

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE ~~IN IDAHO~~ TR)

✓ SITE NAME: Gorby Opera Theater ✓ SITE NUMBER: 84

✓ LOCATION: Idaho ~~Street near Logan~~, Glens Ferry, Elmore County ~~(039)~~, Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Lynn Dorrrough
P. O. Box 7432
Boise, ID 83702

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Glens Ferry, Idaho, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Gorby Opera Theater and the property on which it stands, lot 15, east 17 feet of lot 16, block 22, Glens Ferry Townsite. Legal description on file at the Elmore County Court-house, Mountain Home, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/6,38,880/47,56/940

DATE OR PERIOD: 1914

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: fair altered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Gorby Opera Theater is a 42-by-100-foot building of brick construction with concrete trim. The plan is an unbroken rectangle with a scenehouse in the rear and a parapeted front elevation with round-arched entry in the center and a storefront at left.

The brick facade is symmetrical except for the storefront, which is opposed to a pair of small windows to the right of the entrance. The pair has a common sill with a dropped ornament, as do the other windows. The arched entry is large--the back of the open vestibule to which it gives access is pierced by two pair of double doors. The brick pilasters on either side of it have battered concrete bases, and the geometric dropped concrete caps are in an elaborated cross design. From these caps the arch is sprung, and trimmed with a wide coffered band of outset bricks with a concrete keystone at the apex. Above the keystone is a small rectangular light with geometric ornament dropped from the sill. On either side of the uppr facade is a contiguous pair of round-arched windows with keystoneed ender brick arches, again with the common sill with centered drop ornament.

Long outset straps of concrete ornament with elaborated double-tabbed ends fall from the flat coping at roofline--one near each upper corner and two in the center, with three smaller tabs bisecting the one narrow and two broad bays so formed. These straps originally continued a foot or so higher on broad brick parapet crests, the ones in the center even higher and stepped on their outer edges. Capital-like terminations with dropped tabs above a flat coping completed the forms. The small tabs, too, were finished with a small block above the coping. All of this cresting has been removed and replaced with a continuous flat coping running the width of the facade. The mezzanine lights of the storefront also have been boarded over. Otherwise the exterior, including the simple woodwork of the storefront and that of the vestibule--in the latter case a display of overlaid geometric forms producing elaborated coffers and a frieze of outsized dentils--is intact.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Gorby Opera Theater is architecturally significant as an unusual and picturesque example of a functional type otherwise unrepresented in the Thematic Group; as a full-scale application of the geometricized commercial ornament developed in a number of other sites; and as one of the most distinctive early commercial buildings in Glens Ferry, where the firm had a run of commissions in the 1910s (see also sites 85 and 89).

The Gorby, designed for vaudeville as well as movies, is still the only theater in town. The use of brick is typical of Glens Ferry; the mannered decorative treatment, however, with its vaguely heraldic and classical reminders, is like nothing else local and relates instead to contemporary commissions in Boise, particularly the Elks building (National Register, 1978; see site 76). The remarkable geometric cresting which was originally in place at the cornice line (and which could readily be restored using the original drawings) uses forms familiar from bungalow design (see the Dunton porch, for example, site 79) in a spirit that might be called proto-deco.

The theater was capitalized by R. D. Gorby, whose fire-damaged business block the firm rebuilt several years earlier and completed in the fall of 1916. A correspondent to the Statesman said it was of fireproof construction and "big enough to seat any crowd which usually gathers here."¹

1. (Boise) Idaho Statesman, September 27, 1916, p. 9, c. 1.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

(Boise) Idaho Statesman, September 27, 1916, p. 9, c. 1 (photograph).

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. File 404A. Collection book reference 1914. Tracings signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.