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 *National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Grand Ole Opry House

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 2804 Opryland Drive

City or town: Nashville State: Tennessee County: Davidson

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A Zip Code: 37214

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ 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 _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

[X] **national** [X] **statewide** [X] **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: [X] **A** [ ] **B** [X] **C** [ ] **D**

Claudette Price 12/5/14

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official: **Date**

Title: **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

1-27-2015

Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee
Name of Property | County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions	Current Functions
RECREATION/CULTURE: auditorium	RECREATION/CULTURE: auditorium
OTHER: radio and television broadcast studio	OTHER: radio and television broadcast studio

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Modern Movement/Brutalism

Materials:
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE, WOOD, METAL, CERAMIC TILE

Narrative Description

The Grand Ole Opry House, built 1972-1974 in the suburbs of Nashville, Tennessee, is a huge two-level brick, concrete, and metal Modernist-styled building that combines broadcasting studio and performance hall into one functional space. It sits on an approximately four-acre lot at 2804 Opryland Drive, located between Opryland Hotel, which was developed to serve those attended Opry House events, and the Opry Mills shopping mall located to its south, located just off Briley Parkway. Inside, the Grand Ole Opry House has a large two-level auditorium, broadcast studios, dressing rooms, offices, and customer service (concessions, gift shops, ticket booths) areas. The historic 2010 flood of the nearby Cumberland River damaged the lower levels of the Grand Ole Opry House, but repairs respected the original materials and designs of the spaces while making updates to the electronic broadcast capabilities of the facility. Outside of the repairs made after the flood, few other significant changes have taken place. The Grand Ole Opry House retains architectural integrity.

Exterior

In keeping with its Modern Movement design, reflecting the ideas of "Brutalism," the Grand Ole Opry House is an irregular shaped rectangular building, of Modernist architectural style, with three public elevations and a rear elevation that is large brick wall with minimal openings and architectural detail. The building rests on a concrete basement foundation.

The building's multiple entrances dominate the mammoth south facade. Rising from the ground level are three distinct levels, each accentuated with different materials. The initial ground floor level contains the primary glass and decorative wood-paneled central entrance flanked by a ticket booth and Opry shop entrances. The next level features concrete panels replicating the look of wood panels that rise above the ground level entrance by long sloping ramps that are framed by solid brick walls. A wood and steel band barrier/railing further defines this second level, which has a second set of wood and glass-dominated central entrances. The third level again features the dramatically projecting gable concrete-tile roofline of the central section, with a concrete cornice emblazoned with the metal script spelling out Grand Ole Opry House centered in the flat concrete cornice. The interplay between concrete, wood, and brick spans across the entrances strikes a dramatic pose, suggesting the performance hall function of the building while making apparent the different ramps and entrances used to gain access to the interior. The overhanging roof provides large areas of covered space, part of the challenge given to the architects by officials of the National Life and Insurance Company, the parent company of WSM radio and the Grand Ole Opry at the time of the building's construction. Company officials wanted waiting patrons to have shelter from rain and blazing sun in the summer, protection that was never available for those who waited in line at the Ryman Auditorium.[1]

Underneath the overhanging roof is the central entrance, which has five unequal-sized bays formed by four square concrete two-story high posts which are framed by side oak panels. On the second floor of the facade entrance are three large symmetrical rectangular bays, again supported by square concrete posts that are framed by side oak panels. Beyond the oak-framed concrete pillars is a recessed entrance, with a decorative brick flooring, that has a geometric-pattern wall of wood-framed single pane windows flanked by doors. The center section of wood-frame windows extends from the ground to the roofline, reflecting a cathedral-like effect. Flanking the central glass section are two symmetrical wood-framed single-pane windows, which, in turn, are flanked by entrances comprised of five heavy wood doors. On the cornice above the doors are centered wood letters spelling Grand Ole Opry House. Inserted in the top third of the doors are Gothic-styled colored glass lights. These doors were installed in 2010 after the flood damaged the original doors beyond repair.

The openings to the ground level infill of an exterior Ticket Office (west of entrance) and Opry Shop (east of entrance) are similar steel-frame glass walls with a brick veneer exterior wall that supports a sharply sloping metal roof.

The entrance doors on the second level also flank the wood and glass central window design, adding to the cathedral-like effect of the building's entrance and interior lobby. A solid-wood with steel band barrier/railing leads visitors to either of the two second level entrances and protects guests from falling in the open space between the first and second levels. The second level has five heavy wood doors with the lettering Grand Ole Opry House on the cornice. The doors date to 1974; they were not damaged in the 2010

[1] Description is adapted from "Architectural Information," Opryland U.S.A. Press Kit 1974, Grand Ole Opry Archives, Nashville.

flood. Visitors access this level by a concrete and steel walkway that extends over the ground level entrance. The walkway also contains the patterned brick flooring found on the ground level.

The East and West elevations are somewhat similar in appearance and function, but are not as large nor as prominent. They are side exits, similar to the massive central entrance in that they are two-story high, with two symmetrical oak-sided concrete posts creating three symmetrical bays on each story. The side exits also are accessible by concrete steps that are divided into two sections by a metal posts and railings, along with gradually sloping concrete and brick ramps, with wood and steel-band railings, of which the wood railings continue to the second level bay openings, creating a safety barrier for visitors. Like the central-entrance facade, the side exits also stretch from the ground to the roofline, emphasizing how the exterior and interior were linked visually and symbolically for those entering the building. Both side exit elevations also show how the c. 1997 infill for the ticket booth (west elevation) and Opry Shop (east elevation) were accomplished. Both the ticket booth and shop are covered by sharply sloping metal-covered shed roofs.

The North elevation is the rear of the building. Since it was not an entrance or exit for the public, it lacks the decorative treatments found on the South facade and the East and West elevations. Aesthetically it is treated much as a backstage area would be in any twentieth century performance hall. Projecting at the rear of the building above the flat roof is a secondary tile-covered slope roof that covers the stage area and service areas of the building. The only exception to the solid brick wall appearance of the north elevation is a long fabric-covered metal canopy, c. 2010, that leads to a single wood-framed glass backstage artist entrance, which has the metal lettering Grand Ole Opry House over the door. This entrance was severely damaged in the 2010 flooding and the door had to be replaced. The rear stage access/equipment door was also severely damaged in the flood and has likewise been replaced. Otherwise, the North elevation has had few changes since 1974.

Interior

The two-level interior is dominated by a large public space, consisting of a two-level lobby, long hallways, guest facilities, restrooms, and the huge broadcast studio auditorium. Behind the stage—or the back-of-house space—contain more private space, not easily accessed by visitors that includes dressing rooms, additional broadcast studios, and offices.

Entering the public space at the first or second levels, a large, spacious lobby dominates the space. Brick pavers, in a hexagonal pattern visually connect the exterior plaza on both levels with the interior lobby; the pavers end at the two largest central entrances to the actual broadcasting studio auditorium. The dominant visual element of the lobby is a central staircase of brick and concrete steps that runs from the ground level to the second floor. The staircase has heavily timbered balustrades with wood trim walls and stair rails that help to highlight the space. The staircase emerged largely unscathed from significant damage in the 2010 flood.

On both levels, the lobby and the long, wide hallways serve as both public areas of orientation and services, as all customer services are located either within or adjacent to the central lobby. On the ground level, the central lobby also has entrances into the Opry Shop and into the Ticket Office. From the central lobby, long, wide hallways extend outward, creating four symmetrically located openings into the broadcast studio auditorium. On the first floor, the original wainscoting had to be removed and replaced after the 2010 flood; on the second level, however, rusticated wood trim highlights walls and stairwells. In 2010, as part of the

repairs and renovation to the building after the flood, contractors added a LED-lighting system in the hallways, replacing the globe-covered light fixtures of 1974. At the end of the hallways on both levels are restrooms, which were renovated for handicap access in 2003. An elevator was installed in 2003 to enable the building to be in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. On the balcony level, chair lifts were installed at each end of the hallway in 2003 to also meet ADA requirements.

The largest two openings for the broadcast studio auditorium are from the lobby, with additional openings located at both ends of the hallway. The broadcast studio auditorium consists of 45,000 square feet, with seating for 2,000 on the orchestra level, and 2,400 in the overhanging balcony.

On the orchestra level, two central auditorium openings flank the glass-encased broadcasting and engineer center that is located at the rear of the ground level auditorium. On either side of the broadcasting/engineer center the orchestra level auditorium seating is divided into stage and upper parts. The stage part consists of seven sections of 16 rows of long wood pews. The upper part is much smaller. It has eight sections but there are only eight rows per section.

On the auditorium's balcony level, there are eleven sections of wood pews, with the number of rows per section ranging from 14 in the largest center sections to six in side sections. The wooden pews are covered in carpet, with individual seats indicated by thin metal lines. They can seat as many as 14 people. In 1974 the carpet over the pews was orange; in 2001 this carpet was replaced with a more neutral tone.

The damage to the auditorium seating from the 2010 flood was confined to the first sixteen rows of seating on the orchestra level. Those 16 rows of wood benches were replaced with new ones that were similar in material (oak) and design. Otherwise the wood pews and flooring from 1974 exist in the remainder of the first level and all of the second level of the auditorium.

In 1974 small open concession stands operated at the orchestra level of the auditorium, located at the lower corners of the seating. These spaces were converted to staff and storage spaces c. 1997 and acoustic fabric now covers the openings.

The stage dominates the broadcast studio auditorium. It measures 110 by 68 feet, and was floored with maple floorboards with a center stage disk of approximately six feet in diameter that came from the Ryman Auditorium. During the 2010 flood, water covered the stage. During the repair of the building later in 2010, few maple floorboards could be salvaged and most were replaced. The center stage disk was damaged but not beyond repair—it was restored.

After the 2010 flood, an estimated 90 percent of the electronics of the auditorium and the broadcast studio were updated to meet present-day high definition broadcasting needs.

The back-of-house area contains two primary areas: (1) an administrative and artist area that has offices, 18 dressing rooms, lounge, mail room, and other support needs, and (2) Studio A and related rehearsal rooms and offices. The administrative and artist area is directly behind the stage, between the large broadcast studio auditorium and Studio A, which is located at the very rear of the building. Artists and employees access this part of the building through a side "Artist Entrance."

The back-of-house area received extensive damage since it was within the lowest-lying part of the building and floodwaters concentrated here. Most of the offices, lobby, dressing rooms, green rooms, and other offices have been rebuilt as there was a complete demolition down to studs and concrete slab and few original materials could be salvaged. The rebuilding led to several space alterations. A new mezzanine for staff offices was installed. Two dressing rooms were converted into a locker room. The artist dressing rooms were rebuilt and remodeled. The "green room" backstage was given a general Colonial Revival style updating in the use of wood wainscoting and paneling. At the same time such defining interior features as the 1974 metal artists' mailboxes were restored and kept.

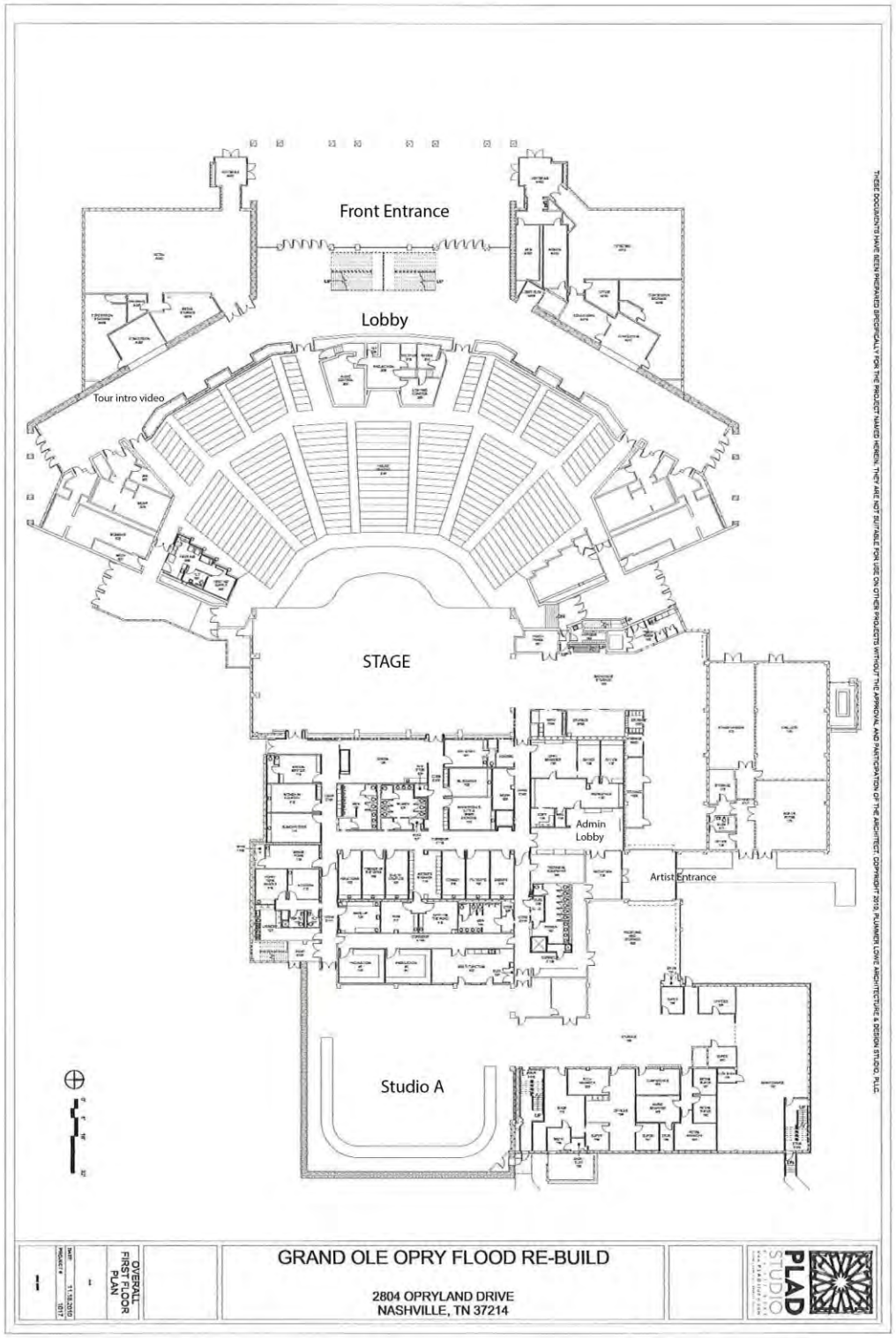
Studio A was not so damaged, although its electronics have been replaced as in other parts of the building. Studio A is a large open space with concrete floors and walls and serves as a primary television production facility. Studio A has a balcony capable of seating an audience of 300. Studio A was restored after the 2010 flood but the original seating was not damaged thus it reflects the original 1974 appearance, down to the orange fabric covering the seats.

Considering the damage to this part of Nashville in the May 2010 flood, the repairs to the Grand Ole Opry House were carried out quickly but thoughtfully. The building retains architectural integrity.

To protect against future natural disasters, an approximate 12-foot-high brick veneer floodwall was located at the rear of the Grand Ole Opry House and was installed in 2010-11.

Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State



Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee
Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

[X] 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.
[X] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

COMMUNICATIONS
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
OTHER: Popular Culture

Period of Significance

1974-1983

Significant Dates

1974

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Welton Becket & Associates, architects with Pierre Cabrol as principal designer
W. F. Holt and Sons, builders

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Grand Ole Opry House at 2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its exceptional national significance in popular culture and broadcasting. Built 1972-1974 by the W. F. Holt and Sons construction firm in Nashville and designed by Welton Beckett & Associates Architects of Los Angeles, it was the first building specifically designed for and built for hosting the nationally significant weekly broadcasts of the Grand Ole Opry. It has since hosted Opry broadcast for 40 years, longer than any facility in Nashville. Before its construction, the Opry was performed in other Nashville buildings adapted for that purpose. At its opening in March 1974, the Opry House was the largest radio and television broadcasting studio in the world, signifying the commitment of the Opry's parent company to both the Opry as a living radio performance institution and to its new, broader audience of both rural and suburban Americans. Its planning, construction and first decade of programming coincided with and helped to shape a new era in the country music industry, one where the music took on new sounds, production techniques, and marketing strategies that still shape the genre today. Its period of significance begins with its opening in 1974 and extends to 1983, the year that The Nashville Network cable television venture began, representing a new era in the facility's broadcasting history, the completion of the original WSM vision for the Opry House, and Nashville's response to the success of television broadcasts of country music from Austin, Texas.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A Significance: Communications and Entertainment/Recreation

I. Background history

The regular Saturday night radio broadcast over Nashville's station WSM that would later become known as the Grand Ole Opry, began on November 28, 1925 with an impromptu hour of with old-time fiddle tunes played by 77-year-old championship fiddler, Uncle Jimmy Thompson. The nostalgic sounds found immediate acceptance with the listeners tuned into WSM's then-1000 watt signal, who made their appreciation known through a large number of requests made via telegram and telephone to WSM's program director and announcer, George Dewey Hay.[2]

WSM radio had gone on the air only a few weeks earlier, with its inaugural broadcast on October 5, 1925 from its studio in the headquarters of parent company, National Life and Accident Insurance Company, in downtown Nashville, Tennessee. The station's call letters were taken from the insurance company motto, "We Shield Millions."[3]

The success of Thompson's first appearance prompted Hay to schedule a regular program of down-home music from that point forward. The opportunity to play music over the new medium was attractive to many

[2] The early history of the Opry is detailed in Charles Wolfe, *A Good-Natured Riot: The Birth of the Grand Ole Opry* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999).
[3] Craig Havighurst, *Air Castle of the South: WSM and the Making of Music City* (Urbanna: University of Illinois Press, 2007), xvi.

local musicians, and soon WSM had a full slate of soloists and string bands vying to perform tunes from the folk tradition on the Saturday night "barn dance" show. [4]

The lively music immediately attracted audiences who trekked to the office building that housed the station in hopes of seeing the barn dance musicians in person. Finding the crowds disruptive to business, the insurance company executives tried banning the audience and eventually built a larger studio to accommodate the masses, but the ever-increasing number of fans of the show, which had now taken the name, the Grand Ole Opry, ultimately forced Hay and his cast of entertainers to leave the WSM studios and look for a larger venue. Thus began a series of moves for the Grand Ole Opry, first to the Hillsboro Theater near Vanderbilt University, then to the rustic Dixie Tabernacle on Fatherland Street in East Nashville, and in 1939, to the War Memorial Auditorium, across the street from the National Life headquarters.
By this time, "hillbilly music," as the Opry's musical genre was called, had begun to focus less on traditional string band music and had turned the spotlight on vocalists who performed new compositions. This shift in focus was due in no small part to the realization of music business leaders that there was much profit to be gained thought he ownership of publishing rights. The Opry had two very influential artists of this type on its roster in 1939: Roy Acuff and Bill Monroe. These unique and talented artists, now broadcasting over a 50,000 watt clear channel signal, attracted national attention, including that of the NBC and Mutual radio networks and sponsors RJ Reynolds Tobacco and Purina. A corporate role for the performance of the Grand Ole Opry did not come just in modern times but was present at the birth and initial expansion of the weekly performance of the Opry.[5]

While the Grand Ole Opry did not pay individual artists and musicians near what could be earned in personal appearances, Opry cast membership had other benefits. In 1933, the Grand Ole Opry Artists Service Bureau began acting as Nashville's first country music booking agency, booking tours for Opry acts in exchange for a percentage of the gate. The reach of the Opry broadcasts (WSM's signal blanketed much of the United States and Canada, Cuba, and parts of Mexico and the Caribbean) provided lucrative opportunities to advertise tour dates and new recordings, as well as songbooks, autographed photographs, and other souvenirs, which could be mail-ordered from artists. It was his success in selling songbooks that prompted Opry star Roy Acuff to join forces with veteran songwriter and WSM staffer, Fred Rose, to open Nashville's first country music publishing company, Acuff-Rose, in 1942.[6]

However, the Opry's continued popularity once again forced the show to find a new venue after the large (and rowdy) crowds prompted the caretakers of the elegant War Memorial Auditorium to ask WSM to take the show elsewhere. The Opry landed just a few blocks away at Ryman Auditorium (NHL, 1/3/2001). The building had opened in 1892 as the Union Gospel Tabernacle, a non-profit non-denominational hall founded on "strictly religious" principals. The building had been constructed largely through the efforts of riverboat shipping magnate Thomas Green Ryman, who was inspired by the preaching of Georgia evangelist Reverend Samuel P. Jones to construct a building where all Nashvillians could hear the word of God. However, the

[4] Wolfe, 43-110.
[5] Ibid., 101-165; Richard Smith, *Can't You Hear Me Callin': The Life of Bill Monroe* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2009), 40-85; Elizabeth R. Schlappi, *Roy Acuff: the Smoky Mountain Boy* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1978).
[6] Don Cusic, "Acuff-Rose," Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 2-3.

citizens of Nashville quickly pressed what was then Nashville's largest public hall into service as a venue for lyceum lectures, concerts, graduation ceremonies, and even a performance by New York's Metropolitan Opera, for which the first stage was constructed.[7]

However, by the time the Grand Ole Opry moved in on June 5, 1943, the Gothic Revival building was considered out of fashion. It had no dressing rooms, no air conditioning, and hard oak pews for seating. But it seated over 3,500, and the auditorium's curved interior and wooden pews had naturally superior acoustic properties. The stark surroundings jelled with the Grand Ole Opry's "good-natured riot" it brought to the stage.[8]

Shortly after the move to the Ryman, the Opry's popularity skyrocketed. In October 1943, the NBC radio network began carrying the Prince Albert Tobacco-sponsored 30 minute portion of the Opry coast-to-coast. This meant that across America, listeners could tune in to the Grand Ole Opry through a local NBC affiliate. Stars of the Prince Albert Show, including Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, and Red Foley became household names. Armed Forces Radio Network rebroadcast these shows to servicemen and women stationed overseas during World War II, and the show was so popular that Roy Acuff beat Frank Sinatra in a poll of enlisted men asked to name their favorite singer. In 1955, a Grand Ole Opry television show was first broadcast over a regional ABC network.[9]

As the Opry's star rose, Nashville began to take shape as the hub for the country music business. In 1946, the final piece of the music business puzzle was put in place when three WSM radio engineers opened Nashville's first professional recording studio, Castle Recording Company. Thus, the infrastructure for Nashville to emerge as the center of the growing country music industry was in place, and WSM and Grand Ole Opry artists and staff had a hand in each component.[10]

Early regional centers such as Chicago with its "National Barn Dance" radio show that pre-dated the Opry, Shreveport, Louisiana and the "Louisiana Hayride," Springfield Missouri's "Ozark Jubilee" and Wheeling, West Virginia's "Wheeling Jamboree," began acting as de facto "farm teams" for the Grand Ole Opry, as artists such as Red Foley, Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Porter Wagoner, and others were recruited for the "big leagues" that the Opry now represented.[11]

During the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the Grand Ole Opry showcased a cast that featured country music's most successful performers, including Eddy Arnold, Minnie Pearl, Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Porter Wagoner, Loretta Lynn, and Dolly Parton. Even artists who would later become known for bucking the system that evolved around the Grand Ole Opry; artists such as Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Bobby Bare, and Tompall and the Glaser Brothers, were members of the Grand Ole Opry first, eager to gain the status that Opry membership brought.

[7] Curtis W. Ellison, *Country Music Culture: From Hard Times to Heaven* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 18-21.
[8] Especially see Wolfe, *A Good-Natured Riot*.
[9] Havighurst, 121-154.
[10] Ibid., 145-146.
[11] Ellison, 12.

During the early 1960s, to meet demand, the Opry doubled the number of shows held at Ryman Auditorium, adding a Friday night show and a Saturday matinee. Still, the crowds making the pilgrimage to see the Opry in person formed massive lines each weekend. With the growth in popularity of country music and Opry attendance on what seemed to be a permanent upward trajectory, WSM and National Life officials found themselves faced with a decision to make about the Opry's future. Evaluations of the potential to modernize Ryman Auditorium in order to provide a comfortable venue for artists and audiences ran from exorbitant to impossible, and company leaders were reluctant to invest in Nashville's downtown, which, like other city centers across America, was suffering through the ongoing suburbanization of the city. It was under these circumstances that the National Life leaders made the decision to move the Grand Ole Opry into what would become the first venue constructed specifically for the Opry; the venue that would become the world's longest-running radio show's longest-tenured home.[12]

The story and significance of planning, construction, and early years of the Grand Ole Opry House also speaks to the building's role in and association with a larger cultural transformation in the country music at that time. In the journal *Southern Cultures*, historian Jeremy Hill has recently emphasized:

> As many scholars have observed, the commercial genre of country music has always generated much of its appeal by mediating the distance between the past and the present, the rural and the urban. The genre has provided a window onto the (oftentimes idealized) past and a vision of its rustic roots while also reassuring fans of their own acceptable modernity by locating the performances of rusticity within openly modern commercial ventures such as the Opry itself. When the Opry moved to Opryland, the new venue provided a platform for reconfiguring a notion of home and attachment to traditional places within this powerful dialectic of nostalgia and progress. Opry fans and stars argued that authentic country character was not bound to physical locations but to timeless country values and the preservation of a loving memory of old home places.[13]

II. Planning a New Home for the Grand Ole Opry, 1963-1973

The Grand Ole Opry is a live performance radio show that began in 1925 and continues today as one of the longest-running radio broadcasts in history. The program has always aired from WSM, a clear channel radio station broadcasting from 650 AM from Nashville, Tennessee. The parent company of WSM from the Opry's beginning to 1982 was the National Life and Insurance Company, whose motto was "We Shield Millions," thus the call letters WSM. National Life broadcast the Opry from multiple Nashville locations, including the extant Belcourt Theatre, the War Memorial Building, and, most importantly, the Ryman Auditorium, which artists, audience members, and the country music industry considered to be the "Mother Church" of country music from 1943 to 1974, a total of 31 years. [14]

[12] Havighurst, 220-223.
[13] Jeremy Hill, "Country Music is Wherever the Soul of a Country Music Fan Is: Opryland U.S.A. and the Importance of Home in Country Music," Southern Cultures 17(Winter 2011): 93.
[14] Ellison, 20-21.

Planning for a new Grand Ole Opry House to replace the Ryman Auditorium dates to at least 1963 when WSM officials bought the Ryman Auditorium (they had leased it for the prior 20 years) for $208,000. WSM officials and administrators from its parent company, the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, considered the turn-of-the-century Union Gospel Tabernacle to be dangerous for artists and audience alike, and being insurance professionals, they saw the building as a great liability. After acquiring ownership, WSM took steps to improve the safety and comfort of the Ryman, but quickly considered that to be a lost cause. Bud Wendell, the Opry manager in the 1960s and 1970s told historian Craig Havighurst: "It scared the hell out of National Life. Scared the hell out of us that were down there. I read every now and then the artists were up in arms that we were going to leave the Ryman Auditorium. And hell, every one of them just couldn't wait to get out of [there] and have parking and dressing rooms."[15] In an interview with the *Washington Post* in 1974, Opry legend Roy Acuff admitted: "Most of my memories of the Ryman auditorium are of misery, sweating out here on this stage, the audience suffering too." In fact, Acuff added "It irritates me to think that no other musicians would put up with this place," that somehow the Ryman suited country music stars.[16]

Also in 1963, Irving Waugh, later WSM president and the visionary behind the Grand Ole Opry House asked his colleague Elmer Alley, director of programming for WSM-TV, to look into a future for the Grand Ole Opry away from downtown Nashville. Alley developed a memo that outlined a riverside location for an entertainment complex with a new Opry House and a small motel for visitors. Then Waugh went to Houston, Texas, where the almost completed Astrodome complex--an amusement park and hotels flanking a huge, modernist indoor sports stadium—inspired him to upgrade Alley's outline for a new Opry House with a theme park and much larger hotel. He quickly presented the plan to the National Life board, which asked for a feasibility study. The formal planning of the Grand Ole Opry house, to be complimented by a large hotel (now Opryland Hotel) and an amusement park (Opryland operated from 1973 to 1998), was underway by 1964.[17] The selected firm was Research Associates of Los Angeles, credited with the planning of Disneyland in Anaheim, CA, and the later Knots Berry Farm amusement park outside of Los Angeles, CA.

Planning and discussion of the idea of a new Grand Ole Opry House intensified in the next four years. The amount of planning and consideration shown by National Life and WSM officials mirrored that of their predecessors in creating the company and radio station. As historian Louis M. Kyriakoudes has explained: "The rural elements of the Opry disguised a very modern business strategy."[18] By the summer of 1968, WSM President Irving Waugh was ready to ask for corporate endorsement. In a lengthy and very important memo to National Life head William C. Weaver, Jr., Waugh frankly admitted the limitations of the Ryman Auditorium—especially its lack of air conditioning "in an age that expects and demands such a comfort," its size (demands for tickets far outstripped the capacity of the Ryman), and that the tabernacle was "almost impossible to keep clean." But more importantly, the Ryman added significantly to the greater issue: that WSM's "number one problem" was the Grand Ole Opry because it had "failed to keep pace with the growth

[15] Ibid., 227.
[16] Jeanette Smith, "The Grand Ole Opry Ain't Po' No Mo'," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1974.
[17] Havighurst, 228-299.
[18] Louis M. Kyriakoudes, "The Grand Ole Opry and the Urban South," *Southern Cultures* 10(Spring 2004): 74.

of the music industry in our area, and proliferation of Country and Western music nationwide." Waugh did not despair of the situation, but the Opry would have "continued success" and "achieve a far more dominant position in the leisure time activity consciousness of the world of tomorrow"—if the "'Opryland Concept'" became a reality. Waugh predicted that "with imagination, creativity with taste, and the proper planning," thousands would be attracted to Opryland. Moreover, brochures on the new Opryland would be invaluable tools for the company's field men as they sold insurance door to door. Opryland "would give the Shield man [the company's insurance salesman] instant recognition and a pride of association."

But most important of all in Waugh's mind, the commitment to the new concept would reverse a troubling trend, that the"'Grand Ole Opry' is no longer 'grand'—only 'old'"; nor had it kept "pace with the growth of the music industry in our area."[19] Waugh had first hand knowledge that the Opry program might be in trouble. In March 1968, the rock group The Byrds, who were in Nashville recording what became the legendary "Sweethearts of the Rodeo" album (along with Bob Dylan's "Nashville Skyline" (1969), the two albums would launch the country rock movement) performed at the Opry, where their modern interpretation of country music met with some catcalls and jeering. Then they appeared on WSM's nighttime radio program hosted by Ralph Emery, who belittled the band and their sound. Ironically perhaps, Grand Ole Opry performer Skeeter Davis, Emery's ex-wife, befriended the band and praised their performance.[20]

Opry officials first moved forward on a new agenda when they agreed to host the ABC network television program, "The Johnny Cash Show," from 1969-1971. Influenced by wife June Carter, Cash had settled old scores and worked with Opry officials to film the program at the Ryman Auditorium. The mix of musics and musicians there proved electric to the industry. Cash became the "godfather of Nashville's outlaw movement."[21] Opry officials saw that there was a market—a big market—for new music. But ABC in the first year of the program also confirmed that the Ryman, as it existed then, was not much of a venue for the production of network television. The place needed all sorts of updates and upgrades.

Thus new developments in Nashville in late 1968 and 1969 had underscored the wisdom of WSM's decision to move forward on a new Opry house. The first national announcement had come in October 23, 1968 issue of *Variety*, the national trade magazine for entertainment, when Red O'Donnell reported that the Research Associates plan was completed with the story: "Eye New Grand Ole Opry House with Major Tourist Complex at Nashville." The location was not disclosed, but the study called for a 150-200 acre complex, to be called "Opryland, U.S.A.," with a new Opry House as the plan's centerpiece.[22] WSM's Irving Waugh selected Mike Downs, a vice president at Sea World, Inc., in California, to serve as the project's general manager.[23]

The concept of a new home for the Grand Ole Opry made sense to National Life officials, and several commentators also understood that the new project reflected a much larger shift in the country music industry. A May 1970 story in the *New York Times* remarked that the new project would "add one more

[19] Irving Waugh to William C. Weaver, Jr., August 28, 1968, Grand Ole Opry Archives, Nashville.
[20] Ron Wynn, "How Miles Davis helped The Byrds," *Nashville Scene*, May 27, 2010.
[21] Michael Streissguth, "How Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan saved country music," *Salon website*, June 8, 2013.
[22] Red O'Donell, "Eye New Grand Ole Opry House With Major Tourist Complex at Nashville," *Variety*, October 23, 1968.
[23] Bill Williams, "Facility's Site Steeped in History," *Billboard* 84(April 15, 1972): O3.

flutter of acceleration to the headlong Americanization of the South" as it moved the Opry from "the grit and Victorian decay of downtown Nashville" to "a fancy suburban home that would look as natural in Los Angeles as in the hills of Tennessee."[24] (The number of California-based professionals who ended up being involved in the project as planners, designers, architects, engineers, and producers is notable; Hollywood literally reshaped Nashville's oldest country music institution.) The article described the proposed Opry House "as a carefully designed modern auditorium, complete with air-conditioning and television production facilities."[25] And, the reporter admitted, the time had come for change because the Opry and country music in general was much more national than before. In 1961, as the article cited, only 81 radio stations played Opry-style music 24 hours a day; less than ten years later over 600 stations did so, and the genre was represented in every major city, including New York City. Nashville was more than what people assumed. It had "so successfully attuned itself to the popular currents of American music and thought that in the last five years it has become one of the top two recording centers in the United States."[26]

Moreover, many country music performers of the late 1960s and early 1970s embraced the notion that a rural nation could go suburban yet keep and value the older values of rural life and culture. In his 1970 No.1 song, "Wonder Could I Live This Way," African American country artist Charley Pride "emphasized and even celebrated the fact that his rural ties were a thing of the past. The song deconstructs the romanticized mythology of country living by showing instead the combination of hard work and hard times associated with living `there.' Each verse takes a specific piece of an idealized rural past and questions whether anyone would trade in the comforts of modern life for the hard work and economic uncertainty of the past."[27] Songwriter John Loudemilk sang of Brentwood-area suburbs being country homes, since it was not the dwelling that was important but the values of rural life still live in those dwellings. In other words, as historian Jeremy Hill explains, "What made them "country" was not living on the farm but retaining traditional values—and it was these enduring values in the face of homogenization that made suburban country fans unique."[28] The new Opry House and Opryland U.S.A. were not jarringly inappropriate locations for the Grand Ole Opry; rather for 1970s country music they were actually the right place.

In June 1970, National Life and WSM officials celebrated the groundbreaking for the "new 'Grand Ole Opry' House," as well as the hotel and amusement park. The music trade magazine *Billboard* predicted that the event marked "the start of what should be one of the greatest economic bonanzas the city has ever enjoyed."[29] Indeed, twenty years later, Opryland would be recognized as not only Nashville's but the state's largest private employer.[30]

Attention next focused on the design for the new Opry House, which would be the centerpiece, and the primary, overriding reason why the rest of Opryland U.S.A came into existence. Like the master plan for the entire complex the commission went to a California firm with ties to Disney, Welton Becket & Associates of

[24] Roy Reed, "Grand Ole Opry Is Yielding to Change," New York *Times*, May 29, 1970.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Hill, 105.
[28] Hill, 104.
[29] "Groundbreaking for Opryland," *Billboard* 82(July 4, 1970): 53.
[30] Robert K. Oermann, "The Nashville Network," Nashville *Tennessean*, 1988 clipping in Grand Ole Opry Archives

Los Angeles. Becket was a native of Seattle and took his architecture degree at the University of Washington and added a year of study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Setting up his practice in Los Angeles, he joined Walter Wurdeman and Charles Plummer to form the firm Becket, Wurdeman, and Plummer in 1933. After his partners' deaths, he renamed the firm in 1949 as Welton Becket & Associates, working until his death in 1969. During these years, Becket formed a strong friendship with Walt Disney and counted such notable buildings as the Beverly Hilton Hotel (1955), and Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles Music Center (1964) among his achievements. The success of the Chandler Pavilion caught the eyes of WSM and National Life executives, who wanted their new facility to be modern in all sense of those words. After Becket's death the firm continued as Welton Becket & Associates, led by MacDonald Becket, into the 1980s. The lead architect of the Grand Ole Opry House would be Pierre Cabrol. The Becket firm won the commission because it, according to WSM's president Irving Waugh, "'developed a structure which will recapture the relaxed atmosphere of the existing Opry House, while providing thoroughly contemporary facilities for live radio and television audiences.'"[31]

A 1970 architectural document by the firm detailed three major goals for the facility: 1) Grand Ole Opry radio broadcasts; 2) Broadcasting and taping of major network television programs, including syndicated country music programs and daily Country Music programs from Opryland, U.S.A.; and 3) serving as a tour attraction for Opryland U.S.A.[32] Waugh predicted that some of the Ryman's wood flooring and brick would be incorporated into the new building. As Dan Rogers and Brenda Colladay have emphasized in their recent book *Backstage at the Grand Ole Opry*:

> Everyone from Opry management to Opry members to architects Welton Becket and Associates understood the magnitude of the undertaking: to create the first venue built specifically for performances of the Grand Ole Opry, nearly 50 years into the show's revered history. Of course, it would provide the modern technical facilities needed to produce the Opry and other live and televised shows, offer backstage amenities that the stars of the day were accustomed to, and include a comfortable auditorium to guests. But the functionality was the easy part of the job. The difficult part was to make the place feel like the home of the Opry.[33]

As construction was underway for the Opry House, the Opryland U.S.A. amusement park opened in the summer of 1972. One reporter noted how the new surroundings reflected a new era: "The fantasy-wrapped package of smiling faces and good cheer erases the images of the bars and peep shows flanking the late 19th-century tabernacle [the Ryman] that has housed the Opry since 1941. Some of the more famous appendages, such as Ernest Tubb's Record Shop, have been invited to move into the rarefied atmosphere. Others, such as Tootsies Orchid Lounge, have not because of an officially stated desire to create a 'proper family atmosphere.'"[34]

Also in 1972 came the release of the now-classic triple-album recorded in Nashville by the Nitty Gritty Dirt

[31] "Grand Ole Opry's new home begun," *Broadcasting* 79(August 24, 1970): 32.
[32] Welton Becket & Associates, Program for Grand Ole Opry Nashville, Tennessee, January 1970, Revised March 1970, Grand Ole Opry Archives, Nashville.
[33] Dan Rogers and Brenda Colladay, *Backstage at the Grand Ole Opry* (Franklin: Grandin Hood, 2013), 15.
[34] "Park Overshadows Grand Ole Opry," New York *Times*, August 12, 1972.

Band (another California-centered group like The Byrds) that also demonstrated that Opry stars were willing to incorporate new sounds and musicians. The sessions included Roy Acuff, Earl Scruggs, Merle Travis, Jimmy Martin, and Mother Maybelle Carter, anchors of the Grand Ole Opry for decades. The album's first song was a rousing version of "The Grand Ole Opry Song," which mentioned stars of past and present of the radio show.

The suburban setting of the park gained immediate acceptance but at the same time, country music enthusiasts and historic preservationists were demanding a preservation solution for the Ryman Auditorium—its future was seemingly tied to the construction of the new Opry House. In May 1971, local and state preservationists such as May Dean Eberling and Ann Reynolds Roberts moved to have the Ryman listed in the National Register of Historic Places. That summer, National Life announced plans to demolish the Ryman, and to use some of its materials in the Opry House but to use most of them in a memorial structure called "Little Church of Opryland," with Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, Ernest Tubb, Tex Ritter, and the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham as board members.[35]

Even as additional voices rose in protest, WSM officials were determined to build the chapel and use some of the materials in the new Opry House. Opry manager Bud Wendell asserted that "instead of waiting for the government to tear it down, we're going to do something useful with it."[36] Wendell like many in the company and artists of the Grande Ole Opry were deeply bothered, even offended, by the sad state then of the city's honky-tonk area since X-rated movie houses, X-rated "book stores," and peep shows had moved in. He claimed that Opry members supported the project, the concept of which came from Knotts Berry Farm, an amusement park in California. In September 1972 group from Sunland, California, formed the Committee to Save the Opry to raise funds for the preservation of the Ryman Auditorium. William C. Weaver, Jr., president of National Life, dismissed the group, stating that saving the Ryman was not feasible since "fire insurance alone . . . makes it economically unsound to keep the structure standing."[37] Weaver, like Waugh two years earlier, promised that the Ryman would be preserved "in a different form," with "a practical transfer of the physical structure to more proper surroundings."[38] That meant that some of the brick would be used on the façade of the new building, that the state would be moved intact from the Ryman to the Opry House, that original pews would be moved and used in the wings of the stage, and that other brick would "be used to building a non-denominational chapel at Opryland, and the building thus will revert to its original purpose."[39]

Then a national voice in the preservation movement—Ada Louise Huxtable—stepped forward with a devastating critique of the "preservation" plans for the Ryman with the article "Only the Phony is Real" in the May 13, 1973 issue of *The New York Time*s. Huxtable remarked that the proposal was the "final indignity" and "a travesty" and she considered the plans to build a chapel from the Ryman ruins as "probably tak[ing] first prize for the pious misuse of a landmark and the total misunderstanding of the principles of

[35] "Billy Graham Heads 'Opry' Chapel Group," Billboard 83(July 24, 1971): 39.
[36] "Opry Mgr. States Ryman To Be Razed," *Billboard* 84(February 26, 1972): 27.
[37] "Preservation of Ryman Pushed," *Billboard* 84(September 9, 1972): 37.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

preservation."[40]

The combination of local pressure and outsider concern eventually combined to convince WSM and the architects to eventually scrap plans to demolish the Ryman and to use its materials in the new building. (A six-foot circle from the Ryman stage was removed and placed center stage at the new building in January 1974; it remains there today.)[41] Architect Pierre Cabrol was relieved. He never wanted to do a traditional take on the Opry House since he considered the building's technological innovations for modern radio and television broadcasting (better sound, better lighting) to preclude any sort of tabernacle-like or barn-like (as at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum) cladding.

II. The Opening of the Grand Ole Opry House, 1974-1976

The Grand Ole Opry House opened in March 1974 to intense national media coverage, heightened by the decision of President Richard M. Nixon to attend the gala opening, as part of his campaign to reconnect to his rural supporters in wake of the continuing fallout from the Watergate political scandal. *New York Times* columnist, Tom Wicker, opined: "Only a week or so ago, it was suggested in this space that he [Nixon] seemed to have abandoned any effort to win back public or Congressional support, or to repair his personal reputation, and had instead opted for a determined legal effort to hang onto his office no matter what people thought of him. Now, in an almost frenetic burst of action aimed at the public, Mr. Nixon" has gone to Tennessee and appealed "to his vital political base in the South. Taking yo-yo lessons from Roy Acuff at the Grand Ole Opry, with George Wallace looking on, won't lose many votes in Dixie, which still has 22 Senators eligible to vote in an impeachment trial."[42] Historian Diane Pecknold has written about the almost perfect match between the country music demographic and what Nixon's advisors wanted to achieve politically by "consciously seeking to transform an established marketing demographic into a political one."[43] Nixon's appearance at the Opry House opening was "particularly fitting" considering the President's Southern Strategy.[44] The interest of the President's staffers also neatly coincided with those of National Life, who wanted to emphasize that their Grand Ole Opry was worthy of national recognition and that their audience was not that of the rural minority but of the growing suburban majority which so defined American politics and culture in that era.

Thus, the dedication was a decidedly political event on many levels. For National Life and WSM, the attendance of so many luminaries gave prestige and almost unprecedented national attention to their business. In the night's official program National Life chair William C. Weaver crowed, "It is my pleasure to have you with us on this historic occasion. We have been planning and working toward this day for many years. And we have spared no expense and no effort to create a new home for the Grand Ole Opry that befits the country music art form and the institution that the Opry has become."[45]

[40] On the outsider critique, also see Hill, 93.
[41] Bill Hance, "Part of Old Opry Stage Headed for New Home," Nashville *Banner*, January 9, 1974.
[42] Tom Wicker, "Nixon to Opry to Peale," New York *Times*, March 19, 1974.
[43] Diane Pecknold, *The Selling Sound* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 219.
[44] Ibid., 227.
[45] "WSM Grand Ole Opry," program, March 16, 1974.

Not only were President Richard Nixon and First Lady Patricia Nixon in attendance (with Nixon's secretary, Rosemary Woods, in tow) but seating at the front of the stage were Tennessee Governor Winfield Dunn and his wife Betty, along with most of the Tennessee congressional delegation, the governors of Mississippi and New Mexico, and many other local and state officials. Alabama Governor George Wallace and his wife Lurleen were just to the side on the main floor since the Opry seating was not accessible for a wheelchair. President Nixon performed on stage with Roy Acuff, playing the piano standard "My Wild Irish Rose" and "Happy Birthday" in honor of his wife's birthday and then playing part of "God Bless America." He thus became not only the first President to attend an Opry broadcast, he also became the first and thus far only President to perform in a Grand Ole Opry broadcast. After the music President Nixon addressed the audience:

> First, country music is American. It started here, it is ours. It isn't something that we learned from some other nation, it isn't something that we inherited . . . Second, it relates to those experiences that mean so much to America. It talks about family, it talks about religion, the faith in God that is so important to our country and particularly to our family life. And as we all know, country music radiates a love of this Nation, patriotism . . . I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of all the American people to thank country music, those who have created it, those who make it, those who now will have it continue in the future, for what it does to make America a better country, because your music does make America better. It is good for Americans to hear it. We come away better from having heard it.[46]

The President's endorsement no doubt was aimed at "silent majority" voters, the opening was clearly a political event, an elaborately staged "photo-op." But it also was a cultural event. The President's words first gave WSM and National Life officials the confirmation that indeed the Opry House established a new era for the genre. The new house set the stage for the new sounds to come. "In the early 1970s a wide variety of individuals within the world of the Opry drew on a dominant American discourse which marginalized the urban poor and instead promoted the suburban conservative values of private property, geographic mobility facilitated by socioeconomic resources, and security from the perceived urban threats of crime and immorality," emphasized historian Jeremy Hill. "The spatial and rhetorical move played well in terms of branding the Opry and country music as more suburban, middle-class, and family-friendly, but at the expense of a broader, more inclusive, definition of country folks and country homes."[47]

Besides the political theme of President Nixon and Governor Wallace sharing the spotlight in Nashville, national writers also commented on how the new modern space made a statement important to many country and western performers—that the Opry was not low-class and hayseed, that it was modern and with it. The opening program asserted that the Opry House was "a vibrant and viable shrine to the famous radio show."[48] Part of the conversation was scripted as reporter Suzanne Freeman of *The New York Times* realized: "There seems to be a sort of public relations program" underway, one designed "to soothe the disgruntled fans who

[46] Rogers and Colladay, 19.
[47] B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., "Nixon Plays Piano on Wife's Birthday at Grand Ole Opry," New York *Times*, March 17, 1974; "Country Music, riding a wave of popularity, feels its oats in Nashville," *Broadcasting* 86(March 25, 1974): 75; Hill, 108.
[48] Opry House program.

claim the Opry will be ruined when it moves out to Opryland."[49]

Indeed, WSM gave Opry performers a talking points sheet for "answering questions during personal appearances." The sheet emphasized that the new building was air-conditioned, that the pews were "contoured to fit the human form and carpeted for extra comfort." Yet, Opry stars did not need to stick to a script—they understood that the new building reflected much more than comfort. Opry performer Vic Willis said: "Thank God we're getting out of here. They should've built a new Opry House 49 years ago. They talk about atmosphere encircling this place. Well, let me tell you something. We don't need this type of atmosphere."[50] As historian Jeremy Hill writes, "though its unclear precisely what atmosphere Willis fears, his use of the word "encircling" resonated with the notion of the slums as a "ring of blight" surrounding the nation's downtown areas."[51] Roy Acuff with more than a note of sarcasm explained that "people in Nashville . . . thought the Ryman was a good place for country music. A slum."[52] That perception worried the King of Country Music. It threatened his own sense of the appropriate "home" for his extended Opry "family," suggesting that a "connection between privatized suburban space and the dangers of the city were crucial to the construction of Opryland U.S.A. as a better "home" for the Opry, its fans, and their families."[53]

The new Opry House strongly stated that a slum was not a proper home, according to music star Jeanne Pruett, who asked "Isn't it fitting that the number one music of the world (Country) now has the number one house in the world to be showcased in?."[54] The *New York Times* reporter, and former Nashville resident, Suzanne Freeman summed up the prevailing attitude: "The Opry was simply an embarrassment to a lot of the Nashville people. It set their town apart at a time when they wanted most desperately to be in tune with the rest of the country, so they scorned it, ignored it and hoped it would die a natural death. It's no wonder, then, that the Opry people like to feel their power now that Nashville is called Music City, U.S.A."[55] Freeman added: "So you cannot blame them for wanting a comfortable place and you cannot blame them for wanting to overwhelm a little with their new money-power."[56] Opry comedian Jerry Clower remarked: "My home is not like it used to be, my church is not like it used to be, my car is not like it used to be—in fact, I can't think of much that is."[57] Opry instrumentalist Del Wood told folklorist Patricia Hall of the Country Music Foundation: "If I could go back to my home and my grandmother and my daddy could be there, who are both now gone, and my mother, and we were all young again, oh, how wonderful it would be. But we can't do that. We must take what we have now, and what we have now is the family we have left, and this is true at that new Opry House."[58]

Reporter B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., observed that "this [the new Opry House] is what country music has come to in America. No longer stigmatized with the hillbilly image—even New Yorkers are discovering

[49] Suzanne Freeman, "Opryland Is a Dream to Believe In," New York *Times*, March 10, 1974.
[50] Bill Hance, "Ryman Opened 82 Years Ago," Nashville *Banner*, March 16, 1974.
[51] Hill, 98.
[52] Jeannette Smyth, "The Grand Ole Opry Ain't Po' No Mo'," Washington *Post*, March 18, 1974.
[53] Hill makes this point in his article "Country Music is Wherever the Soul of a Country Music Fan Is," 99.
[54] Grand Ole Opry House Press Kit, 1974, Grand Ole Opry Archives, Nashville.
[55] Suzanne Freeman, "Opryland Is a Dream to Believe In," New York *Times*, March 10, 1974.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Clower quote is from Hill, 102.
[58] Wood quote is from Ibid.

it—it has gained the sort of respectability that leads to commercialism."[59] *Esquire* magazine opined: how "wealth is pursued and used" in Nashville "makes Nashville not simply another version of the American Dream, but today—in the America of the Seventies—the funkiest dream of all."[60] Historian Jeremy Hill sums up the significance of this discourse to contemporary American culture. "This spatial and ideological re-positioning of the Opry," Hill concludes, "emerged out of a larger cultural trend within country music which helped to normalize the previously stigmatized genre and its fans, locating them in the geographic and temporal mainstream of American life—suburban, not inner city; late twentieth century, not late nineteenth; and more national than regional."[61]

Another key consideration for the Grand Ole Opry House was that it was securely located in the city's new suburban landscapes. WSM president Irving Waugh asserted: "We decided that instead of rebuilding down there [downtown] we should go outside the city to a place where we could control our own environment."[62] This wish for control, historian Jeremy Hill concludes, reflects the company's belief "that there was no urban space that would allow them to protect and control Opryland the way they wanted to. Suburban values meshed with suburban land opportunities."[63]

After the grand opening night in March, WSM officials quickly moved to achieve that goal of Irving Waugh from 1968—to use the new building to revitalize the Opry but also revitalize country music for the 1970s. Yet there was already a counter-movement, to a degree, afoot: one that wanted to move the music back to the honky-tonk and rougher edges of rural life. Opry officials were well aware of this new "Outlaw movement," as some of their own performers (Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser, Johnny Paycheck, Johnny Cash, Bobby Bare) had joined it and WSM's best known announcer, Ralph Emery, had promoted the new outlaw sounds through his late night radio program and his early morning Nashville television program where Kris Kristofferson often visited. Music historian Michael Streissguth recently pointed out that the Outlaws did not eschew the Opry as much as they repelled against the Nashville Sound and the power of prominent studio heads, such as Chet Atkins at RCA. The Outlaw call for raw sound, even rawer lyrics began to be heard nationally in 1975. Then in 1976, two years after the opening of the new Opry House, RCA executives cleverly took previous recordings from Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Jessi Colter, and Tompall Glaser and packaged it as an album titled "Wanted! The Outlaws." It became country music's first album to sell a million copies. Streissguth concludes: "the independence these men [and women] inspired rang through Nashville. As other recording artists took control of their own sessions, staff producers lost their jobs and record companies sold their Nashville studios; RCA, CBS, ABC and the rest became packagers and marketers of Nashville-based artists."[64] This shift in the Nashville recording industry ironically meant that Opry would gain stature in the 1980s as the place for "real" country music, and the next generation of "Outlaw" artists (Marty Stuart and Travis Tritt both in 1992) came to the Opry House to associate themselves and their careers with the Opry tradition.

[59] Drummond, "Nixon Plays Piano."
[60] Pecknold, 227.
[61] Hill, 94.
[62] Waugh quoted in Hill, 96.
[63] Hill, 96.
[64] Michael Streissguth, *Outlaw: Wayon, Willie, Kris and the Renegades of Nashville* (New York: It Books, 2013), 2.

The year the new Opry House opened was also when music producers in Austin, Texas, began planning for a television program that, initially, would focus on Texas-associated musical traditions. A pilot program was developed in 1975 and by 1976 enough stations had signed on that public television aired the first episodes of *Austin City Limits*. Although the program began to appear in select markets in the same year as RCA released "Wanted! The Outlaws," Austin City Limits did not consider itself a home for Outlaw music. It was "originally known for its 'redneck rock' or 'progressive country' music (a combination of traditional country music with rock and folk influences that flourished in Austin in the early 1970s)."[65] Once Willie Nelson performed his landmark album "Red-Headed Stranger" in its entirety on the program in 1977, however, its reputation as a center for Outlaw music expression was solidified. In the next decade, the program expanded its roster of artists to include blues, rock, and folk legends. It became a weekly music showcase for a wide variety of performers, many of which would now be classified as part of the "Americana" music scene.

As *Austin City Limits* was marking Austin as an important music center from 1976-1983, programmers at the Grand Ole Opry House demonstrated their relevance to the new trend in country music by broadening the offerings found on the Opry stage in Nashville. A review of the first two years of concerts in the Opry House underscores how officials strived to keep the new facility busy during the week (weekends reserved for the Opry of course), establish new television programming from its modern broadcasting studio, plus giving new opportunities for performers from the nascent Outlaw, Redneck Rock and Americana music genres.[66]

Soon after the Opry House's opening night in 1974 came the first sign of the new era: a concert by Canadian folk musician Joni Mitchell, a star of the earlier Woodstock Music Festival who first visited Nashville soon after Woodstock in 1969 when she was on the opening episode of the ABC network "The Johnny Cash Show," which was taped at the Ryman Auditorium. Following Mitchell in 1974 came artists who would always show respect to traditional country but spoke most strongly to younger audiences: Gordon Lightfoot, Dickey Betts (of Allman Brothers Band fame), James Taylor, Jackson Browne, and Bonnie Raitt.

Within the next two years, the range of music performed at the Grand Ole Opry House expanded significantly with concerts from the Fisk University Jubilee Singers, Pointer Sisters, John Prine, Linda Ronstadt (twice), the Four Seasons, Bill Gaither, Bee Gees, Jackson Browne, John Denver, Neal Diamond, Barry Manilow, Lou Rawls, Frank Sinatra, and Bruce Springsteen, an April 28, 1976 show that WSM officials considered to be the first "rock music" show at the new building. The shows of new pioneers of "progressive country" such as Prine, Browne, Raitt, and Ronstadt fulfilled the early WSM vision of a new house featuring the new sounds of country music, and of a generation of artists who would influence the next generations of country music performers: Eric Church's 2012 song "Springsteen" is just one of many cases in point.

The use of the Opry House as a television studio began immediately but grew slowly. Nashville may have state-of-the art facilities but it was located far from the two acknowledged centers of television, New York

[65] Damon Arhos and Michael Toland, "Austin City Limits," The Handbook of Texas Online, accessed August 11, 2014.
[66] "G.O.O. House Events, 1974-1996," Grand Ole Opry Archives. The first music events after the Opry House opening were concessions to Nashville elites, as well as opportunities for National Life to show off what it had provided to the city: the Norwegian National Ballet and Nashville Symphony with Lawrence Welk and then with Van Cliburn as guest stars. These three performances allowed WSM to show off the new building to audiences that would rarely, if ever, attend the Grand Ole Opry.

City and Los Angeles. Tom Snider's "Tomorrow" show for NBC taped two programs in March. The next month NBC taped a primetime special, "Country Comes Home," highlighting the new building with a group of performers who are almost all now members of the Country Music Hall of Fame. Then in August came Hollywood in the guise of Robert Altman's filming for the movie "Nashville." Altman's "Nashville" is a serious parody of not only mainstream country music of the 1970s but also the industry and culture that nurtured it. Clearly the most important movie yet about country music and Nashville, the movie received listing in the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress in 1992. The Country Music Association also began to broadcast its annual awards show from the Opry House in the fall of 1974.

The television capacity of the new Opry House was more fully explored in 1975 and 1976 as the major national networks taped numerous programs, ranging from ABC's "In Concert" specials in early 1975, Perry Como's "Como Country" special, a week of broadcasts from the syndicated Mike Douglas Show, the Johnny Cash and Friends Show, a special 50th Anniversary of the Grand Ole Opry special hosted by Hal Holbrook, and the CMA Awards Show. Bill Williams reported in *Billboard* on January 18, 1975: "dozens of syndicated television shows" would be coming out of the new Opry House and Opryland. An additional major push in 1976 came from WSM's own Opryland Productions, which began the taping for a national syndicated program, "Music Hall America." Syndicated television, from the "Porter Wagoner Show" to "Hee Haw" (which arrived in 1980) dominated use of the television facilities in the building's first years. Also taped at the new Opry House were programs such as "Pop Goes the Country," which helped WSM to meet its goal of extending programming to new country music audiences.

It took less than two years for the new Opry House to secure its place as the city's premier venue, mixing all sorts of music styles in one place, and as a television production center for country music nationally. In August 1975, a year before *Austin City Limits* fit the national screen, journalist Patrick Anderson in his *New York Times* feature story on "The Real Nashville"—playing off of Altman's fictional "Nashville"—recognized that here were "several overlapping worlds that do not always exist in perfect harmony."[67] Anderson could not find consensus on what the new type of country music coming out of Nashville was called—"terms like country-pop, progressive country, cocktail country, country-politan, rhinestone country and red-neck rock"—but Anderson decided "None of these terms means much, but it doesn't really matter because, as long as the music is selling, nobody cares what you call it."[68] In his visit to the new Opry House, which he described as "this stunning new $15-million architectural gem," Anderson found that little had changed: "The Opry is the Opry, whether it's held in a cornfield or Carnegie Hall." But he did encounter activism among the artists for the short-lived Association of Country Entertainers, which emerged out of the protest of Olivia Newton-John winning the CMA Female Vocalist of the Year Award in 1974. Anderson agreed that the protest had merit; traditional country music was being watered down, "although not necessarily by outside interests. . . Country music and pop music co-exist uneasily—the old and the new, the pure and the pragmatic—what what's 'watering down' to one man is progress to another."[69] That was the world occupied and represented by the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville.

[67] Patrick Anderson, "The Real Nashville," New York *Times,* August 31, 1975.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

III. Completing the Vision, 1977-1983

The music goals of the new facility had been achieved, but the potential of country music and television remained promising yet not fully met. Then at the start of the next decade came challenges, both from within (the growing number of PBS stations carrying the weekly Austin City Limits show and from without (the sudden boom in popularity of music video and the MTV cable network). In 1981 WSM's Tom Griscom submitted a proposal to his superiors that had a national vision—launching a country music cable station and raising the money to do so by selling WSM-TV. As he was readying to launch Ralph Emery's influential TV program "Nashville Alive" for the TBS cable network in 1981, WSM's David Hall famously announced to the Nashville *Banner* that "Traditionally, the film and TV industry was localized on the East and West Coasts. Now, Nashville is the Third Coast."[70] "Third Coast" became a term embraced by Nashville entertainment professionals and underscored what many saw as the city's and industry's future.

Elmer Alley, who had been a crucial visionary in the creation of Opryland in the 1960s, was tasked with developing the initial run of programming for the Nashville Network. In January 1982 WSM and National Life formally announced the creation of its own cable music network, called The Nashville Network, produced at Opryland and distributed by Group W (Westinghouse) Satellite Communications.[71] Roy Acuff later explained: "We have taken our music to listeners of the Grand Ole Opry over WSM radio but now the Nashville Network expands our audience to the cable TV viewers across the nation."[72]

National Life, however, would not oversee the final creation of the new network; in the summer of 1982, American General Insurance, a large corporation based in Houston, purchased control of National Life, taking under its umbrella all of the different ventures of WSM including the new cable network.[73]

If the creation of the new Opry House and Opryland heralded a turning point in the country music industry, the launch of a Nashville-produced and directed national cable network devoted to country music inaugurated the modern era of country music as it is recognized in the second decade of the 21st century. The Nashville Network premiered on March 7, 1983, featuring a five-hour-long music show from different venues across the nation but highlighting performers at the Grand Ole Opry House, including Roy Acuff, Patti Page, Chet Atkins, and the Gatlin Brothers. At that time, it was the largest launch (7 million homes) of a cable television network.[74] Its numbers soon overwhelmed the ratings for *Austin City Limits*, and the Nashville Network was not a weekly show but on the air every day.[75] Nashville Network officials bragged in an advertisement in *Broadcasting* magazine, "more and more advertisers realize that the sound of country music is the sound of cash register gold."[76] "No one had any idea that the Nashville music scene would ultimately be televised on such a grandiose scale," said WSM's Ralph Emery. "I thought it would just be a

[70] Quoted in Havighurst, 235.
[71] "Group W and NLT Corp. Plan Nashville Network," Associated Press, January 18, 1982.
[72] Mark Schwed, "Nashville Network—giant commercial for country music," United Press International, March 5, 1983.
[73] Havinghurt, 237.
[74] Joe Edwards, "TV Talk: Nashville Network Programs Country Music," Associated Press, February 4, 1983; Mark Schwed, "Nashville Network—giant commercial for country music," United Press International, March 5, 1983; Diane Bartley and Robert K. Oermann, "Nashville Network Makes Cable History," Nashville *Tennessean*, march 8, 1983..
[75] In reaction to sagging audience numbers, *Austin City Limits* expanded its roster of musicians clearly into the rock and blues genres, and found success there by the late 1990s. See "Austin City Limits," Handbook of Texas History Online.
[76] "The Nashville Network," *Broadcasting* 104(March 14, 1983): 126.

glorified version of my local show."[77]

The Nashville Network fulfilled the initial goals of the Grand Ole Opry House to create a premier television venue for country music. As a broadcast center, the Opry House became linked with the new television network. Music historian Robert K. Oermann remarked: "the national TV operation has replaced the Grand Ole Opry as the most important broadcaster of Nashville's most famous export. What the Opry was to country music 30 years ago, The Nashville Network is now."[78]

The network's immediate success led American General to put the Opry, Opryland park and WSM up for sale less than 10 days after the premier of The Nashville Network. [79] Opry insiders worried that the sale of the network, the radio station, and Opry itself could lead to multiple ownership, spelling potential disaster. However, by the fall Gaylord Broadcasting, an Oklahoma media company, purchased control of Opryland, the Opry, WSM, and the Nashville Network.[80]

The Grand Ole Opry House, designed by Welton Becket & Associates of Los Angeles, is Nashville's first 1970s contemporary designed building to be listed as a "brand new architectural typology." Underneath the massive sloping gable roof and within the ramps, staircases, and triple wood and glass entrances operated a modern technological marvel: the world's largest broadcast studio. Architectural historian Robert Kronenburg concluded that the Grand Ole Opry House was "a new building that represented the first example of a brand new architectural typology—a facility dedicated to popular music performance before a large audience for live broadcast."[81] When it opened in 1974 it was "the largest radio and television broadcasting studio in the world."[82]

WSM officials commissioned Welton Becket & Associates to "design a new structure with greater seating capacity than the Ryman, one with the most advanced standards of utility, safety, and comfort, yet one that preserves the intimacy between artist and audience" found at the earlier Ryman.[83] In developing the original designs for the facility, MacDonald Becket recognized that the Opry had achieved "'a warm feeling of friendly informality,'" between performer and audience, but the firm insisted that "'we did not want to design a carbon copy of the old Ryman Auditorium. The concept was to create a non-monumental structure with a human size and scale.'"[84] Pierre Cabrol, the lead designer for Welton Becket, first had to address his client's insistence that the auditorium look not like a theater but more like a church, an obvious nod to the Ryman. Cabrol and his associate Art Love "decided to develop the design in an abstract way that prioritized the size, character and relationship of the interior spaces, rather than thinking about the exterior form."[85] This approach met the firm's goal of preserving the "intimacy that so thoroughly binds the Opry's

[77] Ralph Emery with Tom Carter, *Memories: The Autobiography of Ralph Emery* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 177.
[78] Robert K. Oermann, "The Nashville Network," Nashville *Tennessean*, 1988 clipping in Grand Ole Opry Archives.
[79] Bob Millard, "American General Places Opry, Other Nash. Sites Up for Sale," *Variety* 310 (March 30, 1983); 120.
[80] Havighurst, 239-40.
[81] Robert Kronenburg, *Live Architecture: Venues, Stages and Arenas for Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 2013), 87.
[82] Ibid.
[83] "Architectural Information," unpublished press kit for Grand Ole Opry House, 1974, Grand Ole Opry Archives, Nashville, 4.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Kronenburg, 88.

performing artists with the audience.'"[86]

In 1974 Art Love explained the firm's approach in an interview published in *Building Design & Construction* magazine: "we deliberately forced ourselves to avoid thinking about the exterior design. We felt that in order to be objective in terms of plan relationships, the details of the exterior would grow naturally out of the function of the interior. This was really a case where a building was designed from the inside out. Its irregularity is due completely to what went on inside and the functional relationships between various spaces."[87] Lowe emphasized that WSM instructed the firm: "`Don't design us a theater. If you do, it won't do the job it should because you'll be occupied with concerns that nothing whatsoever to do with the Opry or with broadcasting.'"[88] What WSM wanted was what it got—a huge broadcasting studio where the audience could have a relationship with the artist.

The primary solution was to have the seating for the broadcast studio arranged in auditorium fashion, facing a massive (110 by 68 feet) fan-shaped stage, and with pews, not individual seats, for the audienceThe architects divided the building's space into four major areas: public (auditorium and lobby), ancillary (backstage, rest rooms, concessions), operational (broadcast areas), and administrative (office space was increased after the 2010 flood). The huge auditorium was also innovative in that unlike other projects that incorporated performance equipment within the walls of the broadcast studio, it hung modern performance and service equipment in the ceiling, allowing for technological improvements as time moved forward; this design approach proved crucial after the 2010 flood, allowing for a far more rapid repair than most thought possible. In 1974, the Opry House press kit emphasized: "House and stage lighting, speakers, acoustic panels and air condition diffusers are all located in this catwalk area which was originally painted orange as a feature so the audience would appreciate that they were in a studio, and therefore an important part of the performance."[89] Once again, Cabrol's and Lowe's emphasis on function drove the interior design of the building.

The primacy of function in the design of the Opry House is also manifest in both the exterior and interior by the ways the architects considered crowd control and access. Often there are two ticketed Opry performances a night and the turnover of visitors must take place within 30 minutes or the sound of people moving about would potentially disrupt the broadcast performance. Kronenburg summarized how this concern to make the studio accessible to two different audiences in the same night impacted the design: "Entry doors at the front are separated from the exit doors at the side, and there is also upper-level access directly into the building at balcony level to expedite crowd movement. The entrance area is a grand two-storey space with staircases that rise up in front of a large glass wall to the balcony access level. The character of this area with the use of brick wall surfaces and heavy wood detailing for doors and window frames also has some connection with the character of the Ryman, not by copying its form but in materials and detailing."[90]

[86] "Architectural information," 4.
[87] Gordon Wright, "E-e-e-easy livin' at the new Grand Ole Opry," *Building Design & Construction* (May 1974): n.p.
[88] Ibid., n.p.
[89] Kronenburg, 89.
[90] Ibid., 89.

Moreover, Kronenburg concluded, the historic references combine with the general openness of space to reflect "the core values of community and human relationships that are fundamental to the traditional religious heritage of Nashville country music—that the architecture reinforces this connection is not surprising."[91]

Architects Cabrol and Love resisted WSM's wish that the building look traditional—the function of being a modern broadcast studio meant that a chapel or barn look would not work well. "Instead the architects interpreted the classic rural forms of the region—sloped shingle roofs; wood textures and porches—into modern construction. The materials palette is therefore solid and naturally toned; hexagonal brick pavers used outside continue inside; brick wall panels set within wood boarded concrete frame; concrete shingles on sloping roofs."[92] Lowe explained how the firm translated WSM's interest in having a place where fans would immediately connect with the Opry: "What they really communicated to us were the intangible things they felt the building should do—the feeling a person should have when he was inside. It should be a building in which one feels very comfortable, one that has all the elements that would make a person feel at home."[93] Architectural historian Robert Kronenburg concludes: the Opry House "is not beautiful but it is robust, solid and in great condition—the same can be said for too few buildings of the 1970s."[94]

The building's general contractor was W. F. Holt & Sons of Nashville. Purcell + Noppe + Associates of Chatsworth, CA, were the acoustical consultants while George T. Howard & Associates of Hollywood, CA, were the theatre/studio consultants.

After the 2010 flood, a rehabilitation of damaged areas was undertaken by David Plummer of PLAD (Plummer Lowe Architecture and Design) studio. The firm repaired flood-damaged areas and used the opportunity to update and add expanded back-of-house facilities, such as adding a mezzanine where new office space could be provided plus upgrading 18 dressing rooms [an increase from the original 12], work done "still within the character of the venue," in Kronenburg's assessment.[95] They followed the same rule of 1974: protect "the feeling a person should have when he was inside." That idea was particularly followed in the rebuild of the artists' dressing rooms—themed and decorated so that the area resembles what could be a den for an artist, not just a common work space.

Once the work was finished in 2010, the repaired Opry House strongly retained the key "talking points" provided to Opry stars in 1974: it reflects "warmth and informality. Rough-finished wood, brick, and tile have been used extensively in its construction. It is a comfortable, warm building rather than a 'plush,' or 'fancy,' or 'glamorous' building."[96] This effect actually speaks to the function of the building and the architects' wish to express that functionalism in the design. Contrast the Opry House to the adjacent Opryland Hotel complex, which incorporates a trio of revival approaches (Colonial, Victorian, Southern Plantation) to its buildings. The Opry House is a modernist statement true to its decade of construction and

[91] Ibid., 90.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Wright, n.p.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 95.
[96] "Facts Sheet on New Grand Ole Opry House for use by Opry talent," 1974, Grand Ole Opry Archives.

stands as one of the city's most significant landmark from the 1970s.

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Grand Ole Opry House — Name of Property

Davidson County, Tennessee — County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)		State Historic Preservation Office
	previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency
	previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency
	designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government
	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	X	University
	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	X	Other
	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository: MTSU Center for Historic Preservation; Grand Ole Opry Archives	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.5 Acres **USGS Quadrangle** 311 NW

Latitude: 36.206581
Longitude: -86.691864

Verbal Boundary Description
Beginning at point A, on Opryland Drive/property boundary, the boundary moves westerly for approximately 665 feet to point B; the boundary then moves south for approximately 475 feet to point C; the boundary then moves east for approximately 250 feet to point D; the boundary moves north east approximately 475 feet to point E on Opryland Drive/property boundary and then north approximately 300 feet to the point of the beginning (A). The boundary contains approximately 5.5 acres.

Boundary Justification
The boundary includes land historically associated with the Grand Ole Opry building. Because of the close proximity of parking lots, structures, and other buildings, the entire 14 acre parcel is not included. The Grand Ole Opry building is surrounded by other buildings, parking lots, and a shopping mall.

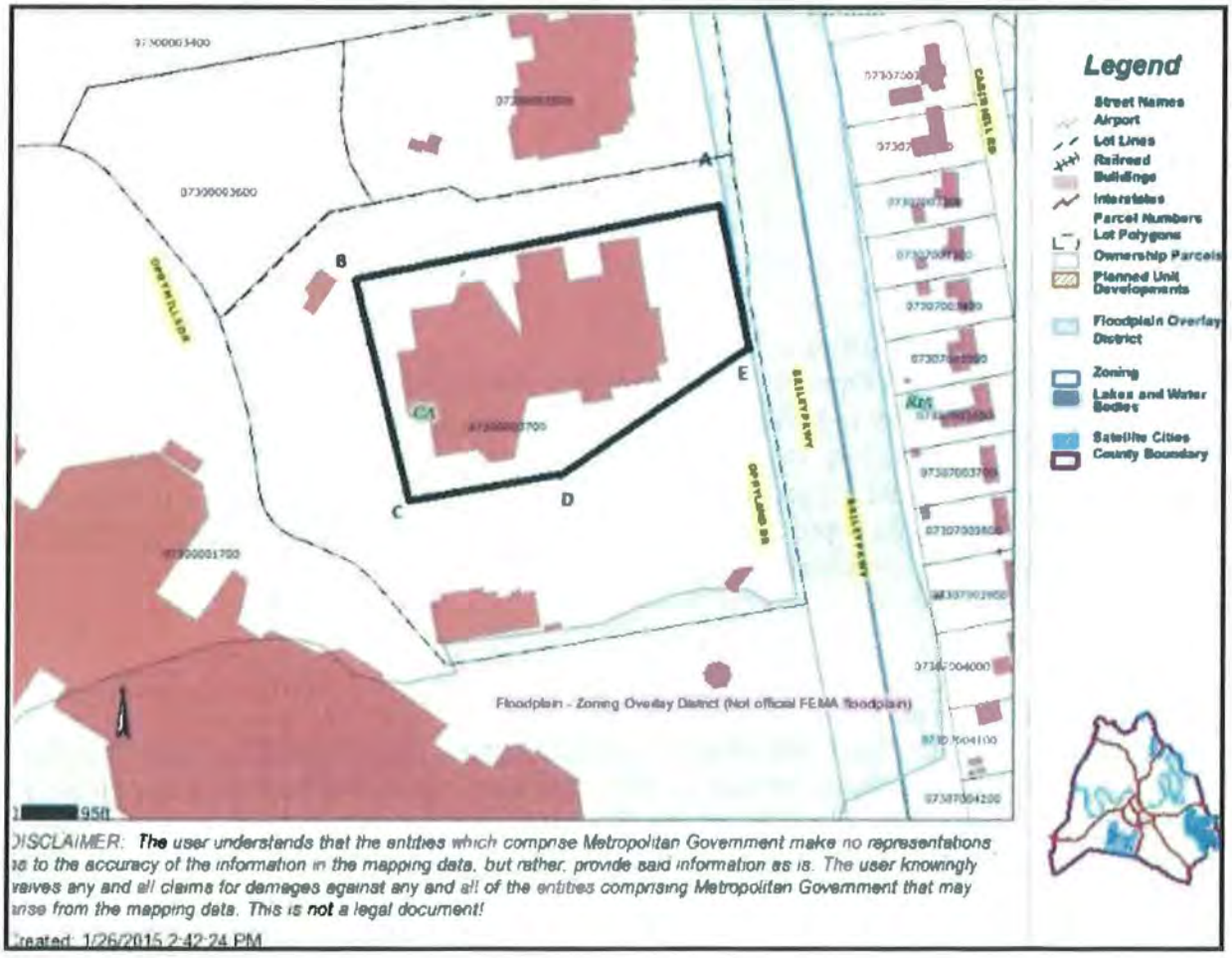
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

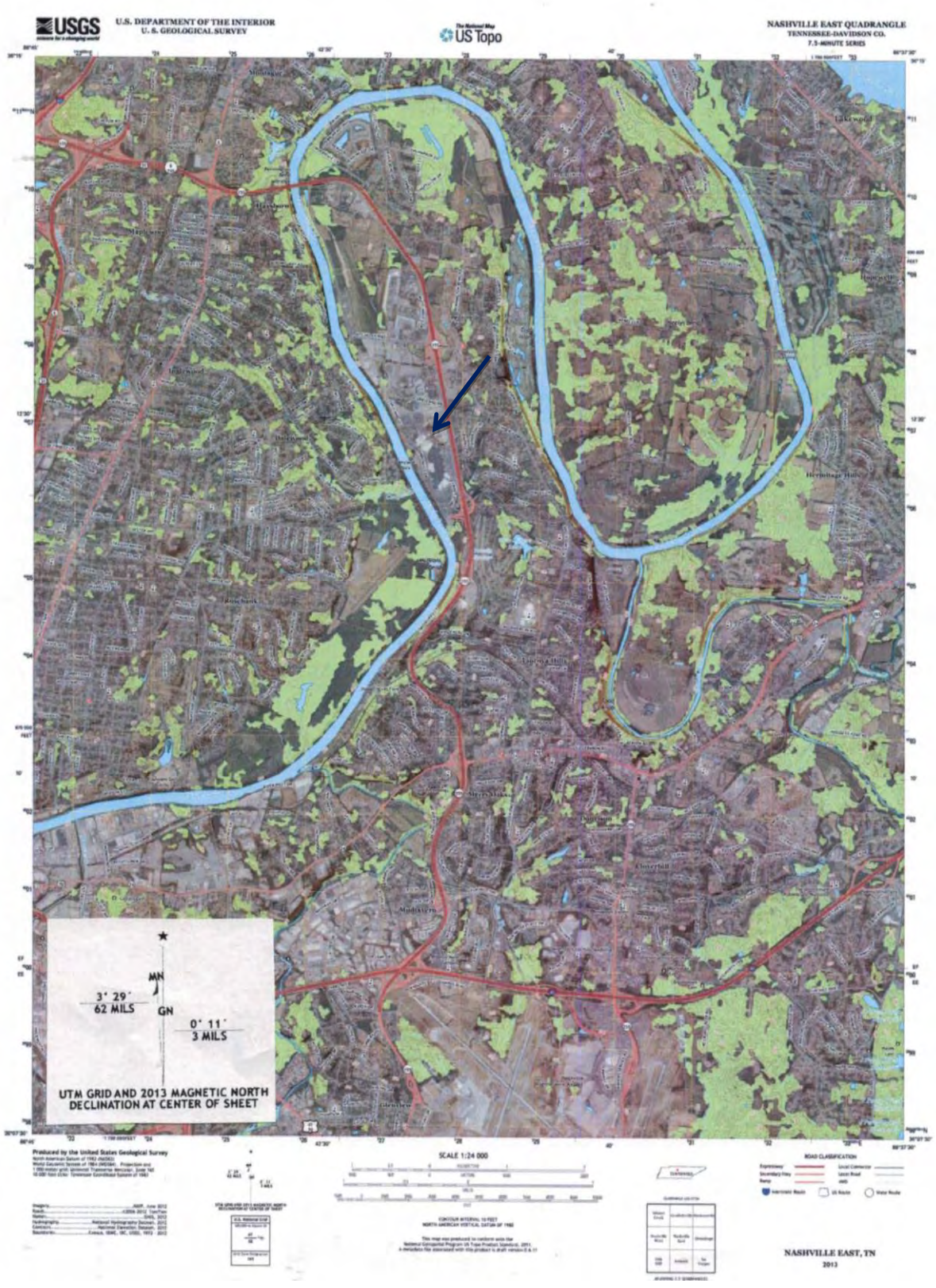
Section number 10 Page 2

Grand Ole Opry House
Name of Property
Davidson County, Tennessee
County and State



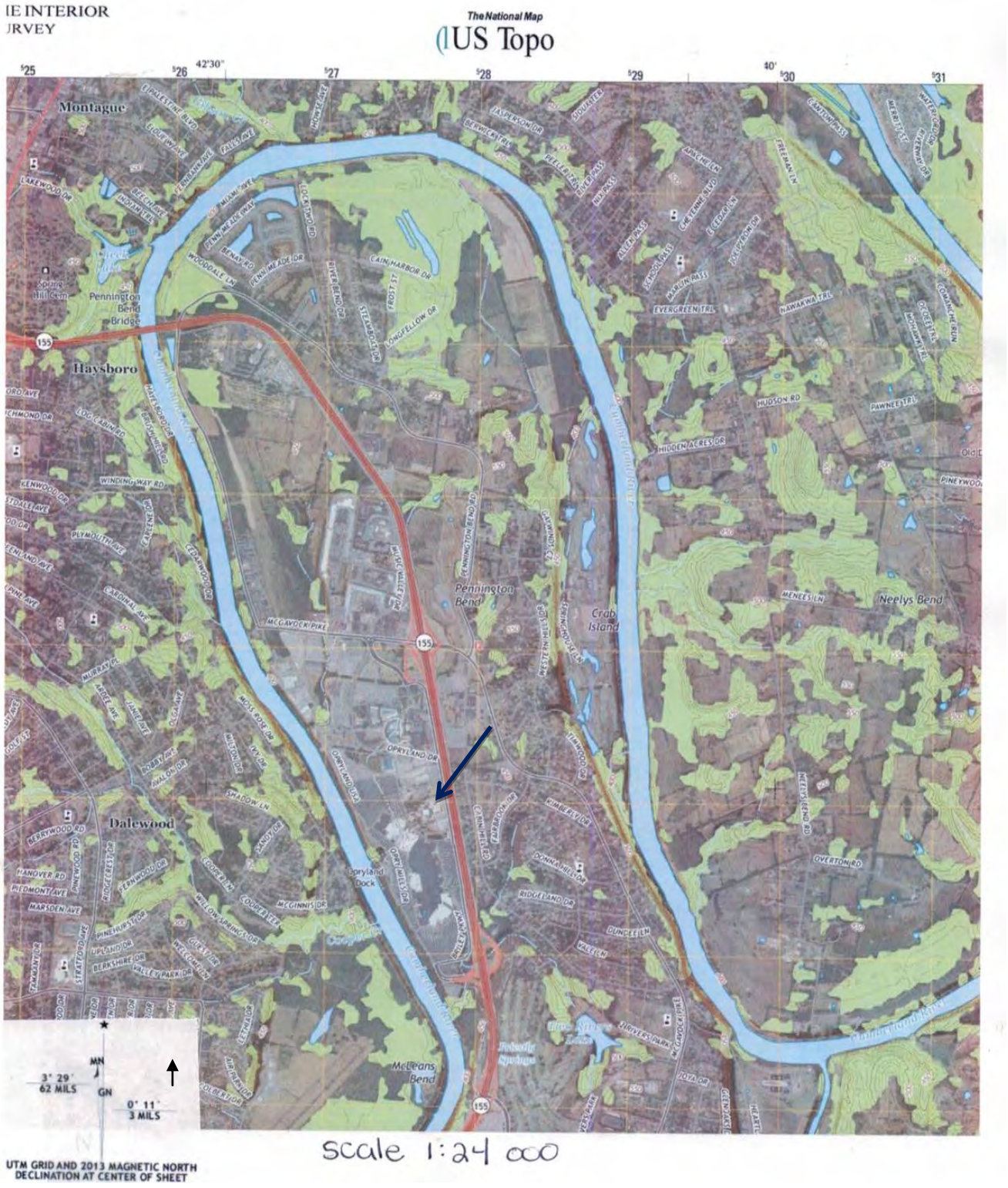
Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State



Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State



Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee
Name of Property | County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name	Carroll Van West		
Organization	MTSU Center for Historic Preservation		
Street & Number	Box 80	Date	May 15, 2014
City or Town	Murfreesboro	Telephone	615-898-2947
E-mail	carroll.west@mtsu.edu	State TN	Zip Code 37132

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs (**refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints**)**
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee
Name of Property | County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Grand Ole Opry House
City or Vicinity: Nashville
County: Davidson State: Tennessee
Photographer: Grand Ole Opry
Date Photographed: April 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Façade and main entrance, facing east

2. Façade, facing southeast

3. North elevation, artist entrance, facing southwest

4. North elevation, artist entrance, facing south

5. North elevation, Studio A wing, facing southwest

6. East elevation, Studio A wing, facing northwest

7. South elevation, facing northwest

8. South elevation and south entrance, facing north

9. South elevation at main entrance, facing north

10. South elevation and façade, facing north

11. Façade, facing northeast

12. Main entrance courtyard, facing west

13. Main entrance, facing east

14. Main lobby staircase, facing southeast

15. Main lobby, central section, facing south

16. Main lobby, south section, facing south

17. Main lobby, north section, facing south

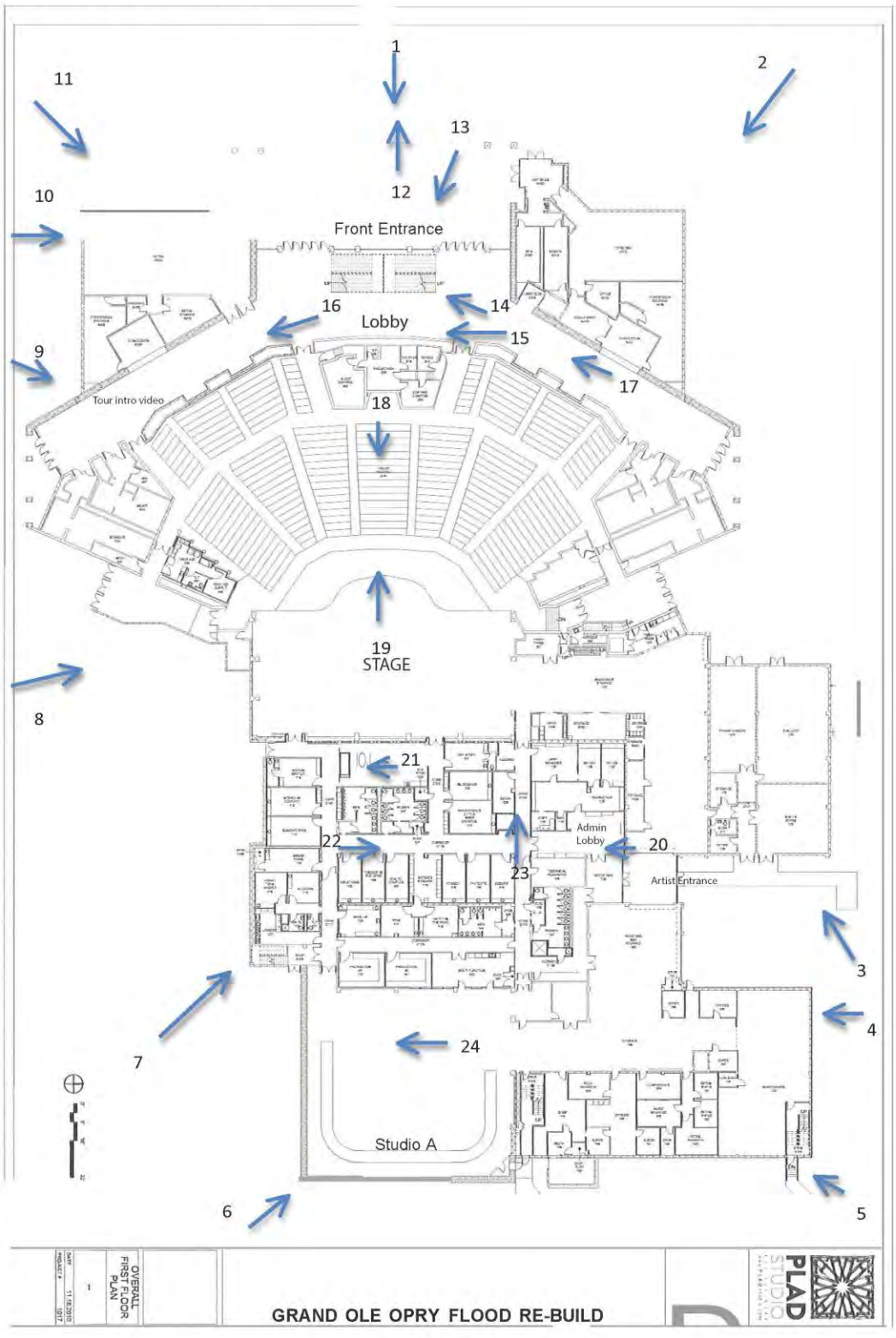
18. First floor auditorium, facing east

19. Stage, facing west
20. Administrative lobby, backstage, facing south
21. "Green" room, backstage, facing south
22. Hallway and lockers, backstage, facing north
23. Stage entrance, backstage, facing west
24. Auditorium from second floor seating, facing southeast
25. Second floor lobby, facing south
26. Second floor lobby, south section, facing north
27. Second floor lobby, central section, facing east
28. Second floor seating, facing south

Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State

Floor Plan and Photo Key- Main Floor



Grand Ole Opry House | Davidson County, Tennessee

Name of Property | County and State

Floor Plan and Photo Key- Second Floor

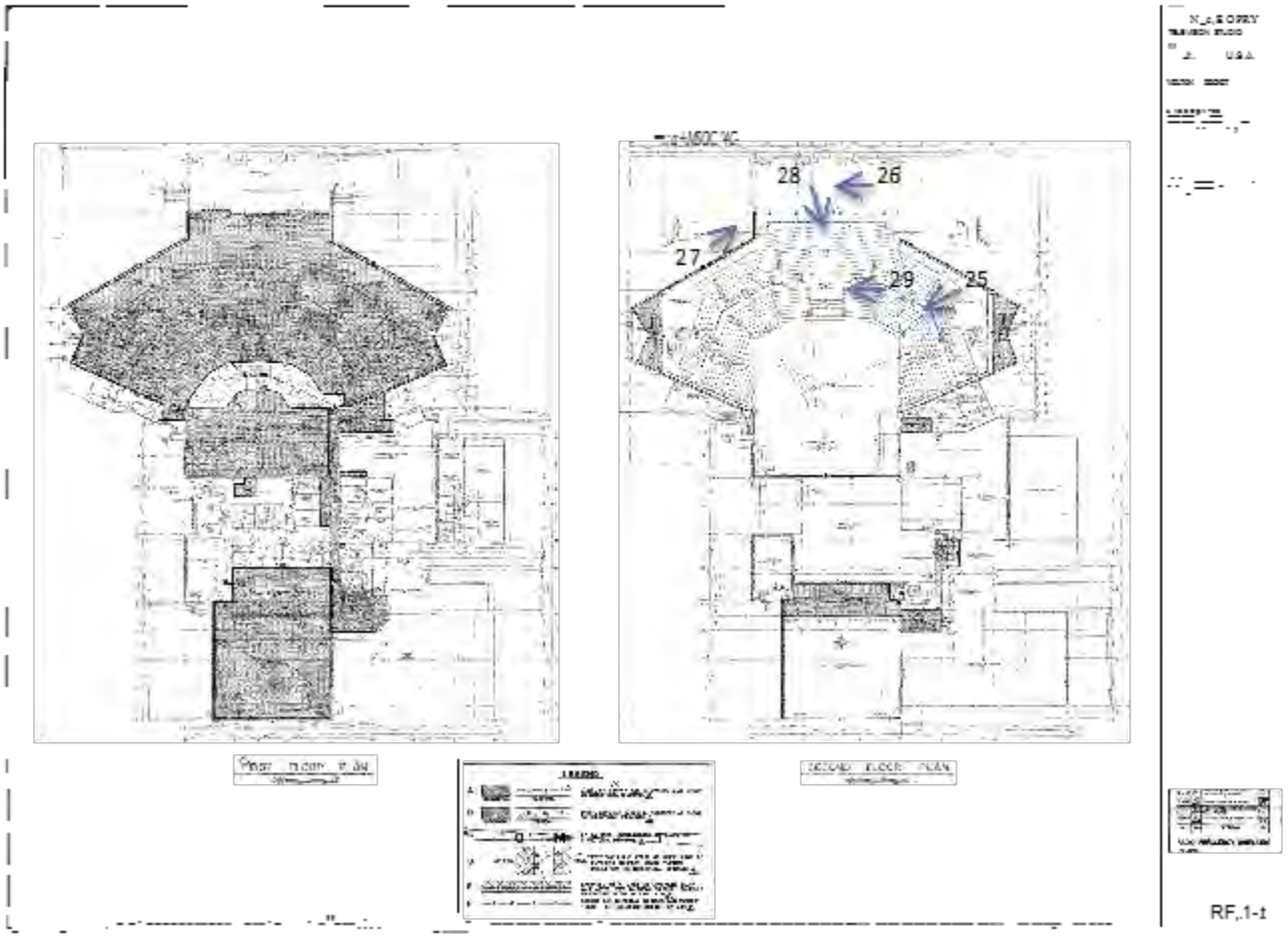


Figure 1: Historic photograph of auditorium, c. 1974

Figure 2: Historic photograph of façade, September 1974

Figure 3: Studio A (historic image c. 1985), facing south

Figure 4: Historic photograph of backstage hallway, c. 1974

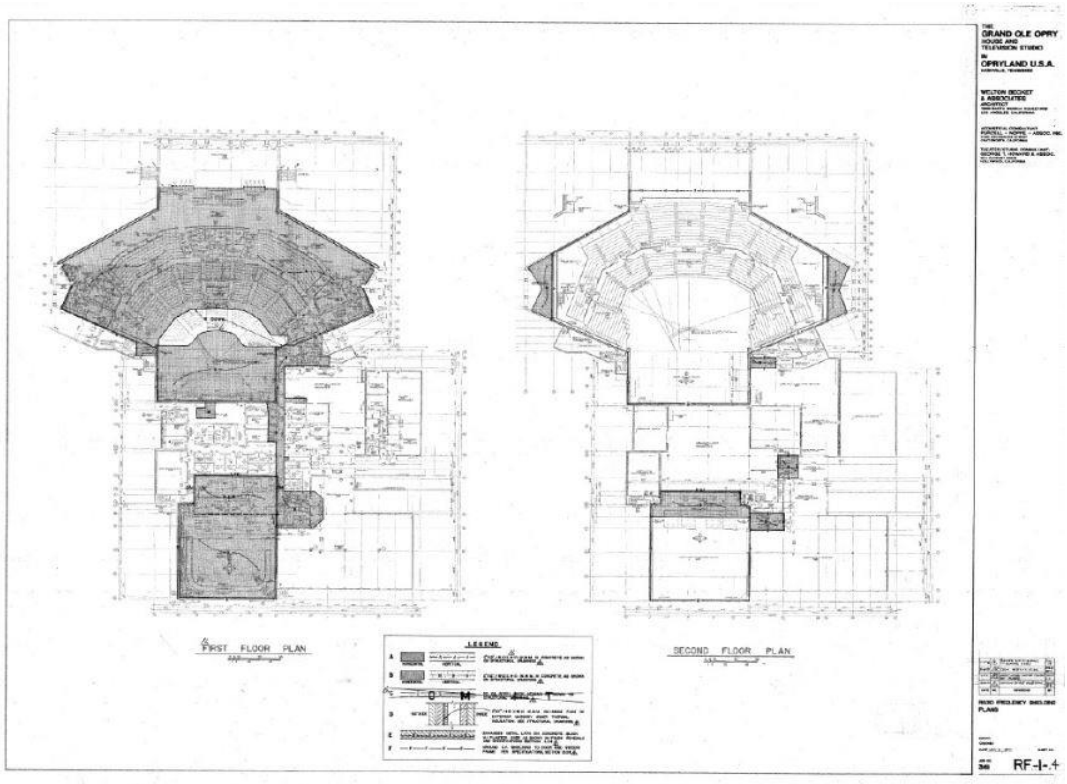
Figure 5: Historic photograph of lobby stairs, first floor, c. 1974

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Grand Ole Opry House
Name of Property
Davidson County, Tennessee
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Figures Page 43



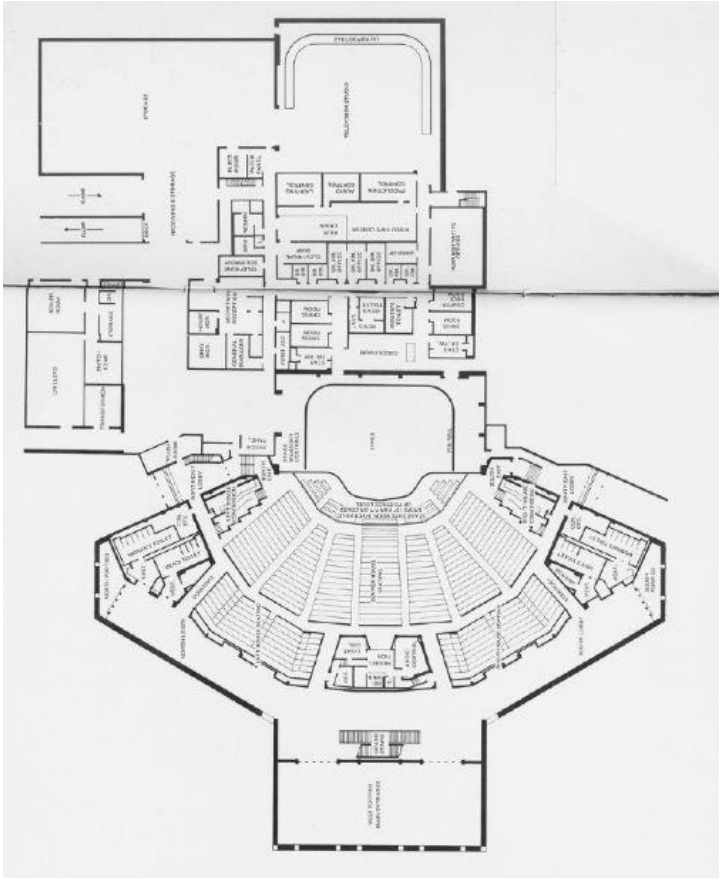


Figure 6: 1974 Welton Becket Blueprints


GRAND OLE OPRY HOUSE
TRADITION
THE SHOW THAT MADE COUNTRY MUSIC FAMOUS.
FAMILY


TRADITION
THE SHOW THAT MADE COUNTRY MUSIC FAMOUS.
LET 'ER GO, BOYS!
TICKETS


AND OLE OPRY
RTIST ENTRANCE


STOP


GRAND OLE OPRY HOUSE


GRAND OLE OPRY
THE OPRY store


SHOW
FAMOUS


SECTIONS
3-4
10-11
the OPRY
GRAND OLE
OPRY
Humana


Tickets & Tours
CONCESSIONS


GRAND OLE
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650 WSM
GRAND OLE OPRY
OPRY.COM #OPRY


Nashville to see the foundation of country music, the Grand Ole Opry"
"The Opry is a way of life, it's an institution that gets passed on every weekend.
the Opry is the place to be."
Marty Stuart
WSM
GRAND
OLE
OPRY


ON AIR
GRAND OLE OPRY
WSM
GRAND OLE OPRY
OPRY.COM #OPRY


EXIT


RESTROOMS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Grand Ole Opry House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Davidson

DATE RECEIVED: 12/12/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/21/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/05/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/27/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001222

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	Y
OTHER:	N	PDIL:	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	Y	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

✓ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT 1-27-2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The "new" Grand Ol Opry is directly tied to the Rise of Country music as an Entertainment industry; with A New Look & modern Design, The Opry brought Country into the Suburbs.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A & C

REVIEWER J. Gabbert DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
2941 LEBANON ROAD
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550
www.tnhistoricalcommission.org
E-mail: Claudette.Stager@tn.gov
(615) 532-1550, ext. 105
http://www.tn.gov/environment/history

November 24, 2014

Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service
National Register Branch
1201 Eye Street NW
8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the documentation to nominate *Grand Ole Opry House* to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the *Grand Ole Opry House* to the National Register of Historic Places.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, please contact Christine Mathieson at (615) 770-1086 or Christine.Mathieson@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS:cm

Enclosures(4)