

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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27. (N-5631):

A. Property Name: Newark Opera House

B. Location and Verbal Boundary Description: The Newark Opera House is located at 95 East Main Street. The nominated property includes the building and parcel of land on which it is situated, the latter having a frontage of 61 feet on East Main Street with a depth of 145 feet of Academy Road (Property Tax Map, City of Newark, no. 20, lot no. 53).

C. Owners: Newark Amusement Corporation, 66 East Main Street, Newark, Delaware 19711

D. Property Description:

The Newark Opera House is a four story rectangular building with six bays at the north front facade. The exterior walls are built of brick laid in American common bond, with a 9 to 1 repeat, at the first three stories. The fourth story is contained by the mansard roof, probably of frame construction, and covered with patterned slate shingles. The northeast corner of this structure, however, rises to three stories only and has a flat roof. The top perimeter of the building is outlined by a continuous boxed cornice and several courses of corbelled brick. Both north and east main facades have segmental arched openings with two-over-two double hung windows at the second and third stories. Based on an early twentieth century photograph, the present windows are more recent replacements of triple hung sash windows with drip stone moldings. The first floor facades of this structure have two entrances, each with side lights and fanlight transom, in addition to store front display and multi-paned windows. This ground floor treatment is a later modification of the original building facade which had an open double arched entry at the northeast corner flanked on either side by gas lights. Two bull's-eye windows have also been removed from the Academy Street facade and were replaced by additional sash windows.

E. Historical Background:

The Newark Opera House was built in 1885 for David Caskey. Between the years of 1885 and 1925, approximately, the building was the site of live theater and music, in addition to movies, in Newark. Theater productions took place on the second floor of this structure in the public hall. The hall was also the location of the town's first nickelodeon, a local attraction which had the distinction of showing movies to both black and white Newark residents. A 1981 Sanborn Insurance Survey Map shows the Opera House as a three story building with a general store and barber shop on the first floor, a public hall and dwelling on the second floor, and additional dwelling space on the third floor. A 1907 edition of the same map indicates this building with an added fourth story. It is possible that the mansard roof was a later building addition, constructed at the turn of the century.

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Throughout the early 1900's the Opera House was occupied by a bank, a post office and a general store, with a multi-purpose hall slocated in the second floor and a lodge room on the third. Today the building continues to be utilized by both businesses and apartment tenants.

F. Significance:

The Opera House provided an important commercial and entertainment center for Newark residents at the turn of the century. Despite minor alterations to the building's facade, the structure remains a fine example of Second Empire architecture as interpreted by Newark builders.

N-5631
Newark Opera House

Property no. 2027
Lot no. 53



29 31 32 33 34 35 36 40

25 27 26 37 23 30

U.S. POST OFFICE

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NEWARK METHODIST CHURCH

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110 109 108 107 106 105 104 103 102 101 100 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74 73 72 71 70 69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60 59 58 57 56 55 54 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1