



984

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 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 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Waterville Opera House
Other name/site number Waterville City Hall; 117-5680-0006

2. Location

Street & number 200 E. Front Street not for publication
City or town Waterville vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Marshall Code 117 Zip code 66548

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.)

Patrick Zollner

9/13/08

Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

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

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

removed from the National Register

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

10.16.08

Waterville Opera House
Name of Property

Marshall County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
_____		sites
_____		structures
_____		objects
2	total	

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

Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of KS MPS

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: theater, auditorium

GOVERNMENT: city hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: theater, auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School Style Opera House

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: STONE: limestone
Walls: STONE: limestone

Roof: METAL: Steel

Other: CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1903-1958

Significant Dates

1903, 1914, 1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Snodgrass, A. W. (architect)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Waterville Opera House
Name of Property

Marshall County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	4	6	9	3	1	8	0	4	3	9	5	7	7	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

2

Zone		Easting						Northing						

3

Zone		Easting						Northing						

4

Zone		Easting						Northing						

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

Name/title Beverly J. Roepke, Treasurer

Organization Waterville Preservation Society, Inc. Date June 1, 2007

Street & number P.O. Box 341 Telephone 785-363-2766

City or town Waterville State Kansas Zip code 66548

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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name City of Waterville

Street & number 114 East Commercial Telephone 785-363-2367

City or town Waterville State Kansas Zip code 66548

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

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Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Waterville Opera House (1903) is located at 200 East Front Street at the northeast corner of Front and Kansas Streets. The 87' x 46' building faces south toward the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks. The opera house was built by local craftsmen with locally quarried limestone and has remained in the ownership of the city since its construction. The bottom floor was built to house the city's government offices, library, banquet room, kitchen, restrooms, and dressing rooms. An auditorium and raised stage has always occupied the second floor space. The city has maintained the building and it remains in good condition.

Exterior

The south-facing rectangular building is faced with rusticated limestone blocks and features terra cotta detailing along the parapet. The terra cotta is comprised of egg-and-dart and scroll patterns. The front elevation includes five bays that are defined by full-height engaged piers, which pierce the roofline creating a sort of castle motif. The corners feature a corbel detail resembling an inverted cone or pyramid near the roofline. A stone beltcourse defines each floor of the building. The front elevation is defined by a Classical Revival-influenced porch, which features two pairs of smooth-faced battered wood piers supporting a flat roof with a dentilated cornice. The porch is flanked by a single window on each side. There is a basement entrance beneath the main porch. There are one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with stone lintels and sills throughout the building. The cornerstone at the building's southwest corner credits Mayor William E. Talbot, council members H. C. Strohm, P. C. Parker, William Ross, C. M. Sawin, H. C. Whiteside, and architect A. W. Snodgrass with the building's construction and completion in 1903.

The west (side) elevation faces Kansas Street and features three bays. The central bay is inset, and the corners are defined by piers that pierce the roofline. The terra cotta with egg-and-dart and scroll patterns continues along the parapet. The corners feature a corbel detail resembling an inverted cone or pyramid near the roofline. A stone beltcourse defines each floor of the building. The ground floor includes only two one-over-one, double-hung windows, which are located at the southwest corner of the building, and a basement entrance at the northwest corner. The second floor includes four one-over-one double-hung windows of varying sizes and an entrance with staircase at the northwest corner. The two central bay windows include stained glass transoms. A window opening in the second floor of the north bay has been filled in with stone. The third story features two one-over-one, double-hung windows in the south bay. Two window openings in the third story of the north bay have been filled in with stone.

The north (rear) elevation faces an alleyway and less decorative than the two street-facing elevations. There are four one-over-one, double-hung windows on the ground level and a double-door entrance with a

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**Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS**

segmental arch lintel at the northeast corner. There are two one-over-one, double-hung windows on the second floor of this elevation. There is no cornice or decorative terra cotta.

The east (side) elevation faces an adjacent property, and, like the rear elevation, this side is less decorative than the two street-facing elevations. There are three bays, but there are no belt courses or decorative elements to define the three floors as on the west elevation. There are four basement windows with window wells. There is a basement entrance at the northeast corner of the building. The second floor features three windows of varying sizes and an entrance with a ladder at the northeast corner. The two central windows include stained glass transoms. There is one one-over-one, double-hung window on the third floor.

Interior

The main entrance of the building leads into a vestibule and waiting room. Heavy curtains separate the entry room from the auditorium. To the west is a ticket booth. To the east is a staircase leading to the basement. A stepladder inside the ticket booth provides access to a balcony used to house lighting and sound equipment. No seating is included in this balcony.

One enters the rear of the auditorium through the vestibule. The floor slopes downward toward the raised stage at the north end of the building. The seating is situated around central and side aisles and includes 17 rows with 20 seats each for a total of 340 seats. Although historic, these seats were removed from another venue and installed in this building in the 1970s. A corner exit is on either side of the stage. The interior walls are smooth plaster and painted white. The 35-foot high ceiling features painted sunken panels that surround a central 12-light chandelier.

The 24-foot wide stage sits about four feet off the auditorium floor. The base of the stage is faced with white-painted bead board, and the walls and ceiling surrounding the stage are accented by a decorative plaster floral motif with lights. Curtains hang inside the stage to hide the rear walls and to provide a neutral backdrop for performances. There are staircase exits behind the scenes on either side of the stage leading to the four dressing rooms below.

The dressing rooms and restrooms are at the north end of the basement and consist of small, enclosed rooms with closets and storage spaces. A kitchen and large open room formerly used as a banquet hall is also located in the basement south of the dressing rooms. This area is now used as a community center for teenagers. A narrow set of steps along the east side of the building leads up to the building's main entry vestibule. The former city offices (now vacant) occupy the southern portion of the basement and are accessible from the building's exterior entrance beneath the main porch. The walls in these basement spaces are generally painted plaster. Some areas have been covered with a bead board or wood paneling. Simple wood panel doors with original hardware exist throughout.

Several improvements to the building were made in the 1970s including the installation of air-conditioning, lighting, and sound equipment. The interior was again refurbished in 1996.

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**Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS**

Outbuilding

A small single-story garage (circa 1924) with a pyramidal roof is located behind the building adjacent to the alleyway. The stucco garage faces Kansas Street and includes a single door and garage door. According to the 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, this building housed the city's fire department and jail. It contributes to the significance and history of the property.

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**Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Waterville Opera House (1903) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance to local entertainment, recreational, and government history, and under Criterion C for its significance as a unique architect-designed opera house and city hall with Classical Revival detailing. Architect A. W. Snodgrass of nearby Frankfort designed the building.¹ This property is nominated as part of the Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas Multiple Property Submission under the Community Hall property type.

Context²

In Kansas, the construction of community halls generally began prior to the Civil War and continued through circa 1921, corresponding with the establishment of settlements across the state. Community halls performed a wide variety of functions, including serving as venues for theatrical and musical performances, town meetings, fraternal and social organizations, commencement ceremonies, and athletic and military demonstrations. They were large open rooms with movable seating that could be arranged to suit a specific event. Additional features might include a raised stage, dressing rooms, a raked floor, and fixed seating. Most often, community hall occupied space on the second or third floor of a commercial block building in the heart of the downtown area, sharing space with retail businesses, professional offices, and government offices. Some communities erected one-story stand-alone buildings to serve as community halls. In the smallest, most rural communities, local governments helped finance and build community halls that hosted live performances and often included government offices as well.

Community halls occupied vernacular wood frame, brick, or stone buildings. Ornamentation was simple and reflected the popular commercial styles of the day...Because limestone occurs naturally in Kansas, many community halls were distinguished by full masonry construction, limestone facades, or stone accents on brick facades...

Some community halls occupied more than one story of a commercial block and stand-alone halls occasionally featured a full or partial second story, indicating the presence of a raked floor to facilitate patron viewing or a balcony with an upper level hall or anteroom.

¹ Snodgrass also designed the Frankfort School (1902-1903), which was listed in the National Register in 1972.

² Elizabeth Rosin, et. al, "Historic Theaters and Opera Houses Multiple Property Documentation Form," 2004, p. 57-59.

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Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS

Community and Property History

The first settlers arrived in the area in the late 1850s and built a mill along the banks of the Little Blue River. The town of Waterville was platted in 1868 by officials of the Central Branch U.P. railroad company just south of the river and incorporated was in 1870. The proximity to the river and railroad promoted the town's early growth. The Riverside Mill and a cigar factory operated along the river at Waterville. By 1910, the population was 704.³

In January 1903, city and community leaders began discussing where to put a proposed community building and opera house. The two final choices included the city park or a corner lot where a bar and boarding house, known as the Lick House, stood. The Lick House was located across the street to the north of the railroad tracks and was, as some in Waterville thought, of questionable value to the community. Nine businessmen offered to loan \$500 each without interest if the site of the Lick House was chosen.⁴ They voted to buy the lot on which the Lick House stood for \$1,000.⁵ An architect, A. W. Snodgrass of Frankfort, Kansas, was given \$50 "on account" to draw up some plans.⁶

The *Waterville Telegraph* from 1903 provides information about the negotiations and construction of the opera house. Once the city settled upon a location to build the new opera house, they sought bids from contractors.

At 6:00 on Tuesday evening only two bids to build the city hall had been received, and at the meeting of the city council in the evening both bids were rejected. The council went into executive session and after adjournment the members declined to give out the amount of the bids, only saying that there were two, and that both had been rejected. The council adjourned until Friday evening...Although the members of the council declined to give out the amount of the bids, it seems that the bidders themselves did, and we are informed that they were as follows: Frank Strowhig of Holton \$7359 and Anderson and Riepens of Frankfort \$7331 neither bid to include the tin work nor putting in the furnace, the estimated cost of which would be between \$600 and \$700 more...⁷

³ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: Andreas Publishing Company, 1883); Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopaedia of State History, vol. II* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912), 895.

⁴ According to Cutler, "The first hotel in Waterville was the Eagle House, erected in the spring of 1868 by Henry Agle. During the same year the Bay State House was erected by August Fromm, who leased it to W. W. Smith. Smith ran it but a short time, when F. G. Adams leased the building for one year. Mills and Hinman then purchased the building, and changed the name to its present appellation, "Lick House." A short time afterwards, a Mrs. Brown purchased Hinman's interest, and the hotel was run under the ownership of Mills and Brown for two years, when Mills became sole proprietor, and operated it until 1878, then leased it to W. H. Trusdale, who controlled it until 1880, since which time W. W. Smith has been manager."

⁵ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, January 30, 1903.

⁶ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, February 13, 1903.

⁷ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, March 6, 1903.

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Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS

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The city council met the following Friday in a special session to accept the bid of A. W. Snodgrass to build the opera house and city hall for \$7000.⁸

The assessed valuation of the city was a little less than \$74,000. Bonds were to be issued for \$500 each. It was thought that a levy of five mills on the dollar for the first five years would raise the necessary amount. After that it would be reduced to three and one-half mills a year. A special election was held to approve issuing bonds in the amount of \$8,000. According to the *Waterville Telegraph*, local leaders considered letting women vote. However,

Under paragraph 642 of the General Statutes of 1901, the right was conferred upon them to vote in cities of the first, second and third class 'for the election of city officers, and for school bonds.' It seems that this is the only general provision there is for women to vote at all in any city, and therefore they will not have any right to vote tomorrow, and the question of issuing bonds for a city hall will have to be decided by the men voters.⁹

The April 3, 1903 edition of the *Waterville Telegraph* reported that work had begun to remove the "windows, doors, and casings from the old Lick House, and taking off all the finish lumber, which was found to be in excellent condition." The April 10, 1903 edition reported that "the old Lick House will soon be a thing of the past, the rear portion having already been taken down and cleared away by the contractor, and the main building will be taken down next. All the material will be used in the new City Hall."

Work on the foundation of the new building had begun by early May 1903. Progress was slowed by the shortage of stone masons [sic], causing Snodgrass to place an advertisement in the paper. "Stone masons wanted. Good wages paid and long job. Apply to A. W. Snodgrass, Waterville, Kans."¹⁰

The cornerstone was laid during a ceremony on August 4, 1903. The building was completed in September 1903 and an open house was held for the community to tour the new building. The community raised an additional \$3,000 for furnishings. The formal opening of the building was on Thursday, September 22, 1904.

Many traveling shows came through this area and played at the opera house. A traveling theater group – the Lockes – performed during the theater's first week of business in September 1904. Another early show included the Ted North Company featuring the grandfather of Jay North, who played Dennis Mitchell on the 1950s and 1960's television show *Dennis the Menace*. One of the first events held at the opera house was a lecture series that met with much approval. The local Shakespeare Cub, which formed in 1901, produced many plays at the Waterville Opera House. A primary goal of the organization was the

⁸ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, March 13, 1903.

⁹ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, June 20, 1902.

¹⁰ *Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph*, July 3, 1903.

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**Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS**

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creation of a public library. Having raised funding and received donations, a library opened in the southeast corner of the basement of the opera house on March 11, 1914.¹¹

Various school plays, musical events, and graduations were held at the opera house until 1967 when the school was consolidated with a neighboring community. A summer theater organization still uses the auditorium. Interestingly, the building has always been used for community purposes as originally intended. Some opera houses were converted into movie theaters, but not the Waterville Opera House.

In the early 1970s the Weaver Hotel re-opened across the street from the opera house providing wonderful food that enjoyed a wide reputation. The Weaver Hotel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in August of 1975. During this time, a professional theater company, Continental Theater Company, built their shows in Waterville in the summer and toured during the winter. They were based in Waterville for three summers, during which shows were performed several nights a week. We had dinner theater and special events with the opera house and the Weaver Hotel.

After Continental Theater Company left Waterville, the community organized the Waterville Summer Theatre and contracted with community theaters in the area to bring shows to town. Later the community began doing their own shows, which they still do once or twice a year.

The Weaver Hotel was closed for a while and was purchased in 1999 by several individuals who formed the Waterville Preservation Society. The group has secured grants for the restoration of the hotel, including a Heritage Trust Fund grant for exterior repairs and a \$1.7 million TEA grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to redo the interior. It has been given to the City of Waterville and currently work is being done to rehabilitate hotel and open a Visitors Center. This work is ongoing.

National Register designation is being sought for the Waterville Opera House so that it, too, may qualify for grants as repairs and work will be needed.

Outbuilding

The small outbuilding behind the opera house that once housed the community's fire station and jail is also integral to the history of the property. The Waterville Fire Department was organized on October 16, 1912. In 1924, the city purchased a Chevrolet truck mounted with a tank carrying 1200 feet of hose and erected a new garage behind the opera house in which to house the equipment. This date appears consist with the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, on which the outbuilding first appears in 1927. A bigger and more modern fire station was built elsewhere in November 1966.¹²

¹¹ Centennial Committee, Inc. *Waterville: Observance of First Hundred Years After Incorporation of Waterville, Kansas.* 1970, p. 58-59.

¹² Centennial Committee, Inc. *Waterville: Observance of First Hundred Years After Incorporation of Waterville, Kansas.* 1970, p. 39-40.

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Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS

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Blackmar, Frank. *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*. Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912. Available online at <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1912/>.

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Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: Andreas Publishing Company, 1883. Available online at www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/index.html.

Rosin, Elizabeth, et. al. "Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas" National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form. 2004.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

Waterville (Kansas) Telegraph. January 30, 1903, February 13, 1903, March 6, 1903, March 13, 1903, July 3, 1903.

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**Waterville Opera House
Waterville, Marshall County, KS**

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is located in its original location on Lots 10 and 11, Block 9, Original Town Subdivision. The lot size is 88' (east and west) x 150' (north and south).

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the lots historically associated with the Waterville Opera House.

PHOTOGRAPIC INFORMATION

Property Name: Waterville Opera House
Location: 200 E. Front Street, Waterville, Marshall County, KS
Photographer: Sarah J. Martin
Date: March 4, 2008
Location of Digital Images or Negatives: Kansas State Historical Society

Photo 1: Southwest corner showing front elevation, facing NE
Photo 2: West elevation detail of stonework and windows, facing W
Photo 3: Northwest corner showing rear and side elevations and outbuilding, facing SE
Photo 4: Northeast corner showing rear and side elevations, facing SW
Photo 5: South (front) elevation, facing N
Photo 6: South (front) elevation showing main entrance, facing N
Photo 7: Interior, auditorium and stage, facing N
Photo 8: Interior, auditorium and stage, facing NE
Photo 9: Interior, auditorium and entrance vestibule, facing S
Photo 10: Interior, main entrance into vestibule, facing S
Photo 11: Interior, light fixture in auditorium
Photo 12: South (front) elevation terra-cotta detail along parapet



Waterville Opera House
 Marshall Co., KS
 14:693180 E
 4395770 N

6663 III NE
 (BARNES)
 27 MI. TO U.S. 24
 0.1 MI. TO JUNC. U.S. 77 & KANS. 9