

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Lake Benton Opera House ^{and} Kimball Building

and/or common Lake Benton Opera House & American Legion Building

2. Location

street & number on Benton St. between Fremont & Center St. N/A not for publication

city, town Lake Benton N/A vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Minnesota code 27 county Lincoln code 081

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Private Club

4. Owner of Property

name Opera House: City of Lake Benton
Kimball Building: Henry Sollie, American Legion Post #10

street & number N/A

city, town Lake Benton N/A vicinity of state Minnesota

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lincoln County Courthouse - Registry of Deeds

street & number N/A

city, town Ivanhoe state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Historic Sites Survey Lake Benton Opera House—yes Kimball Building—no
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1971 and 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society, 240 Summit Avenue

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

7. Description

				CONDITION:
Condition		Check one	Check one	Opera House: Excellent
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	Kimball Building: Good
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lake Benton Opera House was listed on the National Register in April 1977. The nomination is being amended to include the adjacent Kimball Building that shares strong design features and a common history with the Opera House.

The Lake Benton Opera House and the Kimball Building comprise a two story red brick rectangle which faces on Benton Street between Fremont and Center Streets in Lake Benton. They are linked by means of similar material and common cornice line. The principal facade of the Opera House is symmetrical with a three-part entry positioned within a colonnade of four square brick piers capped with unadorned stone capitals. This buffstone is also used in a decorative frieze in which a checker-board pattern is established of stone and brick. Arched windows placed at mid-story flank the entry. Directly above the entry on the balcony level are two doors which flank a central three-part window; all of which open onto a narrow wood-decked balcony with iron balustrade. The Kimball Building, originally a dry goods store, is comprised of two irregularly spaced sections divided by a brick pilaster strip. The once recessed entrance is now flush with the front facade. Over-sized store-front windows have been removed and covered with stucco.

The interior of the Opera House is divided into two principal parts. The stage measures twenty-three feet by forty-eight feet and the auditorium (lobby included) measures forty-five feet by forty-eight feet. Present seating capacity on main and balcony floors is three hundred; the original capacity of three hundred and fifty was lessened during later remodeling with the removal of several seats and two box seats. A narrow orchestra pit is positioned directly in front of the audience seating at mid stage.

The stage area is comprised of a central stage with maple floor elevated approximately three feet above the main floor. Back stage there are two separate areas designated as dressing rooms. Emergency exits are provided by two stair-cases positioned at either side of the stage which link the balcony with the backstage area.

The Kimball Building was converted into a hotel in the 1920s and into an American Legion Club Room in the 1940s. It has two floors and a basement. The main floor is used as a general meeting hall with a kitchen located in the rear. The second floor, once used as an apartment, now partially houses dressing rooms for the theatre. An opening on this floor provides the only direct access between the buildings.

During the years after World War II the Opera House was allowed to go into disrepair until it was acquired in a state of advanced deterioration by the City of Lake Benton in 1970. At this time the roof structure had collapsed and required total replacement. The original pressed tin ceiling was irreparable and has been substituted with a paneled ceiling upon which the original design of the tin has been reproduced. The building is presently in use by local groups for theatrical and musical productions. It is in excellent repair.

The Lake Benton Opera House is beginning the process of acquiring the Kimball Building. Plans call for the immediate restoration of the street facade with subsequent conversion of the first floor into makeup areas for the actors and lounge and art gallery space for the theatre patrons and expansion of second floor dressing rooms.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1896 **Builder/Architect** Taylor Bros. & Henry Enke

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lake Benton Opera House and Kimball Building are significant as well-preserved related structures which have played a central role in the cultural and commercial development in the community of Lake Benton. In 1893 Lake Benton realized the need for a cultural center. A frame building housing an opera house as well as commercial space was constructed, but it burned in December of 1895. Wasting little time, spirited members of the community bought ninety-six shares at \$100 each to construct the present opera house. Henry Nanson, owner of the commercial space, financed the construction of the Kimball Building. Ernest Kimball, son-in-law of Nanson, was a former contractor and mason who after participating in the construction of many Lake Benton businesses likely supervised the construction of the Opera House and his father-in-law's building. Kimball then took over the management of the newly constructed dry goods store and it is for him that the building is known to the community. The Opera House has served as host for a full range of community activities as well as traveling theatrical events. Left unoccupied after World War II, the building deteriorated until 1970 when active community members arranged for its purchase by the city. Local civic groups joined in the building's restoration and today the Opera House is a viable community center hosting events from greater Southwest Minnesota. In 1970 the restoration goals were to restore and perpetuate Southwestern Minnesota heritage and culture. Today most of these goals have been realized and the Opera House supporters look forward to the restoration and adaptive re-use of the Kimball Building which has been so closely linked with the Opera House for over eighty years.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #1

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Lake Benton

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A

1	4	7	1	6	6	4	0	4	9	0	4	2	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 33, 34 & 35, Block 7, original town of Lake Benton

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Roth, Research Historian

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date October 1980

street & number 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House

telephone 612-296-0102

city or town St. Paul,

state Minnesota

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10/14/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 4/22/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 3 1980

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 4

"An Opera House Assured" Lake Benton News, 1 January 1896

"Has Opera House Met Its Death" Lake Benton Valley News, 3 June 1967

"Lake Benton Has A Fire" Lake Benton News, 4 December 1895

Lake Benton, Minnesota December, 1900. Minneapolis: Wall & Haines

"Opera House Assured" Lake Benton News, 19 February 1896

Tasker, A.E., ed. Early History of Lincoln County. Lake Benton: News Print, 1936