

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECORDED
MAY 17 1990

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name CARSON CITY CIVIC AUDITORIUM
other names/site number MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

2. Location

street & number 813 North Carson Street (US 395) not for publication N/A
city, town Carson City vicinity N/A
state Nevada code NV county Carson City code 510 zip code 89706

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Ronald M. Gove 5/19/90
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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:)

Amy Federman 6/19/90
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Steel

roof Asbestos

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See Continuation Sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
OTHER: Depression-Era Relief Efforts

Period of Significance

1933-42

Significant Dates

1938-39

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Lehman A. Ferris/ H.L. Dressler

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one

UTM References

A

1	1
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2	6	1	9	4	0
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4	3	3	7	9	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

North half of Block 14 of the Proctor and Van Winckle Addition.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the lot that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard A. Bernstein
 organization Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology date March 9, 1990
 street & number 201 South Fall Street, #106 telephone (702) 885-5138
 city or town Carson City state Nevada zip code 89710

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Architectural Description

Historical Background: Carson City, Nevada's capital, was first platted as a townsite by Abraham Curry in 1858 under the provisions of the federal "Townsite Act of 1844." When the Nevada Territory was carved from Utah in 1861, Carson City was designated its capital, in large measure because Curry campaigned for that distinction. He had also reserved a plaza at the town's center specifically for a capitol building. Shortly thereafter, Carson City was also chosen as the county seat to the newly-formed Ormsby County, the state's smallest. In 1864, Nevada achieved statehood. In 1875, Carson City received its official city charter.

The Carson City Civic Auditorium was designed by architect Lehman A. Ferris in 1938 and built by contractor H. L. Dressler in 1939. The project was cooperatively financed by a municipal bond issue and the Public Works Administration (PWA) on a fifty-five/forty-five joint basis.¹ The PWA was a federally-sponsored, depression-era relief program designed to provide work to the ranks of the unemployed, while also providing local communities with much-needed public facilities.

Setting: Carson City, at an approximate elevation of 4,600 feet, is bordered to the west by the heavily-timbered Sierra Nevada, to the east and southeast by the sagebrush-covered hills of the Pine Nut range, and to the north by the Virginia range. The Carson River, fed by various Sierran canyon streams to the south, skirts the borders of Carson City to the southwest, before turning east into the Lahonton reservoir and the Carson sink.

The Civic Auditorium faces west onto North Carson Street (U.S. 395, the community's major north-south artery). To the north, Ann Street provides two secondary entries, while North Plaza Street borders the rear of the building site to the east. The remainder of the building lot immediately to the south is now occupied by the Downtowner Motor Inn. Most of the surrounding area, especially along U.S. 395, is heavily trafficked and commercialized.

¹ Minutes of the Board of City Trustees, Volume 7, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Carson City, Nevada, p. 80.

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Exterior: The single-story Carson City Civic Auditorium is symmetrically massed and monumentally scaled. Structurally, the building depends upon a steel skeleton to reinforce its red-brick sidewalls. Its multiple-gable roof, sheathed with asbestos-cement shingling, covers an I-shaped plan. A molded wooden cornice trims the roof on all sides. The brick that rakes the eaves along the main (W) gable is laid in decorative sawtooth fashion and features a corbelled arcade, distinguishing it stylistically as belonging to the Romanesque Revival.

The auditorium's main entry is surmounted with a large semicircular fanlight. The fanlight features frosted glass held in place by metal sashes. The entryway to the gabled lobby foyer is also enriched with a highly decorative concrete surround. The original architectural drawings, as prepared by L.A. Ferris in December 1938 call for a terra cotta entry surround, indicating that there was a change order, perhaps in an effort to save money.² The two sets of octagonally-panelled wooden doors are flanked and separated by scrolled Romanesque columns, also of concrete. The letters spelling CIVIC AUDITORIUM are deeply incised into the half-round arch of the concrete molding surrounding the fanlight. The bricks of the entry stairway are laid on edge with the main landing featuring a basketweave pattern. Decorative wrought-iron railings, probably of recent origin, adorn the platform areas to either side.

The side (N & S) facades are each pierced by five pairs of round-arched windows, providing light to the auditorium on the main level. The metal-sashed auditorium windows, with soldier course voussoirs and rowlock sills, are deeply set into the main body of the building, revealing a double wythe of brick. The brick sidewalls are laid in a six-layer common bond. The three shades of burnt brick are joined with a mortar tinted with a red pigment.

The entire structure rests upon a raised steel-reinforced concrete foundation that houses a full basement. The separation between floor levels is delineated on the exterior by a brick water table laid on a forty-five degree bevel. The full basement is lit by square metal-sashed casement windows grouped in pairs, now covered by steel mesh to prevent burglary. There are five

² "Original Architectural Drawings," Dated December, 1938, Public Works Department, Carson City, Nevada.

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pairs on each side (N & S) facade, and two on the rear (E). The front lobby is lit by a number of smaller, round-arched windows, sometimes paired and separated by a concrete Romanesque column with unscrollled capitals. They each feature four-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows. The north facade also includes two side entries, one to the lobby and the full basement below and one to the stage and the basement. The south facade also includes a side entry that provides direct access to the stage and the basement below.

Interior: The gabled side pavilions towards the front (W) of the building house a lobby on the main level and a meeting room directly above. The lobby floor is sheathed with nine-inch square linoleum blocks. The cross gable towards the rear (E) house a stage on the main level and a full kitchen directly below. The auditorium runs the length in between and is floored with maple. The theatre's original stage equipment includes a full array of lights for dramatic productions and a movie screen. The full basement was originally intended as a banquet room and included complete kitchen facilities. The original built-in cabinets still remain. The walls are cream and ivory-colored plaster.

Evaluation: The Carson City Civic Auditorium's styling and scale are unique to this community and rare for most of the region and the state. The structure remains substantially unaltered and retains all significant aspects of its historical appearance and integrity.

The use of features associated with the Romanesque Revival are generally reserved for public, institutional and governmental buildings. The first known example of the Romanesque Revival in Nevada was the Federal Building in Carson City, designed by Treasury Architect M. E. Bell and built in 1981. The Federal Building exhibits elements of the French Chateausque as well. The Romanesque Revival became increasingly popular with Nevada's architects in between the two World Wars. Examples include St. Paul's Catholic Church, designed by J. J. Foley, built 1924, and not registered, and the Fallon Municipal Building in Fallon, designed by Frederick J. DeLongchamps, built in 1930, and not registered. The Civic Auditorium is the most recent manifestation of this style known in Nevada. For that reason the Civic Auditorium is significant on a statewide basis and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

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The Carson City Civic Auditorium is significant under Criterion A because of its association with the theme of "Depression-Era Relief Efforts" (as outlined in the Nevada Comprehensive Preservation Plan). The Auditorium is also significant as a rare example of a monumentally-scaled Romanesque Revival-styled building in Nevada and therefore qualifies for the National Register under Criterion C as well.

Carson City - Historical Background

Carson City, while still within the Utah Territory, was platted as a federal townsite by Abraham Curry in September, 1858. The settlement served primarily as a trading post and way station for the migrants bound for the California goldfields. Curry and his partners, M. Proctor, B. F. Green and J. J. Musser, were quick to deed property to any and all who would promise to build. The Carson City Methodist Church, as an example, still occupies the lot it originally purchased for \$25.00.

With the "Rush to Washoe" that followed the silver strike on the Comstock in 1859, Carson City continued to prosper as the region's mercantile center. The 1860 federal census shows that 714 people then occupied the growing community. Within a year the population nearly doubled, in part because it had become a Pony Express station. The sizable influx of new residents, most from California, pressured the U.S. Congress to grant them independence from the Utah Territory. As a result, Nevada was granted separate territorial status in 1861. Curry, who had always hoped that Carson would become the capital, invited the Territorial Legislature to utilize his new Warm Springs Hotel southeast of town as its first meeting place. The last act of the first legislative session on November 29, 1861, designated Carson City as the seat of the newly-formed Ormsby County.

In 1869, the state financed the construction of its own capitol. At the same time, the federal government constructed a new mint building to coin the ore coming from the Comstock. The 1870 federal census counted over 3,000 Carson City residents.

Carson's growth was further enhanced in 1872, when it was selected as the headquarters of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad. The fifty-two-mile line connected Carson City with various regional points. These included Virginia City and the mines of the Comstock, Reno and the Central Pacific to the north, and Minden and the agricultural areas to the south, all of

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which ensured Carson's stature and position as a transportation center. The new railroad transported ore from the Comstock more efficiently to the various mills that sprang up along the Carson River and revitalized the Comstock's stagnating mining economy. In 1875, the state granted Carson City its city charter.¹ By 1880, federal census figures show Carson contained over 4,200 residents.

One traveler in 1880 described Carson City in this manner: "There was a strange mingling of substantial public buildings and of hastily built shells; the fine gray stone Mint, the State-house, hotels, banks, express-offices, contrasted with Chinese shanties and houses evidently built during the rush of the 'early days.' In the side-streets were churches and comfortable dwellings with vines and flowers and fruit trees among them . . ." ²

Carson City, like much of Nevada, experienced a serious economic downturn towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1891, the federal government constructed the Federal Building, combining elements of the Romanesque and Chateausque. Its construction came at a time while little else was being built in the community.

The 1906 mining booms in Goldfield and Tonopah provided relief for communities as far north as Carson City, evidenced by the number of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival homes built on Carson City's west side.³ Population figures declined from 1890 until

¹ S. Allen Chambers, Jr., The Architecture of Carson City, Nevada (Washington, D.C., Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, 1972).

² "L.C. Jones, "At The Foot of the Sierras," Lippincotts Monthly, March, 1880, p. 332.

³ The Wilson Brougher Mansion, a transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival home, was built in 1903-4 and placed on the National Register in 1980. Brougher's wealth was derived from his various Tonopah Mining Claims. Brougher Mansion National Register Nomination, 1980. Other early Twentieth Century Colonial Revival homes include the Governor's Mansion, built in 1907 and placed on the National Register in 1976, and the Dr. William Henry Cavell house, built in 1907 and placed on the National Register in 1986.

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they bottomed out in 1930 at 1,596. Since then the numbers have steadily increased.⁴

Building The Civic Auditorium

The first known reference concerning the Carson City Civic Auditorium dates back to December 14, 1936, when Ellis Folsom, a spokesman for Capitol Post No. 4 of the American Legion, appeared before the Carson City Board of City Trustees. The Carson City Armory, which had been converted for use as the American Legion's fraternal hall, had burnt to the ground. Folsom suggested the city approach the Public Works Administration (PWA) of the Federal Emergency Relief Agency for a grant of forty-five per cent of the cost of constructing a new auditorium, the remainder to be raised by a municipal bond. The Legion would later support the new auditorium by donating the site upon which the former Armory stood as well as the \$3,000 they had received from the insurance company.

On April 12, 1937, Reno-architect John F. Norberg, appeared before the Board requesting that he be retained for this project. An official resolution was passed authorizing the president to develop an application.⁵ In response, the PWA made clear that a grant for \$45,000 would be impossible.⁶

The issue of applying for a federal grant did not resurface again until June 13, 1938, when President Millard appointed Trustee O. F. Pratt as chairman of the Civic Auditorium committee. Later that month, architect Norberg, not yet officially retained, presented a preliminary floor plan. Trustee Spradling moved that

⁴ Today, the total population is approximately 39,420. "The 1989 Population Estimates for the Counties and Incorporated Cities" (Carson City, Department of Taxation, February, 1990). It should be noted however, that in 1969 Carson City and Ormsby County were consolidated, eliminating many duplicate county offices. The land area of Carson City embraces what had originally been designated as Ormsby County.

⁵ "Resolution No. MA-1," Minutes of the Board of City Trustees, June 14, 1937, Volume 7, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Carson City, Nevada, pp. 154-6.

⁶ Ibid.

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the Board give the project tentative approval, the building to be built of brick and steel. The motion carried unanimously.⁷

By July 11, the application for PWA funds for the Civic Auditorium had been approved, with the proviso that Carson City would be ineligible for more than \$31,500.⁸ In response the Board announced August 29 as the date for a special election to raise the remaining amount.

The Board's specifications called for the auditorium to include the following: a dance floor 50 x 70 feet with a maple floor and a seating capacity of 500; the lobby to have a maple floor and to be 22 x 40 feet; the stage to be 20 x 35 feet; cloak rooms and dressing rooms for both stage and lobby. The basement plans called for the following: a banquet hall 20 x 70 feet with a concrete floor; a lower lobby to be 16 x 28 feet; and furnace and storage rooms. Other specifications called for a building built of steel and burnt brick with an asbestos/cement shingle roof, steel ventilated shaft and all interior rooms to be finished in "California stucco." The project was also to include the laying of sidewalks, landscaping of grounds, with the building fully furnished and equipped, including kitchen and stage. The total estimated cost was fixed at \$70,000.⁹

Perhaps in an effort to sway a few votes, Norberg's plans and sketches were put on display in the show window of the Sierra Pacific Power Company.¹⁰ Approximately two-thirds of the voting public approved the city's plans to issue \$40,000 worth of bonds.¹¹ By the end of October, the site had been cleared by

⁷ Minutes of the Board of City Trustees, June 22, 1938, Volume 7, pp. 156-7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Auditorium Bond Election on August 29th," August 9, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:4-6.

¹⁰ "Sketch, Floor Plans Civic Auditorium on Display Here," August 16, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:4-6.

¹¹ "Auditorium Bond Issue Approved Yesterday By Carson City Voters of Both Classes," August 30, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:5-6. The term to "classes" refers to the fact the voters and their

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Works Progress Administration workers and ground had been broken.¹²

For reasons undocumented in its official Minutes, the Board held a special meeting on November 4 in order to change architects and to employ "L[ehman] A. Ferris of Reno to prepare the necessary plans for the project."¹³ The following week the contract for excavation was awarded.¹⁴ Early in December, the contract for pouring the concrete for the foundation and basement was awarded to the Reno firm of Wine and Williams. They were given forty days to complete the work.¹⁵

On January 10, 1939 the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved of Ferris's final plans. A local newspaper report mentions that "common brick of the first class will be used in construction of the auditorium walls. The brick will be of three slightly varying shades, unassorted, and no attempt will be made to work the separate shades into designs. This plan will lessen the material cost three dollars per thousand bricks." At the same meeting the architect stressed the need for a time extension and the impossibility of getting the building completed within the budget and the schedule set by the PWA.¹⁶

ballots were separated according to whether or not they were considered property owners. The bond issue had to be accepted by a majority in each class in order to pass.

12 "Supply of Firewood From Building Site for Auditorium," September 13, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:5-6; "Ground is Broken for Civic Auditorium; Construction Work Will Be Started Soon," October 25, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:5-6.

13 "New Architect for Civic Auditorium; Will Rush Work on Foundation-Basement," November 18, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:5-6.

14 "Bids For Excavating Awarded by Trustees To Elisondoberry," November 22, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:4

15 "Contract Awarded For Pouring Concrete On Auditorium Job," December 5, 1938, Nevada Appeal, p. 3:2.

16 "Final Approval Given Auditorium Plans; Board Seeks Extension for Completion," January 11, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:6-7.

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Construction of the auditorium went into full swing in March when a steel skeleton was set in place and the laying of brick begun. The contract for this phase was awarded to H. L. Dressler¹⁷ of Gardnerville.¹⁸ Soon after the Board submitted an application for an extension in time and for an increase in the grant allocation. Any additional funds would be applied towards equipping the stage and kitchen. By June, 1939, the roof had been erected and sheathed and the main body of the project completed.¹⁹

The Board's attention turned to the interior and they directed Ferris "to draft specifications for all furnishings for the civic auditorium." This included the chairs, tables and curtains. Ferris made the following proposal for the interior color scheme. The ceiling would be ivory, the walls would be buff, the kitchen

¹⁷ Herb Louis Dressler (c.1892-1982) was born in Carson Valley, the grandson of Fritz Dressler, the well-known Douglas county rancher. During World War I, Herb Dressler worked in the shipyards in California. There he learned to use his "steel square," a carpentry tool essential to the profession, while in the apprenticeship of carpenter Aaron Jensen. After the war, Dressler returned to Gardnerville. In 1916, he married Ellen Hiteman. Other buildings that Dressler constructed include the following: Gardnerville Elementary school (date unknown), Douglas County school gym (1937), several buildings at the Stewart Indian School, several homes at Glenbrook on Lake Tahoe, various buildings at Camp Richardson on the California side of Lake Tahoe and the Gardnerville Lutheran Church (c. 1952). Oral interview with Bud Dressler, surviving nephew of H. L. Dressler, March 26, 1990 with Richard Bernstein, Architectural Historian.

¹⁸ "Placing Steel for Civic Auditorium," March 20, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p 1:2; "Bricklayers Work on Civic Auditorium," March 29, 1939, Nevada Appeal, 1:3. Dressler's bid of \$55,843.00 was lowest of those submitted. The other bid contractors were from Sierra Construction Co., Reno; Wine and Williams, Reno; J.C. Dillard, Reno; Anderson and McShee, Winnemucca; Minutes of Board of City Trustees, Volume 7, p. 108.

¹⁹ "Putting Roof Boards on Civic Auditorium; Brick Walls Are Built," May 3, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:5; "Shingling Roof of Civic Auditorium," May 16, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:4.

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would be a light cream, the linoleum of the lobby and the kitchen would be of brown and dark cream with a 12-inch black border, the linoleum on the stairs would be a combination of brown and onyx tones, the kitchen cabinets would be a light cream, the toilet partitions would be an olive green and the radiators would be aluminum.²⁰

Completion of the entire project dragged on for several months for various reasons. One was the need for additional funds to purchase stage and kitchen equipment. Another was the difficulty in acquiring the finishing hardware such as ornamental exterior lanterns and door handles, much of which is still in place.²¹

Although not fully completed, the building was functional. The first dance in the auditorium was held in August, 1939 when the American Legion and Auxiliary convention held its annual meeting in Carson City.²² Later that month the PWA approved Carson's application for additional federal funds for the purchase of "curtains, chairs, stage equipment and furnishings, tables, [and] sidewalks and landscaping around the building."²³ Other groups soon requested the use of the building for all forms of social and group functions. It was rented by the Carson City band, the Nevada Boy Scouts, the Epsilon Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi and the Carson City 20-30 Club.²⁴ Perhaps one of the more notable productions was a "Gay 90s" celebration in honor of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Admission Day, staged by a Virginia City

²⁰ "Auditorium Interior Colors Are Picked At Meetings of Trustees," June 6, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:4; Minutes of the Board of City Trustees, Volume 7, p. 145.

²¹ Minutes of the Board of City Trustees, Volume 7, p. 155.

²² Use of the building was confined to the first floor, however, because of insurance reasons. "Will Permit Use of Civic Auditorium for Dance Saturday Eve," August 10, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:2.

²³ "Additional Federal Grant for Auditorium Approved at Washington, Board is Advised," August 29, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:6-7.

²⁴ "Various Organizations Reserve Carson's Civic Auditorium for Dances," October 10, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:2.

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group led by Dr. G. H. Ross. "Settings, properties and curtains from Virginia City's famous Piper's Opera House were used in the reproduction of "Sneitzer's Beer Garden Revue."²⁵

Lehman A. Ferris

Lehman A. Ferris was born May 14, 1893, the son of George and Doris Ferris. His father, although never formally trained, established an architectural practice after moving to Nevada in 1908. By 1910, the elder Ferris was so inundated with work, that his son started to assist in writing specifications. In 1911, Lehman began his formal education when he entered the electrical engineering program at the University of Nevada in Reno. The lack of family finances cut Lehman's education short and he never graduated.

After World War I, Lehman began full-time work for both his father and Frederick J. DeLongchamps as a specifications writer. In 1919, Lehman supervised the construction of a grammar school in Elko, and the Humboldt County Courthouse and the Humboldt Hotel, both located in Winnemucca. The firm of Ferris and Son was formed soon thereafter. Perhaps their largest commission came in 1928 when they designed the Las Vegas High School. Because of the economic conditions during the Depression, their firm was dissolved in 1932. George Ferris took a job as the State Architect for the Federal Housing Administration and Lehman continued to practice privately.

After working as an electrician, draughtsman, specifications writer, and superintendent of construction with various mining operations, Lehman Ferris began work for the State Highway Department. In 1935, a new Democratic administration under Governor Carville took office and Lehman was pressured to resign. He then became Reno's first building inspector. Working at home at night, it was then that Lehman began to develop an architectural practice of his own. He was awarded the contract for the Carson City Civic Auditorium in 1938.

²⁵ "Comstockers Present Revue in Auditorium Monday Evening," October 28, 1939, p. 1:2; "Historic Curtains of Piper Opera House for Play Tonight," October 30, 1939, Nevada Appeal, p. 1:7.

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In the mid-1940s, Lehman left his job with the city, revived his architectural practice full time and formed a partnership with Graham Erskine. Examples of structures designed by this firm include the Reno High School, Wooster High School, Hug High School, the Nevada State Legislative Building and Harold's Club. Both Ferris and Erskine were instrumental in establishing a licensing board for architecture in Nevada in the 1940s. As a result, Lehman has Nevada Architectural License No. 1.²⁶

Lehman Ferris's career in Nevada spanned over sixty years. His designs and projects contributed to Nevada's architectural diversity and character and can be found in all parts of the state.

The Public Works Administration

In response to the crippling economic problems during the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933. Title II of the Act created the Public Works Administration with \$3.3 billion to construct highways, dams, federal buildings, naval construction, and other public projects.²⁷ Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, was appointed chief administrator. Ickes insisted that all project applications be closely examined, thoroughly planned and that all matching financing be firmly secured. As a result most PWA projects developed very methodically. Because of such careful planning and attention to detail, many PWA-financed projects have survived and continue to function.

The PWA spent over \$6 billion and financed over 34,000 projects across the country. Almost half of all schools built in the United States from 1933-1939 were PWA-financed. PWA-financed projects employed nearly 140,000 workers each year and indirectly created 600,000 more. The Reorganization Act of 1939 turned the

²⁶ "Bio-Index of Architects and Builders in Nevada," Nevada Comprehensive Preservation Plan (Carson City, Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology, 1989), Appendix A, pp.28-30.

²⁷ Title III provided for excess-profits taxes to help finance the Public Works Administration. James S. Olson, editor, Historical Dictionary of the New Deal (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 351-353.

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responsibilities and personnel of the PWA over to the Federal Works Agency (FWA).²⁸

In states west of the Mississippi, Public Works Administration funds helped finance projects costing a total of \$2 billion. During the 1930s, \$32 million of federal financing was awarded to 189 PWA projects in Nevada.²⁹ Some of the more prominent PWA-financed projects in Nevada include: the Nevada State Supreme Court in Carson City, designed by Frederick J. DeLongchamps, built in 1935-36 and placed on the National Register in 1987; the Robert B. Mitchell School in Sparks, designed by Frederick J. DeLongchamps, built in 1940 and not registered; the Lincoln County Courthouse in Pioche, designed by A.L. Worswick, built c. 1935 and not registered; the Southside School Annex in Reno, architect unknown, built in 1938 and not registered; and the Reno City Hall, architect unknown, built in 1938 and since demolished.

The Carson City Civic Auditorium, unlike the PWA-financed projects noted above, was the only one directly associated with the growth and development of Carson City and the only one that utilized the character-defining features associated with the Romanesque Revival.

By the mid-1950s, local fraternal and community groups were not utilizing the building as regularly as they had. In 1965, the Ormsby County Library was formed. The following year the city opened up a library in the basement of the Civic Auditorium. The library continued to occupy the space until 1971 when a new building was constructed elsewhere. By that time other city and county agencies (i.e. Personnel, Health and Welfare, Cooperative

²⁸ The Federal Works Agency (FWA) consolidated several public works agencies. John M. Carmody, previously the chief of the Rural Electrification Administration, was chosen to administer the newly-formed FWA. This is why John Carmody's name is on the commemorative plaque on the front of the building and not that of Harold L. Ickes. In 1949, the FWA was abolished and its responsibilities transferred to the General Services Administration. Historical Dictionary, pp. 191, 351-353, 398-400.

²⁹ Richard Lowitt, The New Deal and the West (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 223-4, 268.

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Extension, etc.) had offices in both the basement and upstairs portion of the building.

By 1983, Carson City had secured new office space and the auditorium was completely abandoned. Recently, an organization dedicated to establishing a children's museum in Carson City has shown interest in renovating and reusing the structure. They want to obtain the funding necessary to bring the building back up to code and make it productive once again.

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- Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume 7, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Carson City, Nevada.
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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90000912

Date Listed: 6/19/90

**Carson City Civic Auditorium
Property Name**

**Carson City
County**

**NV
State**

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Amy Federman
Signature of the Keeper

6/19/90
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The period of significance should be 1938-39 to correspond to the construction date. The nomination is hereby officially amended to reflect this change.

Verified by telephone with Richard Bernstein of the Nevada SHPO, 6/18/90.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**