

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88000930

Date Listed: 7/7/88

Army Theater
Property Name

Dawes
County

NE
State

Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Boland
Signature of the Keeper

7/7/88
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Item #, Classification: the ownership is "public-State"

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

MAY 24 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Army Theatre
other names/site number Trailside Museum; NeHBS #DW07-147; OHBIN #05-23-06

2. Location

street & number Fort Robinson State Park N/A not for publication
city, town Crawford N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Dawes code 045 zip code 69339

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
James A. Hanson May 16, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)
Beth Boland 7/7/88

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre;
music facility;
sports facility
Social: Meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: One-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Wood

roof Slate

other Pillared portico

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Army Theatre is located inside Fort Robinson State Park, immediately south of what is now the Park's lodge and restaurant. Its front, or south facade, faces what is now U.S. Highway 20, which passes through the Park. Constructed in 1904 for a reported \$20,818 (Photostat, post records) to serve as both the army post's theatre and gymnasium, the One-Part Commercial Block wooden frame structure measures approximately 90 feet by 45 feet. It has a pitched slate roof with a pillared portico entryway similar to a vault front. No ticket window or box office exists. A small foyer inside the main doors accesses to the auditorium through double doors.

The auditorium is 54 feet deep by 44 feet wide from the proscenium opening to the edge of the balcony. The balcony extends 15 feet above and behind the main entrance. Access to the balcony is by way of a wooden staircase on either side of the main door. A metal--possibly iron--rail, delineates the front edge of the balcony. The wooden floor is in excellent condition.

The massive wooden proscenium arch measures 22 feet wide by 15 feet high; eleven-foot wings provided adequate off-stage space. Access to the backstage area is by way of a doorway on each side of the proscenium wall. The stage measures 19 feet from the proscenium opening to the back wall. A three-foot apron curves away from the opening. Small triangular wedges fill the space on the auditorium side of the proscenium opening between the edge of the apron and the doors to the backstage area. No trap doors are visible.

Despite the addition of display cases when the building became the University of Nebraska's Trailside Museum, the structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved.

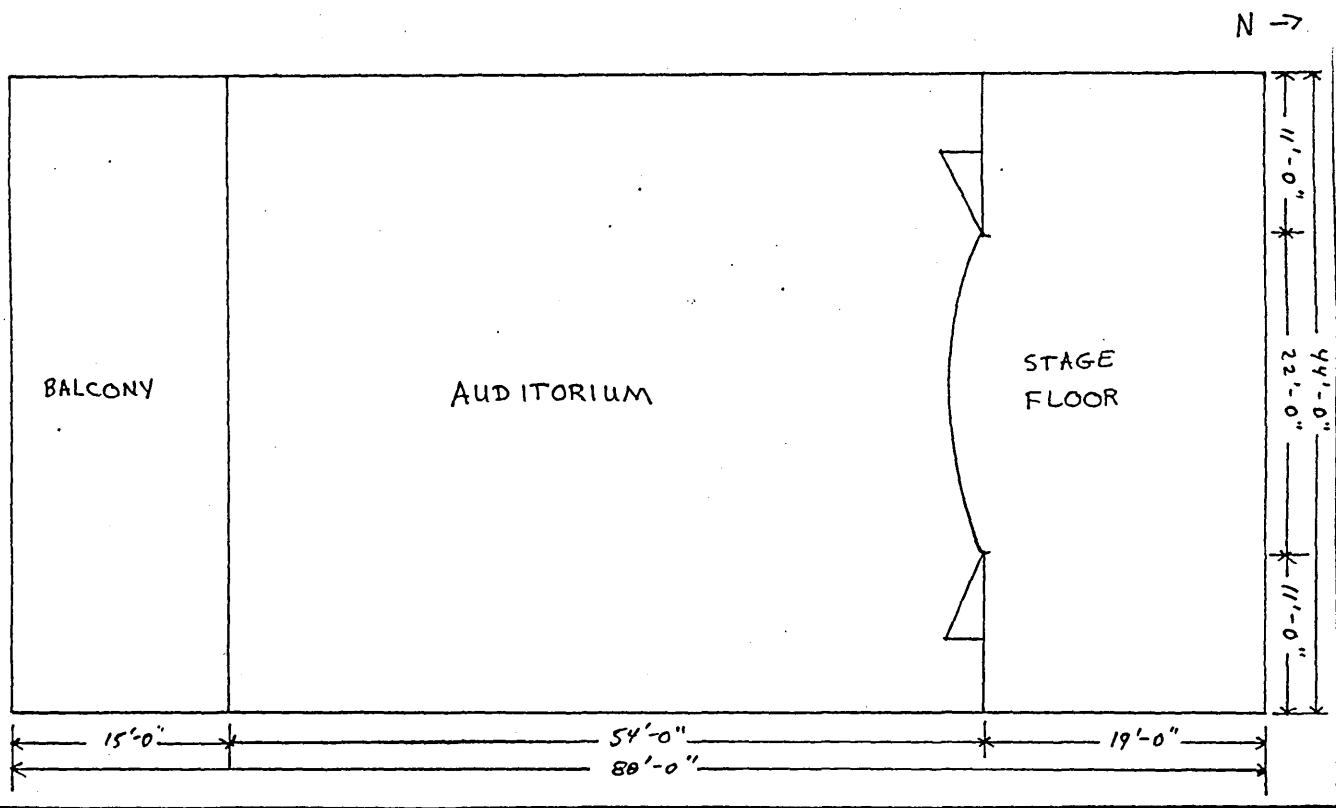
See continuation sheet

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Floor plan, Army Theatre, Fort Robinson



Credit: P. Leitner, Draftsman

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

<p>Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)</p> <p><u>Performing Arts</u></p> <p><u>Entertainment/Recreation</u></p> <p><u>Social History</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Period of Significance</p> <p><u>1904-1917</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Significant Dates</p> <p><u>1904</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
	<p>Cultural Affiliation</p> <p><u>N/A</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Significant Person</p> <p><u>N/A</u></p>	<p>Architect/Builder</p> <p><u>Unknown</u></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Army Theatre is significant for its association with and in reference to the historic context "Aesthetic Systems: Itinerant and Local Performing Arts in Nebraska" and the property type of "Opera House Buildings in Nebraska, 1867 to 1917." Under Criterion A, this opera house is significant in the areas of the performing arts; entertainment/recreation; and social history, on a state level, as a well preserved example of an opera house building in Nebraska. The building retains a high degree of historical integrity, possessing the physical and associative characteristics to make it an eligible member of its property type.

This opera house is significant in the area of performing arts for bringing a variety of entertainment to the military post. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as the John E. Frank Players, *The Climax*, and home talent minstrels and comedies. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1904-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole post community could gather to attend band concerts, dances, and moving pictures. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1904-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history because, in its function as the post gymnasium, it gave Fort Robinson a location for boxing contests and bowling. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1904-1917.) In the days before radio, television, and sound movies, activities at the opera house were anticipated for days or weeks ahead of time. It provided a place for soldiers to pass their leisure time while remaining on the post.

The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of 1904, when the Army Corps of Engineers erected the dual purpose building. It continues through 1917, the year considered to signal the end of the opera house era in Nebraska, based on declining numbers of touring companies nationally and rising numbers of movie houses and automobiles. More soldiers were able to travel to nearby Crawford or even Chadron (25 miles) as cars became more common. The Army Theatre reverted to a gymnasium exclusively, rather than a facility for the performing arts.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Army Theatre. Fort Robinson site visits. 23 May and 16 Oct. 1987.
Buecker, Thomas. Telephone interviews. Crawford: 19 May and 13 Oct. 1987.
---. Personal interviews. Fort Robinson: 23 May and 16 Oct. 1987.
---. Letters to the author. Fort Robinson: 26 Jun. 1986 and 25 Aug. 1987.
Crawford Tribune. 22 Apr. 1904 - 12 Oct. 1906.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

D. Layne Ehlers (see below)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one [1] acre

UTM References

A

1	3
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6	2	5	7	1	5
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4	7	2	4	7	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

An independent artifact with boundaries described by a imaginary line located 5' from each wall of the building, located in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ in section 18, T31N, R52W, Fort Robinson State Park, Dawes County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that parcel of land which contains only the theatre building and excludes any adjacent real estate which lacks historical association.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Layne Ehlers, Principal Investigator
organization OHBIN Study date April, 1988
street & number 2302 South 11th telephone 402/435-6946
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68502

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Army Theatre, Fort Robinson
Representative Entertainments, 1904-1912

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Social History

Jan 1905 Boxing contest, Al Henderson vs. Sgt. Baily
Jun 1905 Boxing contest, Dick Case vs. "Rabbi"
Jun 1905 Boxing contest, Jack Dempsey vs. "Lightning" Murray of the 10th
 Cavalry
Mar 1906 Grand boxing carnival
Dec 1907 Bowling
Jan 1908 Bowling

Entertainment/Recreation

Dec 1905 First Cavalry String Orchestra concerts
Dec 1905 First Cavalry Regimental Band concert
Jan 1906 First Cavalry Regimental Band concert
Oct 1907 Dance
Apr 1908 Masquerade ball, music by the Eighth Cavalry Orchestra
Nov 1908 Masquerade ball
Dec 1908 Regimental dance
Mar 1910 Masquerade ball
Apr 1910 Tacky dance
Jun 1910 Moving pictures
Nov 1910 Moving pictures
Jan 1911 I Troop dance
Jun 1911 Moving pictures
Jul 1911 Moving pictures
May 1913 Troop C Twelfth Cavalry Dance

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Army Theatre, Fort Robinson
Representative Entertainments, 1904-1912

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Performing Arts

Mar 1908 Eighth Cavalry Comedy Co., music by Eighth Cavalry Orchestra
Nov 1908 Fort Robinson Comedy Club with *The Chimney Corner*
Dec 1908 Fort Robinson Comedy Club
Jan 1909 Merry Minstrels of Fort Robinson
Dec 1909 Unidentified show troupe
Jun 1910 Young Sandow Strong Man Exhibition
Sep 1910 *The Flower of the Ranch*
Oct 1910 *The Climax*
Oct 1911 *The Servant in the House*
Mar 1912 The Jolly Five, home talent
Nov 1912 *The City Company*
Dec 1912 *The Love Pirate* with John E. Frank Players
Gypsy Queen

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Photographs

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The following information is the same for all Ft. Robinson photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY: Army Theatre
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Fort Robinson State Park, Dawes County, Nebraska
NeHBS SITE No.: DW07-147
OHBIN SITE No.: 05-23-06
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Ft. Robinson #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-23-87 (8705/4:36)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking
northeast at the south (front) and west facades.

PHOTO NUMBER: Ft. Robinson #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-23-87 (8705/5:2)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking north
at the stage.