

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

MAY 24 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Z.C.B.J. Opera House

other names/site number NeHBS #CX01-17 OHBIN #05-09-04

2. Location

street & number 4th & Pine N/A not for publication

city, town Clarkson N/A vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Colfax code 037 zip code 68629

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

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
Signature of certifying official

May 16, 1988
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.

- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

- determined not eligible for the National Register.

- removed from the National Register.

- other, (explain:)

Beth Poland

9/28/88

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

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social: Meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: One-part commercial block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknown

walls Brick

roof Unknown

other Cement diamond trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Z.C.B.J. Opera House is located at the south end of the downtown area of Clarkson on Pine Street, which is the main street through town. The lots were purchased in 1913 by the Z.C.B.J. Lodge members from Adolph Fajman; the combination opera house and lodge hall building cost about \$20,000 to construct (*Clarkson Herald* 23 Sep. 1913). The brick structure, decorated with small cement diamonds, measures approximately 50 feet wide by 125 feet long. It has a flat roof. Access to the auditorium is through double doors leading in from the lobby. The box office accesses to both the lobby and the auditorium.

The auditorium is 48 feet wide by 77 feet, 6 inches long, from the rear of the room to the proscenium opening at the stage. Both the stage and auditorium floor are oak. Built-in wooden benches with backs fill the balcony, which is reached by four foot wide stairs on either side. The balcony is 10 feet, 6 inches deep from the back wall to the front rail. The auditorium has a beautiful pressed tin ceiling in excellent condition.

The plain wooden proscenium arch measures 22 feet, 9 inches wide by between 14 and 15 feet high; ample wings of 12 feet, 7 inches fill the sides of the stage. Eight rolled stage curtains on battens hang above the stage. At the rear of the stage, in the upstage left corner, is built-in vertical flat storage. Small wooden dressing rooms are also in the wings. A prompt box is located downstage center; a trap door is downstage right. The stage measures 25 feet from the proscenium opening to the back wall, with a three-foot apron, which contains a footlight trough. Access from the auditorium to the stage is through doors on either side of the stage.

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

 See continuation sheet

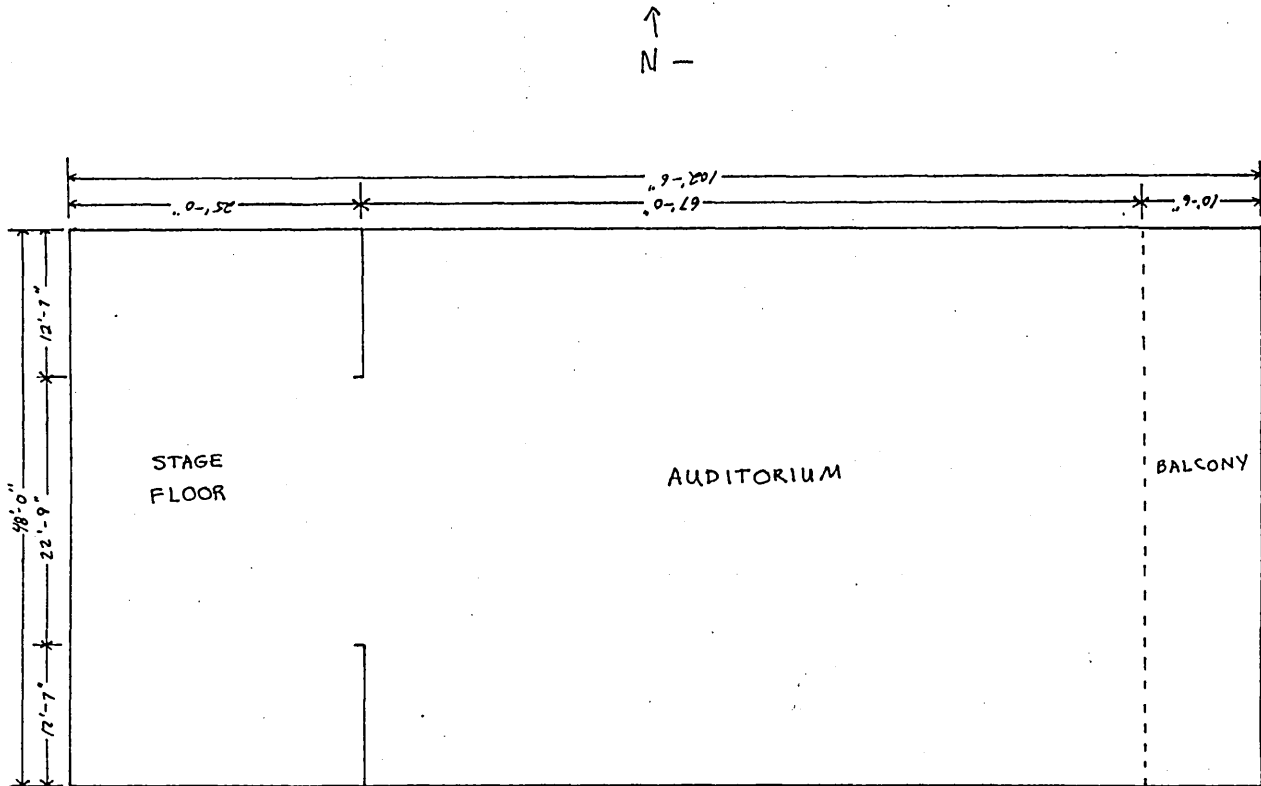
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Floor plan, Z.C.B.J. Opera House, Clarkson



P. Leitner, Draftsman

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The two-story rectangular brick building has a raised basement with raised entry, and a flat roof with parapet wall and stone coping. "Pavilion-like" corners are crowned with mission-shaped roof parapets with stone copings. The main facade exhibits a stone wall cornice near the roof line, brick belt courses, and brick corbelled rectangular panels with diamond and circle motifs. "Z.C.B.J." in stone bas-relief, is located near the roofline. The central raised entry is flanked by brick wall pilasters with decorative capitals, and beltcourses. "Opera House" in stone bas-relief is located directly above the double door entry with transom window. Fenestration consists of double hung window units with one over one pane arrangement. The building continues in use today as a fraternal meeting hall, used by the V.F.W. lodge.

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)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>Performing Arts</u>	<u>1913-1917</u>	<u>1913</u>
<u>Entertainment/Recreation</u>	_____	_____
<u>Social History</u>	_____	_____
_____	Cultural Affiliation	_____
_____	<u>N/A</u>	_____
_____	_____	_____
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
<u>N/A</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	
_____	_____	

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

The Z.C.B.J. 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 Clarkson. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as musical concerts, touring stock companies, classics such as *The Wolf*, and home talent productions. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1916-1918.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole community could gather to attend dances, lectures, and moving pictures. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1916-1918.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history (Criteria A), on a state level, because it gave Clarkson a neutral, nonaffiliated location for Memorial Day services, political speeches, Commercial Club meetings, and lodge meetings. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1916-1918.) 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.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Clarkson Herald. 16 Sep. 1913 - 18 Nov. 1913.
Clarkson Diamond Jubilee 1886-1961. Wahoo: Ludi Printing Co., 1961.
Hamernik, Mrs. Henry. Letter to the author. Clarkson: 1987.
Krejsa, Libbie. Letter to the author. Clarkson: 24 Aug. 1987.
---. Telephone interview. Clarkson: 6 May 1987.
van Hoff, Joseph John. "A History of the Czechs in Knox County, Nebraska."
M. Thesis. U of Nebraska, 1938.
Z.C.B.J. Opera House. Clarkson site visit. 9 May 1987.
Z.C.B.J. Opera House, Clarkson, exterior. Postcard. Andrea Paul Collection,
Lincoln, NE.

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

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Block 9 in Clarkson's Village, in the town of Clarkson, Colfax County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lot(s) that have been historically associated with this property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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

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The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building, 1913, by the local Z.C.B.J. lodge. Apparently the first opera house in Clarkson, it was regarded as "an improvement worth while--the best building of its kind on the [railroad] branch [line]" (*Clarkson Herald* 23 Sep. 1913). 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. Although the Z.C.B.J. Opera House continued as a viable insitution through the present time, most performing arts activities tapered off with World War I, leaving the opera house as a facility used mostly for movies, dances, and lodge meetings. Also, the proximity of Schuyler (21 miles) and Stanton (21 miles) meant that as more Clarkson residents bought cars, activities in those larger nearby cities became a viable option. Limited choices in the Z.C.B.J. Opera House doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events, primarily significant under the category of social history.

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10/24/2011

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Z.C.B.J. Opera House, Clarkson
Representative Entertainments, 1916-1918

DATE	EVENT AND PERFORMERS
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Social History

Jun 1916 Memorial Day services
Oct 1916 Stanislav Sepan of Omaha, political speech
Commercial Club meeting and banquet

Entertainment/Recreation

Jun 1916 Moving pictures
Jul 1916 Catholic Nameday Dance
Sep 1916 Dance, music by Jirovec Orchestra
Moving pictures
Oct 1916 Dance, music by Jirovec Orchestra
Married People Only Dance
Moving pictures
Nov 1916 R.A.R. Club Grand Ball
Dance, music by Jirovec Orchestra
Volunteer Fire Dept. 19th Annual Ball, Jirovec Orchestra
Moving pictures
Jan 1917 New Year's Dance
Dr. John Grey, lecturer on the hobo life
Sep 1917 Moving pictures, including official government war pictures
Oct 1917 Catholic Lodge Dance, music by Jirovec Orchestra
Red Cross Grand Ball and Card Party, Krofta Band
Lecture by Mr. and Mrs. Yephtik of Serbia

Performing Arts:

Jul 1916 Metropolitan Players presenting *The Wolf*, dir. Edward Lynch
Oct 1916 "The Marriage of the Midgets, or A Tom Thumb Wedding," home
talent kindergarten program
Nov 1916 Bohemian home talent play
The May Club home talent play
Sue Burgess Concert Co.
Dec 1916 Melver's Musical Comedy Co. in *A Bachelor's Honeymoon*
Jan 1917 Bohemian home talent play
Oct 1917 Laurel Concert Co.
Nov 1917 Kathryn Dale in *The Girl of the Sunny South* and *Ordered to the
Trenches*
Winter's Entertainers

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Photographs
Section number _____ Page 1

The following information is the same for all Clarkson photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY: Z.C.B.J. Opera House
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Clarkson, Colfax County, Nebraska
NeHBS SITE No.: CX01-17
OHBIN SITE No.: 05-09-04
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Clarkson #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-09-87 (8704/2:27)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking west southwest at the east (front) and partial north facades.

PHOTO NUMBER: Clarkson #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 05-09-87 (8704/2:17)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west at the stage from the balcony.