

14607775

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: IOWA
COUNTY: KEOKUK
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE APR 4 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: What Cheer Opera House, Inc.

AND/OR HISTORIC: Masonic Opera House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: ~~Briney & Barnes Street~~ 201 Barnes Street

CITY OR TOWN: What Cheer CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fourth

STATE: Iowa 50268 CODE: 14 COUNTY: Keokuk CODE: 107

3. CLASSIFICATION

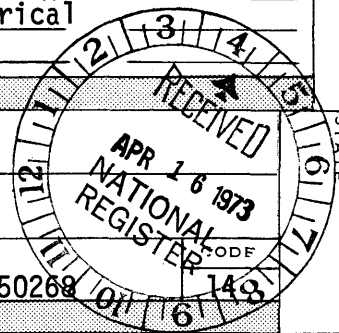
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restoration in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Historical

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Opera House, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER: 201 Barnes Street

CITY OR TOWN: What Cheer STATE: Iowa 50268



5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: County Recorders Office in Keokuk County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Sigourney STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Second Rail Road Addition to the Town of What Cheer, Iowa

DATE OF SURVEY: March 17, 1880 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Keokuk County Recorder Office in Land Deed Record 6 page 455

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Sigourney STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

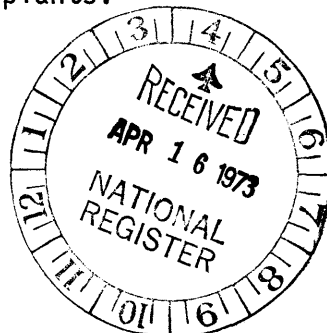
7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(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 What Cheer Opera House has the appearance of a three-story building, 50 feet wide and 100 feet long. The middle story being the balcony level. The top floor was originally built as a Masonic Temple, the emblems associated with Freemasonry are still in existence in the small decorative pediment at the top of the building. The building is brick with a hint of Romanesque detail in round head windows and the corbels at cornice. The horizontal bands of rock faced stone more or less divide the building into story height. The structure was remodeled into a movie theatre many years ago, but fortunately original exterior window and main entrance mill work was either stored within the building or covered up with new material in a manner not destroying same. The only original items missing are the four front doors, these have been reconstructed same as original. Some of the formed sheet metal work on the pediment and cornice is in need of replacing or repair, some pointing has been done on the exterior, but only enough to preserve the building from further damage. The lobby is quite small, too small to provide any waiting space during intermissions; there is equal space off the balcony. The doors to the auditorium were stored, and are now hanging as originally. The auditorium seats 350, the balcony 240. Both balcony and auditorium have been restored, again, interesting original detail was found under late period alterations. Both auditorium and balcony seating is basically horseshoe. The front ten rows, being an area just in front of the stage, sunken a bit, were known as the "Pit". The three rows immediately back of the Pit were known as the "The Dress Circl", and the rows behind the Dress Circle were known as "The Parquet Circle". The third floor Masonic Temple was supported by rows of cast iron columns parallel to the side walls and about 1/4 point. These columns also support the balcony. The curving balcony shape and rail are possibly the outstanding architectural details in the building. The restoration of the building has been a very slow process, each little bit of restoration has been done only when profit from productions became available. There is no effort at this time to do any restoration of the third floor, rather, it has become a good source of spare architectural items needed to restore first floor and balcony. The basement was never completed but partially excavated to accomodate plants.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **Construction started in March 1893**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This opera house has become quite significant, because it was a very important part of our way of living at one time. It was the only source of entertainment for many towns; opera houses were in every city; gradually they were altered beyond restoration into movie houses, torn down or gutted and entire new uses were made of the shell. Here is one that has been saved and in good condition. Life has been put back into it and provides entertainment which draws people from a radius of two hundred miles. At the turn of the century, nationally known repertoire companies appeared in What Cheer, a few weeks after they appeared on Broadway. Today, history repeats: Guy Lombardo, Sammy Kay, Wayne King, Jan Garber, Fred Waring. To quote Fred Waring, "Thousands of people have appeared on this stage, something of their performances linger here, there is a built in accoustic, there is a warm feeling of being with your audience that I have never known in any other place."



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Patriot-1880; Reporter-1882; Chronicle-1888; Patriot-Chronicle-1928, still in operation.

Universe Lodge 242 AF & AM

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

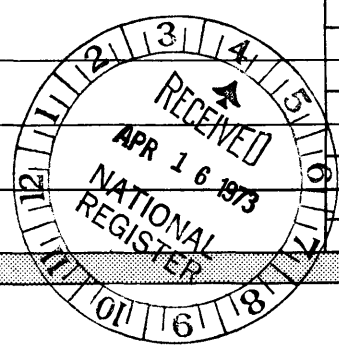
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 24' 15"	92° 21' 23"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

UTM
15/553930
4589310
02

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than one acre**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Thomas O. Burriss, President**

ORGANIZATION: **What Cheer Opera House, Inc.** DATE: **February 7, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **R. R. #2**

CITY OR TOWN: **What Cheer** STATE: **Iowa 50268** CODE: **14**

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

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:

National State Local

Name Adrian D. Anderson

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 11 April, 1973

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

Roberton Utley
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 6/4/73

ATTEST:
J. Bradford
Acting Keeper of The National Register

Date 5/25/73