

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
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: Hardacre Theater

Other names/site number: Hardacre Opera House and Memorial Hall; Odd Fellows Hall; The Hardacre

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Schwenk, Sally Fullerton. "Historic Movie Theaters of Iowa," MPD, National Register of Historic Places (2009)

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 112 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street

City or town: Tipton State: IA County: Cedar

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   national    statewide   X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:   X   A    B   X   C    D

Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>State Historical Society of Iowa</u>	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

Signature of commenting official: <u>Steve King</u>	Date <u>16 Nov 2015</u>
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Hardacre Theater  
Name of Property

Cedar County, Iowa  
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**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:)

Jon Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

1-5-16  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public -- Local   
Public -- State   
Public -- Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)   
District   
Site   
Structure   
Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium
- SOCIAL/meeting hall
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- 
- 
- 

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- WORK IN PROGRESS
- 
-

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick  
Terra Cotta  
Asphalt

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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**Summary Paragraph**

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**Narrative Description**



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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.)

- 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
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
SOCIAL HISTORY

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1916-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1916

1948

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Gartside, Benjamin W., Jr.

Western Construction Company

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.770226 | Longitude: -91.127822 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |                 |                   |
|----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: 655615 | Northing: 4625948 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone: | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is Town Lots 15 and 16 located near the middle of the block on the north side of E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street between Meridian Street on the east and Cedar Street on the west in Tipton, Cedar County, Iowa, which parcel forms a rectangle that extends 55 feet along E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street and the north-side alley, and 142 feet on both the east and west sides, all of which lies in Block 11 of the Original Plat of Tipton.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Hardacre Theater in Tipton, Iowa.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Jennifer A. Price, Ph.D. / Consultant  
organization: Price Preservation Research  
street & number: P.O. Box 5201  
city or town: Coralville state: IA zip code: 52241-0201  
e-mail jennifer-price@mchsi.com  
telephone: (319) 337-2020  
date: October 2015

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**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 this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Hardacre Theater

City or Vicinity: Tipton

County: Cedar State: IA

Photographer: Jennifer Price

Date Photographed: March 2, 2015

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

1 of 21. General view northwest of Hardacre Theater façade.

2 of 21. Hardacre Theater façade, view north.

3 of 21. Hardacre Theater façade, view northeast.

Name of Property: Hardacre Theater

City or Vicinity: Tipton

County: Cedar State: IA

Photographer: Bill Highland and Greg Brown

Date Photographed: May 9, 2014

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

4 of 21. Hardacre Theater façade, view north.

5 of 21. Rear of building, view southwest.

6 of 21. Exterior lobby and ticket booth, view north.

7 of 21. Underside of marquis, view northeast.



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- 8 of 21. Tin ceiling in exterior lobby, view north-northwest.
- 9 of 21. Front lobby, view south-southwest.
- 10 of 21. Painted ceiling in front lobby, view north-northwest.
- 11 of 21. Foyer with stairs to balcony, view west.
- 12 of 21. Stage, view northwest.
- 13 of 21. Proscenium, view north-northwest.
- 14 of 21. Theater seating, balcony, and projection booth, view south from stage.
- 15 of 21. Center of theater, view south from stage.
- 16 of 21. Balcony and stage, view northeast.
- 17 of 21. Projection booth, view west.
- 18 of 21. Below-stage dressing room, view northwest.
- 19 of 21. Stairs to second-floor apartments, view north.
- 20 of 21. West apartment, view south.
- 21 of 21. East apartment, view south.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Hardacre Theater is located on the north side of E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street between Meridian Street (east) and Cedar Street (west) in downtown Tipton, the seat of Cedar County in east-central Iowa. The theater is part of a small town Main Street setting comprised mainly of one- and two-story brick commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century surrounding a central public courthouse square. The theater sits at about the middle of a block of mostly historic brick commercial buildings with the entire block, including the theater, facing the Cedar County Courthouse Square across 5<sup>th</sup> Street to the south.

Built in 1916, the Hardacre Theater is an example of an early twentieth-century broad commercial front brick block with an Art Deco theater marquee. The upper façade features an overall symmetry of vertical and horizontal elements; full-height projecting brick pilasters, mid-story cornice with inscribed frieze; common sill; round-arched fenestration; decorative wall surface motifs; and an accentuated cornice.

***Exterior***

The Hardacre Theater is a two-story, triple storefront brick commercial building that fills three town lots (55 feet wide) and extends to the alley (140 feet deep) with a 50-foot high brick fly loft on the alley side. The foundation is poured concrete, exterior walls are load-bearing brick, and the façade is clad in a dark reddish face brick trimmed with contrasting white terra cotta. The side and rear walls are made of a softer, smoother, orange-colored common brick, perhaps locally made. The façade is divided into five unequal bays: a wide central bay flanked by two narrower intermediate bays and two narrower outer bays. The bays are divided by six full-height projecting brick pilasters. Contrasting white terra cotta trim defines the pilasters and forms the seven round-arch window surrounds on the second story (three in the center bay and two in each intermediate bay). Terra cotta also forms the common sill, the square motifs, and the projecting cornice. Each pilaster rests on a limestone base. Hidden behind the marquee is an original inscribed limestone nameblock reading "HARDACRE MEMORIAL HALL."

The structure of the building can be divided into three parts: 1) the south third, which includes the lobby, street-level businesses, and second-floor Odd Fellows Hall; 2) the middle third, which includes the main auditorium and balcony; and the north third, which includes the stage and fly-loft. The south and middle thirds are divided by a multi-wythe masonry wall that extends from the basement to the roof. The middle and north thirds are divided by the proscenium wall that extends from the basement to the roof.

The south third of the theater appears to consist of a wood floor and roof and ceiling framing members that span three bays east to west. Although the first floor structure is exposed in the basement and second-floor ceiling and roof framing is exposed in the attic, the arrangement and condition of the second-floor framing members is unknown. The structural components of the middle third of the theater that contains the auditorium are inaccessible, however, according to the architect working on the renovation plans, the structure likely consists of a wood floor and roof joist framing members along with some larger steel members. A steel wide flange shape at the end of the balcony support is visible from the exterior fire stair, so some steel supporting members exist, as would be expected over the large open space of the auditorium. The north third of the theater – the stage and fly loft – consists of a wood floor framing members that span north to south on concrete interior bearing walls and a steel beam near the original dressing room area. The 50-foot-high fly loft is inaccessible, but it appears to be

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framed with wood members. About 32 feet up from the stage on the west wall, a loading gallery is also framed out of wood members. The roof, though not exposed, is expected to be framed with wood members spanning from the proscenium to the north exterior wall, consistent with the rest of the building.

The main level features a wide and deeply recessed exterior theater lobby, accessed beneath a triangular-shaped neon marquee, which projects 12 feet from the building and is supported by a single metal post. This neon-lighted marquis was built in 1948 by the Iowa Neon Sign Company to replace a more Streamline Moderne version from the 1930s. The exterior lobby has a pressed metal ceiling, recesses for theatrical promotion and a stainless steel ticket booth that projects into the exterior lobby and is flanked by equal double doors. Centered at the rear of the exterior lobby is a narrow ticket booth clad metal (probably stainless steel or aluminum). The ticket booth may be a remnant of the theater's previous Streamline Moderne remodel. The intermediate bays have large storefront windows resting on limestone sills and bulkheads. The windows are not original, and the original transoms have been covered or replaced with plywood. Two entry doors (not original) are located in the narrow outermost bays and provide access to the storefronts and stairs to the upper level. Original transoms over these doors have been covered or replaced.

The upper level, as stated previously, has seven round-arch windows with vinyl replacement 1/1 double hung sash windows. Above each window is a decorative inset square motif; two more of these inset squares are in each outermost bay, one just above the entry door transoms and one just below the cornice.

### ***Interior***<sup>1</sup>

The interior lobby has a hard plaster ceiling painted with green, pink, and white abstract floral and vine motifs, however, the paint is badly peeling. This hand-painted ceiling was a feature of the 1948 interior decoration by Dahlstrom & Weinberg of Minneapolis. The lobby also contains a modern concession stand.

A masonry wall with two pairs of doors separates the interior lobby from the narrow foyer (built 1928), inside of which is a pair of stairs (one on each side) that lead up to the either side of the balcony and two doors that lead down the raked floor of the auditorium. The color scheme here is rose and blue trim with blue carpet.

The main auditorium has 264 seats from different eras of the theater's history on a sloped painted concrete floor. Walls are dark blue with acoustical panels that are deteriorating, along with white floral motifs (likely also from the 1948 interior modernization) that repeat those in the interior lobby. Lighting includes four original hanging pendant lights hang from the ceiling and newer non-functional wall sconces line the perimeter. The balcony contains 132 seats on six wooden risers.

The stage, which is not original, projects 16 feet beyond the proscenium arch and conceals the original orchestra pit and air ducts from a 1936 "washed air" air conditioning system. The proscenium arch, built in 1948, is 15 feet tall by 27 feet wide, and was inserted into the original arch and the arch reduced by adding an eight-foot panel at the top of the original 23-foot arch. This inserted panel presents hand-

<sup>1</sup> Much of the interior description has been gleaned from Rohrbach Associates 2014:19-20.

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painted in pink, peach, and white floral motifs (in good condition) matching the style and quality of those in the interior lobby. Behind this 1948 proscenium (and visible from backstage) is the original ornate plaster proscenium arch with geometric and floral relief.

The stage contains the movie screen and its large fixed armature and mechanical equipment backstage. Existing fly galleries and gridiron remain and historic load-in doors are back stage, but have been removed from their original location and an air conditioner installed in their place. Five dressing rooms and mechanical rooms are located below stage.

Below the interior lobby and both storefronts is an unfinished basement that contains historic doors that may belong to the foyer or second floor lodge hall. The main auditorium has no basement.

The second floor, which originally contained the I.O.O.F. Manitou Lodge Hall was subdivided into two apartments sometime after the lodge disbanded in 1988. Despite this remodeling, original features are extant, including a green plaster ceiling visible above a modern acoustical ceiling, as well as woodwork. Historic doors to this level may be stored in the main basement.

### ***Seven Aspects of Integrity***

The Hardacre Theater has excellent integrity as one of Iowa's historic movie theaters:

- **Location** – This is the location where the Hardacre Memorial Hall and Opera House, later known as Hardacre Theater, was built in 1915-1916.
- **Setting** - The setting of the Hardacre Theater remains intact, including its position between two late-nineteenth-century brick commercial buildings and facing the Cedar County Courthouse Square across the street to the south. Moreover, downtown Tipton retains a good deal of its Main Street commercial architecture, enhancing the theater's historic setting.
- **Materials** – The building retains most of its original and/or historically remodeled components, including on the exterior its original overall five-ranked façade, exterior brick with white terra cotta trim, fenestration pattern, and Art Deco exterior lobby and marquee. The interior retains features of several historic remodels during the 1930s and 1940s, including a theater foyer with balcony stairs, and decorative painted plaster interior lobby ceiling and proscenium.
- **Design** – The design of the building reflects its construction in 1916, with some historic remodeling of the theater entrance in 1948. Although both storefronts and upper floor apartments have modernized interiors, including new room configurations and dropped ceilings, early rehabilitation work has uncovered many original features, including arched window moldings and historic proscenium details, all of which will be restored.
- **Workmanship** – The theater displays good integrity, with original brick and terra cotta work, and woodwork that shows the workmanship of original builders and contractors, as well as remodeled features such as the marquee and exterior lobby and ticket booth.
- **Feeling** - The overall feeling of the Hardacre Theater still reflects a sense of time and place as the theater was during its period of significance.
- **Associations** - Through its extant historic features, the Hardacre Theater retains strong associations with its original and historic functions as a small-town, Main Street movie theater and community gathering place.

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***Future Plans***

The Hardacre Theater Preservation Association and the architectural firm Rohrbach Associates, PC, are in the process of renovating and rehabilitating the Hardacre Theater as a cultural and community center for Tipton, Cedar County, and Eastern Iowa. With the preservation and restoration of the historic fabric of the building as the main goal, the upgraded facility will continue to operate as a cinematic theater, however, the preservation association is also restoring the facility so it can be used for live performance theater, traveling shows, music performances, and community gatherings, all of which were historic functions of the theater when it was built in 1916.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Hardacre Theater in Tipton, Iowa, is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the Hardacre Theater is significant for its historic entertainment associations and with the social history of the Tipton community. Through its long service as Tipton’s entertainment venue, the Hardacre Theater has functioned as an opera house, movie theater, and community assembly hall. From road shows, to silent films, to sound motion pictures, the Hardacre Theater reflects the development of movie theaters in Iowa from 1916 to 1965. The theater was owned and operated for two decades during its period of significance by Beulah I. DeNune, an important example of the role women continued to play in small town and rural motion picture theaters long after the Hollywood Studio system evicted all but men from picture palace management. DeNune was responsible for bringing the Hardacre Theater into the modern age with sound motion pictures, air conditioning, and an Art Deco/Streamline Moderne interior styling, many features of which are extant. The small town venue also functioned as a community center, where residents of Tipton and its neighboring farm community gathered for social, civic, celebratory, patriotic, and commemorative events.

Under Criterion C, the Hardacre Theater is a rare, surviving example of an early twentieth-century opera house movie theater. The theater reflects “the general trend beginning in the late nineteenth century toward ground floor theaters,” and those built after 1910, when ground-floor theaters within commercial blocks became common. The theater also retains layers of architectural significance, from its many original features to those from its historic remodels, particularly those executed in the early 1930s and in 1948. The Hardacre Theater’s association with the I.O.O.F. Odd Fellows fraternal group in Tipton is representative of a sub-type of opera house/movie theater community buildings in Iowa.

The Hardacre Theater meets the registration requirements for Opera House Movie Theater under Criteria A and C as set forth in the National Register Multiple Property Document, “Historic Movie Theaters of Iowa” (Schwenk 2009). Under Criterion A, the Hardacre Theater functioned for a finite period between 1916 and 1940 as a commercial public exhibition venue for motion pictures. The theater originally housed live theatrical performances with some limited exhibition of silent motion moving pictures prior to expanding its motion picture exhibition capabilities and, later, undergoing conversion to exhibit motion pictures with sound. The period of significance of the Hardacre Theater – 1916-1965 – coincides with the period when the exhibition of motion pictures occurred, accompanied by live performances (Schwenk 2009:F12).

Under Criterion C, the Hardacre Theater retains enough historic architectural integrity to “reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features and construction practices of its property type,” but also retains “specific architectural features and stylistic and design treatments present during the period in which motion pictures were exhibited in this venue, including any important exterior or interior changes.” The Hardacre Theater also reflects “the technological advancements and architectural and structural changes required in adapting the opera house theater for exhibition of motion pictures (Schwenk 2009:F12-F13).



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### ***Jacob Hardacre and the Early Years of the Hardacre Theater, 1916-1927***

Built in 1915-1916, the Hardacre Opera House and Memorial Hall was the result of one man's fondness for the people of Tipton, Iowa, the seat of Cedar County located on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (Aurner 1910:296). Jacob Hardacre had been a resident of Cedar County and the Tipton area from 1841, just a year after Tipton was platted, to 1892, when he moved to Missouri. When he died on August 10, 1912, without any direct heirs besides nieces and nephews, his will included a generous bequest to the Tipton community for an opera house, an amenity Hardacre believed the town very much needed. News of Hardacre's bequest was carried in newspapers across Iowa. Hardacre had been a member of the I.O.O.F. Manitou Lodge #8 since 1857, and for that reason Hardacre delegated to the Odd Fellows lodge the authority "to be involved in his generous gift of an opera house." When the lodge received word of the bequest, they selected a committee to assist the Hardacre Estate trustees in carrying out the deceased's wishes. The provisions of the will called for the building to include a lodge room for Tipton's Odd Fellows "provided the Manitou Lodge furnish an additional sum sufficient to cover the additional expense" (Harmel 2014; Stout 1987).

When the Odd Fellows received Jacob Hardacre's bequest, Tipton was a market town of about 2,000 residents. In the early 1910s, Tipton's entertainment venues included a third-floor hall repurposed to serve as an Armory/Opera House and two make-shift "picture theaters" on Cedar Street, one a ground-floor theater at the southeast corner of E. 4th Street and the other a second-floor theater in part of the Tipton Hotel Block near the southwest corner of E. 6th Street.<sup>2</sup> All of these theaters occupied older commercial buildings converted for stage entertainment and moving picture exhibitions. One of these, the Gem Theatre, closed in 1915. Tipton had never boasted a purpose-built grand opera house theater like the one Jacob Hardacre's gift would make possible (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1883, 1893, 1897, 1906, 1914; Harmel 2014).

Three years went by as Hardacre's will was contested several times, and the original \$65,000 bequest to Tipton was reduced to \$20,000, just enough to build a suitable opera house and public hall (*Cedar Rapids Republican*, January 10, 1913; *Postville Review*, February 15, 1915). Meanwhile, the Odd Fellows committee had been investigating several proposed sites for the new opera house, and on February 23, 1915, "moved to purchase the 55 foot space between the Monahan Garage and the Cobb building, which extended back to the alley." The property, owned by Carl H. Mather, was located on the north side of E. 5th Street and faced the Cedar County Courthouse Square across the street south. Mather reserved the extant buildings and had them moved off site in March. In April, Benjamin W. Gartside, Jr., a 26-year-old Davenport architect, drew up at the Odd Fellows committee's request three different plans for the new building, all with provisions for a lodge room.<sup>3</sup> None of these satisfied all the lodge members. By a close vote the I.O.O.F. members decided not to participate in the construction of the building, and by mid-May, "Hardacre Hall" was designed to be a one-story building with an opera house with two small office rooms adjoining the lobby. Just a week later, the lodge reversed its decision, approving a \$4,200 appropriation to provide lodge rooms on the second floor and two 20-by-40-foot store rooms on the first floor flanking the opera house lobby (Harmel 2014; Stout 1987; Iowa State Census 1915).

<sup>2</sup> The names of these theaters were the Gem Theater, Kent's Theater, and the New Dreamland Theater (better known as the Majestic) (Harmel 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin W. Gartside, Jr., is named architect of the Hardacre Opera House at Tipton in *The American Contractor* 36 (August 21, 1915): 78.

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The ground-floor opera house design differed from Iowa’s earliest purpose-built opera houses, which were usually “two- or three-story wood frame or brick structures with commercial spaces or local government offices on the first floor and an auditorium and permanent seating on the upper floor(s)” (Schwenk 2009:9-10). The seating capacity of these early opera houses “reflected both the community and the surrounding rural population and ranged from accommodating fairly small audiences to as many as 600 to 900 patrons.” Likewise, the interior and exterior stylistic design and ornamentation reflected the size of the community, its economic circumstances, and popular architectural styles at the time of construction” (Schwenk 2009:9-10). For Tipton, Gartside designed the Hardacre Opera House to include seating for nearly 600, a capacity based on the population of Tipton, the county seat, and its hinterlands.

The letting held at Gartside’s office in July attracted a dozen contracting bids, all of which – even the lowest bid – far exceeded the estimate. Gartside then altered the opera house plans to generate lower bids. Although it is unknown how “exuberant” in style and ornamentation Gartside’s original plans for the Hardacre were, the new scaled down design called for a brick building with a broad commercial front and restrained stylistic features executed in a dark red face brick with terra cotta trim.

On September 29, the contract was let to Western Construction Co. of Iowa City for their low bid of \$20,975. Excavation was scheduled to begin October 4, but heavy rains caused serious problems with basements of adjoining buildings, resulting in the collapse of the brick wall of the Cobb building. In late October, the concrete fittings were poured and the basement walls were completed by November 12 (Harmel 2014).

When construction was completed in January 1916, the members of Manitou Lodge “invited the public to witness the interesting ceremonies of dedicating their beautiful new home in the Hardacre Memorial building.” Afterward, “the doors of the auditorium were thrown open for inspection and many people for the first time had the pleasure of examining this fine contribution to the town’s architectural improvement.”

From the lobby entrance back to the rear of the deep roomy stage, the opera house proper presents a very inviting and pleasing appearance. Nearly 400 comfortable chairs of modern design are placed in descending tiers to the orchestra pit, with wide aisles between sections. The balcony is capable of seating 200 more people, giving the auditorium a capacity of 600. Adjoining the stage are five dressing rooms provided with lavatories and toilets and a larger assembly room for general use. The stage is well supplied with necessary equipment and will afford ample space for the presentation of any ordinary play. The lighting facilities are ample and so arranged as to provide the best effects.

The two store rooms in front, while not large enough for most mercantile enterprises, are well adapted to some kinds of business and will doubtless find ready renters at remunerative rates.

The second floor is devoted exclusively to the use of the Odd Fellows, the large lodge room extending clear across the front part of the building, with a suite of smaller apartments, lavatories and toilet rooms in the rear. Everything in this connection is well adapted to the purposes for which it was designed, and the arrangement and equipment are all that could be desired. Naturally the Odd Fellows are well pleased with their new home, and the citizens of Tipton generally are proud of the attractive improvement (*Tipton Conservative*, April 12, 1916).

Although the two commercial spaces in the building were small, they were especially well suited to the local barbering trade, the majority of which occupied the west store room. Other small shop businesses that variously occupied these two store rooms included H.W. Riechert’s Electrical Supplies (c.1920); Walker Grocery (late 1920s); The Piatt Shop – Tipton’s Specialty Shop for Women (1929); Jack Sprat Food Stores (mid-1930s); Cosmo’s Lunches and Ice Cream (1936); Wallick Barber and Beauty Shop

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(late 1950s-early 1960s); and Max Crawford’s Barber Shop (early 1960s) (Harmel 2014).

In December 1915, a three-year lease of the Hardacre Opera House for \$1200 went to local painter Ralph E. Kent and his mother-in-law, widow Mrs. Anna Bagley, the two styling themselves as the Tipton Amusement Co.<sup>4</sup> In February 1916, just as the Hardacre Opera House neared completion, Kent began looking for an opening night act, and placed this want ad in the *Opera House Reporter*, a weekly theater trade newspaper published in Estherville, Iowa:

“Tipton. R.E. Kent, Manager. Hardacre Opera House, seats 600. Stage 22x46. Everything new and Up-To-Date. Now booking first class attractions. Looking for A1 opening show about April 10” (*Opera House Reporter*, February 18, 1916).

The *Opera House Reporter*, helped out with this bit of news: “The new opera house under construction at Tipton, Iowa, is near completion. Manager R.E. Kent is desirous to book a first class attraction to open the house, about April 10th” (*Opera House Reporter*, February 25, 1916). The *Moving Picture World*, the exhibitors’ trade journal, announced the opening of Tipton’s new picture theater, albeit one week late:

TIPTON, IA. – Ralph E. Kent has leased the new Hardacre Opera House and the opening is scheduled to take place on or about April 10. The house will be devoted to road shows and photoplays. Building and equipment modern in every particular; stage 22 by 46 feet; seating capacity 600; steam heat, electric lights, etc. (*Moving Picture World*, April 15, 1916).

Thus the Hardacre Opera House was intended to be a venue for both live shows and moving picture exhibitions from the start. Moving picture exhibition had been increasing in popularity and availability in the United States since the mid-1890s, after Thomas Edison invented the *Kinetoscope* – a moving picture machine for viewing by individuals – in 1892 and the Lumiere Bros. developed the *Cinematographe* – a device for exhibiting moving pictures by projection onto a special surface – in 1895 that made commercial exhibition for audiences possible. From then on, moving picture exhibition “quickly joined traditional American entertainment venues,” with acting troupes and vaudevillians easily incorporating moving pictures into their live stage shows. The novelty of the silent moving picture could boost attendance for the touring lecture series, the number of patrons at a penny arcade or amusement park, and were assured to fill the hall at the fireman’s benefit concert. These “movie picture shows” exhibited what became known as “actuality” films – pre-cursors to newsreels and documentaries – that showed scenes of vaudevillians performing, comics in skits, trick effects, notable persons, railway trains in motion, travelogues of scenic and foreign places, firefighters and police in action, military exercises, parades, naval scenes, expositions and fairs, and sporting events. Because they were silent, most moving picture exhibitions were supported with live performances, which might include the musical accompaniment (played by a pianist or orchestra) to the film, a narrator or lecturer to explain the images, and comedians or other live acts to round out the show (Schwenk 2009:17-20).

Starting a moving picture business was relatively easy and inexpensive. In 1906, a projector cost about \$65, a storefront room rented for \$5 per month, and a 1000-foot reel to wind the film during the projection of images was sold through the Sears-Roebuck catalog for one dollar. With a painted wall or white sheet for a screen and benches for seating, almost anyone feeling the entrepreneurial urge could become a moving picture exhibitor. Beside the relatively low cost of setting up in business, exhibitors were benefiting from the favorable socio-economic conditions created by Progressive-era legislation,

<sup>4</sup> What role Mrs. Bagley played in running the opera house is unknown at this time.

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resulting in a shortened work week and rising wages and giving more people the time and ability to go to the movies (Schwenk 2009:19-20).

In Iowa, moving picture theaters appeared in the state's larger cities as early as 1905, and the number of these theaters rapidly expanded through the post-World War I period. Owners of many of Iowa's opera houses, particularly those with ground-floor auditoria, attempted to capture revenues from both motion pictures and live performances, by converting their live performance theaters to motion picture theaters. An owner accomplished this conversion by erecting a screen at the back of the stage and installing a projection booth in the balcony, a process so simple that "by the beginning of World War I, moving pictures in the Midwest were the major attraction at most small-town opera houses (Schwenk 2009:19; 26). In the case of the Hardacre Opera House, the equipment for exhibiting "photoplays" (i.e., moving pictures) was already in place at the opening.

For the opening night performance on April 13th, Kent succeeded in booking the Selwyn & Co.'s play *Twin Beds*, which was a big success. Despite the controversial title of the play, which as the *Tipton Conservative* explained, "led some to believe that the performance might not be as quiet in tone as it should be for the proper entertainment of particular people," every seat in the auditorium was filled when the curtain rose "on the liveliest entertainment ever presented" in Tipton:

There were only seven persons in the cast, but every one of them was a real actor, and there were no dull intervals from the opening to the close. Situations of the most ludicrous character followed each other and the audience was kept in a roar of laughter most of the time. Nothing occurred, however, to offend the most fastidious sense of propriety or furnish any real ground for criticism. Everybody was pleased and the universal verdict a rattling good performance fully up to the requirements of the occasion. Manager Kent was fortunate in securing so good a company for his opening night and is to be congratulated on the success attending it (*Tipton Conservative*, April 19, 1916).

In addition to describing the quality of the opening night performance, the *Tipton Conservative* also gave its assessment of the auditorium and described the interior as a work in progress:

When the unpainted drop curtain was up the stage presented a decidedly handsome appearance and compared very favorable with those to be found in much more pretentious houses in larger places. The walls and ceiling need paint to give them a real attractive appearance, but that will come in time and then Tipton will have as nice a play house as can be found in any second class city of the state (*Tipton Conservative*, April 19, 1916).

The *Tipton Advertiser* gave their assessment of opening night, as well, writing: "The splendid acoustic properties of the playhouse were evidenced by the way in which every spoken word on the stage carried to the most distant seats. The fine lighting effects secured showed the excellence of the electrical appointments" (*Tipton Advertiser*, April 14, 1916).

Manager Kent brought several other entertainments to the Hardacre Opera House in 1916, including "The Around the Town" musical comedy company in May, Hermany's Cats and Dogs Gymnasts (featuring Foxy, The Flying Wonder) in June. Later that same month German War Pictures was possibly the first moving picture exhibition at the Hardacre. Appealing to America's continued neutrality during the first World War, German War Pictures was a lecture by former German army Lieutenant Alfred Mohr that accompanied the six reels of silent film footage documenting the German military and their Red Cross dogs. In late August, Kent booked the Chase-Lister Theatre Co., a troupe that specialized in drama, comedy, and vaudeville acts. Although Kent apparently had no previous theater background (he gave his occupation as "painter" in the 1915 Iowa State Census), he was evidently

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good at his job. The Blankenburg Trio fondly remembered their engagement at Tipton, and described the manager of the Hardacre Opera House as “a prince” (*Tipton Conservative*, June 14; June 7, 1916; and August 23, 1916; *Opera House Reporter*, June 9, 1916).

In late August, however, after just eight months in the business, Kent sold the Tipton Amusement Co.'s lease to Oliver P. M. Littlejohn, the recently retired proprietor of the hotel at Laurens, Iowa.<sup>5</sup> The announcement of the change in management was made in the *Opera House Reporter*: “R.E. Kent has retired as manager of the Hardacre Opera House at Tipton, Iowa. His position being filled by O.P. Littlejohn” (*Opera House Reporter*, September 29, 1916). Littlejohn seems to have purchased the Hardacre with the intention of operating it in part as a moving picture theater. His son, Oliver Littlejohn, worked at the theater as well, and learned to operate the projector and other mechanical equipment.<sup>6</sup> Littlejohn managed the theater through June 1918, possibly longer. During his tenure as manager, Littlejohn continued to feature the live entertainment for which the Hardacre Opera House had been built. In September, he booked the popular play, *The House of a Thousand Candles*, as well as the theater company Gaskell & MacVitty, Inc., for a special one-night only presentation of the drama *Graustark*, the advertisement for which made clear that it was “Not A Moving Picture Show.” In October, comedian W.B. Patton’s play *Lazy Bill*, and Rowland-Clifford-Gatts (Inc.) presented *In Old Kentucky*. For a week in early November the Gordinier Bros. Stock Co. performed several plays and vaudeville acts and later the Blanchard Dram Players brought *The Heart of the Hills* to the Hardacre stage. Each of the theatrical companies booked at the Hardacre Opera House brought carloads of their own scenery and props. In late October, Tipton and Cedar County residents packed the house to hear the Hon. Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the U.S. Navy speak on “Prosperity, Peace and Preparedness,” a laudation of the Wilson administration (*Tipton Advertiser*, September 6; September 13; September 20; November 3, 1916; *Tipton Conservative*, September 13; and September 20; October 18; October 25, 1916; November 1; and November 29, 1916). H.H. Whittier of *Opera House Reporter* included this traveling show manager’s report about the Hardacre and the Tipton community:

Monday at Tipton, Iowa, a dandy town with an up to date ground floor house, the Hardacre, modern in every respect; just changing management. We did a fine business and the performance went over fine; aided a great deal by the dandy ladies’ orchestra they have there (*Opera House Reporter*, September 29, 1916).

Under Littlejohn’s management, the Hardacre Opera House gradually added more moving picture exhibitions to the program schedule. The first big moving picture feature was D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, shown in December 1916 (Harmel 2014). By October 1918, Littlejohn was showing “war films” every Wednesday (Stout 1987). Moving from live road shows to moving picture exhibition was a relatively easy transition for Iowa’s theater owners. As historian Sally Schwenk explains:

In Iowa, as in neighboring states, many of the activities associated with doing business on a live theater traveling circuit established precedents for the early distribution and exhibition of movies throughout the state. In live theater, the traveling troupe’s business manager initially established a relationship and contract with the local exhibition venue which would be rented; each party either split the gross receipts for each performance or the performing company rented the hall or opera house for a given number of performances. The business manager or a “front man,” often referred to as the advance man, preceded the company’s arrival in each town and made final arrangements with the opera house manager or owner of a community hall or lodge room, handled the final details of lodging arrangements for the group, placed

<sup>5</sup> “O.P.M. Littlejohn, who formerly operated a hotel at Laurens, has bought a moving picture theater at Tipton, and took possession last week.” *Pocahontas Record*, September 7, 1916; “Laurens Hotel Sold,” *Pocahontas County Sun*, May 11, 1916.

<sup>6</sup> WWI Draft Records, Oliver R. Littlejohn, 1918; US Census 1920.

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advertisements in the local newspaper(s) and arranged for the printing of handbills to be displayed in store windows and hand-delivered by young boys.

Economic success for both building owner and the traveling company depended on the general economy of the community and the organizational skills and internal management of both the traveling troupe and performance hall owners. These economic issues would be important factors in the distribution and exhibition of motion pictures in Iowa well into the 1960s (Schwenk 2009:E13-14).<sup>7</sup>

As in most small-town opera houses in Iowa, by 1918, moving pictures had become the major attraction at the Hardacre Opera House. In March 1919, Calvin A. Lopeman, an experienced moving picture exhibitor from Belle Plaine, bought the Hardacre lease from Littlejohn. Under Lopeman’s proprietorship, the Hardacre showed films by Paramount Pictures daily, suggesting an investment in newer projection equipment and possibly a new screen. Ticket prices ranged from 11 to 17 to 22 cents. The former owner’s son, Oliver Littlejohn, continued to work as the theater’s “Mechanic,” probably as the projectionist and equipment engineer, while Hazel Snyder, the 26-year-old unmarried daughter of the town’s late mayor Charles Snyder, was “Manager” (US Census 1920; Stout 1987; Harmel 2014; *Tipton Conservative*, August 30, 1916; Iowa State Census 1915; US Census 1920).<sup>8</sup>

In addition to daily moving picture exhibitions, the Hardacre Theater continued to feature live entertainment and function as a community hall for the people of Tipton. In May 1917, the senior class of Tipton High School presented their “annual class play” on the Hardacre stage to a packed house (*Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, May 18, 1917). In January 1919, Little Edna May, child performer and gymnast, and Buster, “the wonderful canine with the human brain,” were highlights of the week-long Clifton Comedy show (*Tipton Advertiser*, January 7 and 17, 1919). The following month, on February 21, a public memorial was held at the Hardacre to honor “two Tipton boys . . . killed in action while serving their country in France” (*Tipton Advertiser*, February 28, 1919).

The first of many updates to the theater came in 1927, when a new pipe organ, which accompanied the silent film exhibitions, was installed. Less than a year later, the theater closed for a week for redecoration and repair, during which time the inner foyer (extant) was constructed between the interior lobby and the auditorium (Stout 1987; Harmel 2014).

***Beulah I. DeNune and The Hardacre: Development of a Modern Motion Picture Theater, 1928-1948***

Although Beulah I. DeNune was an important figure in the history and development of the Hardacre Theater into a modern motion picture theater, most of the changes she made to the building itself (i.e., the marquee, interior décor, equipment, etc.) were replaced during the 1948 remodeling. For that reason, the Hardacre Theater is not being nominated under Criterion B significance.

<sup>7</sup> In February 1917, one troupe’s front man criticized the management and staff of the Hardacre Opera House: “Friday at Tipton, Iowa, the last stand in the state for this season. We played the beautiful Hardacre theatre and it surely is some beauty and at present is under the management of O.P.M. Littlejohn who was sick in bed during our engagement and the parties whom the work was left to in the way of advertising layed [sic] down on it, and had to be done after our arrival. With all kinds of opposition we did all that could be expected and that is not saying much. This town with the proper hustling, should be a good one-nighter” (*Opera House Reporter*, February 2, 1917).

<sup>8</sup> Other theater staff in 1920 may have included “Motion Picture Showman” Bert Myers, who may have worked at the Hardacre or one of the other “Picture Theaters” that continued in business for at least a year following the opening of the Hardacre Opera House. By 1926, and probably earlier, however, the Hardacre Theater was the only motion picture theater in Tipton (see *Film Year Book*, 1926).



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In November 1928, Calvin A. Lopeman sold the Hardacre Theater business to Grover L. DeNune, a long-time moving picture exhibitor and resident of DeWitt, Iowa, where he and his wife Beulah I. (Hippler) DeNune owned and operated the Majestic Theater. Ernest R. McDaniels, a grocery store manager in DeWitt, became G. L. DeNune’s local manager of the theater in Tipton. Just one year later, DeNune had the Hardacre Theater equipped with a Vitaphone disc sound system.<sup>9</sup> The first “Talky” exhibited with the new technology was *The Broadway Melody*, a drama of the Gay White Way, starring Charles King, Anita Page, and Bessie Love in an all talking, all singing, all dancing motion picture (Stout 1987; *Motion Picture News*, January 4, 1930; *Anamosa Journal*, November 22, 1928).

By 1932, and possibly earlier, Beulah DeNune had assumed ownership of the Hardacre Theater business. Like many female film exhibitors, DeNune had a family background in the amusement business (Fuller-Seeley 2013). In 1912, her father W.C. Hippler and Grover L. DeNune became associated in the moving picture business in Belle Plaine, styling themselves Hippler & DeNune (*Motion Picture News* 1913; *Belle Plain Union*, October 30, 1913). Over the following year, the firm prospered, and by late 1913, Hippler & DeNune were operating three moving picture theaters, one in Belle Plaine, Iowa, one in Bellevue, Iowa, and one in Rock Falls, Illinois. The business partnership apparently sparked a romance between the young DeNune and Hippler’s daughter, Beulah, and the couple married in December 1913 at Clinton, Iowa, which was close to Hippler & DeNune’s theater in Rock Falls (*Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, December 3, 1913). By 1918, G. L. DeNune had become owner and manager of the Majestic Theater in DeWitt, Iowa, where the couple then resided and had one daughter, Enid. The three lived together in DeWitt until 1928, when the DeNunes’ daughter died. That same year, G.L. DeNune purchased the Hardacre Theater from Calvin A. Lopeman. The DeNunes’ marriage ended sometime after 1930, for by 1932, the former DeWitt resident is described as “Miss” Beulah DeNune,” “manager and operator of the Hardacre Theatre” in the social column of the *Olin Recorder*, a newspaper in a nearby town (*Olin Recorder*, September 15, 1932).<sup>10</sup> According to her own “Monthly Program Schedule” from 1932, Beulah I. DeNune was the “Prop. and Mgr.” of the Hardacre Theater, and in 1933, the Tipton City Directory listed her occupation as “proprietor Hardacre Theater” and her residence as the Hotel Tipton, where her theater manager, Jack Blaney, resided as well (Polk 1933/IAGenWeb).

That Beulah DeNune’s name never appeared as owner or manager of the Hardacre in the trade journals (only G. L. DeNune’s did) reflects the almost total male domination of motion picture exhibition, and particularly in the Hollywood-run picture palaces, by 1930. In the early years of moving picture theater expansion, women were a tiny minority (perhaps two to five percent of the total) of those managing such businesses, and not because it was a new field and therefore ungendered. Although the skill required to operate a projector had already been masculinized by the early twentieth century,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Vitaphone was a sound-on-disc system developed by Bell Telephone Laboratories and Western Electric. The system was first embraced by Warner Brothers and over 100 short subjects were produced at the Warner Brothers-First National Studios in the mid 1920s. The cumbersome equipment, used to produce and show the product, did not create a demand for more talking films and the inconsistent quality of the synchronized sound system often produced unintentional laughter from audiences. The first major success was the World Premiere of DON JUAN at the Warner Brothers Theatre in New York City on August 6, 1926.(from The Belknap Collection for the Performing Arts, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida. Accessed at <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/spec/belknap/exhibit2002/vitaphone.htm> - July 2015).

<sup>10</sup> When Grover L. DeNune died in 1948, his obituary noted his marriage to Ann Ryan in 1942, and his late daughter Enid “by a former marriage” (*Belle Plaine Union*, September 9, 1948).

<sup>11</sup> “The Latin-derived names of the first film machines—Kinetoscope, Vitascope, and Kineoptikon—suggest an association with science and technology, traditionally masculine areas of expertise” (Fuller-Seeley 2013).

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however, “the *business* of running a small retail, entertainment, or service establishment was not as severely gender-typed (Fuller-Seeley 2013).<sup>12</sup> As film historian Katherine Fuller-Seeley writes:

A survey of US film trade journals from 1907 to 1918 finds mention of nearly 140 women who were primary purchasers of theatres. They were a small minority of approximately 12,000 theatre owners, but were nevertheless discussed in print as colleagues. The six female projectionists noted in the trades, however, were reported as curiosities.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps hundreds more unmentioned women were key to movie theatres as participants in family businesses, partners, or employees holding major responsibilities (Fuller-Seeley 2013).

In addition to their management skills, women found that motion picture exhibitors’ concern over outside censorship gave them influence in the business. “Women,” Fuller-Seeley writes, “were believed to be morally superior to men, thanks to lingering remnants of the nineteenth-century ideology of ‘true womanhood.’ The mere presence of women could cleanse an audience, a business, or an industry, as it did vaudeville in the 1890s.” In a series of profiles from 1910 to 1913 of one famous female exhibitor, Josephine Clement, the trade journals “attributed her success to the fact the she was a woman,” lauding her “refined management, her theatre’s “wholesome condition,” and “spick and span attendants,” all of which distinguished her from “ignorant, obstinate commercialism of a short-sighted, money-grabbing” exhibitor, the type who “unfortunately rul[ed] the roost.” When another female manager was praised “for keeping her theatre especially clean, comfortable, and well ventilated, she replied that ‘it is attention of this nature that is a strong point in a woman’s management of a picture house.’” Attracting the orderly family trade was the goal of the model theater, and with such a woman in charge, parents would feel comfortable bringing their children to the movies (Fuller-Seeley 2013).

Such was first Hardacre Opera House manager Ralph E. Kent’s likely motive for partnering with his mother-in-law, widow “Mrs. Anna Bagley,” as the Tipton Amusement Co. Bagley’s name alone would convince Tipton residents of the clean wholesome entertainment they were likely to see at the Hardacre Theater. The same goes for the previously mentioned Hazel Snyder in her management role under proprietor Calvin A. Lopeman in 1920. As the daughter of the town’s mayor, Snyder’s gender and name were both assets to the motion picture theater business.

Although women continued to own and manage motion picture theaters during the 1920s, their numbers were greatly reduced by the theater empires amassed by the film production studios, which built their own ornate urban picture palaces and bought out established chains. The cost of a new theater went from \$1,000 to \$12,000 in the early 1910s to \$100,000 and more by the mid-1920s. Banks of that era generally denied women such a level of credit, but female exhibitors in smaller towns, where costs were much lower, experienced fewer such obstacles buying or renting large theaters (Fuller-Seeley 2013). Beulah DeNune was one such female exhibitor, who was apparently able to secure the building loans necessary to make continual updates to the Hardacre Theater. In July 1936, for example, she had a “new ‘washed air’ system of air conditioning installed by American Air Conditioning

<sup>12</sup> Original emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Intriguingly, as Fuller-Seeley writes, “these women were involved in exhibition during the period when theatre managers exercised great power over the creation of the show. Exhibitors not only selected what films to rent or purchase, but arranged the two-to-fifteen-minute films into programs.” In other words, a theater manager’s job involved producing a multi-media show, for which the manager would edit (with scissors!) a film for length and content, choose the musical accompaniment, sound effects, ‘illustrated songs,’ and other live entertainment, and sometimes even provide a lecture to go along with the screening (Fuller-Seeley 2013).

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Corp.<sup>14</sup> By 1936, but possibly earlier, she had erected the theater’s first neon marquee in the Streamline Moderne style (*Tipton Conservative* 1940; Historic Photo 1936). In 1939, DeNune leased a second motion picture theater – the newly built Toy Theatre – located just around the corner from the Hardacre on the west side of Cedar Street.<sup>15</sup> She also had new American Body Form Restful Chairs, the latest in theater seating – installed in the Hardacre auditorium (*Showman’s Trade Review* 1940).<sup>16</sup> By 1941, DeNune had installed a Western Electric Mirrophonic Sound system, which was a great improvement on the theater’s 1929 system (Hardacre Theatre and Toy Theatre Monthly Program Schedule, 1941). As Don Stout writes, Beulah DeNune was “undoubtedly a capable businesswoman,” since “her theatre routinely ran at sell out, or nearly so, year in and year out,” an amazing feat considering she operated the theater through most of the Great Depression (Stout 1987).

The 1920s also saw the old idea of female moral superiority all but vanish, but the belief that women could attract and keep a “better” clientele did not. The ideal proprietor/manager in 1925, according to the manager of the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, New York, was “a combination of housekeeper, butler, host, and guardian of the property. His first duty is to see that his guests are happy and comfortable.” In other words, a good motion picture theater manager was a person with traditional feminine qualities (Fuller-Seeley 2013). According to Stout, Beulah DeNune, known to some as “B.I.,” was “colorful,” a woman of “smaller dimensions,” who “portrayed the same style and demeanor as Mae West.” He remembered she typically wore “a long black closely fitted gown, her fingers laden with rings,” and “enjoyed playing poker with some of the ‘boys.’” Despite this somewhat provocative image, which may or may not be completely accurate, DeNune had nevertheless earned the trust of the desirable family trade through special events, bargain nights, and catering to children. In July 1931, she changed “Bargain Night”<sup>17</sup> from Wednesdays to Thursdays, so Tipton’s merchants – who kept their stores open late on Wednesday evenings – and store clerks could join in the lower ticket prices. In 1932, she presented for area families a special “Fall Style Show,” for which a promenade was built thru the center of the house for “live models [to] show the newest styles of fall” for men, women, and children, along with acrobatic dancing and a feature film, all for bargain ticket prices (*Olin Recorder*, September 22, 1932). Every Christmas Eve, DeNune gave “her annual free show to the kiddies of the community” – along with a gift to each child who attended – a tradition she began sometime before 1938. DeNune also kept the community informed of upcoming attractions with her “Monthly Program Schedules, which she mailed to residents of Tipton and the surrounding Cedar County community for the duration of her proprietorship. All her programs, she assured potential movie-goers, were “balanced with news, comedies, acts, and novelties (*Muscatine Journal*, December 22, 1943; Harmel 2014; Fuller-Seeley 2013; “Program for the Month” 1933).

<sup>14</sup> As Stout describes it, the new system “kept the temperature within the theatre about 20 degrees cooler than outside. Air shafts were built along each side of the downstairs wall and 2 special ducts built for the balcony. In addition to furnishing perfect comfort to patrons when outside temperatures were very high; it also furnished pure air at all times; at least that was the sales pitch.” Components of this system are extant. According rehabilitation architectural report, the system entered the load-in doors and was ducted through the stage area. “The system occupies a large area of the stage indicating the addition severely limited the capacity of the stage to host live performances or traveling shows” (Rohrbach Associates 2014:25).

<sup>15</sup> “Announcement was made last week that the Miller building, razed by fire Dec. 28, will be rebuilt as a modern theatre building. The building has been leased for a term years to Beulah I. DeNune, who will continue to operate the Hardacre theatre on East Fifth Street. The lower floor of the new building will be occupied by the theatre, while offices will be located on the second floor” (*Iowa City Press Citizen*, January 10, 1939).

<sup>16</sup> Some of this seating appears to be extant.

<sup>17</sup> Bargain Night admission was 10 and 20 cents, as opposed to 15 and 50 cents Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and 10 and 40 cents Thursday and Friday (Harmel 2014).

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***The Hardacre Theater at Mid-Century, 1948-1965***

Sometime before July 1947, Beulah DeNune sold the Hardacre Theater business to Iowa United Theatres, a motion picture theater chain based in Des Moines. John Snyder became local manager. In December 1948, the new proprietor decided the 32-year-old theater needed a makeover, and to that end ordered a new neon marquee built by the Iowa Neon Sign Company in Des Moines. Not long after the new marquee was in place, Iowa United Theatres hired Dahlstrom & Weinberger Company of Minneapolis to redecorate and modernize the public areas of the interior. Dahlstrom & Weinberger were well known in the Midwest movie theater industry and specialized in theater decoration and modernization, which included all interior materials and furnishings (carpeting, paint, lighting, seating, stage drapery, lobby furnishings, etc.), and in particular free-hand wall murals and motifs.<sup>18</sup> Inside the Hardacre, the company “installed soft lighting effects. The ceiling was ornately designed in off-white art work all applied free hand. Doors to the theatre auditorium were trimmed with chrome studded upholstery nails and chrome door bars. New show card cases and advertising space added \$1,000 to the bill. As a final touch the floors refinished.” The free-hand work included the hand-painted floral motifs on the interior lobby ceiling and on the new proscenium arch (Rohrbach Associates 2014; Stout 1987).

The Hardacre continued as a small town movie theater and community hall through the 1950s and 1960s. Clarence Nayland took over as manager in the early 1950s. Francis Schilling became manager in 1953, having been “part of the Hardacre since he was a teen-ager,” when he served as assistant projectionist and popcorn salesman. Schilling managed the theater until 1970, when he purchased it from Iowa United Theatres (Stout 1987; Hough 1979).

***The Theater in the Modern Era***

In 1972, a stage extension was built to make live entertainment and shows at the Hardacre possible again. By 1979, the Hardacre was being used for plays and fashion shows. Backstage, the Tipton Playhouse remodeled the old dressing rooms and regularly presented plays. A children’s theater took over in the summer, and local groups occasionally staged fashion shows. In 1975, a partnership between the University of Iowa Drama Department, the Tipton Playhouse Theatre, and the Hardacre resulted in several plays performed by the University of Iowa drama students throughout the 1980s (Hough 1979; Rohrbach Associates 2014:26).

In 1978, unable to keep up with the gas heating bills that hovered at \$1,000 a month in the winter, the I.O.O.F. sold the building to Louie E. and Virginia M. Cook. The lodge itself disbanded in 1988, and the hall later subdivided into apartments. In 1982, ever diminishing audiences at the Hardacre forced Schilling to sell his lease to Lee and Frances Kenney, who reintroduced live theater with Tipton Playhouse productions. The Kenneys carried on until 1986, when they declared bankruptcy and the

<sup>18</sup> In 1939, they received the contract for the interior decoration of a brand new theater – The Wisconsin -- in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin. In the lobby, an artist for the company created a swan mural and “two brilliantly colored leaf panels” (*Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, January 30, 1939). In modernizing The Chief, a movie theater in Britt, Iowa, Dahlstrom & Weinberger artists “painted murals on the walls depicting Indians hunting buffalo, Indian teepees and covered wagons. The murals are in brown and white on a background of old rose. Panels near the ceiling have been painted in green, red and white” (*Britt News-Tribune*, August 8, 1951).

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theater closed. Just one year later, the Hardacre reopened with new owners Jeff and Julie Eisentraut (Stout 1987; Harmel 2014; Rohrbach Associates 2014:26).

In 1997, Troy Peters founded the Hardacre Film Festival, which became an annual event typically held in August, that showed independent films from around the world on the Hardacre Theater screen. The festival continued for the next 16 years, until the theater was closed for renovation in 2013.

### ***Architecture of Hardacre Theater***

#### **The Hardacre Theater: Opera House Movie Theater**

The Hardacre Theater is a rare surviving example of an opera house movie theater. Unlike opera houses built before 1910, which were typically second-floor auditoriums in a multi-functional commercial block, the Hardacre Theater – built in 1915-1916 – was a ground-floor opera house, the main feature of a commercial block that included two small storefronts and an Odd Fellows lodge hall on the second floor. In addition, the Hardacre Theater's association with Tipton's Odd Fellows is one of many examples throughout Iowa of fraternal groups building opera houses to house commercial entertainment, community events, and lodge activities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Hardacre Theater is of particular architectural note, because it represents: "the tradition of fraternal groups which constructed buildings with the opera house on the ground floor and the lodge rooms above in secondary spaces. These buildings also had a hierarchy of dedicated commercial spaces for retail sales, businesses, and for offices of professionals that, with the theater income, generated revenue for the fraternal organization to maintain their private meeting rooms and philanthropic activities" (Schwenk 2009:14).

The theater's broad commercial front, dark red face brick, and white terra cotta trim was a good fit for Tipton, a modest rural county seat of 2,000 residents. The more restrained architectural style also may have been a cost-saving design strategy by architect Gartside, when the first round of bids for the Hardacre Opera House produced construction estimates way over budget (see Stout 1987).

#### **Benjamin W. Gartside, Jr., Architect**

The architect of the Hardacre Opera House and Memorial Hall, Benjamin W. Gartside, Jr., was born in Davenport, Iowa, in 1885. His father, Benjamin W. Gartside, was also an architect, who in 1878, joined and later headed the architectural and designing department of the T.W. McClelland Company, Davenport's most prolific nineteenth-century builder. He eventually became vice president.<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Gartside, Jr., also studied architecture and worked for his father for a number of years at the McClelland Company before joining the Bettendorf Company around 1910.

By 1913, Gartside, Jr., had opened his own architectural practice in Davenport, and that same year designed the North Harrison Trust & Savings Bank, also in Davenport. Besides the Hardacre Opera House, other early career buildings by Gartside include the Amusement & Drill Hall in Oxford, Iowa; McCausland Savings Bank in McCausland, Iowa; and the Trinity Ex. Lutheran School in Des Moines, all in 1916 (*The American Contractor* 37 (June 24, 1916): 16; *The American Contractor* 37 (June 3,

<sup>19</sup> See Martha Bowers, *Historical and Architectural Resources of Davenport, Iowa*. Multiple Property Document, National Register of Historic Places (1982).

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1916): 106; *The Construction News* 36 (August 2, 1913): 26). In 1925, Gartside was the advising architect for the Fisher & Fisher Co.'s Model Electric Home. By then, Gartside had designed more than 500 homes in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin (*Davenport Democrat and Leader*, February 1, 1925). In 1929, the architect was managing a new building service department for the Gordon Van Tine Co., the mail-order building company in Davenport (*Davenport Democrat and Leader*, March 17, 1929).



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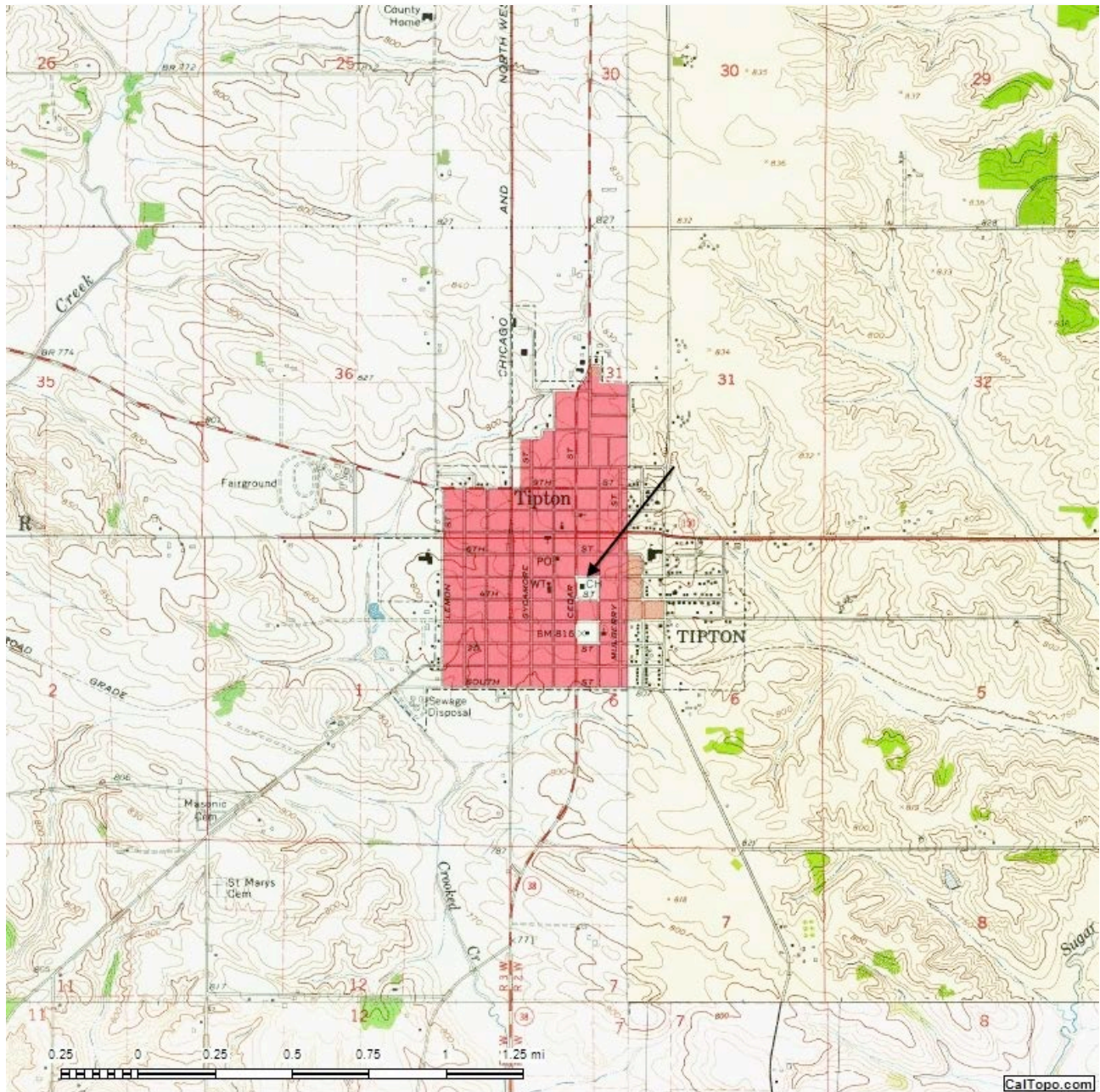


Figure 1.

Hardacre Theater, Linn County, Iowa N↑

41.770226, -91.127822



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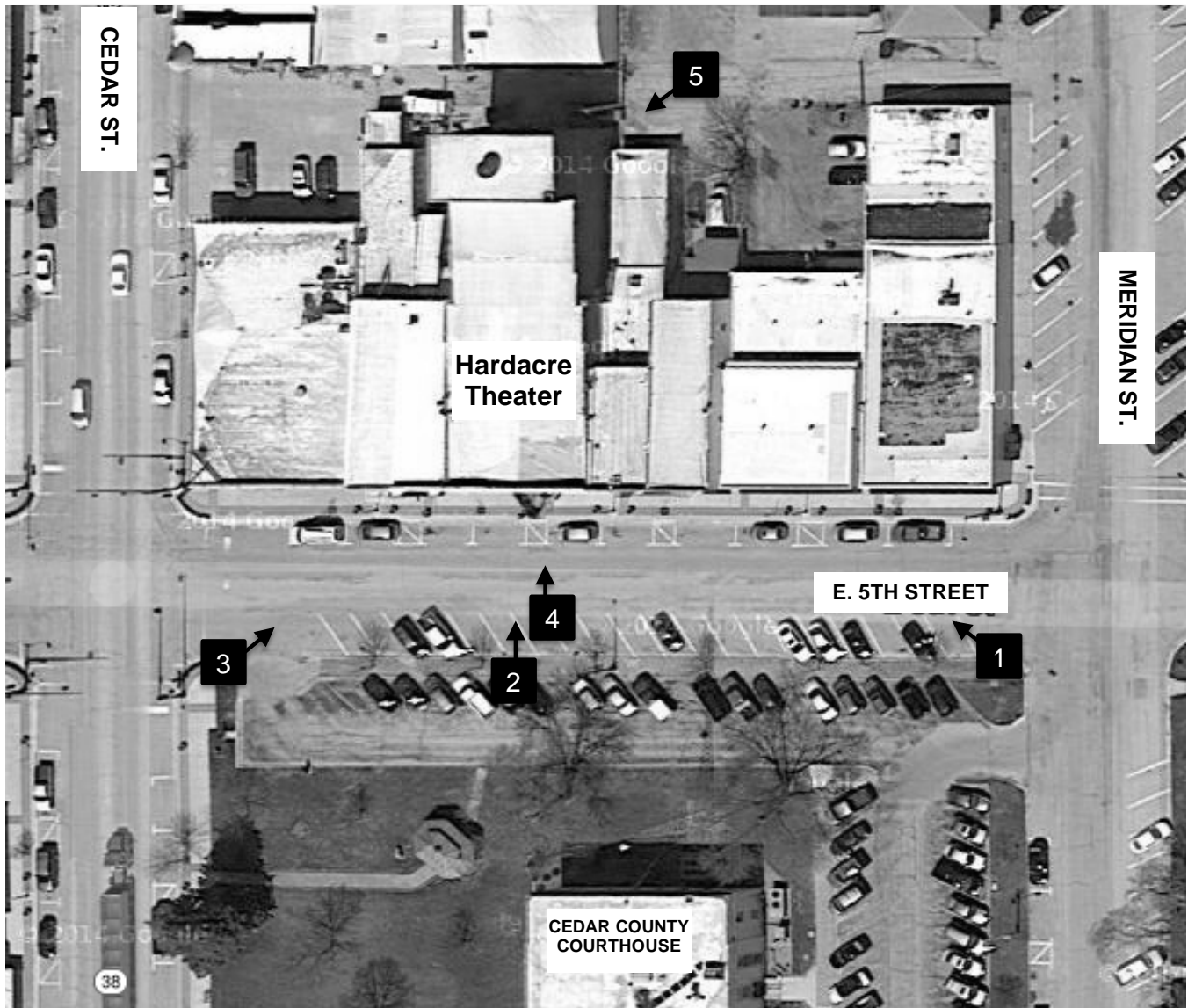


Figure 2. Site Plan Photo Key (Photos 1-5) N↑

Base map: Imagery 2015 DigitalGlobe USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data 2015 Google

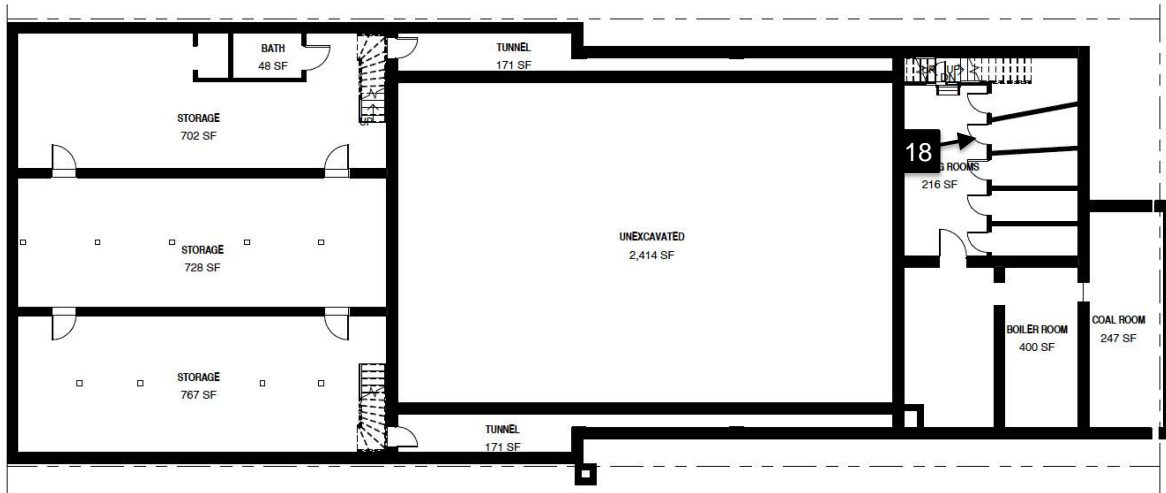
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**EXISTING PLAN - BASEMENT**

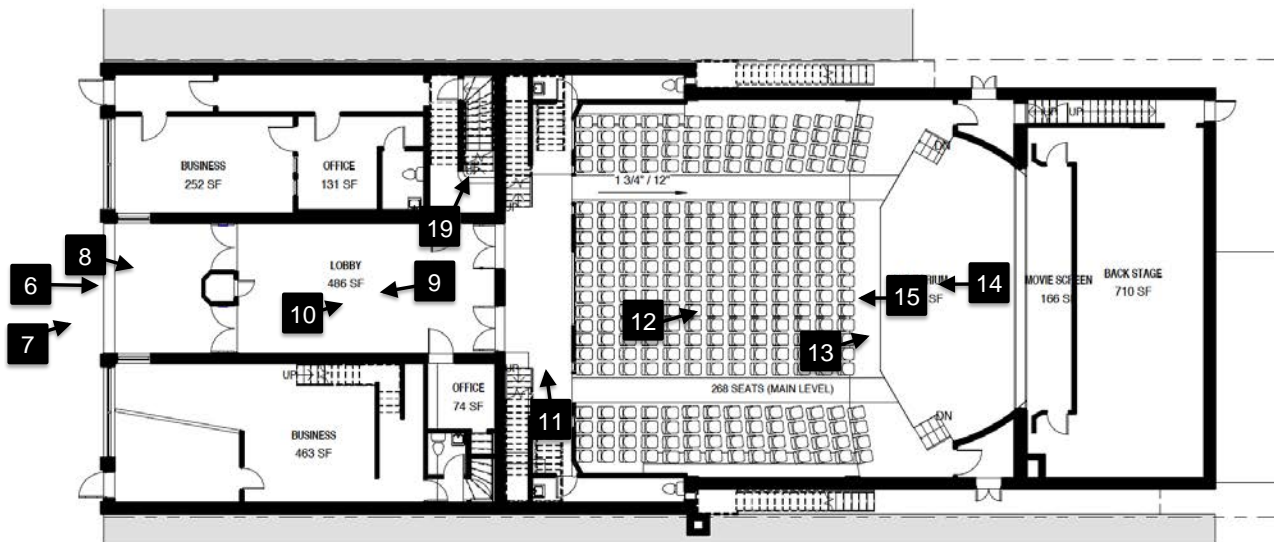
3/32" = 1'-0"



**Figure 3. Basement Level Photo Key (Photo 18)**

N ➔

Floor plan: Rohrbach Associates, P.C. 2014



**FIRST FLOOR - EXISTING PLAN**

3/32" = 1'-0"



**Figure 4. Main Level Photo Key (Photos 6-15 and 19)**

N ➔

Floor plan: Rohrbach Associates, P.C. 2014

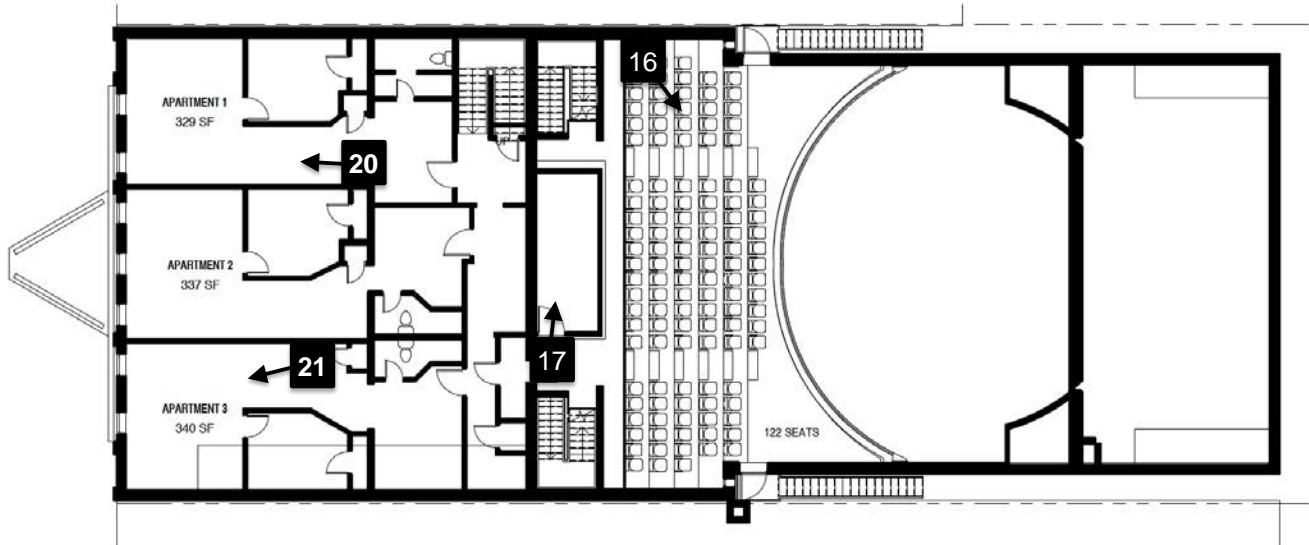
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EXISTING PLAN - SECOND LEVEL

3/32" = 1'-0"



Figure 5. Second Level Photo Key (Photos 16-17 and 20-21) N➔

Floor plan: Rohrbach Associates, P.C. 2014



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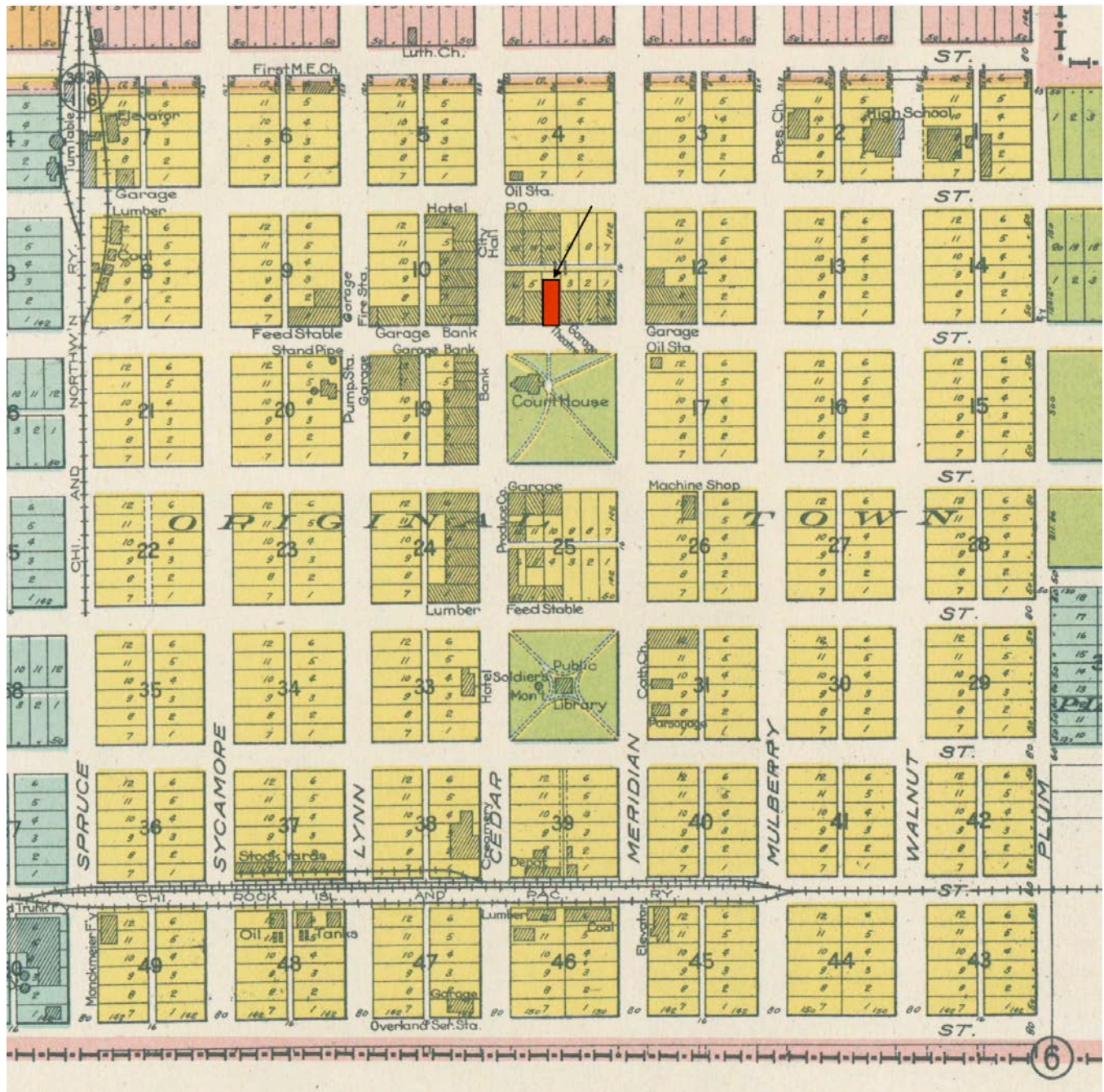


Figure 6. Original Town Plat of Tipton, 1921, with Hardacre Theater indicated (box/arrow) N↑

Source: Huebinger Publishing Co. 1921

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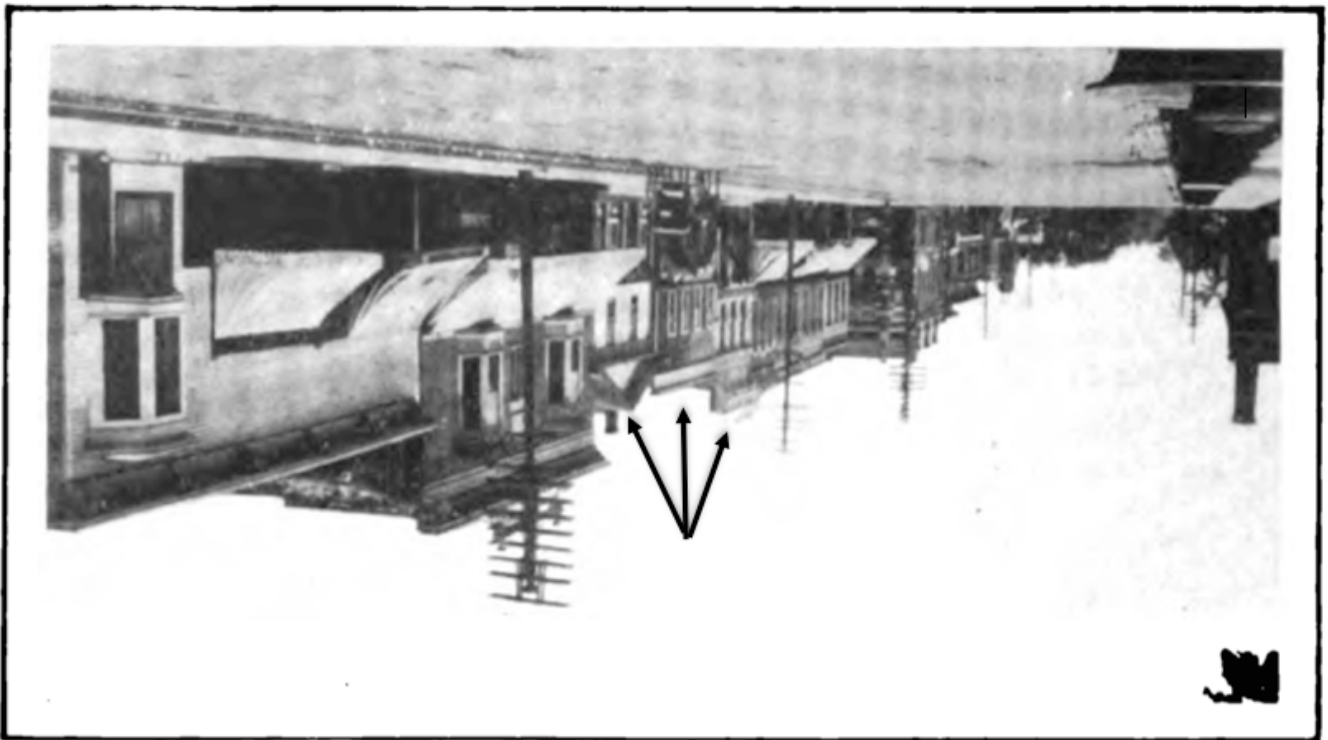


Figure 7. View northwest of E. 5th Street, showing commercial buildings facing Tipton's courthouse square. Arrows indicate the three buildings replaced by the Hardacre Opera House and Memorial Hall in 1916. No comparable historic view has been located after the theater was built. Source: Auner 1910



Figure 8. Benjamin W. Gartside, Jr., was a 26-year-old architect in Davenport, when he was hired to design the Hardacre Opera House and Memorial Hall in Tipton. Source: Davenport Democrat and Leader, March 17, 1929



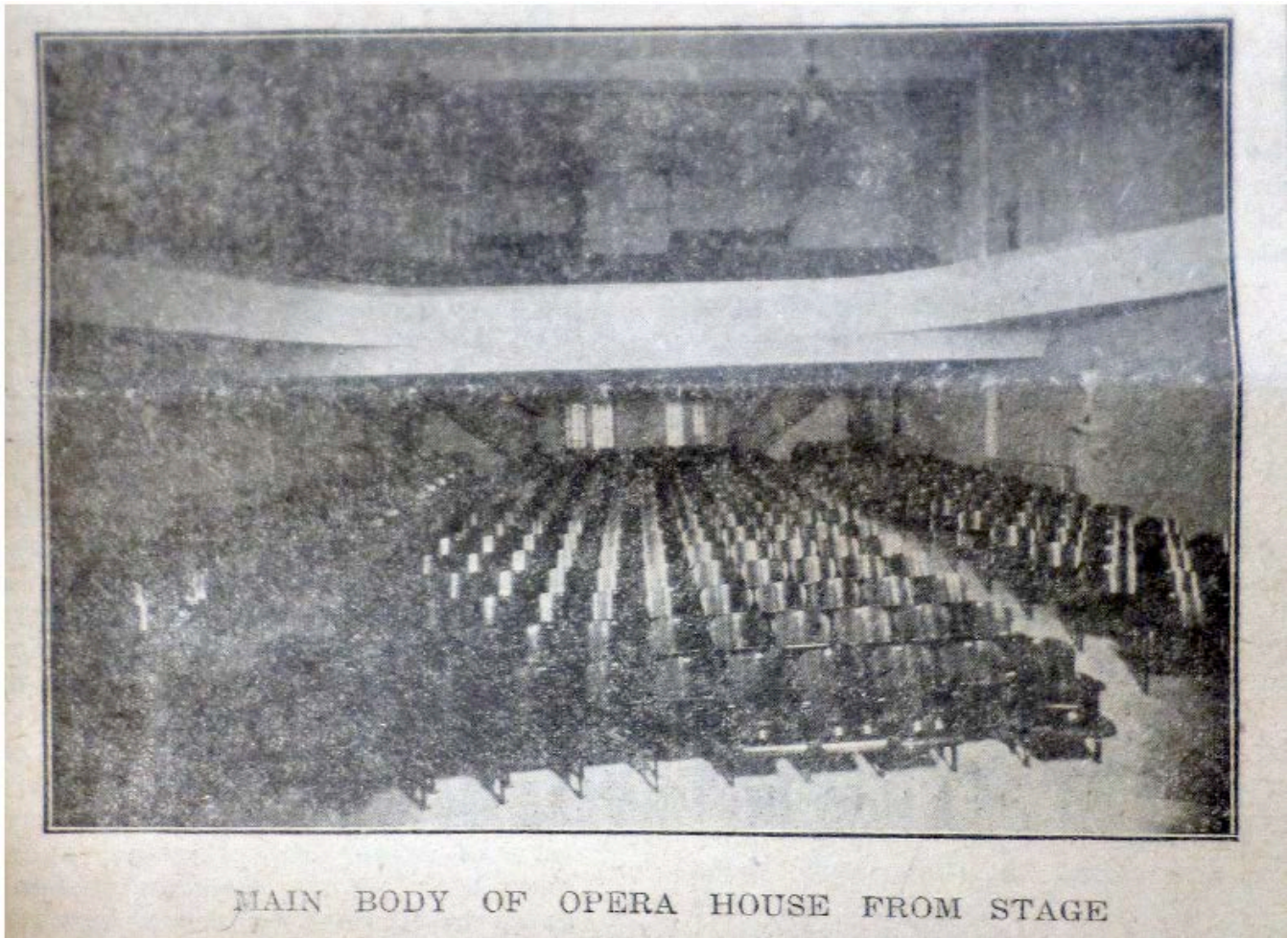
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**Figure 9. Main Body of Hardacre Opera House from Stage, 1916**

Source: *The Tipton Advertiser*, April 7, 1916



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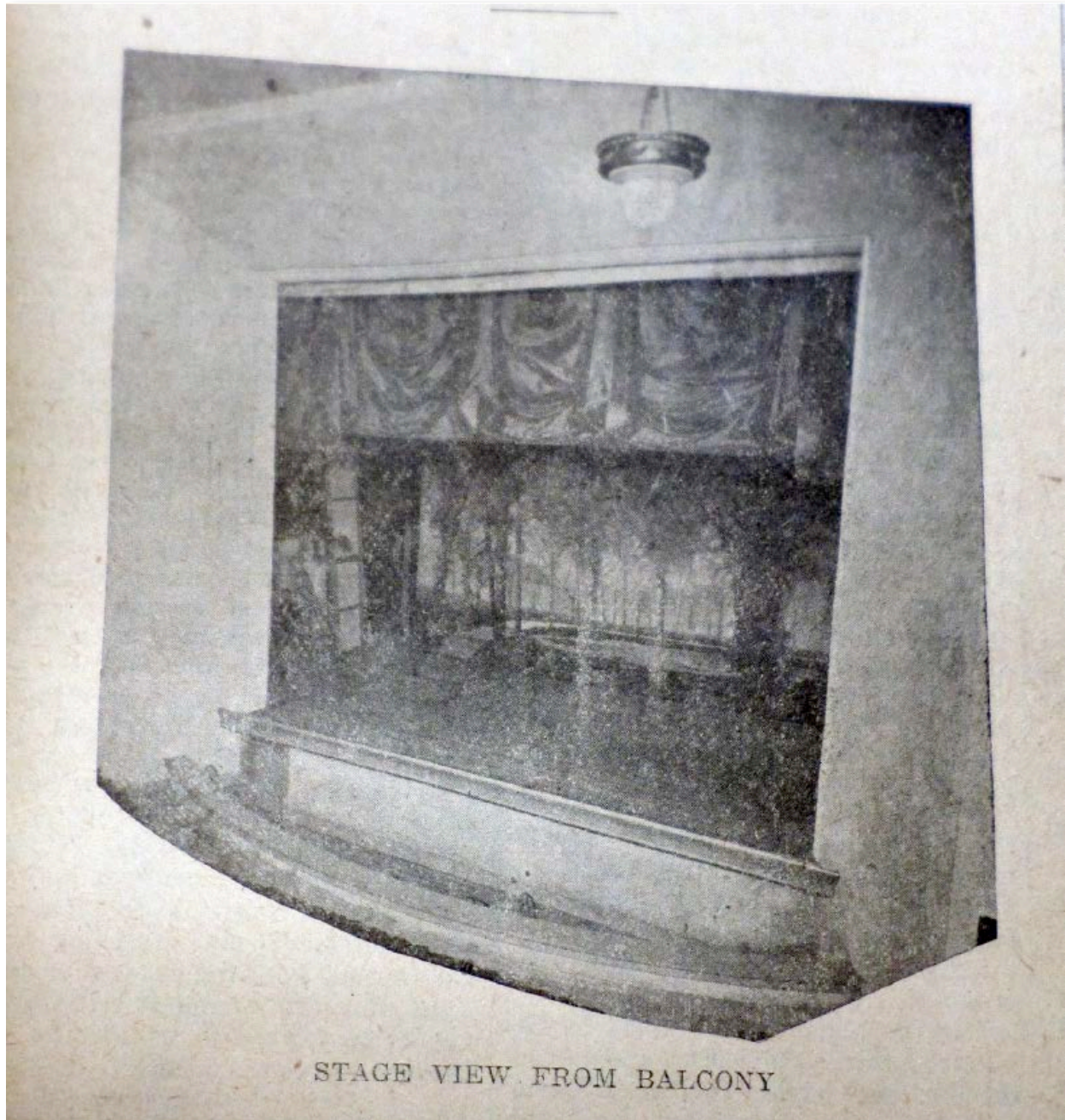
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**Figure 10. Stage View from Balcony, Hardacre Opera House, 1916**

Source: *The Tipton Advertiser*, April 7, 1916

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Figure 11. View of The Hardacre and its Streamline Moderne marquee, mid-1930s, when the theater was owned and operated by Beulah I. DeNune

Source: Rohrbach Associates, Inc. 2014



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**Figure 12. Snapshot with Hardacre Theater (and first neon marquee) in background, July 4, 1936**

Source: Hardacre Theater Preservation Association

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Figure 13. Hardacre Theater, 1940, during Beulah I. DeNune's proprietorship. Note the stainless steel ticket booth (extant) and the neon Streamline Moderne marquee (nonextant), two of many updates made by DeNune during her almost two decades as owner/manager, 1940.

Source: *Tipton Conservative*, 1940



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*These Theatres have installed*

AMERICAN  
**Bodiform**  
RESTFUL CHAIRS

**Since these great theatre chairs  
first appeared one year ago!**

*Why not visit the theatre listed below which is nearest you? Ask the manager  
what he thinks about the American Bodiform Chairs. Then let us show you why.*

<p><b>NEW ENGLAND</b></p> <p>PARADE.....Portland, N. H. OPERA HOUSE.....Bellevue Falls, Va. BILLS.....Andover, Mass. MIDDLEBURY.....Middlebury, Mass. GREENDALE.....Wareham, Mass. AVON.....Standish, Conn. JEWETT.....Jewett, Conn. PLAZA.....Windsor, Conn. HOPKINSVILLE.....Bridgeport, Conn. WATERBY.....Branford, Conn.</p> <p><b>NEW YORK</b></p> <p>NEWSPICE.....New York City STATE.....Easton, N. Y. CENTURY.....Buffalo, N. Y. FLATIRON.....Brooklyn, N. Y. COURT HOUSE.....Watertown, N. Y. CENTURY.....New York, N. Y. RKO 84th St.....New York, N. Y. NEW THEATRE.....New York, N. Y. GRANDMAN'S HEAD.....Albany, N. Y. RIVERSIDE.....Syracuse, N. Y. SHAW.....Brooklyn, N. Y. NEW THEATRE.....New York City</p> <p><b>MIDDLE EAST</b></p> <p>SPRINGBURY.....Upper Darby, Pa. MACK.....Chester, Pa. MAY.....Harrisburg, Pa. FOX.....Philadelphia, Pa. MEX.....Oxford, Pa. OPERA HOUSE.....Warrington, Pa. PENNS.....West Reading, Pa. PLAZA.....Pittsburgh, Pa. SHAW.....Walden, N. J. AVON.....Newark, N. J. CANTON.....Newark, N. J. TOWNE.....Calden, N. J. AVON.....Guttenberg, N. J. FAR LAWS.....Washington, D. C. FARLE.....Washington, D. C.</p> <p><b>SOUTH EAST</b></p> <p>MICHIGAN.....Wytheville, Va. GARDNER.....Ft. Worth, Va. LEWISBURG.....Groody, Va. BUCKINGHAM.....Arlington, Va. NEW THEATRE.....Fremont, Va. NEW THEATRE.....Harrison, Va. BRADSHAW GRAND.....Chickadee, W. Va. BROWN.....Cabin Creek, W. Va. GAYTON.....Whiting, W. Va. PLEASANT VALLEY.....Whiting, W. Va.</p>	<p><b>SOUTH EAST (Continued)</b></p> <p>POKER.....Parkersburg, W. Va. NEW THEATRE.....Martins, W. Va. LEWISBURG.....Whitesville, W. Va. STATE.....Bethesda, Md. HEATONVILLE.....Heatonville, Md. BALDWIN.....Adams, Ga. DUNCAN ROAD.....Adams, Ga. MARIETTA.....Marietta, Tenn. MEMPHIS.....Morgantown, N. C. BRIGHTON.....Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. NEW THEATRE.....Lake Worth, Fla. PALACE.....Lynchburg, Fla. NEW SPARKS.....Winter Park, Fla.</p> <p><b>MIDDLE WEST</b></p> <p>VALENTINE.....DeKalb, Ohio MARIETTA.....Cincinnati, Ohio TOWNE.....Cincinnati, Ohio RKO SHERBORN.....Cincinnati, Ohio RKO PALACE.....Cincinnati, Ohio GRANDIA.....Cleveland, Ohio RKO KETTER.....Dayton, Ohio RKO GRAND.....Cincinnati, Ohio TOWNE.....Cincinnati, Ohio M. LOOKER.....Cincinnati, Ohio SHEA'S PALACE.....Akron, Ohio RKO KETTER.....Dayton, Ohio RINGS.....Portland, Ind. WYOMING.....Madison, Ind. FOX.....Indianapolis, Ind. ARABIANNA.....Shelbyville, Ind. JULIAN.....Jacksonville, Ill. STATE.....Danvers, Ill. IRMA VIRGINIA.....Chicago, Ill. FARLEY.....North Beach, Ill. NEWSPICE.....Chicago, Ill. LEWISBURG.....Bellefonte, Ill. FOX STAR.....Grand Rapids, Mich. GARDNER.....Cassile, Mich. SONIA.....Detroit, Mich. MARIETTA.....Marshall, Mich. IM THEATRE.....Fremont, Mich. COTY.....Dearborn, Mich. COMMUNITY.....Harbor Beach, Mich. BRIGHTON.....Muskegon, Mich. MAYDAY.....Crosseville, Mich. BRIGHTON.....Albion, Mich. GARDNER.....Flint, Mich. GARDNER.....Lansing, Mich. SUN.....Barren, Mich. NORTHEAST.....Lansing, Mich. BRIGHTON.....Flint, Mich. WESTOWN.....Lansing, Mich. SUNDAY.....Boltard, Mich. NORTON.....Flint, Mich.</p>	<p><b>MIDDLE WEST (Continued)</b></p> <p>LARK.....Toledo, Mich. HARPER.....Detroit, Mich. MACK-STRONG.....Detroit, Mich. UNIVERSITY.....Ann Arbor, Mich. GRAND.....Canton, Mich. LEX.....Fenton, Mich. MAIN STREET.....Saginaw, Mich. AMERICAN LEGION.....Grosse Pointe, Mich. CHRYSLER.....Grosse Pointe, Mich. ARROWHEAD.....Oakland, Mich. AVONIA.....White Bear Lake, Minn. PIL.....Sleeps Eye, Minn. CASHI.....Cady, Minn. MARBLE.....Mable, Minn. HALLMARK.....Troy, Minn. YAGUE.....St. Matthews, Ky. LIBERTY.....Lincoln, Neb. BROADWAY.....Gape Girardeau, Mo. ANDERSON.....Marshall, Mo. PACIFIC.....St. Louis, Mo. PLAZA.....Kansas City, Mo. DE GRAY.....Brookfield, Mo. HARDY.....St. Louis, Mo. PALACE.....Wilkes, Kans. MILLER.....Wichita, Kans. JULIA.....Baraboo, Wis. MONTANA.....Milwaukee, Wis. FLORA.....Dyersville, Ia. HARDY.....Tipton, Ia. PALACE.....Cedar Rapids, Ia. WARRIOR.....Keosauqua, Ia. HEALD.....Potosi, Ia. PALACE.....Morgantown, Ia.</p> <p><b>WEST</b></p> <p>NEW FOX.....Stirling, Calif. BROADWAY.....Denver, Calif. COURT HOUSE.....Denver, Calif. FOX.....Los Angeles, Calif. GRANDIA.....Berkeley, Calif. PIONEER.....Lancaster, Calif. NORVA.....Salida, Calif. PACIFIC.....Sage Falls, S. D. GRAND.....Lynchburg, S. D.</p> <p><b>SOUTHWEST</b></p> <p>TEXAS.....Waco, Tex. ROBERTSON.....Dallas, Tex. PALACE.....Marble, Tex. MARIETTA.....Houston, Tex. GARDNER.....Corpus, Tex. TEXAS.....Houston, Tex. NATAYAN.....Houston, Tex. RIVER OAKS.....Houston, Tex. RICE.....Blytheville, Ark. DUNCAN.....Durango, Ariz. CLAYTON.....Chico, N. M. FOX MARIETTA.....Mesilla Park, N. M.</p>	<p><b>CALIFORNIA</b></p> <p>LA BARRA.....Van Nuys MARBLE.....Los Angeles HARVEY.....San Francisco STATE.....Long Beach BRIGHTON.....Long Beach DE ANZA.....Elizabethe NEWSPICE.....San Francisco PARADISE.....Los Angeles PIONEER.....Woodland GARDNER.....Glendale FOX.....Folsom ACADEMY.....Bakersfield TOWNE.....Fresno LOS ANGELES.....Los Angeles VALLEY.....Ventura FOX OPERATOR.....Oakland MAYWOOD.....Los Angeles REVERA.....Ostland</p> <p><b>NORTHWEST</b></p> <p>DRAGON.....Wapato, Wash. STATE.....Spokane, Wash. LIBERTY.....LaGrande, Ore. ROMA.....Fargo, N. D. MEMORIAL.....Bella, N. D. GRAND.....Ontonagon, N. D. WARRIOR.....Wahalla, N. D. STATE.....Bottrop, N. D. FOX BROADWAY.....Bellevue, Mont. LIBERTY.....Great Falls, Mont. CASTLE.....Newcastle, Wyo. EMERALD.....Laramie, Wyo.</p> <p><b>EXPORT</b></p> <p>ROCK.....Trinidad, Spain CINE AVENUE.....Lima, Peru NEW THEATRE.....Montreal, Canada FRANKSON.....Paris, France RIVERSIDE.....San Juan, P. R. MARBLE.....San Juan, P. R. PLAZA.....Toronto, Ont., Can. ROCK.....San Juan, P. R. 20th CENTURY.....Igorok, Alaska NEW THEATRE.....Havana, Cuba MAYWOOD.....San Juan, P. R. NEW THEATRE.....Montreal, Ont., Canada</p>
--	--	---	--



**American Seating Company**  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN  
Pioneers and manufacturers in theatre, auditorium, school, church,  
stadium and transportation seating.  
Branch Offices and Distributors in Principal Cities



Figure 14. The Hardacre in Tipton is on the list of theaters that had the new American Body Form Restful Chair – the latest in motion picture theater seating – installed in 1939. Some of these chairs appear to be extant. Source: Showman's Trade Review 1940

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Figure 15. Hardacre Theater, 1975. Note Art Deco marquee (extant) erected by Iowa Neon Sign Co. of Des Moines in 1948. Source: Rohrbach Associates, P.C. 2014

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Figure 16. Hardacre Theater, 1979

Source: Cedar Rapids Gazette, October 21, 1979



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**Hardacre Opera House**

**Thursday, Friday and Saturday**

Unusual European Novelty  
HERMANY'S CATS AND DOGS GYMNASTS  
Featuring  
FOXY, THE FLYING WONDER

SPECIAL THURSDAY  
Daniel Frohman presents Clyde Fitch's Powerful  
Drama "The Moth and the Flame" pictured in five  
parts by the Famous Player Film Co. and released on  
Paramount Program.

ADMISSION 10c and 15c

Two big features for the price of one

Source: *Tipton Conservative*, June 14, 1916

**HARDACRE OPERA HOUSE**  
Tipton, Iowa

— SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT —  
Just one night,  
Wednesday, Sept. 27  
Gaskell & MacVitty, Inc.  
present

**GRAUSTARK**

A love behind a throne. 5 Acts.  
All special scenery for the  
play carried by the company.  
This is one of the largest com-  
panies to play here this season.

SEATS NOW SELLING  
Special Prices.  
Out of town orders given good  
attention.

NOT A  
MOVING PICTURE SHOW!



Source: *Tipton Conservative*, September 20, 1916

Figure 17. Performances at the Hardacre Opera House in 1916, first year of operation

**Opera House**  
All Fair Week Beginning  
**MONDAY, AUG. 28**

THE CHASE-LISTER THEATRE CO.

The show that for years has been the standard by  
which others are judged

In a repertoire of high class plays such as "A Fight  
for a Million." "No Mother to Guide Her." "Thorns  
and Orange Blossoms." "Brother Against Brother."  
"God's Country and the Woman." "Why Woman  
Sin." "The Devils Lane." Etc.

Special Scenery for Every Play

VAUDEVILLE FEATURES THAT PLEASE  
Lane and Adell  
Bush Burrichter  
Louis Andrews  
Sarah Treadwell  
The Chase-Lister Orchestra

The Opening Play Will be  
**A Fight For A Million**

Prices for Reserved Seats  
**25c. 35c 50c**

Source: *Tipton Conservative*, August 23, 1916

**Hardacre Theatre Thursday, Sept. 7**

C. S. Primrose announces  
the succes of the century —  
George Middleton's Drama-  
tization of Meredith Nichol-  
son's Novel,

**"THE HOUSE OF A  
THOUSAND  
CANDLES"**

One year at the Hackett &  
Daly's Theatres, New York  
City, and the Garrick The-  
atre, Chicago.

Prices—  
**25c, 50c, 75c,  
\$1.00**



Source: *Tipton Conservative*, September 6, 1916

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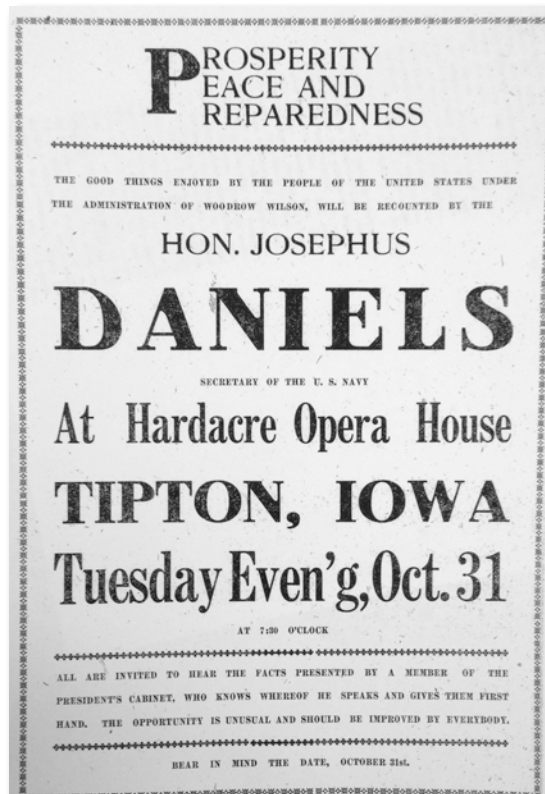
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Source: *Tipton Conservative*, June 7, 1916

Figure 18. The Hardacre Opera House also provided a venue for programs encouraging America's continued neutrality during World War I



Source: *Tipton Conservative*, October 25, 1916



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**Hardacre Theatre**  
**Matinee and Night, Tuesday, March 25th**  
 An Event in the Theatrical History of Tipton.

**D.W. GRIFFITH'S SUPREME TRIUMPH**  
**HEARTS OF THE WORLD**



**" THE LOVE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
 A STORY OF THE LILIES OF FRANCE  
 THROWN AGAINST THE LURID GLARE  
 OF WAR'S GRIM BACKGROUND "**

**Love in the weaving--  
 History in the making.  
 Teeming With Laughter and Sadness.**

**Company's own Orchestra.** Direct from the Burtis Opera House Davenport  
 Matinee Prices 25c, 50c. Boxes \$1. Evening Prices 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1. Boxes \$1.50

Figure 19. In 1919, the Hardacre Opera House exhibited silent films by Paramount Picture daily, including this war propaganda film by D.W. Griffith

Source: *Tipton Advertiser*, March 14, 1919

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**BUSTER**

**BUSTER.**

This wonderful canine with the human brain is a rare example of what the dumb animal can be taught.

His feats with the Clifton Comedy show at the opera house Monday night are nothing short of marvelous.

Their entire show is free Monday, Jan. 20.

Source: Tipton Advertiser January 17, 1919

**LITTLE EDNA MAY**



This is a likeness of the most wonderful and daring seldom equalled by her elders.

tile child performer now appearing before the public. Her accomplishments are many and varied, and she is conceded to be the most marvelous child gymnast, executing feats of strength

She is appearing with the big Clifton Comedy show at the Hardacre theater. For advertising purposes the admission is free Monday, Jan. 20. There are eight big acts in all.

Source: Tipton Advertiser, January 7, 1919

Figure 20. Hardacre Opera House continued to present live stage performances, such as the Clifton Comedy Show, starring Little Edna May, "the most marvelous child gymnast," and Buster, "the wonderful canine with the human brain," even after converting to daily motion picture exhibition.

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**STYLE SHOW**  
OF  
**Fall and Winter**  
**Garments**  
FOR  
**Men, Women & Children**  
LIVE MODELS

Jean Irwin in Acrobatic Dancing and other features

**Hardacre Theatre**  
**TIPTON, Iowa**  
**Fri. & Sat. Sept. 23 & 24**

— ALSO SHOWING —  
Ricardo Cortez and Helen Twelvetrees in  
"IS MY FACE RED?"

Admission — — — — — 10 and 25 cents

Figure 21. Beulah DeNune kept the Hardacre Theater as a venue for motion picture exhibition and live stage shows, the latter of which were particularly appealing to women. Source: *Olin Recorder*, September 22, 1932



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**1937 AUGUST 1937**

**The Hardacre**  
"Service" BEULAH I. DeNUNE PROP. AND MGR. "Quality"  
TIPTON • IOWA

**GRAND OPENING**  
August 8 with Western Electric Mirrophonic Living Sound

**Program for the Month**  
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Doris Nolan—George Murphy— GERT. NIESSEN CHAS. WINNIGER <b>TOP OF THE TOWN</b> It reaches the highest peak in glorious entertainment! Gags . . . gals . . . giggles! Sensational!	Jean. MacDonald—Nelson Eddy— J. BARRYMORE HERMAN BING <b>MAYTIME</b> Which shall she choose . . . a career or love? Tender romance, powerful drama and beautiful music.	Carole Lombard—F. MacMurray— C. BUTTERWORTH DOR. LAMOUR <b>SWING HIGH, SWING LOW</b> Success went to his head and he found the way down easier than the way up. Romantic drama.	Mae West—Warren WILLIAM— RANDOLPH SCOTT LYLE TALBOT <b>GO WEST, YOUNG MAN</b> She was on a personal appearance tour and kept her manager in hot water, and everybody else!	DIME NITE JOAN BENNETT CARY GRANT <b>Wedding Present</b>	RAY MILLAND and HEATHER ANGEL in <b>BULLDOG DRUMMOND ESCAPES</b> WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>BORDERLAND</b>	TEX RITTER and ELEANOR STEWART in <b>ARIZONA DAYS</b> WENDY HARRIE and BINNIE BARNES in <b>BREEZIN' HOME</b>
Bing CROSBY—Bob BURNS— MARTHA RAYE SHIRLEY ROSS <b>WAIKIKI WEDDING</b> Bing singing Hawaiian love songs—Martha doing a swing-hula—Bob among the pineapple orchards.	Jane WITHERS—El BRENDEL— LEAH RAY ANTHONY MARTIN <b>THE HOLY TERROR</b> Motherless daughter of hard naval commander terrorizing everybody—pals and foreign spies.	Jane WITHERS—El BRENDEL— LEAH RAY ANTHONY MARTIN <b>THE HOLY TERROR</b> Motherless daughter of hard naval commander terrorizing everybody—pals and foreign spies.	Mae West—Warren WILLIAM— RANDOLPH SCOTT LYLE TALBOT <b>GO WEST, YOUNG MAN</b> She was on a personal appearance tour and kept her manager in hot water, and everybody else!	DIME NITE GLADYS GEORGE <b>VALIANT IS THE WORD FOR CARRIE</b>	GENE AUTRY and BETTY BRONSON in <b>YODELIN' KID</b> from <b>PINE RIDGE</b> CLAIRE TREVOR and LLOYD NOLAN in <b>KING OF GAMBLERS</b>	WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>TRAIL DUST</b> CHARLIE RUGGLES and ALICE BRADY in <b>MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS</b>
Ben Bernie—Walter Winchell— ALICE FAYE PATSY KELLY <b>WAKE UP AND LIVE</b> From the "best selling" book of the same title. Music by Gordon and Revel. A-1 entertainment.	Claud. Colbert—Melvyn Douglas— ROBERT YOUNG GEORGE DAVIS <b>I MET HIM IN PARIS</b> Romance in the Alps . . . Gag comedy everywhere! Lots of fun when two men are after same girl.	Claud. Colbert—Melvyn Douglas— ROBERT YOUNG GEORGE DAVIS <b>I MET HIM IN PARIS</b> Romance in the Alps . . . Gag comedy everywhere! Lots of fun when two men are after same girl.	Joel McCrea—Barbara Stanwyck— LLOYD NOLAN STANLEY RIDGES <b>INTERNES CAN'T TAKE MONEY</b> He made friends with the "big shots" of the underworld and brought happiness to lonely girl.	DIME NITE JEAN MUIR WARREN HULL <b>FUGITIVE IN THE SKY</b>	WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>TRAIL DUST</b> CHARLIE RUGGLES and ALICE BRADY in <b>MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS</b>	WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>TRAIL DUST</b> CHARLIE RUGGLES and ALICE BRADY in <b>MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS</b>
Joe E. BROWN, Marian MARSH— FRED KEATING EDGAR KENNEDY <b>WHEN'S YOUR BIRTHDAY?</b> Not a serious moment! Waiter, faking horoscope to find love, discovers himself in prize ring.	Joel McCrea—Barbara Stanwyck— LLOYD NOLAN STANLEY RIDGES <b>INTERNES CAN'T TAKE MONEY</b> He made friends with the "big shots" of the underworld and brought happiness to lonely girl.	Joel McCrea—Barbara Stanwyck— LLOYD NOLAN STANLEY RIDGES <b>INTERNES CAN'T TAKE MONEY</b> He made friends with the "big shots" of the underworld and brought happiness to lonely girl.	Joel McCrea—Barbara Stanwyck— LLOYD NOLAN STANLEY RIDGES <b>INTERNES CAN'T TAKE MONEY</b> He made friends with the "big shots" of the underworld and brought happiness to lonely girl.	JEAN MUIR WARREN HULL <b>FUGITIVE IN THE SKY</b>	WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>TRAIL DUST</b> CHARLIE RUGGLES and ALICE BRADY in <b>MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS</b>	WILLIAM BOYD and JIMMY ELLISON in <b>TRAIL DUST</b> CHARLIE RUGGLES and ALICE BRADY in <b>MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS</b>

**Look What's Coming Soon!**  
A STAR IS BORN      TURN OFF THE MOON  
SHALL WE DANCE      RIDING ON AIR  
MARKED WOMAN      HOTEL HAYWIRE

Figure 22. "Program for the Month" schedule card that proprietor and manager Beulah I. DeNune regularly sent to residents of the Tipton community. This one from August 1937 announces the Grand Opening of The Hardacre, August 8, newly equipped with Western Electric Mirrophonic Living Sound.

Source: Hardacre Theater Preservation Association, Tipton



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Figure 23. The reverse side of these monthly schedule cards included gossip and other news bits about Hollywood, movie stars, and other famous people. "Come to our theatre, and we will show you all kinds of life. . . all kinds of people, portrayed in productions you will never forget. . . productions that will live forever, vibrantly alive in your memory." Hardacre Theatre, Beulah I. DeNune, Manager

Source: Hardacre Theater Preservation Association, Tipton





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Precision INSURANCE

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HELPS WITH THE  
HARDACHE HEATH

FREEMAN INSURANCE





COBB

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THE HARDACRE ORG

HELP SAVE THE  
HARDACRE THEATRE  
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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED  
MAY 3 & 10 SIGN UP  
AT THEHARDACRE.ORG

THE HARDACRE  
THANK YOU







112









112































WOMEN

**HARD**  
TIPTO  
THU. - FRI. - SAT.  
SEPT. 24 - 27 - 28  
4 DAYS STARTS  
SUN. SEPT. 29th











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Hardacre Theater  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Movie Theaters of Iowa MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Cedar

DATE RECEIVED: 11/20/15                      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/24/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/08/16                      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/05/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000951

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    1.5.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ 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.



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR  
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

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IOWA  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

November 16, 2015

PRODUCE  
IOWA

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmarks  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

STATE HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM OF IOWA

- Lisbon Methodist Church, 200 E. Market Street, Lison, Linn County, Iowa
- Hardacre Theater, 112 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Tipton, Cedar County, Iowa

STATE HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Foster Hill*

STATE  
HISTORIC  
SITES

Elizabeth Foster Hill  
National Register

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA  
HISTORICAL  
FOUNDATION