Form 10-300 (July 1969) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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The Perkins Opera House is located on the upper portion of a large, brick structure which is designed along Romanesque Revival lines. The building was built by John H. Perkins, a prosperous Leon County merchant in 1890. The ground floor housed various business establishments; the upper floor was the site of "an attractive and well-equipped" opera house.

Black, cast iron steps lead through wooden and glass paneled double doors into the area which originally served as a lobby on the ground floor. Stairs leading from this lobby up to another at the second floor no longer exist; however, marks along the wall confirm their former placement. to the opera house is today gained by a back stair which may have been used by performers. Doors leading into the ground floor lobby are covered by a sloping hood which is supported by two ornate iron brackets. Two narrow columns which once framed the entry have been removed. Above the door is found a small deck, enclosed by a decorative iron railing. Narrow windows, evenly spaced around the building at the upper level, are double hung sash, and above each one appear stained glass panes which are still intact. Atop these windows are found arched, radiating voussoirs with shaped lintels. Two elongated windows at the center of the north side of the building are slightly different, being topped by shaped lintels, but without the arched voussoirs. Above these two windows is noted a triangular cement date block containing the inscription "A.D. 1890 Perkins Block." This triangular shape is repeated directly above at the roof line, and is the only projection on an otherwise horizontal roof shape.

The building contains eight brick chimneys, two of which are visible from the north side (front) and six at the south side (rear). A form of arcaded corbel table at the roof line with arched and stepped projections is noted. The north and east exteriors of the building are visibly broken into advancing and receding planes by means of vertical, brick projections which create the effect of buttressing. On each of these projections is an additional projecting niche-like structure capped with a plain moulding with trefoil motif beneath.

At the lower level of this building is found a series of small shops which are presently occupied and comprise the only activity associated with the entire structure. Use of the upper level gradually diminished after 1930, and it has continued in a dormant state up to the present time.

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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7. Description (b)

The interior of the rectangular shaped building has deteriorated, both through vandalism and natural wear resulting from a lack of regular maintenance. In spite of its present condition, the building possesses many interesting characteristics which reflect the elaborate style found in the original decorating scheme.

The wooden stair at the back of the present shop leads up into the left side of the upper lobby. Glass paneled doors--no longer attached to their hinges--were observed leaning against the walls. The auditorium once contained seating for approximately 500 persons; although many of the seats are removed from the flooring and are now stacked in several storage rooms. Four sloping aisles separate the three groups of seats on the ground floor of the opera house. Approximately fourteen seats per row in the center section; seven to nine seats on the side sections, and fourteen rows from front to back make up the seating arrangement on the main level. The wooden floor shows extensive deterioration; weak in some places and in others, non-existent. Balcony seating was arranged in pews with three rows on either side of the room which may have housed the stage lighting. This room was subsequently used as a projection room when the opera house was used as a motion picture theatre.

Two ornately decorated box seats at the front of the auditorium were found to be in fair condition, with the ceilings only slightly chipped. Evidence of delicately painted floral designs on the walls and ceilings of these box seats still remains. Plaster columns in Corinthian style flank each side of the box seats. The interior walls of the opera house are stripped of all decoration, and painted scenes which once graced the walls have disappeared.

Elaborate tin and mirrored lighting fixtures have been removed from the ceiling, and were found lying on the floor in back of the seating area. One larger fixture believed to have been the principal chandelier was found in an attic loft. The stage area, said to have been one of the largest in the State, has very weak flooring in several sections. A trap door located toward the rear of the stage permits entrance to the area below which now stores various materials. Porcelain light bulb sockets encircle the front of the stage floor above the orchestrapit.

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NATIONAL REGISTE Form 10-300a (July 1969)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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7. Description (c)

Several anterooms leading off the stage were probably used as dressing rooms for the performers. Stairways were noted in several locations—these leading to various small rooms, to the balcony area, and to numerous smaller nooks.



SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as	s Appropriate)		
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	☐ 18th Century	20th Century
☐ 15th Century	17th Century	🔀 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applica	ble and Known)	1890	
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Perkins Opera House, once the scene of theatrical productions in Monticello, was a center of social and festive activities for Jefferson County. Traveling opera companies, vaudeville shows, and locally produced events were performed from the turn of the century to the late 1920's.

Lack of financial support for the productions and pressure from local church groups eventually resulted in decreased interest and activity in the opera house. The Jefferson County High School conducted commencement exercises at the opera house for a time after local theatrical productions ceased. In 1927, the centennial celebration took place at the opera house in Monticello, and it was noted that this event resulted in the most immense gathering in the history of the building. For a time subsequent, the opera house was the local motion picture theatre, but eventually this use was also discontinued.

Considering the fact that local opera houses were not an uncommon phenomena of this era--1900-1920--it would seem that the Perkins Opera House is not unique. However, because of its immense stage and seating area, and its relatively favorable physical condition for restoration after 82 years of existence, the opera house is, nevertheless, a most significant structure.

Little has been recorded about the opera house itself, other than legal documentation on file at the Jefferson County Courthouse relating to legal descriptions and ownership. Local personalities provided minimal information and many citizens were even unaware of its existence.

A preliminary architectural survey was conducted in 1968 by Mr. Warren Dixon; and Professor Arthur Dorlag was consulted regarding an evaluation of the opera house, but no further action at that time resulted. At the present time, however, renewed interest in restoration has occurred through the efforts of Florida State University and the Department of State. If projected plans are realized, the opera house could again become a cultural center for performing arts in Monticello.

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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DATE
1972

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

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- Driggs, Ken. "Opera Lives in Memories at Monticello," <u>Talla-hassee</u> Democrat, July 28, 1968.
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 Court. (Subgroups: deeds and tax records).
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- Pasco, Samuel. "Jefferson County, Florida, 1827-1910," Florida Historical Quarterly, VII, no. 2, 3 (October, 1928; January, 1929), 139-154; 234-257.
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Form 10-301 (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

3. Latitude and longitude reference.

Florida

county

Jefferson

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

PROPERTY MAP FORM	Jefferson
PROPERTY MAP FURM	FOR NPS USE ONLY
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)	ENTRY NUMBER DATE
T. NAME	1 4 SEP 1972
common: Perkins Opera House	
AND/OR HISTORIC:	
2. LOCATION	
STREET AND NUMBER:	
Washington Street (U.S. 90) and Courth	houge Courses
CITY OR TOWN:	nouse square
Monticello	
STATE: CODE COUN	NTY:
	Jefferson 065
3. MAP REFERENCE	Jefferson 1065
SOURCE:	
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SCALE: 7.5	
DATE: 1963	13 3 7/2 V
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TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS	E 12 8 V
1. Property broundaries where required.	
2. North arrow.	

