

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Clem's Opera House
other names/site number NeHBS #YK04-1; OHBIN #03-01-02

2. Location

street & number Main & Post Sts. N/A not for publication
city, town Gresham N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county York code 185 zip code 68367

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
James A. Hanson May 16, 1988
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Beth Boland 9/28/88
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre;
music facility

Social: Meeting hall

Health Care: Medical business/office

Commerce/Trade: Department store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

Commerce/Trade: Specialty store

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Two-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknown

walls Brick

roof Unknown

other Stone ledges below windows

Pressed metal above windows

Pressed metal cornice

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Clem's Opera House is located in the second lot west of the intersection of Elm and Post Streets, on the south side of the street. Constructed circa 1891 by Dr. W. N. Hylton and Noah and A. L. Clem, merchants, the Two-Part Commercial Block brick structure measures approximately 25 feet wide by 78 feet long. A stone ledge runs the width of the front facade beneath the windows, with decorative pressed metal above the windows. An elaborate cornice crowns the structure (see photo #1). The building has a flat roof, typical of 1890s Nebraska opera houses. Access to the second-story auditorium is through a single door to the immediate east of the building. It arrives at a landing which opens both to the opera house on the west and the lodge hall in the neighboring building to the east. The box office, 16 feet long by 9 feet, 6 inches wide, is located just inside the auditorium door.

The auditorium is 56 feet long from the rear wall to the proscenium opening, by 23 feet, 6 inches wide, with a small room at the back next to the box office. The small theatre has no balcony. Severe water damage is evident in the ceiling and walls. A border of wainscoting, approximately two feet high, surrounds the auditorium and sets off the area below the stage level. Access to the backstage area from the auditorium is through a door on the stage right side of the house.

The wooden proscenium arch measures 12 feet wide by approximately 9 feet high. Wings of 5 feet, 9 inches grace each side of the stage, but contain no dressing room facilities. The stage measures 12 feet deep from the curtain line to the back wall. An apron, two-and-a-half feet wide, curves out from the proscenium opening. One trap door is located center stage.

The structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved.

1987 24 1987

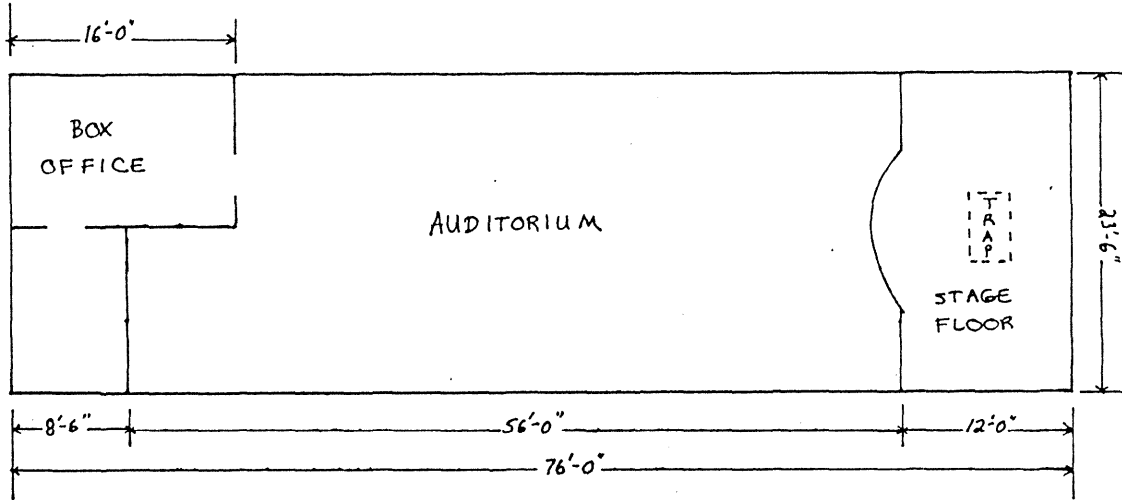
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Floor plan, Clem's Opera House, Gresham

← N



Credit: P. Leitner, Draftsman

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The two-story brick building features an elaborate pressed metal cornice, decorative pressed metal window hoods, and a pressed metal wall cornice. The street level facade shows its original cast iron storefront with recessed entry. The first level originally housed retail space, and presently houses an antique store. The second level opera house is vacant.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Performing Arts
Entertainment/Recreation
Social History

Period of Significance

c. 1891-1917

Significant Dates

1891

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

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

This opera house is significant in the area of performing arts for bringing a variety of entertainment to the community of Gresham. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as touring stock companies, musical concerts, classics like *East Lynne* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and home talent productions. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1898-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole community could gather to attend moving pictures, and entertaining lectures. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1898-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history, because it gave Gresham a neutral, nonaffiliated location for socials, commencements, farmers' institutes, and political meetings. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1898-1917.) In the days before radio, television, and sound movies, activities at the opera house were anticipated for days or weeks ahead of time. It provided a place for people to get together to have a good time and forget their troubles over crops, weather, taxes, the railroads, and the generally hard life of settling the Great Plains.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Baer, DeLoris, ed. *Greater York Area Centennial 1870-1970*. N.p.: n.p., 1970.
Clem, A. L. Letter to the author. Orange, CA/Gresham: 1987.
Clem's Opera House. Gresham site visit. 1 Mar. 1987.
Diers, Arlois. Letters to the author. Gresham: 1986 and 22 Aug. 1987.
Let the Record Be Made: Story of Gresham, Nebraska Diamond Jubilee 1962. N.p.: n.p., 1962.
Schmitt, Walter. Letters to the author. Gresham: 1987.
Tonniges, Floyd. Telephone interview. Gresham: 25 Feb. 1987.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

D. Layne Ehlers (see below)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one [1] acre

UTM References

A

1	4	6	3	4	3	4	0	4	5	4	2	9	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as the east 24 ft. 6 in. of Lot 2, Block 8, Original Town of Poston (now Gresham), York County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lot that has been historically associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Layne Ehlers, Principal Investigator

organization OHBIN Study

street & number 2302 South 11th

city or town Lincoln

date April 1988

telephone [402] 435-6946

state NE zip code 68502

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The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building, circa 1891, in "the only brick two-story building in town" (*Gresham Gazette* 29 Oct. 1897). The period of significance continues through 1917, the year considered to signal the end of the opera house era in Nebraska, based on declining numbers of touring companies nationally and rising numbers of movie houses and automobiles. The proximity of York (23 miles), Osceola (23 miles), and Seward 28 miles), which had moving picture theatres and first floor community auditoriums by 1917, meant that as more Gresham residents bought cars, activities in those nearby cities became a more viable option. Limited choices in Clem's Opear House doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events.

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Representative Entertainments, 1898-1917

DATE EVENT AND PERFORMERS

Social History

Jan 1898 Box social under the auspices of the Try Club
May 1902 Gresham High School Commencement
Nov 1908 Airship Social
Dec 1908 Farmers' Institute
Nov 1912 Democratic meeting with Judge Gungan of Hastings

Entertainment/Recreation

Mar 1898 Moving pictures
Mar 1902 Major Hendershot, 'The Drummer Boy of the Rappahannock'
Nov 1909 Moving pictures
Dec 1909 Ash Davis, cartoonist
Oct 1910 Moving pictures
Nov 1911 Moving pictures of Frontier Days in Cheyenne
Nov 1913 Moving pictures
Oct 1914 Moving pictures
Nov 1914 Moving pictures
Nov 1915 Moving pictures
Nov 1915 Lecture by Mrs. A. C. Zehner on 'American Ideals'
Dec 1915 Entertainment, including lecture, piano solo, Quartette & Orchestra
Dec 1915 Moving pictures
Nov 1916 Moving pictures
Nov 1916 Lecture by Col. W. G. Bain
Nov 1917 *The Fatal Ring*, motion picture serial with Pearl White

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Clem's Opera House, Gresham
Representative Entertainments, 1898-1917

DATE	EVENT AND PERFORMERS
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Performing Arts

Mar 1902	Metropolitan Stock Co.
May 1902	<i>A Pioneer Pedagogue</i> , home talent entertainment Gresham Presbyterian Choir Concert
Mar 1908	<i>Brookdale Farm</i> , a home talent drama
May 1908	<i>The Old Maids Association</i> , home talent farce
Nov 1908	The Carolina Jubilee Singers
Dec 1908	<i>Jerry the Outcast</i> , Gresham Dramatic Co.
Oct 1909	Recital Concert Co.
Nov 1909	Dixie Jubilee Singers <i>Big Jim</i>
Dec 1909	<i>East Lynne</i>
Oct 1910	The Great La=Wayne, hypnotist
Nov 1910	Vic Crane with Edna Lurene in <i>Weary Willie Walker</i>
Dec 1910	<i>Our Busy Ladies Aid</i> , home talent
Dec 1911	<i>Aunt Maggie's Will</i>
Oct 1912	The Mysterious Harrell
Nov 1912	Giddings Family Concert Co. Protean Concert Co.
Dec 1912	Alvah Green
Feb 1913	New York Male Quartet Weller Trio
Nov 1913	Lewis Stock Co. in <i>The Whirlpool</i> <i>A Rival by Request</i> , home talent comedy
Oct 1914	<i>The Girl and the Tramp</i>
Nov 1914	Wesleyan Male Quartette <i>Yankee Doodle Girl</i>
Nov 1915	<i>The Law of the Range</i>
Nov 1916	Terry's Uncle Tom's Cabin
Dec 1917	Funny Frank Manning in <i>Lena Rivers</i> <i>The Devil, Tom Walker and the Girl</i>

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Section number _____ Photographs _____
Page _____

The following information is the same for all Gresham photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY: Clem's Opera House
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Gresham, York, Nebraska
NeHBS SITE No.: YK04-1
OHBIN SITE No.: 03-01-02
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Gresham #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 03-01-87 (8703/1:7)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking southeast at the north (front) facade. (The Opera House is the building in the middle.)

PHOTO NUMBER: Gresham #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 03-01-87 (8703/1:3)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking south at the stage.