

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

904



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name West Point City Auditorium
Other names/site number City Auditorium, Nebraskan Theatre / CM05-046

2. Location

Street & number 237 North Main Street Not for publication
City or town West Point Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Cuming Code 039 Zip code 68788

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Amel
Signature of certifying official
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

Sept 23, 2009
Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 see continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 see continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Bell 11-10-09

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

West Point City Auditorium

Name of Property

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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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION / CULTURE: Auditorium

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION / CULTURE: Auditorium

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and Early 20th CENTURY MOVEMENTS:
Commercial Style

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Tudor

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick

Roof Metal

Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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The West Point City Auditorium is located on the southwest corner of Anna Stalp Avenue (formerly Walnut Avenue) and North Main Street in West Point (2000 population), the county seat of Cuming County, Nebraska. West Point was platted in alignment with the cardinal directions with Main Street running north-south to parallel the nearby Elkhorn River. The Auditorium is an impressive two-and-a-half story building that anchors the northern edge of Main Street and West Point's commercial district. Surrounded by one-story commercial buildings immediately to the south and open space to the north, the Auditorium is currently situated in a way that highlights its prominence.

The West Point City Auditorium is symmetrically arranged with a rectangular footprint that measures approximately 120 feet along Anna Stalp Avenue and 60 feet along its east-facing Main Street façade. Stylistically the building is best described as Commercial style with its rectangular shape and parapet "false-front." But it is also influenced by various European Revival styles popular at the time, particularly those associated with England. Structurally, the building is supported by steel trusses and beams (except for the fly loft) on a high poured concrete foundation that has been clad in brick. A full basement is indicated by small window openings just above ground level on all four elevations.

The exterior of the building can be divided into three main sections: the façade, the main building and the fly loft. The façade section includes the east façade and approximately 20 feet of each side elevation as materials and decorative motifs continue around the corner. The main building is a simple rectangular structure with a gable roof shape clad in its original "raised-ridge" metal paneling. The wood-framed fly loft tower extends upward at the rear of the building and is clad in metal sheeting which appears to be original.

The entire façade section is clad in dark pressed brick arranged in a running bond of offset stretcher rows. The east façade is divided into three bays. The central bay is framed by two stylized pilasters with decorative paneling of light colored brick in the shafts and decorative white stone at the capitals. Cornerstones reading "W.P.C.B." and "1911" are located near the bottom of the north and south pilaster, respectively. The roofline of the central bay has a pediment-shaped parapet outlined by thin courses of white decorative stone. A small stone diamond is centered in the pediment and decorative brick corbelling is located immediately below the pediment. The contrasting color of the brick and the decorative materials is one feature that links this building to Tudor or Jacobethan Revival styles.

The main entrance of the building was remodeled extensively after it was purchased by the City of West Point in 1945. At the second story, the balcony was removed and the balcony entrance was infilled with glass block. The ground floor entrance was also drastically altered at that time. Removal of the vertical units supporting the balcony left a gap between the doors and the pilasters, which was infilled with blond colored brick. Finally, a streamlined, chrome, canopy-type marquee with "AUDITORIUM" projecting from the top was installed above the doors. It is important to note that these alterations occurred during the period of significance and are significant themselves as indicators of the change in ownership. Later, modern metal doors replaced the originals, the elevated entrance was graded for ADA accessibility and the "AUDITORIUM" lettering was lost. These later alterations, however, do not significantly detract from the overall historic integrity of the façade.

The central bay is flanked by identical side bays with wide castellations for parapets that further link the building to the European revival styles. Like the central pediment, the side parapets are outlined with decorative brickwork under the lower course. Here wide dentils are used in place of the more elaborate corbelling. Each story (including the basement) contains three evenly spaced window opening with stone sills. All original one-over-one, double hung windows have been removed and replaced with metal screens that are similar in appearance. The "false-front" of the façade continues around the corner to the side elevations in their easternmost bays. On the north this bay included a second story window opening

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and a boarded basement window. On the south elevation there are two evenly spaced basement and first story window openings and an fire escape with modern door on the second story. Interestingly, on both side elevations of the façade section the parapet is actually a well-disguised chimney.

The gable-roofed main building section abuts the façade at its pediment and its ridgeline terminates at the fly loft. This section is faced in brick arranged in a common bond. These bricks vary in color and have diagonal burn marks from firing. The north elevation of this section is divided into four bays by plain brick pilasters. Each bay has two evenly spaced arched openings with stone sills on both the basement and main level. Some basement windows have been infilled or boarded up. The main level openings are elongated except for in the west bay where the dressing rooms are located. In one bay a doorway with a replacement door, offers access to the area behind the stage. The south elevation has a similar arrangement. All original windows have been removed and replaced with screens and/or paneling, but in most cases the original openings remain entirely intact.

The rear elevation is made up of a mostly solid brick wall. Basement windows and the large centered opening on this elevation have been infilled with brick, but their stone sills and arched brick lintels are still visible. A small, low, concrete block addition covers an entrance to the basement on the north end. A large HVAC system is also located behind the building, entering it through what appears to be a converted doorway. Decorative metal ridge coverings with corner medallions adorn the roof-wall junctions on this elevation and continue around to the side elevations. A slightly protruding brick chimney is located on the north side of the rear elevation.

The frame, metal-clad fly loft located at the rear of the building is approximately forty feet tall. This rectangular tower sits atop the roof of the main building and appears to be built around the chimney. Its west wall is flush with the rear wall of the main building. An opening in the roof of the main building was left for the fly loft during construction in order to create sufficient vertical space to operate stage sets and curtains.

Interior

Interior spaces and arrangements are largely defined by the exterior of the building. The front façade area houses the stairs, ticket booth and balcony / projector room. The main entrance to the building opens to a central terrazzo stairway with marble treads that ascends to auditorium room. A square ticket window, likely part of the late 1940s renovations is located on the north side of the landing before entering the room. Similar stairs descend on either side of the building to the basement. Double wood doors with a square recessed panel swing into the foyer allowing access to the auditorium.

The original interior balcony was framed in at some point after the period of significance to create offices and a central projector room for showing movies. The West Point Community Theatre group is currently working toward opening the sides of the balcony and leaving the projector room for movie screenings.

The main auditorium room features a large hardwood floor and a stage. Historic movie seats from a theater in Albion have been fastened to the floor. A layered wood proscenium curves gracefully around the stage area. Exterior walls in the auditorium room are still the original plaster on brick; however, a carpet wainscoting has been added to the lower portion and to the area below the stage. Some window openings have been covered with a translucent faux stained-glass paper. Original wood surround trim and baseboards have been retained. The rear of the room is characterized by the balcony and projector room above a wall with doors to various offices located under the balcony.

The ceiling of the auditorium has been dropped twice: once during the 1940s and a second time in the 1960s after a small fire. Located above both is a plaster and lath ceiling that contains decorative stenciling. Above the stage area the original

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ceiling curves into a dome for acoustical purposes, likely an important feature for an auditorium designed in large part by the West Point Cadet Band. Interestingly, both dropped ceilings attempted to follow the contours of the dome. The West Point Community Theatre group is currently working toward exposing the original ceiling starting with the dome.

The stage is centered on an original interior wall that separates the public auditorium from the backstage area. The central section of this area is dominated by the wooden stage and fly loft. A wooden ceiling has been added in the fly loft just above the proscenium but it is still accessible by a ladder up a wall on the south side of the stage. A catwalk attached to the south wall of the fly loft has a series of movable wooden pegs and ropes used to operate the stage's historic curtains. One curtain, probably original to the building, features a romantic scene with a fountain surrounded by foliage and a building in the background. The second curtain depicts an urban Main Street scene. From the lower catwalk a second ladder attached to the rear wall leads to a higher catwalk used to operate scenery. The north side of the backstage area is characterized by dressing rooms and storage constructed with wide unfinished lumber. Performers and stage hands have left their signatures backstage in various places. One along the lower catwalk reads, "Rusty Mueller, Fly Man, Dec 8 - 14," and another by the dressing rooms marks a performance by the Sheen (sp.) Juveniles on September 2, 1919. A final feature of the stage area are the 1908 Kansas City Scenery Co. stage lights that project from their place under the stage.

The basement is reached from double staircases at the front of the building or by a wooden staircase near the back. Each front stairway descends to a banquet room entrance containing double two-panel doors that swing outward. Restrooms with similar wood doors are located to the side of each stair. The banquet room is a large space with its original treated concrete floor, a dropped ceiling and florescent lighting. Two rows of round steel posts that support the auditorium floor are present. Pass through windows with wood shelves supported by decorative brackets, likely added in the late 1940s renovation, offer easy food service from the kitchen. While the kitchen contains more modern appliances and flooring it features early utilitarian cabinetry with original hardware.

Integrity

The West Point City Auditorium retains sufficient integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to convey its significance under National Register Criterion A in the areas of recreation/entertainment and the performing arts. In particular the stage, proscenium and fly loft retain excellent integrity. Both the exterior and interior of the building reflect both the original design and alterations made by the City of West Point after purchasing the building in 1945. These alterations are significant in themselves as reflections of the building's continued value to the community. Original windows have been lost, but their openings have been retained in most cases. Furthermore, the West Point Community Theatre group is in the process of exposing many features that were covered during later alterations such the ceiling and interior balcony in the auditorium room. They also plan to make the manual set and curtain pulley system operational. The West Point City Auditorium still has a future as an entertainment and performing arts venue.

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.)

- X 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.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B Removed from its original location.
C A birthplace or a grave.
D A cemetery.
E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F A commemorative property.
G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Performing Arts

Entertainment / Recreation

Period of Significance

1911-1959

Significant Dates

1911

1945

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

J. M. Natchtigall / West Point Cadet Band

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

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The West Point City Auditorium is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of performing arts and recreation/entertainment as a place for music, theater, dances, wedding receptions and meetings from its construction in 1911 through the end of its historical significance in 1959 (fifty years from the present). Financed by West Point businesses and private citizens during a subscription drive, the building was administered by the West Point Cadet Band. It was later purchased by the City of West Point in 1945 after a public vote and remodeled around 1949. The West Point City Auditorium was host to repeated activities that brought cultural and social opportunities to West Point and the surrounding community during its long period of historical significance.

"Prospects Good for New Auditorium"

The citizens of West Point had an affinity for music. Even before the construction of the West Point City Auditorium they crowded into buildings like Krause's Hall to hear visiting bands or their very own Cadet Band. After one 1911 concert, the *Cuming County Democrat* reported, "Home talent always draws well in our little city...were a vote taken, the audience would certainly express a unanimous desire to have such a concert every week."¹ In just a few short months, the community of West Point would have an opportunity to prove their desire for regular musical and theatrical enrichment.

By the summer of 1911 an auditorium had already been on the mind of the citizenry, as at least three attempts to build one had failed, "for some reason or another."² The fourth time, however, would prove to be a success in large part due to the dedication of the West Point Cadet Band. At a mass meeting on May 16, 1911 the Cadet Band proposed a unique solution to finance the construction of the community's long awaited auditorium. They would incorporate and receive non-interest bearing loans from local businesses and community members, which would be repaid through revenue brought in by concerts, dances and performances.³ When Dean Ruesing pointed to weak points in the plan, such as the impermanency of the band and the potential difficulty of raising sufficient funds, the rebuttal was strong. O.E. Anderson responded that, "if our citizens really wanted an auditorium, REALLY WANTED IT, they had the money to build it and the brains to manage it."⁴

The Cadet Band's perceived impermanency was apparently not a widely held concern. The group was already entrenched in West Point cultural and society and had been entertaining the community in some incarnation since late 1872. Clearly it was a group that had gained community trust and support. By September 1911 the Cadet Band was able to incorporate with \$30,000 in capital drawn from eighty-eight business and citizen subscriptions and thirteen donations.⁵ The names of all subscribers were published in the *Cuming County Democrat*. While the largest loans (\$1,000 and \$500) came from businesses like West Point National Bank and Meier Clothing Co., it is worth noting that a substantial sum also came from private individuals donating \$200 dollars or less. From the very beginning the auditorium was a community endeavor financed not through mill levies or wealthy individuals, but through a creative form of private fundraising. Just as O.E. Anderson had suspected, the citizens of West Point "really wanted" an auditorium and had the money to build it.

It would not be long before the community would begin seeing a reward on their investment, if not financially at least in terms of progress on construction. Two cornerstones were laid on September 22, 1911 to commemorate the year of construction and the West Point Cadet Band. "This building is the center of attraction now in this city," exclaimed the

¹ "The Band Concert," *Cuming County Democrat*, February 24, 1911.

² "Prospects Good for a New Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, May 19, 1911.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "The New Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, September 22, 1911.

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Cuming *County Democrat* in its write up on the cornerstone ceremony.⁶ The design and construction of the Auditorium involved a number of parties. A Board of Trustees made up of city officials and Cadet Band members was formed and Omaha architect, J. M. Nachtigall, was enlisted to assist with the general planning. According to Natchitgall, a building of 66 x 100 feet could be constructed for \$15,000. The Board of Trustees would determine, "the exact size and shape and details," of the new building.⁷ By November Contractor Derr was building the fly loft at the rear of the building and Contractor Hartline was, "running the front up with heavy white stones and pressed brick, making an imposing structure, which must be seen to be appreciated."⁸

Indeed the multiple visions of the Cadet Band, the City of West Point, the architect and contractors, and the community at large had combined to create an attractive and functional building. With its contrasting materials, stylized pilasters, decorative corbelling, loosely crenulated parapet, and impressive balcony the façade of the new Auditorium took inspiration from English Revival movements. Inside the audience was seated in detached chairs so that the space could be converted quickly for dances. Downstairs a banquet room and kitchen was available for community events.

Home Talent Makes Good

The Cadet Band was quick to start lining up entertainment for the new building. Of course, they could also do the job themselves. As early as Thanksgiving 1911 the Cadet Band was planning a dance that, "very likely will be held in the new Auditorium."⁹ November may have been a bit ambitious—it is unclear whether this dance was ever held—but on New Year's Eve the building was complete enough to host its first dance with the Cadet Band providing the music. Some dances and concerts were free while others had a cover charge. For instance, a masquerade ball in 1912 charged \$1.00 for men, 25 cents for spectators and admitted masked ladies for free.¹⁰ After all, the group did need to pay back the loans received from community members and businesses for the construction of the Auditorium.

As time progressed it seems the Cadet Band was able to bring in other musical and theatrical talent to the West Point Auditorium, and their concerts became less common. These events were draws for the community and the Band was able to charge more often. Typical fees during the 1910s were 25 cents for children, 50 cents for general seating and 75 cents for reserved seating.¹¹ For the next thirty-four years the Cadet Band would continue to manage the Auditorium, bringing cultural and entertainment opportunities to West Point and the surrounding community. Their efforts did not go unappreciated. At the April 1912 formal opening, "the Band boys well earned and were accorded a splendid showing."¹² Even toward the end of their ownership in the mid-1940s, the *Cuming County Republican* could report that the Auditorium, "has served a useful purpose for many years, and its operator... was known far and wide for the successful dances, road shows, and other entertainments which were sponsored."¹³ The Cadet Band and the Auditorium were clearly a vital part of West Point's social and cultural livelihood from 1911-1945.

A City Takeover and Makeover

By 1945, however, the West Point Band Association was saddled with a steep mortgage on the Auditorium and made the decision to disband. The community had to decide what to do with a large and soon to be vacant building. On Tuesday, January 9, 1945 the community of West Point voted 442 to 44 in favor of the city buying the building. Just as they did in

⁶ "Corner Stone Laying," *CumingCounty Democrat*, September 29, 1911.

⁷ "Report of the Auditorium Committee," *Cuming County Democrat*, May 26, 1911.

⁸ Front Page News, *CumingCounty Democrat*, November 10, 1911.

⁹ Front Page News, *CumingCounty Democrat*, December 29, 1911.

¹⁰ "Masquerade Ball," *CumingCounty Democrat*, February 16, 1912.

¹¹ "Germans at the Auditorium Next Thursday," *CumingCounty Democrat*, April 4, 1913.

¹² "Formal Opening," *CumingCounty Democrat*, April 19, 1913.

¹³ "The Auditorium: An Editorial," *CumingCounty Republican*, January 4, 1945.

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1911, the community was willing to finance the Auditorium.¹⁴ Rarely does a historic building have such a concrete affirmation of community-wide significance, low voter turnout notwithstanding.

It was clear from the beginning that the City of West Point planned to make changes upon taking over ownership. The vote stipulated a \$25,000 bond, "for the purpose of buying the building and rebuilding it," in order to transform, "the structure into a more modern auditorium adequate to the needs of the community."¹⁵ The modernization of the building was not well documented and likely happened in a piecemeal fashion. Its cumulative effect, however, is quite visible particularly on the façade and in the basement. The building readily conveys an association with both ownership eras occurring during its period of historical significance.

Recreation and Entertainment: A Community Building

From 1911 through the 1950s, the Auditorium basically had two primary functions. It was a venue for performing arts, but it also served as a community gathering place for wedding receptions, dances, lectures, club meetings and school functions. It is the repetition and frequency of these former activities that gives the West Point City Auditorium significance in the area of recreation and entertainment. As early as 1912 the town was already utilizing the Auditorium for events like the 13th Annual High School Declamatory Contest, which was touted as the best ever thanks in large part to the new venue.¹⁶ During World War I, the community gathered at the Auditorium for events sponsored by the local Home Guard and other patriotic fare. For instance in July of 1918, a "Lieutenant Nash," one of the first men on the Belgium Front, stopped in West Point on a speaking tour and delivered a "splendid address" to around 500 audience members.¹⁷

Of all the recreational activities that took place at the Auditorium during its period of historical significance, dances were probably the most common. Beginning with the Cadet Band dances of the Auditorium's early period, Cuming County residences could almost always count on some kind of entertainment at the Auditorium during any given week. The American Legion picked up where the Cadet Band left off in the 1920s, sponsoring dances like the January 29, 1920 benefit dance where participants could hear, "the latest musical hits... played by the orchestra with St. Clair in charge. Nuff said."¹⁸ American Legion and Cadet Band dances were less focused on the talent, which everyone was already familiar with, than on the gathering of the community for the purpose of entertainment. In later years, this would change as the city brought in regional big band and swing acts. Local schools also held dances at the Auditorium including the 1949 West Point High School Homecoming Dance.

Performing Arts: From *Heart Breakers* to the Nat Towles Orchestra

The formal opening of the Auditorium featured the musical comedy *Heart Breakers*. Produced by Mort H. Singer, the play had a cast of 50 members and had recently come off a summer run at the Princess Theater in Chicago.¹⁹ Singer was a prominent man in Chicago's vibrant theater community who had interests in over 30 theaters across the United States, including the Princess.²⁰ *Heart Breakers* featured actor George Demerel and required nearly 20 men to run the set.²¹ According to the *Cuming County Democrat*, "the house was well filled with as fine an audience as any company could

¹⁴ "West Point Auditorium—Historical Dates," compiled by the West Point Community Theatre and "The Auditorium: An Editorial," *Cuming County Republican*, January 4, 1945.

¹⁵ "The Auditorium: An Editorial," *Cuming County Republican*, January 4, 1945.

¹⁶ "High School Declamatory Contest," *Cuming County Democrat*, March 15, 1912.

¹⁷ "Splendid Address," *Cuming County Democrat*, August 18, 1918.

¹⁸ "American Legion Dance," *Cuming County Democrat*, January 23, 1920.

¹⁹ West Point 150th Book Committee. *The Best Point for 150 Years: West Point, Nebraska, 1858-2008*, 75.

²⁰ "Wreck Mrs. Taft's Theatre," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1910.

²¹ "Formal Opening and Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, April 5, 1911.

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wish for. The stage scenery was superb and the effects of the colored lights were brilliant.²² While not everyone was entirely satisfied with the April 11, 1911 performance, "One thing was settled: There were hundreds of people in the auditorium who more fully know that never before realized the benefits of a building that was safe, ventilated and convenient." The Auditorium, at the very least, was a hit with audience members. Few performances at the West Point City Auditorium would match the pure spectacle of *Heart Breakers*, but the building continued to draw talent. The New York German Troop, Ciricillo's Italian Band featuring the Farinelli Trio, and tenor Hardy Williamson were just a few of the acts brought in during the Auditorium's first decade.²³

After the City of West Point purchased the Auditorium in 1945, dances were a regular weekly form of entertainment. The late 1940s marked the end of the Territorial Band era, and it appears West Point was on the circuit of many Midwest Territory bands, particularly those associated with Omaha. In July of 1945, the West Point City Auditorium featured four dances with music by the Ray Backman Orchestra (Omaha), Chris Blumm Orchestra, Duffy Belorad (Leigh, Nebraska) and the Nat Towles Orchestra (Omaha).²⁴ Nat Towles was a highly regarded jazz musician from New Orleans who was eventually associated with the Dreamland Ballroom in North Omaha's vibrant African American community. In his study of the Kansas City Jazz and Territorial Band eras, Nathan W. Pearson identifies Towles and others for "their importance in the development of Midwestern Jazz and because they are most frequently described in the oral histories."²⁵ These were not just dances but performances that brought cultural enrichment to West Point and the surrounding community.

While few of these acts ever "made it big" on a national scale or found lasting fame, many were regionally significant and popular at the time. Certainly, their presence in West Point had an impact on the community. Without the Auditorium, the community of West Point would have been unable to draw such talent. In turn, they would have never been exposed to such a wide variety of performances. The Auditorium is significant in the area of Performing Arts not just for who graced its stage, but also for its role in the cultural and artistic enrichment of the local audience.

Conclusion

The West Point City Auditorium is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with entertainment and performing arts from its construction in 1911 through the end of its period of significance in 1959. During its period of significance the Auditorium was a venue for a variety of cultural and community events on an almost weekly basis. From concerts by the locally prominent West Point Cadet Band to dances featuring the Nat Towles Orchestra, the Auditorium was regularly filled with music. Theatrical performances were also booked, bringing entertainment possibilities to West Point usually reserved only for much large cities. Finally, the Auditorium served as a place of repeated and frequent community activities such as meetings, wedding receptions and West Point High School competitive and social events. Moreover, the community itself concretely affirmed its significance in 1911 by funding its construction, and again in 1945, when an overwhelming majority voted for the City's proposal to purchase and renovate the building. The West Point City Auditorium was a vital force in the cultural and social life of West Point and the surrounding community during the early and mid-20th Century.

²² "The Formal Opening," *CumingCounty Democrat*, April 19, 1911.

²³ "Germans at the Auditorium Next Tuesday," "At the Auditorium," and "Large Audience Hears Hardy Williamson," *CumingCounty Democrat*, April 4, 1913, October 3, 1913 and October 24, 1919.

²⁴ "Dance Attraction For the Week at the City Auditorium," June 28, 1945, July 5, 1945 and July 26, 1945.

²⁵ Pearson, Nathan W. *Goin' to Kansas City*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987, 43.

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Bibliography

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"Wreck Mrs. Taft's Theatre," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1910.

"The Band Concert," *Cuming County Democrat*, February 24, 1911.

"Prospects Good for a New Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, May 19, 1911.

"Report of the Auditorium Committee," *Cuming County Democrat*, May 26, 1911.

"The New Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, September 22, 1911.

"Corner Stone Laying," *Cuming County Democrat*, September 29, 1911.

Front Page News, *Cuming County Democrat*, November 10, 1911.

Front Page News, *Cuming County Democrat*, December 29, 1911.

"Masquerade Ball," *Cuming County Democrat*, February 16, 1912.

"High School Declamatory Contest," *Cuming County Democrat*, March 15, 1912.

"Formal Opening of Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, April 5, 1912.

"The Formal Opening," *Cuming County Democrat*, April 19, 1912.

"Germans at the Auditorium Next Thursday," *Cuming County Democrat*, April 4, 1913.

"Formal Opening," *Cuming County Democrat*, April 19, 1913.

"At the Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, October 3, 1913

"Splendid Address," *Cuming County Democrat*, August 18, 1918.

"Large Audience Hears Hardy Williamson," *Cuming County Democrat*, October 24, 1919

"American Legion Dance," *Cuming County Democrat*, January 23, 1920.

"The Auditorium: An Editorial," *Cuming County Republican*, January 4, 1945.

"Dance Attraction For the Week at the City Auditorium," *Cuming County Democrat*, June 28, 1945, July 5 and 26, 1945.

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	689955	N4634536	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Jessie Nunn, National Register Coordinatororganization Nebraska State Historical Societydate August 4, 2009street & number 1420 P Street, 3rd Floortelephone 402-471-4775city or town Lincolnstate NEzip code 68502**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title City of West Pointstreet & number 444 South Main Streettelephone 402-372-2466city or town West Pointstate NEzip code 68788

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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet
Geographical Data**

West Point City Auditorium
Name of Property

Cuming County, Nebraska
County and State

Section 10 Page 9

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 1, Block 11, Original Town, City of West Point, Cuming County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property included the entire parcel historically association with the West Point Auditorium.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet
Photographs**

West Point City Auditorium
Name of Property

Cuming County, Nebraska
County and State

Section Photos Page 10

Photographs

Photo 1 of 15. East Façade, Aspect: NW

Photo 2 of 15. Decorative Detail on East Façade, Aspect: W

Photo 3 of 15. North Elevation, Aspect: SW

Photo 4 of 15. Rear (West) Elevation with Fly Loft and Chimney, Aspect: SE

Photo 5 of 15. Romantic Front Curtain, Aspect: W

Photo 6 of 15. Main Street Curtain, Aspect: W

Photo 7 of 15. Stage, Proscenium and Dome with Dropped Ceiling, Aspect: W

Photo 8 of 15. Balcony Restoration in Progress, Aspect: E

Photo 9 of 15. Detail of Original Ceiling Plaster and Stenciling intact above Dropped Ceiling, Aspect: NA

Photo 10 of 15. Fly Loft Catwalk, Ladder and Pully System, Aspect: E

Photo 11 of 15. Fly Loft Interior and Pully System, Aspect: SE

Photo 12 of 15. Dressing Room, Aspect: NE

Photo 13 of 15. Ticket Window, Stair and Main Entrance, Aspect: SW

Photo 14 of 15. Basement Kitchen Cabinetry and Stairs, Aspect: NW

Photo 15 of 15. Pass Through from Kitchen to Banquet Room, Aspect: NW

All photographs by Jessie Nunn, Nebraska State Historical Society on 03-09-2009.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: West Point City Auditorium

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Cuming

DATE RECEIVED: 10/02/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/16/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/31/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/15/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000904

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 11.10.09 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.



West End
Community Theatre

SHOWING TODAY
RETURN
BACK TO THE
FUTURE
APRIL
22, 23, 24, 25

West Point Auditorium (CMB5-046)
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 1 of 15

NE-CumingCounty-Auditorium-0001



West Point Auditorium (cm05-046)
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 2 of 15

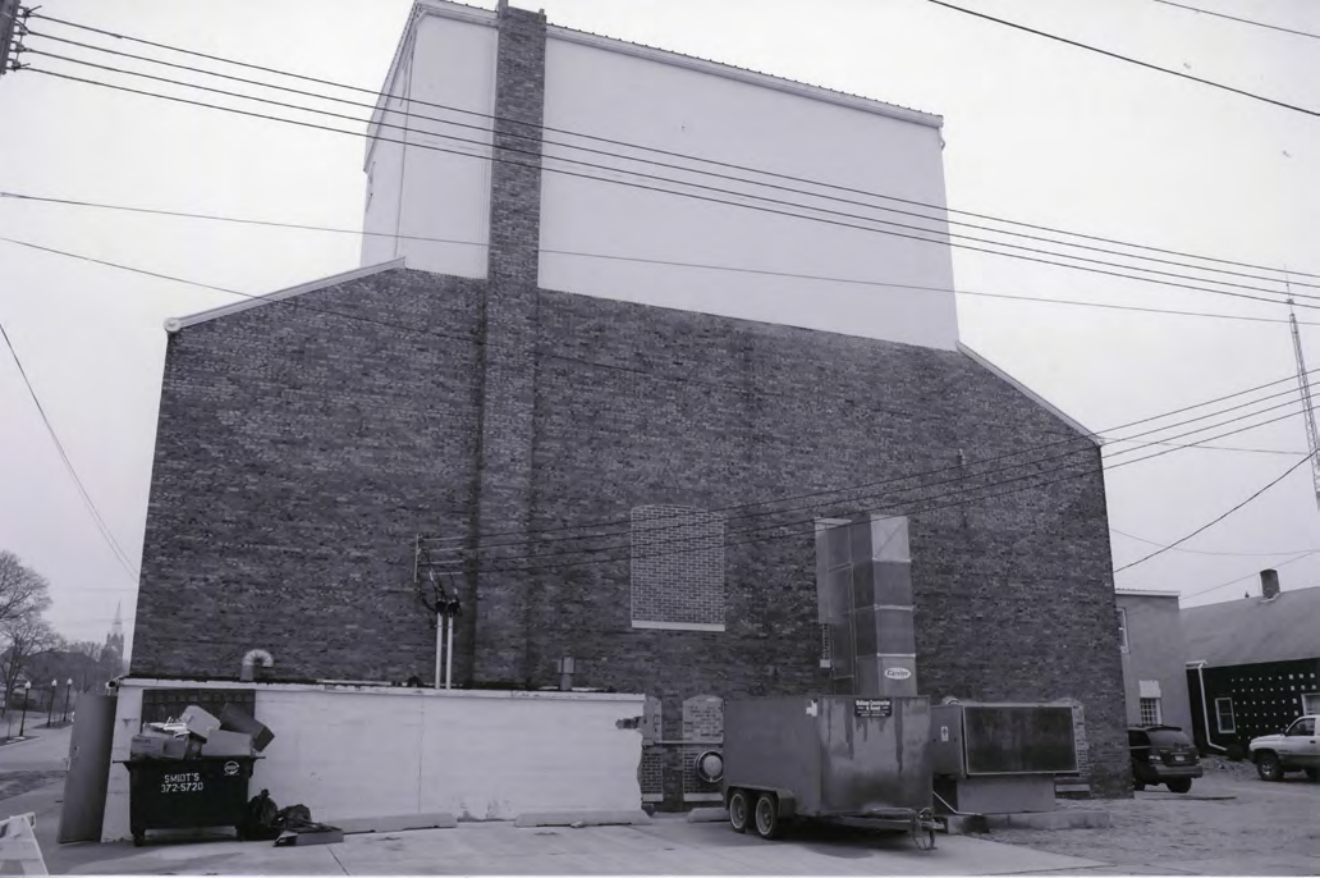
NE-Cuming County-Auditorium-0002



West Point Auditorium (CMOS-046)
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 3 of 15

NE-Cuming County-Auditorium-0003



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 4 of 15

NE-CumingCounty-Auditorium-0004



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 5 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0005



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 6 of 15

NE_CumingCounty_Auditorium_0006



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 7 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0007

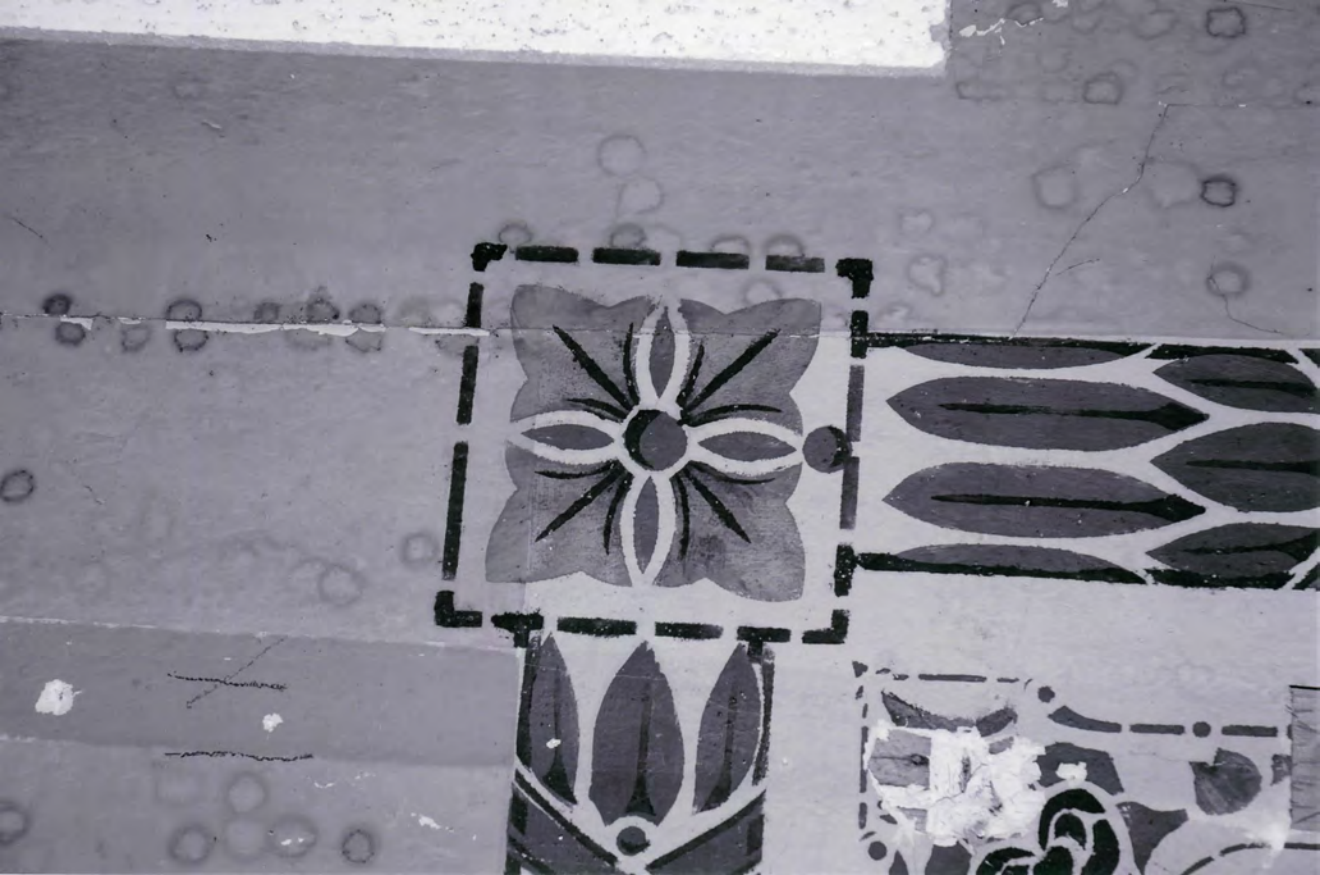


West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 8 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0008



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 9 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0009



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 10 of 15

NE_CumingCounty_Auditorium_0010



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 11 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0011



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 12 of 15

NE_CumingCounty_Auditorium_0012



West Point Auditorium (cm05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 13 of 15

NE_CumingCounty_Auditorium_0013



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 14 of 15

NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0014



West Point Auditorium (CM05-046)

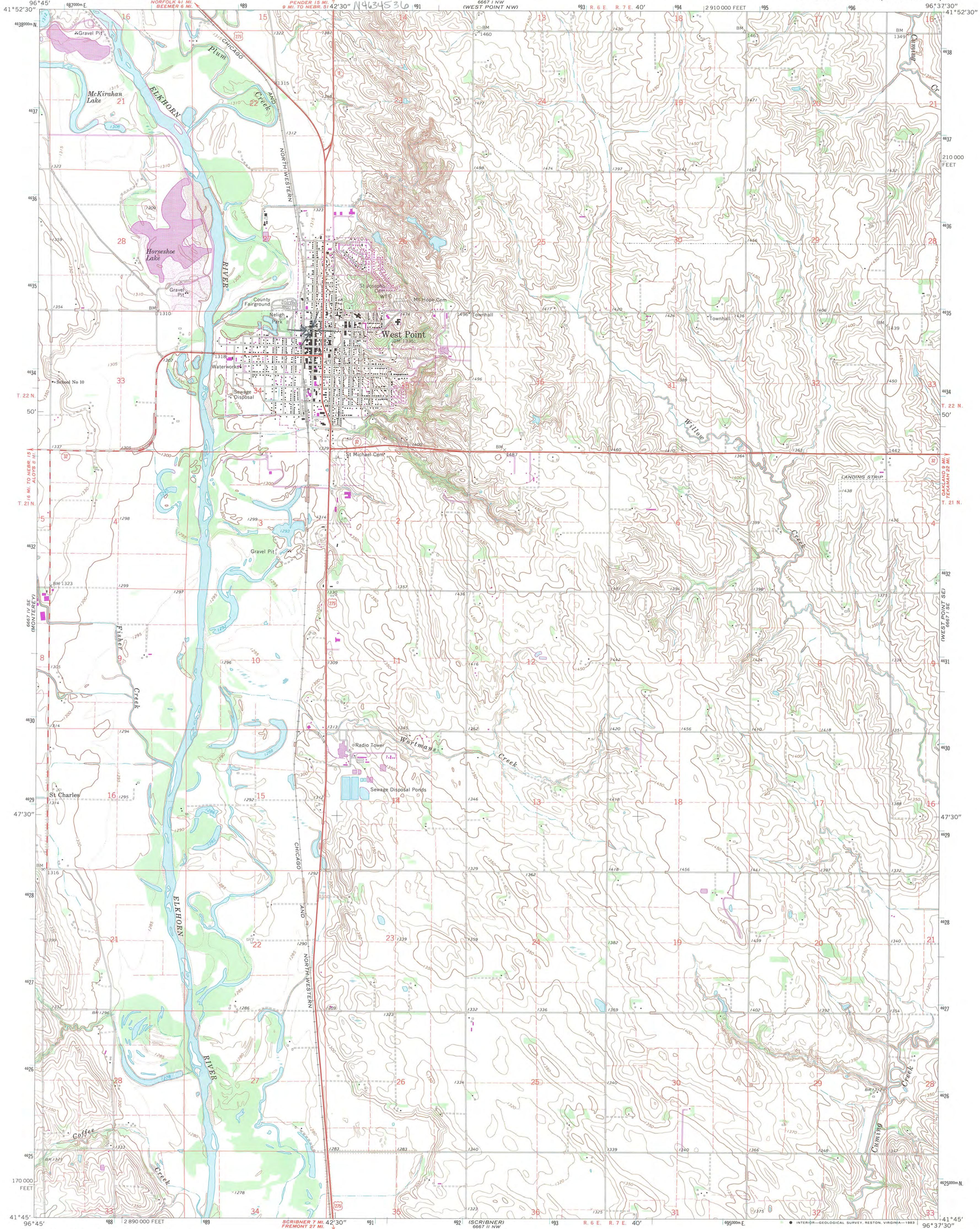
Cuming County, Nebraska

Photo 15 of 15

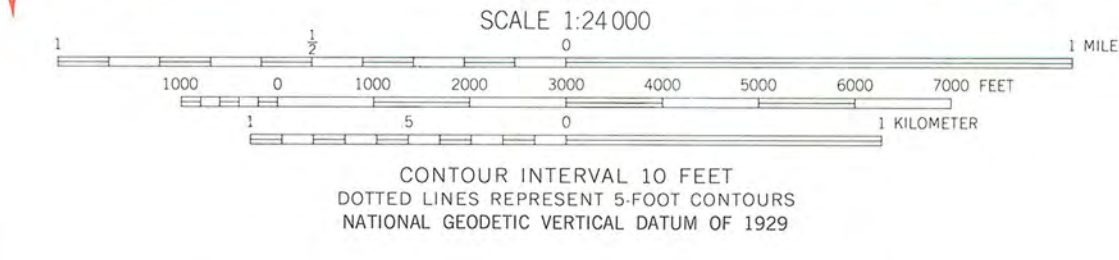
NE_Cuming County_Auditorium_0015

Quad: West Point

West Point Auditorium (CMAOS-046)
West Point, Cuming County Nebraska
Zone 14
E689955
N4634536



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey as part of the Department of the Interior program for the development of the Missouri River Basin Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1965. Field checked 1966
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grid based on Nebraska coordinate system, north zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 5 meters north and 26 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route	State Route

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

NEBRASKA
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1981 and other sources
This information not field checked. Map edited 1983

WEST POINT, NEBR.
N4145-W9637.5/7.5
1966
PHOTOREVISED 1983
DMA 6667 I SW-SERIES V875

Nebraska
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

September 24, 2009



J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: West Point City Auditorium (CM05-046)
West Point, Cuming County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the above resource. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

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Lincoln, NE 68501-2554
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