this elevation would have presented only a loading dock, loading doors, and two structural pilasters to stabilize the clay tile/stucco wall of the high theater fly space. The wooden stage loading doors access an entrance 10' wide and 12' high. They remain as they were originally built in 1918.

The **north elevation** presents fire escapes, covered original windows and pilasters matching the south elevation. In addition, the 1930s swamp cooler foundation of poured concrete has been capped and supplemented with concrete to provide a dining patio and an ADA ramp. It is on this face of the building that ramp access is provided to all public levels of the building. Wrought iron railing, mimicking the fire escapes, surrounds the dining patio. The building, in its original form, is viewed from the northeast in a photo which is believed to be vintage 1937.

From **inside the building entrance**, one first sees stairs rising to upper levels on both the left and the right. Passing these 6' wide staircases, the hallways to restrooms are to the right and left. Next is the theater box office, on the right, the library doors in the background, and a small display window, mirroring the box office, on the left. All of these elements had been lost from the original building during renovations. In the original architectural style and utilizing the building's original blueprints, these elements have been rebuilt during the period 1995-2003 by craftsmen, using maple, birch, and pine as specified in the original plans.

Continuing through the lobby, a heavy multi-paned door flanked by matching windows leads into the space which is used, in 2006, as the city's public library. Although it is air conditioned and contains computers, its books and wood do not reflect a glaring 21st century mood. It was originally designed as a community activity center (gymnasium, dance hall, etc.) and was used during World War II as a garment sewing space. The original plans do not suggest unique architectural features and none are to be found. Prior to a 1990 expansion, the library had shared this space with the city offices. A 1946 modification had included bringing sand into the space and raising of the floor to eliminate steps while presenting a less cavernous ceiling. This compacted sand was capped with a concrete floor to complete the project and provide for war effort medical gown assembly. Prior to 1946, this space had been a community gathering space and basketball court as originally designed.

Going upstairs from the lobby

Two stairways from the lobby have been reconstructed with a slightly flatter rise to conform to building codes, but follow the alignment and carry the appearance of the originals. In the future, maple treads, as originally specified, will again be installed on these rebuilt stairs.

Climbing to the top of the first flight of stairs, the original building's doors on the east side of symmetrically matching 8' x 14' landings access the mezzanine level. Combining historical mood with modern function, in 2006 this space is utilized to serve intermission beverages and snacks. The walls of previous conversions were left in place in 1995 when the Mezzanine Bistro was created. Renovations of the interior of this space over the years had seen this space converted for a city administrator's office in the 1970s and for storage in the 1960s. It was originally the observation balcony for community events (basketball games, dances, town hall meetings, etc.) which took place in the space below (now the 2006 public library).

Climbing the second flight of stairs towards the performance auditorium the efforts which maintain the theme of 1918 are presented. The original floors have been sanded and varnished; the windows on the left have been reconstructed with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 4

insulated glass and 1918 paint colors. A display case on the landing is portable. It was donated from another historic building and is purposefully simple. Displays in this case focus on the history of the building as they can include 1930's movie projectors, stage lights, and historic photographs.

A third flight of stairs reaches a third landing where double swinging doors access the auditorium's theater house. The auditorium itself has seen only small change because it has always been used as an auditorium with a stage or a screen. The north and south windows of this space were covered with plywood when it began to be used as a movie theater and remain in place today. The walls and ceilings were covered with acoustic fiber board to accommodate movies in 1928. The balcony portion of the original auditorium has been closed off to create office for the performing theater.

Significant Interior Features

A most prominent feature is **the colorful painted canvas backdrop** behind the stage which was produced by *Twin City Scenic Co.* and first installed in 1918. It was rolled up for all the years that movies were shown in the space. With the exception of water stains on a small part of its area it is in very good 90-year-old condition. It is often rolled down today and used as a backdrop during performances as it was intended in 1918.

The 1917 drawings detail a "**Plaster Band for the Proscenium Arch**" molded from lath, plaster, and under the guidance of a steel guide. That plaster band is viewable today.

To permit larger casts and productions than vaudeville in 1918 would have envisioned, some of the front row seats have been removed and a thrust stage has been constructed into the hall.

Innovative HVAC in 1918

Before the advent of climate controls and air conditioning, hot summer nights at the movies apparently required more than ventilation. In the era of 1937 to 1940, a cooling system utilizing a fan and a "**swamp cooler**" utilizing a well and dripping water for cooling was installed. Today, the swamp cooler foundation supports the dining patio and is the only structure which could be construed as an **outbuilding** on the site. It is really an attached appurtenance created 20 years after the building was first constructed. It is painted to match the rest of the building and is of minimal impact when viewing the overall structure.

When it was designed, the architect planned for the ventilation of heated humid air from the theatre house and the high fly space by way of louvered vents in the ceiling which exhausted air, by convection, through the roof. The interior louvers were tediously crafted from oak 1"x 3"s and 7/16"x 2" strips 3" OC in a circular 6.5' diameter grate. Although energy conservation and roof leakage have dictated that the exterior portions of these louvers be disabled during reroofing over the years, the interior louvers remain in place. The fly space louver is exposed to view in the ceiling high above the backstage. The louver over the house seating area has been covered since 1928 when the acoustic tiling was installed for talking movies.

The uppermost level of the building, an area that the public does not see, contains administrative offices, a costume shop, costume storage, and the sound / light booth for the theater. The construction in this area has been utilitarian and targeted purely at keeping live theater functional in the building. Whereas the floors, stairs and exterior walls remain unchanged from the 1918 construction, the modifications in this area could be reversible to be more sincerely historic if needs dictated.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Other elements

The north side of the building, at the mezzanine level, includes a foundation for the "swamp cooler" as discussed above. The remainder of this system is a concrete block "air stripping tower" at the southeast corner of the building which was also constructed in 1937 to 1940 and is of little significant architectural value. Today this tower houses air conditioning ducts as it adjoins the air conditioning compressor on the east loading dock of the building.

Alterations or changes to the property have primarily been functional rather than structural. Those modifications would include:

1928: Installation of acoustic tiling to accommodate "talkie" movies remains in place today.

1937 to 1940: Installation of "swamp cooler" and well at the east wall of the building. This system has been abandoned and reutilized as noted in previously in the text.

1946: Filling of the basketball court floor with sand and a new floor to accommodate manufacturing, this remains today.

1952: A fire sprinkler system was installed and remains in use today.

1961: Addition of a west lobby and numerous interior modifications have subsequently been removed to return to the original design intent.

1972: Alterations to the lower level to create city office, police office, and a small library space included air conditioning and renovations of the heat plant.

1989: The movie business moved from the upper level making the space available for live theater again.

1990: The ADA ramp to serve the auditorium space was added to the northeast corner of the building.

1993: The city/police offices vacated the lower level and the library expanded into the space they had occupied.

1994: The 1960s had seen considerable "modernization" of the interior to update to uses as city hall, movie theater, and police department office. However, most of this work did not render the historic aspects of the building irreversible.

Upon taking over the building in the early 1990s live theater presenters were faced with making the facility reasonably useable to their patrons. The public library housed downstairs needed a functional entrance which fit the theme of the rest of the building. In the period 1995 to 2005, under the guidance of the 1918 original floor plans, walls have been removed and floors tiled to restore the lobby interior to appear as it did in 1918. A women's restroom with current appliances but a 1918 feel has been created with the use of wainscoting, tiling, and mosaic wall covering.

The St. Croix Festival Theatre became tenants to produce live theater and, with a loan from the city, contracted for a roof and air conditioning repairs. This group also created the "Mezzanine" bistro/restaurant and an improved women's restroom in the building. Their Capital Improvements Plan calls for many future repairs with an eye toward the history.

2000: The "patio" was constructed over the swamp cooler foundation on the north side of the building

2001: The 1961 addition was removed and the west courtyard was constructed. The costume shop was moved to the uppermost floor of the building. Interior partition doors following the 1918 plans were installed between the theater lobby and the library.

2003: Replacement doors, following the 1918 plans, were installed on the west wall of the building.

While the building is still in need of repairs, the overall integrity is good. The repair and reconstruction of the historic entrance has returned the building's façade to its original appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

The St. Croix Falls Auditorium is significant at the local level in the area of Entertainment and Recreation. From the time of its completion it has served as an important entertainment venue in the community, showing movies and hosting important community events. The period of significance begins in 1918 with the opening of the building and runs through the end of the historic period. Outside of the period of significance the building continued serving important civic roles, including housing city offices and the local library.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The community of St. Croix Falls was first settled in 1838 shortly after the Wisconsin Territory was formed. The town was platted in 1857, was incorporated as a village in 1888 and as a city in 1958. The town was located at the Falls of St. Croix just upstream of the Dalles on the St. Croix River. Whereas boats could not pass upstream through the falls, the Dalles of the St. Croix would be the termination point for water travel and the beginning point for land travel and settlement for Swedish and Danish settlers to Western Wisconsin and Eastern Minnesota.

Alleged to be the first permanent white settlement on the St. Croix River, St. Croix Falls was established by a group of land and lumbering speculators who came from Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. Seven men formed the St. Croix Falls Lumber Company in 1838 and began building a log boom, dam and mill at the town site that year. The company's plans were slow to materialize. Disputes over land ownership among the partners and a shortage of financial backing immersed the company in controversy. After the mill was finally completed in 1842, a flood the following year destroyed the boom and millrace. Although construction of new mills shifted downstream in subsequent years, interest persisted in the St. Croix Falls Lumber Company and its waterpower.

By 1869, the holdings of the St. Croix Lumber Company included most of the land within the city of St. Croix Falls, the waterpower property of the St. Croix River falls (Cheever's Mill), and about 33,000 acres of unimproved timberlands in northern Polk County. Much of the land was acquired in 1869 from the State of Wisconsin under provisions of the Morrill Land Grant Act.

As fictionalized in the Vilhelm Moberg's series of books in the 1950s and dramatized in the 1971 movie, "The Emigrants," Swedish and Danish immigrants arrived over the following years to populate the county and the city.

In 1895 Minnesota's and in 1900 Wisconsin's Legislatures recognized the natural cultural value of the river valley by establishing the "Interstate Parks" on their respective sides of the river. The Wisconsin Interstate Park, one mile south of this building, was the first park in the state and its establishment reflects the interest in culture and preservation of the area's history.

Population in northwest Wisconsin in the 19th century grew slowly until the arrival of the railroads. According to Federal Census figures, Polk County's population was just 1,677 in 1860, grew to 10,018 in 1880, and stood at 17,801 in 1900. St. Croix Falls was platted in 1857 and its population in 1860 was 374. It grew to 542 in 1880, was formally incorporated in 1888, and by 1900 stood at 622. These decades and those immediately after the turn of the 20th century saw Polk County transition from logging to farming - first wheat farming and eventually dairying. By 1909 Polk County had 20 creameries in place. St. Croix Falls' population dropped slightly to 569 in 1910.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

In 1906 a power plant was proposed on the river by the *Minneapolis General Electric Company* to generate hydropower electricity. St. Croix Falls was on the railroad and a spur was built through town, down the bluffs, to the dam site. In 1906 the dam was built with a "bear trap" sluice gate to pass the flood flows. With the completion of the power plant, in 1911, power began to be generated to serve the population with the new technology of electricity.

In 1914, the last log drive occurred on the river. The site of the largest log jams in the history of the world; local restaurants still show photos of the passing of this industry.

On a national level, the Progressive Era was coming into being as incomes were growing and leisure time was becoming more prevalent in the American lifestyle. Communities recognized the aesthetic and recreational needs of the population. Cities were on the rise and with this rise came the desire to make cities a better place to live.

It was in this environment that the city council saw the need to provide for the cultural development of their small town. In 1915 they contracted for the design and, by 1918, had completed the construction of the Auditorium for a total construction cost of \$18,281.

ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION

Unfortunately, the opera companies that regularly toured St. Paul and Minneapolis refused to travel all the way to St. Croix Falls since they considered it a financial risk. It was more lucrative for the opera companies to appear in larger cities. In 1918, only one play, "Green Stockings" would be performed in the city's new performing arts space.

In 1918, the village board approached R.O. Pepper, who was renting the Odd Fellows Hall, to show silent movies. They suggested that he rent the upstairs portion of the Auditorium. Silent movies were shown at the theater, every day except Sunday, until 1928.

In 1928, silent movies were replaced by movies with sound. General Electric rented the projectors to the Pepper family and sent its sound experts to assess the building. The experts were able to remove the echo that was present. That was accomplished by installing acoustical ceiling tiles suspended from the ceiling on a metal grid and acoustical ceiling tiles mounted on the walls of the auditorium. The first "talkie" movie was "Battle Cry of Peace" shown in 1930. Movies continued to be shown at the Auditorium Theater until 1989.

Over the years the building's lower level has gone through many alterations and additions. It has been used for dances, dinners, fire department annual banquets, commencements for the St. Croix Falls High School, and other social functions including hosting games of the town's basketball team. It has also been rented out as a sewing factory.

In 1972, the lower level of the building was remodeled to accommodate the city offices and the public library. The city offices occupied the building until 1993 when they moved to a new building. The public library is still located in the auditorium building. It has now absorbed the space which was vacated by the city offices.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

When the movie theater ceased business in the building in 1989, a community group formed to preserve the building. The "Friends of the Auditorium" of 10 to 30 citizens signed a lease with the city and began repairs to elements which reflected 70 years of movie house use. They removed all the movie theater seats, sanded and varnished floors, and initiated programming in the building. In the period 1989 to 1990 presentations would include Big Bands, community variety shows, and shows demonstrating family values and children's education.

In the spring of 1990, the Friends of the Auditorium contracted with a newly formed professional non-profit "St. Croix Festival Theatre" company to produce lost theater drama with equity actors. Although the "Friends of the Auditorium" would disband several months later, the "Festival Theatre" remains tenants of the building 15 years later producing seven shows per year and an average of 15 presentations of each production. Community and city support for this theater company is strong and it is considered a significant part of the tourism industry in the community. The repertoire is varied including Moliere, Shakespeare, and Dickens as well as lost plays such as Svedenhelms (reminiscent of the Swedish settlers) and "Green Stockings" (in honor of the first 1918 production on this stage).

"Festival Theatre" has developed a long range capital improvements plan and is committed to making continued improvements with a continuous eye toward preserving the historical character of the building and enhancing the audience experience. Much of the work in the past 15 years has been summarized in preceding sections.

1918 INFLUENZA HOSPITAL AND WORLD WAR II

In addition to being a social center in the community, the building has supported broader civic efforts. Soon after its completion, the Auditorium's lower level was used as a make-shift hospital for the sick and dying patients with influenza. Later, in support of a war effort, the lower level would be leased to *Munsingwear Inc.* during World War II as a mercantile factory for military contracts.

1936 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SPOKE HERE

The small town of St. Croix Falls would host a U.S. Presidential candidate in the Auditorium building. On October 15, 1936, 500 voters gathered to hear Norman Thomas speak. He was the candidate for President on the Socialist ticket.

Norman Thomas, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was born in Marion, Ohio, on 20th November, 1884. He studied political science at Princeton University and graduated in 1905. A pacifist, Thomas believed that the First World War was an "immoral, senseless struggle among rival imperialisms." His brother shared his views and went to prison for resisting the draft. A member of the Socialist Party, he was its candidate for Governor of New York in 1924. Thomas became the party's presidential candidate in 1928, 1932 and 1936. Although easily defeated, Thomas had the satisfaction of seeing Franklin D. Roosevelt introduce several measures that he had advocated during his presidential campaigns.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Thomas was the presidential candidate again in 1940, 1944 and 1948. A strong critic of Soviet communism, he also denounced rearmament and the development of the Cold War. Other issues associated with Thomas during the post-war period included his campaigns against poverty, racism and the Vietnam War.

Hartford and Hauser

The St. Croix Falls Auditorium was designed by the St. Paul architectural firm of Ernest Myrick Hartford and Charles Alfred Hauser.

Charles Hauser was born in 1889 in the West Seventh Street neighborhood of St. Paul. In his late teens, he apprenticed with Louis Sullivan in Chicago. When he returned to St. Paul, Hauser went into partnership with William Alban (1911-1913) and later with Percy Bentley (1914) and Ernest Hartford (1915-1916). The Auditorium Theater Building was designed by this third partnership.

Hauser was St. Paul's first City Architect (1914-1923) and designed many St. Paul schools, branch libraries, fire stations, and park buildings, some in the Prairie School style. He was elected to the Minnesota State Senate in 1922. He retired after sixteen years' service and reestablished his architectural practice in 1939. Hauser's architectural career extended nearly to his death in 1971.

The Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota has preserved a collection of Mr. Hauser's work. The collection contains watercolor renderings, sketches and photographs and tracings from Hauser's private practice, documenting more than 100 buildings, including civic and commercial structures, churches, residences, banks, hospitals and schools. Among the notable buildings documented are the St. Paul Temple of Aaron (1954); Faribault (Minnesota) School for the Deaf (1931); pencil tracings for the Labor Temple (St. Paul) (1930); and photographs, tracings, and renderings for the Minnesota Building (St. Paul) (1928).

Ernest Hartford began practicing architecture in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1910, having had several years of "office training and practitioner" according to his application for AIA membership. An October 1914 news article tells of the dissolution of firms of "Bentley & Hauser" and "Hartford & Jacobson," as well as the organization of "Hauser and Hartford in the Pioneer Press building in St. Paul.

The St. Croix Falls Auditorium has served the citizens of the city since the building's completion in 1918. It has played many important roles in the cultural and civic life of the community as the location of dances, basketball games and school events. From 1918 through 1989 the auditorium itself served as a movie theater. The building has assumed other uses over the years. During the historic period it served as an influenza ward and as a factory in aid of World War II. In more recent years it has housed city offices and the public library. The building retains good historic integrity and the reconstruction of the original entrance has returned the building's façade to its appearance during its period of significance. The building is recognized as a locally significant building associated the history of Entertainment and Recreation in the community.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Reports

Historic Structures Report of the Auditorium Theater, Saint Croix Falls Wisconsin, 1992, F.J. Sabongi, M. Arch, ASID and SEH Inc. *This report is on file with the Wisconsin SHPO and includes many documents specifically supplementing this nomination.*

Books

The St. Croix: Midwest Border River, by James Taylor Dunn, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965

References

Papers of Charles Albert Hausler, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/manuscripts>

The Improvement Bulletin, "News of the week" December 2, 1911

Application for AIA membership, December 29, 1914 by Ernest M. Hartford.

"Construction Details" magazine of October 1914.

Internet searches regarding Vilhelm Moberg, Norman Thomas, and the movie "The Emigrants."

Wyatt, Barbara, ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Auditorium Building is sited on Lots 21 and 22, of Block 43, in the Original Plat of the City of St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin. The boundary corresponds with the legal parcel.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated parcel is the property historically associated with the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 1

St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

Items a-d are the same for photos 1 – 9.

Photo 1 of 9

- a) St. Croix Falls Auditorium
- b) St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin
- c) Photographs taken by Warren White P.E., January 5, 2006.
- d) Negatives located at Wisconsin Historical Society.
- e) Auditorium entrance, view from west.
- f) Photo 1 of 9

Photo 2 of 9: Auditorium's southwest corner, view from the southwest.

Photo 3 of 9: Exterior windows, view from the west.

Photo 4 of 9: Exterior view of the southwest corner of the building.

Photo 5 of 9: Exterior view of the north elevation of the building, view of the northwest corner.

Photo 6 of 9: Loading dock, view of east wall of building; back of building.

Photo 7 of 9: Interior view from inside the front doors.

Photo 8 of 9: Interior view, stairs to the performance auditorium.

Photo 9 of 9: Interior view taken from the stage.

Figure 1: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

(ca. 1917)



AUDITORIUM ST. CROIX FALLS WIS.

Figure 2: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

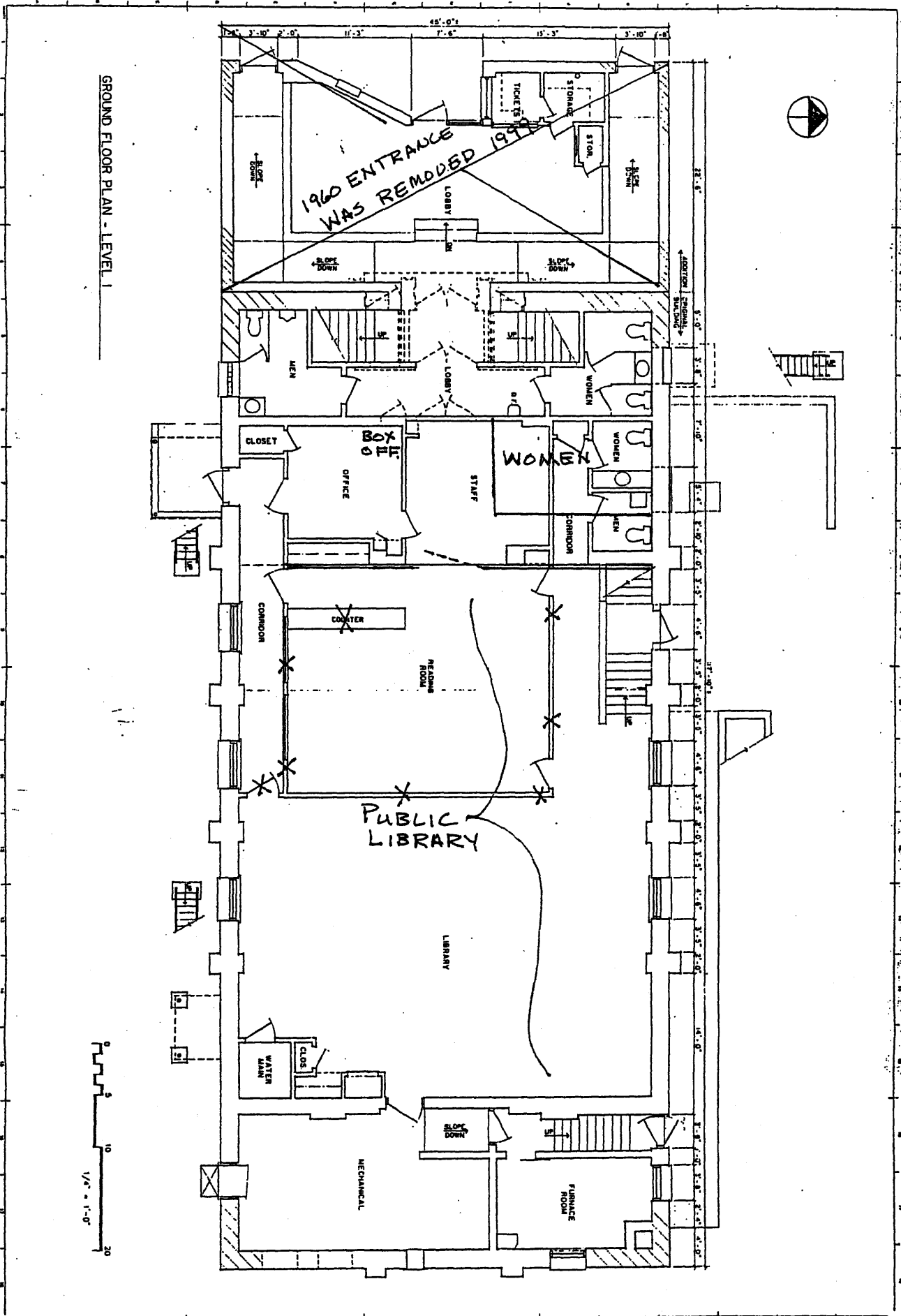


Figure 3: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

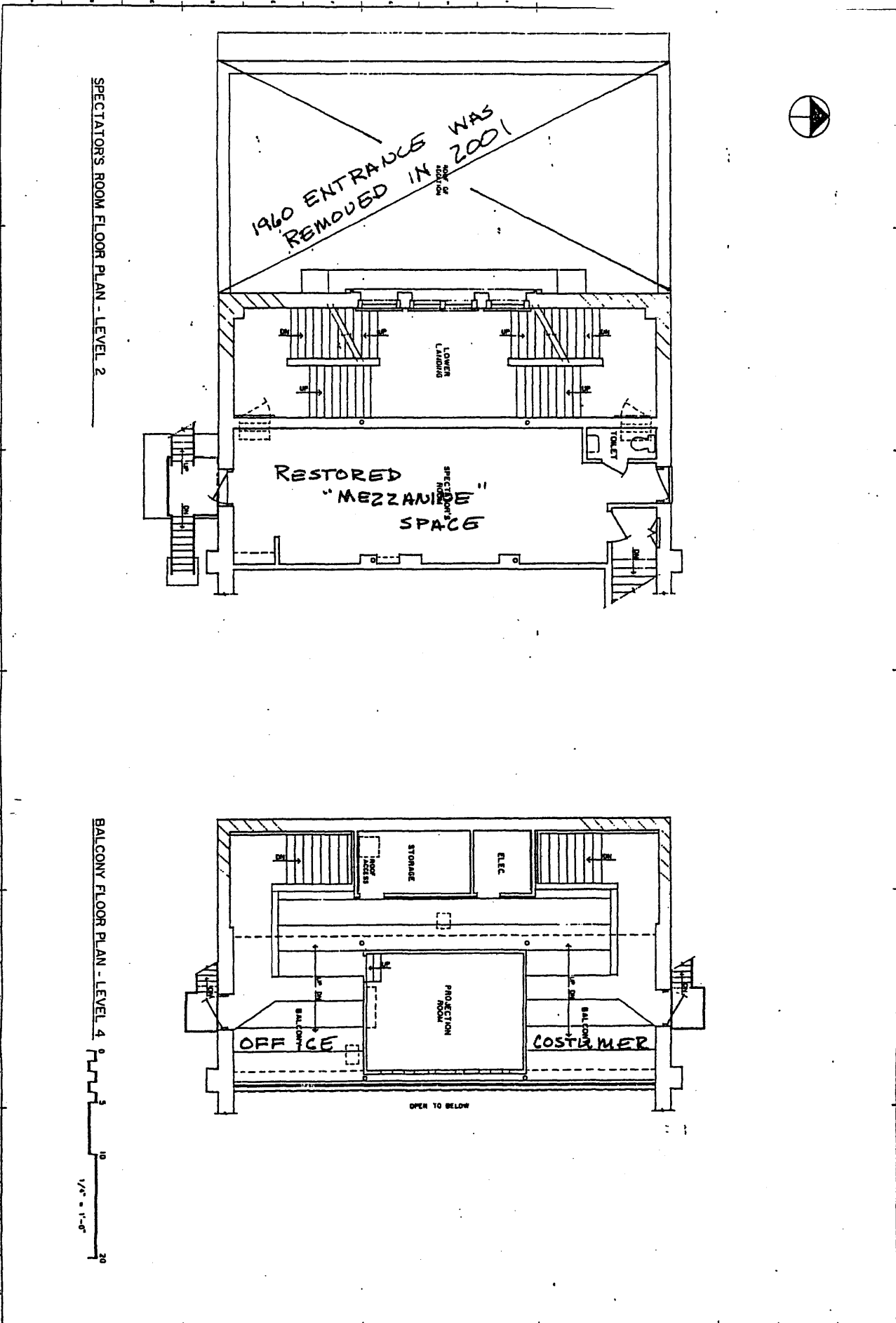


Figure 4: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
 St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

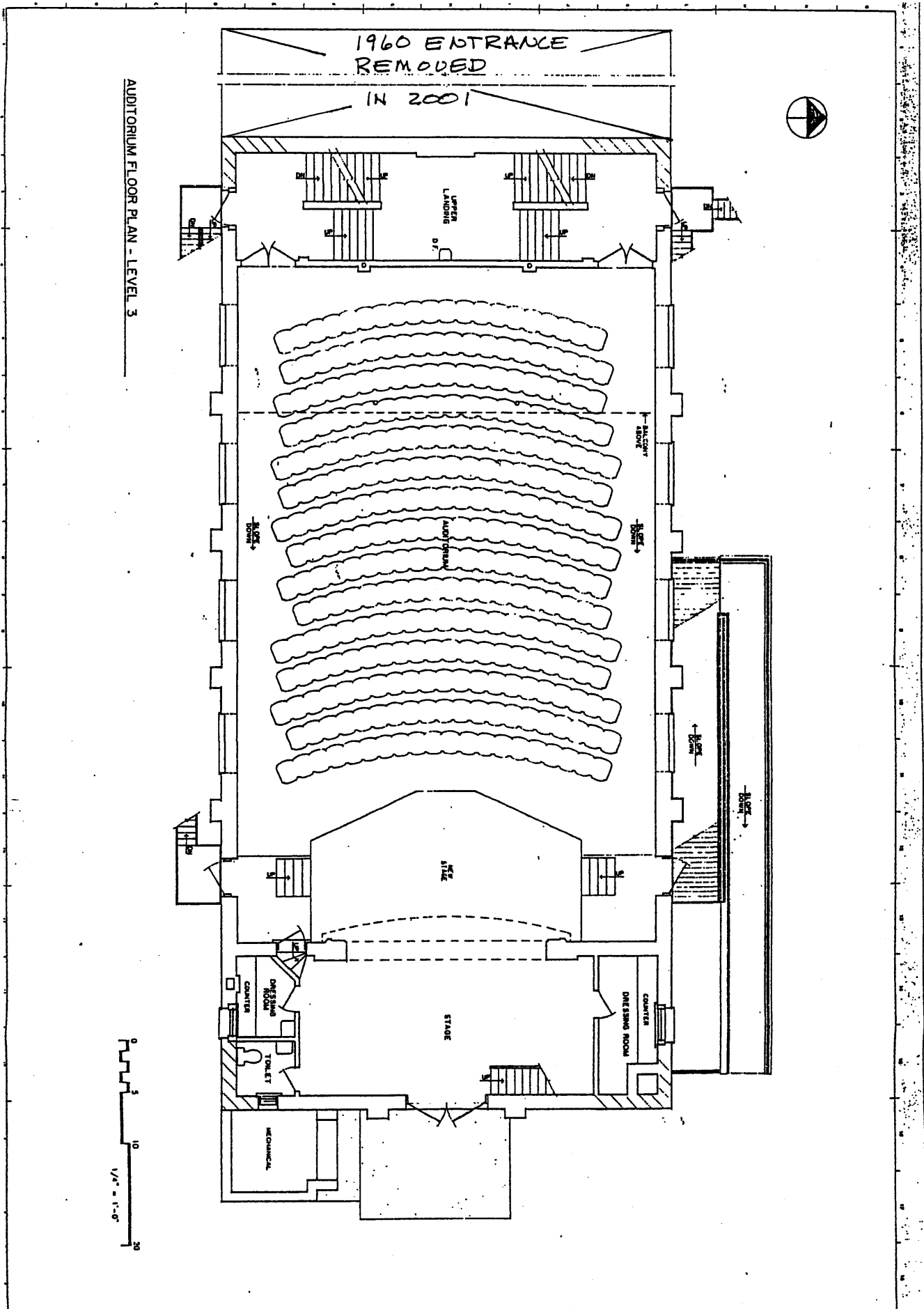


Figure 5: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
 St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin

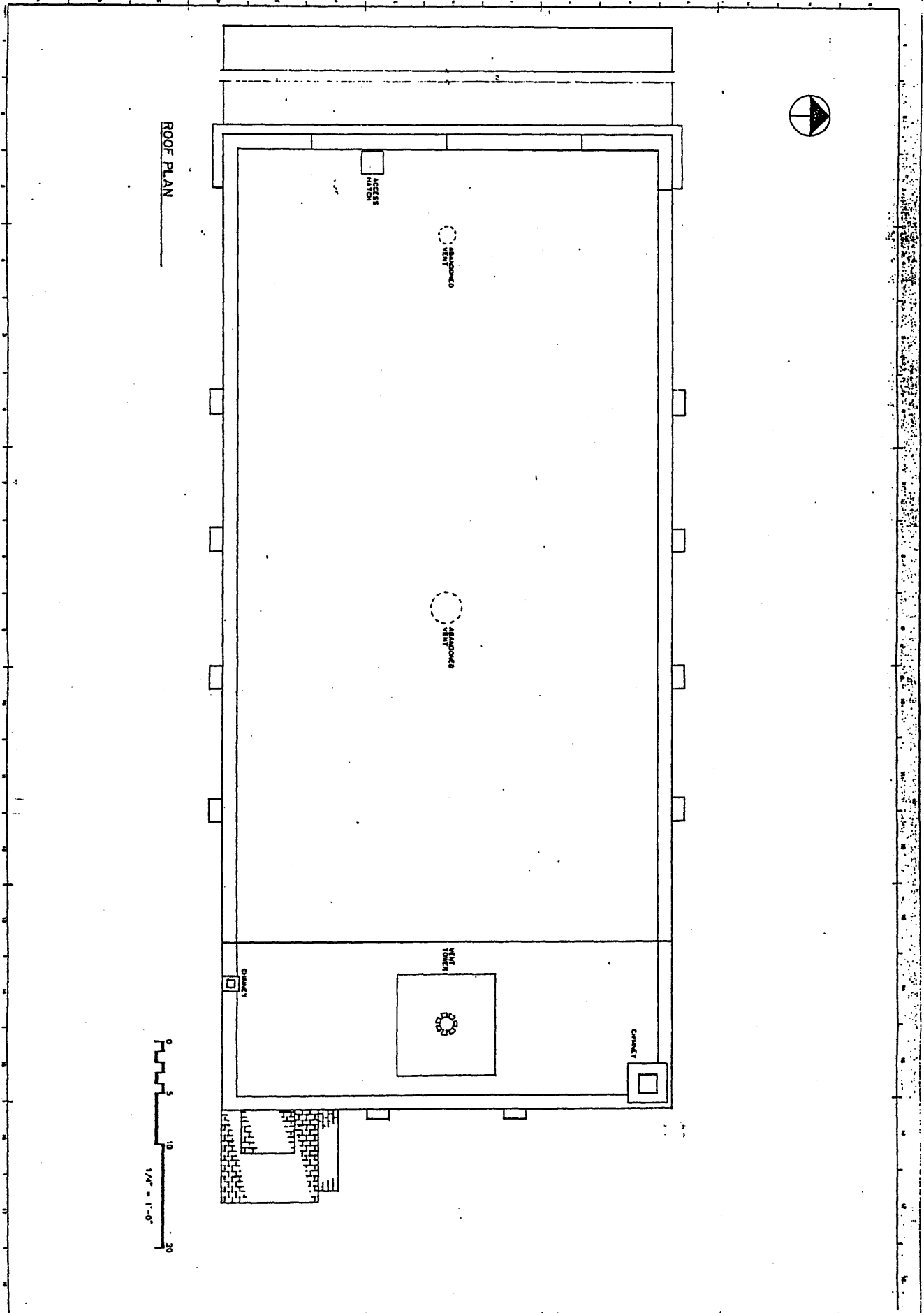
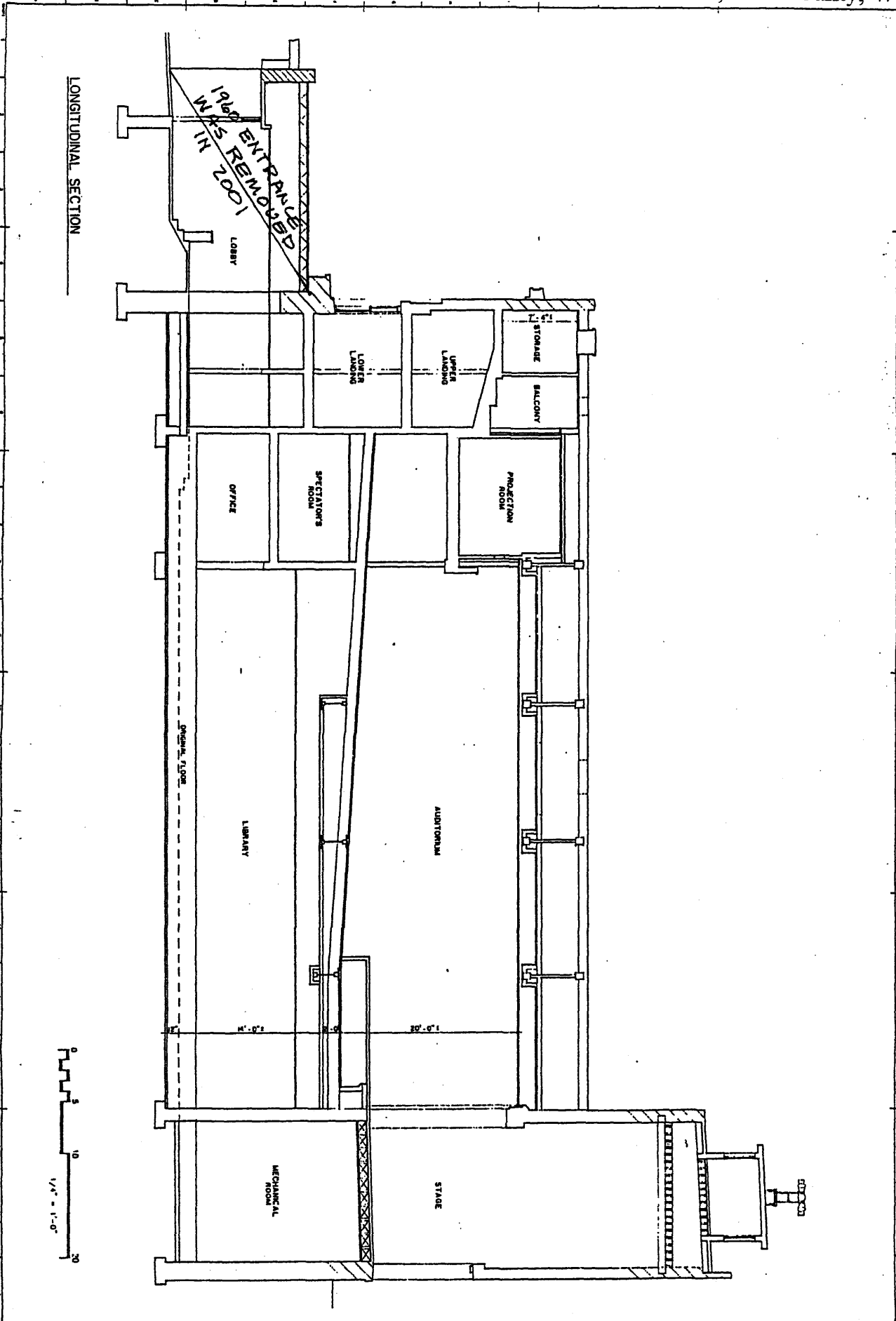


Figure 6: St. Croix Falls Auditorium
 St. Croix Falls, Polk County, Wisconsin



ESEH ARCHITECTURE PROJECTS - ST. CROIX FALLS, WISCONSIN MEMBERS - GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN	THE HISTORIC AUDITORIUM THEATRE ST. CROIX FALLS, POLK COUNTY, WISCONSIN	I warrant a liability that this plan for groundwork by me or under my direct supervision and that I am a duly Licensed Professional Architect under the laws of the State of Wisconsin. Date: _____	2006 NOTES	SHEETS: 2 COMM: _____ DATE: 8-22-04 DRAWN: _____
---	---	--	-------------------	---