

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Tennessee	
COUNTY: Davidson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY-NUMBER	DATE
<b>FEB 23 1972</b>	

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
The Parthenon (Congressman Richard Fulton)

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Centennial Park

CITY OR TOWN:  
Nashville

STATE: Tennessee      CODE: 47      COUNTY: Davidson      CODE: 037

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville      STATE: Tennessee      CODE: 47

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Davidson County Register's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville      STATE: Tennessee      CODE: 47

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Tennessee

COUNTY: Davidson

ENTRY NUMBER: **FEB 23 1972**

DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(Check One)			(Check One)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The first Parthenon built in Nashville in 1897 by Robert T. Creighton was made of wood and plaster and cost \$30,000. Because of its popularity at the Centennial Celebration, it was decided to leave it as long as it would stand. The structure was left and a city park was created around it. By 1920 the Parthenon was beyond repair and the Board of Park Commissioners commissioned Nashville architect Russell E. Hart to make working drawings for an exact replica of the Greek Parthenon. He worked closely with William B. Dinsmoor, a New York architect and archaeologist who spent much of his time in Greece studying the ruins.

The research and rebuilding of the concrete replica of the Parthenon in Nashville consumed eleven years. With the cooperation and permission of the British Museum, casts were made of the Elgin marbles. It was decided that since marble was too expensive, concrete would have to be made to look as much like the weathered marble of Athens as possible.

Wilbur F. Creighton, Sr., son of the first builder, along with Mr. Hart, spared no money or effort in trying to create an accurate reproduction. Reinforced concrete was used throughout the present structure. A mixture was devised of equal parts of white and grey cement combined with a fine aggregate ground from the same material as the course to gain a uniformity in tone and color. A small amount of quartz was added to remove any suggestion of lifelessness.

All the 1897 building was razed except for the stone foundations and brick walls around the cellar. The stone foundation under the columns were strengthened to support the heavier new columns.

The structure measures 228' long by 101' wide and 65' in height. It is surrounded by columns of which no two of the seventeen running along each side nor of the six on each end are quite the same space apart. None is the same size as the columns near it. The columns around the sides and ends measure approximately six feet in diameter at the base, and they have an average spacing, from face to face, of eight feet. They stand on a base at the top of three massive steps running the entire distance on all four sides of the building.

The magic of the building is that optical illusions overcome what could be disturbing flaws. The long steps along the sides, for example, would seem to sag toward the middle if they were built on a straight line. Instead, the Greeks and Nashvillians built those steps to rise nine inches at their center to counteract the sagging effect and give the appearance of a straight line.

The dimensions of the original building were copied to a thousandth of an inch. The tilt of the columns inside the sactuary is an exact copy of the slight lean toward the center of the building that the Greeks designed to overcome the illusion of leaning outward and perhaps to strengthen the building.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Tennessee	
COUNTY Davidson	
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(Number all entries)

7. (Description - continued)

The west room, or treasury of the Parthenon, is the only part of the building that has Ionic columns. All the rest, inside and out, are Doric.

The Early Studios in Washington, D.C., made casts of the sculptured figures and George T. Zolnay, the sculptor who had made all the models for the ornamentation of the 1897 building was retained to make models for the Ionic friezes over the outer colonnades.

The chief variation between Nashville's version and the Greek original is that the Nashville building has a basement; today it is used as an art museum. The only objects displayed in the Parthenon proper are the plaster casts of the Elgin marbles used in reproducing the figures above the pediments.

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

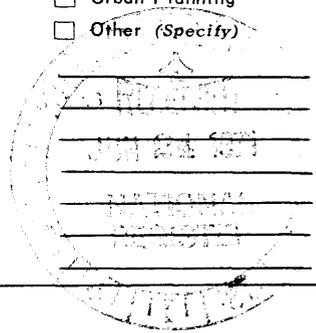
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art          | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

When Tennesseans began planning for the state's one hundredth birthday in 1896, it was felt that an exposition would help to rescue Nashville and the rest of the state from a financial depression. As plans developed, it was decided to build a replica of the Parthenon, crowning architectural jewel of Greece's classical era. After all, Nashville had been known as the "Athens of the South" since the 1820's. The Parthenon would be the central building in the Centennial grounds and would house art exhibits borrowed from museums from across the country and abroad. Grouped about the Parthenon would be sixteen other major exhibition buildings, with nine smaller buildings which would house exhibits from other cities and states.

Through the help of the British Museum floor plans of the original Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess Athene in 438 B.C. and reduced to ruins in an explosion of gunpowder stored there in 1687, were located. Amid lavish ceremonies, the centennial ceremonies were begun on June 1, 1896. The Parthenon, as well as the other structures built for the occasion, was constructed of wood, with the exterior covered with stucco and the interior plastered.

After the Centennial celebration, which was a great financial success, the exposition buildings were razed. However, the Parthenon, emblem of the whole celebration, had become such a vital part of Nashville that the public did not want to let it go. Built in 1897 to last one season, it was finally beyond repair in 1920. The Board of Park Commissioners urged that the Parthenon be rebuilt of permanent materials.

The Parthenon is significant in that it is the only replica of the original Parthenon in existence and is a perfect example of the classic Greek temple architecture. It is the only remaining link of Nashville's centennial exposition. Its use as an art center is important to Nashville, and it has served not only as background for art festivals, but also for Greek pageants, flower shows, and Christmas pageants. It is one of the trademarks of the "Athens of the South" and is one of its top tourist attractions.



**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Creighton, Wilbur F., The Parthenon in Nashville, (Nashville, 1968).  
 Davis, Louise L., "The Parthenon and the Tennessee Centennial: The  
 Greek Temple That Sparked a Birthday Party," Tennessee Historical  
 Quarterly, Vol. XXVI (1967) No. 4, pp. 335-53.

16/5/16/71  
 4000267

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		36°	08'	59"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		86°	48'	52"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 5

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Herbert L. Harper, Director of Field Services

ORGANIZATION: Tennessee Historical Commission      DATE: 6-17-71

STREET AND NUMBER:  
403 7th Avenue, North

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville      STATE: Tennessee      CODE: 047

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>    State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>    Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Stephen S. Lawrence</u></p> <p>Title <u>Executive Director</u>  <u>Tennessee Historical Commission</u></p> <p>Date <u>6-20-71</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Lucretia A. Conroy</u>                  Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p><b>FEB 23 1972</b></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>W. Bradford</u>                  Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>Jan. 12, 1972</u></p>
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