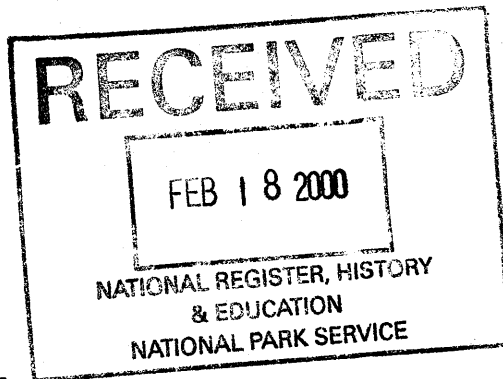


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



253

1. Name of Property

historic name: MARLINTON OPERA HOUSE

other names/site number : N/A

2. Location

street & number : Third Avenue not for publication: N/A

city or town : Marlinton vicinity: N/A

state: West Virginia code: WV county: Pocahontas code: 075 zip code: 24954

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.

Susan M. Pierce  
Signature of certifying official

2/10/2000  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau 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 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau Date

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

MARLINTON OPERA HOUSE  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

**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. Beal

3/24/00

gmc

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<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

**6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions : RECREATION AND CULTURE: Opera House

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Playhouse

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification: LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Vernacular Classical Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Concrete with stucco veneer

Roof: Metal

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

**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.)

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.)

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.

Areas of Significance:

Architecture

Performing Arts

Period of Significance:

1910-1940.

Significant Dates:

1910.

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Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Significant Persons:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Moore, Andrew & Johnson, Gum – Concrete work;  
McKeever, O.E. & Jordan, Bob – Wood Work & Carpentry.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(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
- Office (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 of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: Pocahontas County  
Historic Landmarks Commission

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property : Approximately .125 acre.

Quad Map: Marlinton, WV

UTM References:

ZONE EASTING      NORTHING

17    579255      4230679

Verbal Boundary Description (See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (See continuation sheet.)

**11. Form prepared by:**

name/title : Michael Gioulis, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization: Same as above      date: November 1, 1999

street & number: 612 Main Street      telephone: (304) 765-5716

city or town: Sutton      state: WV      zip code: 26601

**Property Owner:**

name: Pocahontas County Historic Landmark Commission/Ruth Morgan - Chairperson

street & number: PO Box 125      telephone: (304) 799-4470

city or town: Marlinton      state: WV      zip code: 24954

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

Section 7 Page 1

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The Marlinton Opera House is located in the county seat on the corner of Third Avenue, between Eighth and Ninth Streets. It is located on lots 14 and 15 of Block 34 as shown on the preliminary plat map of the town of Marlinton dated 1891. The Opera House faces Third Avenue and is within the commercial core of the downtown.

The Marlinton Opera House building is the only building included in this nomination and it is considered contributing. There are no outbuildings or other buildings associated with the Opera House.

The Marlinton Opera House is a large, rectangular building and measures approximately fifty feet wide (50') and one hundred and sixteen (116') feet long. The building is five bays wide and ten bays long. The building is two stories tall and has a gable roof with one hip roof dormer on each side elevation, towards the rear of the building. The roof is of standing seam metal and was recently repaired. The entire building is poured-in-place concrete with railroad rails used as reinforcement. The walls are a foot thick (1') at the window and door openings.

On the front, or southeast elevation, is a central, arched entrance recessed into a glazed reveal; paired arched windows flank the arched entrance. The entrance consists of double doors with a large multi-paned transom. The windows are also multi-paned surrounding a central fixed pane with decorative arched multi-paned transoms. The windows on the upper story are six over six wood frame double-hung sash. The windows on the west elevation of the first floor are one over one wood frame double-hung sash. The east side elevation has no window or door openings. The rear, or northwest elevation, has a single garage door on the first floor flanked by a one over one window.

The gable ends are sided with metal shingles and there is a dentil wood cornice above the second floor. The gable end on the front elevation contains a single nine-pane window. The rear gable end contains a pair of six over six wood frame double-hung sash windows. The dormers are sided with the same metal shingle material as the gable ends.

The interior consists of basically a large open space with the main entrance on the southeast elevation and the stage at the other end of the building. There is a balcony which runs from the stage area towards the front of the building for three-fourths of its length. The balcony is suspended from the large timber roof trusses by steel rods. A black walnut balustrade serves as the balcony railing. The remainder of the front of the building serves as an entrance foyer. The balcony or mezzanine is located about twelve feet (12') above the first floor; its floor surface is raked. Stairways, one on each sidewall, flank the entrance foyer providing access to the balcony. There are two dressing rooms alongside the stage on the east wall.

Currently, the interior finishes consist of the restored decorative metal ceiling, unfinished interior walls, except on the stairway alcoves which are drywall, and a recently installed wood floor of African wood. The black walnut balcony balustrade is original.

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

Section 8 Page 1

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The Marlinton Opera House is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Performing Arts in Marlinton. The Marlinton Opera House is also significant under Criterion C for Architecture due to its reinforced concrete construction. The period of significance spans the years 1910 to 1940, representing the date of construction in 1910 and “boom years” until its decline around 1940.

The Opera House is significant for its association with the performing arts and recreation during the growth of Marlinton and Pocahontas County. As with all of West Virginia, Pocahontas County was once part of Virginia. Pocahontas County was first organized as the county we know today in 1821. Prior to 1886, Marlinton was known as Marlin’s Bottom and five families lived there. The county seat was moved to Marlinton from Huntersville in 1891 and the new courthouse was built in 1893. The settlement and establishment of Marlinton is intricately tied with the development of the railroad and timber industry of the area. Many prominent developers of the state owned huge tracts of land rich with mineral and timber resources. If they were to utilize these resources, transportation, railroads, were needed. Many of these same developers also owned and operated the railroads. Due to the rich timber stands in the county, there were numerous attempts to bring the railroad to the Greenbrier Valley. Prominent West Virginia industrialists involved with this include Johnson M. Camden, Henry Gassaway Davis, Stephen B. Elkins, and John T. McGraw.

County growth boomed with the establishment of Marlinton and the railroad. The timber industry contributed the most to this development. The population of the county in 1900 was 8,572; by 1910 it had grown to 14,740; and by 1920 15,002. The jump from 1900 to 1910 is the fifth largest county increase in the state for that decade. Marlinton’s population followed the same trend. In 1900 Marlinton’s population was 171; in 1910 1,045; and in 1920 1,177. The town was incorporated in 1900. Marlinton quickly became a center for the new trade in lumber in the county. Marlinton became the second largest shipping center in the county; Cass was first.

The founder of the Opera House was J.G. Tilton, who came to Marlinton from Mt. Vernon, Ohio. He served as a court reporter and a clerk in the courthouse. In January of 1907 Tilton purchased Lot 13 of Block 34 in Marlinton and by August of the same year had begun construction on the Opera House. This was to be the first opera house in town. The building was in use by September of 1907 and was known as “The Grand.” The Grand hosted vaudeville acts, dramatic productions and movies. By January of 1910 Tilton felt the need for a larger facility and purchased Lots 14 and 15 of Block 34 from the Pocahontas Development Corporation. Tilton had broken ground for the Marlinton Opera House in March 1910. The completion date is not known but the building was in use by the end of the year, according to newspapers of the era.



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Marlinton Opera House  
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The building was constructed of poured-in place concrete and reinforced with steel logging train rails. Andrew Moore and Gum Johnson did the concrete work. O.E. McKeever and Bob Jordan did the woodwork and carpentry.

Tilton made an agreement in August 1912 with the Niagara Musical Instrument Manufacturing Company of North Tonawanda, New York for the purchase of a second hand Band Organ with 18 musical selections. The purchase price was \$700.

The building was utilized by artists, local drama, minstrel shows, Lyceum Courses and movies. Productions from New York and nation wide were staged in the Opera House. The local basketball team played in the building. Roller-skating was also available with the fee for an evening of skating being .25 cents. A band composed of local people occasionally accompanied the skating. When the Marlinton Presbyterian Church was torn down in 1915 and the new one was being constructed, services were held in the Opera House. Many school activities were also held in the Opera House. It has also served as a venue for the forest festival.

Tilton was the editor and owner of a weekly paper, *The Marlinton Messenger* after October 1911. The paper was located in the Opera House building after January 1912, and Tilton and his family also lived upstairs. Due to Tilton's later financial problems, the newspaper stopped publication by February 1914.

By 1914, Tilton was in financial trouble. He had secured a loan of \$1,900 the previous year and used as security the three lots, two buildings, barbershop equipment, the furnishings in the first Opera House "The Grand," the band organ and the newspaper equipment, in addition to some land. The purpose of this loan is not clear. The holders of this security foreclosed in 1914 and all the furnishings and property were sold in July to L.S. Cochran.

Tilton and his wife moved to Charleston not long after losing the Opera House and his other properties in Pocahontas County. In October 1916, Cochran deeded the lots and buildings to Floyd Dilley. Floyd was the brother of Tilton's wife, Mary Eveva, and he transferred the property back to her in August 1920. J.G. Tilton and his wife had three sons and a daughter. Tilton died in 1945 and his wife in 1973. The Marlinton Opera House remained in Tilton family hands until December 1977, when it was sold to Glade and Maxine Fertig. In 1991 the Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission acquired the building in the hopes of restoring it to its place in community life.

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

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The Marlinton Opera House is a unique example in the state of a large concrete public building. It is the largest enclosed public space in Pocahontas County and is also the oldest reinforced concrete structure in West Virginia. The building is approximately fifty feet (50') wide and one hundred and sixteen feet (116') long. It is constructed of poured-in place concrete that has been reinforced with steel logging train rails. The wood roof trusses were custom designed to span the fifty-foot room expanse. The tension rods that support the balcony were designed to allow an unobstructed view throughout the building. The most decorative elements in the building are the pressed metal ceiling and the thirty-two windows, which flood the interior with light. Local individuals did all of the work done on the building.

Cement and concrete gained significance as building materials in the early decades of the 20th Century. The American Concrete Institute was established in 1905 to study and research its uses. Throughout the country early buildings of concrete construction date from the 1903 to 1914 period. It was during this period that reinforced technology was developed. The Marlinton Opera House fits into this early period of development of this relatively new but highly significant construction method. It is an example of West Virginia's foray into a modern building style at an early age. Concrete structures and buildings subsequently became important in the state's development, such as the Palace Furniture Building (1911) in Clarksburg, and the work of concrete bridge engineers in the following decades. The Opera House is a precursor to this development.

In summary, the Marlinton Opera House is significant under Criterion A for its association with the cultural and social life of the community and county through the performing arts. The Marlinton Opera House is also significant under Criterion C for architecture for its association as the oldest reinforced concrete building in Pocahontas County and West Virginia.

Marlinton Opera House  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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History of Pocahontas County West Virginia 1981, Pocahontas County Historical Society, third printing, September 1997.

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The Marlinton Messenger. Article dated December 30, 1915; article dated September 7, 1911; article dated January 13, 1910; article dated October 17, 1907; article dated October 10, 1907; article dated September 19, 1907.

Mountain Messenger. Volume V, No. 39, dated September 19, 1989; article dated September 26, 1989.

The Pocahontas Times. Article dated October 8, 1998; article dated July 3, 1986, page 3.

Brochure printed by the Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission, The Opera House.

The Charleston Daily Mail. Dated May 30, 1995.

Marlinton Opera House, Inspection Report by Ralph Pedersen, A.I.A.

Transportation Enhancement Project, Application Form, Fiscal Years 1993 through 1995, dated March 24, 1994.

Management Plan for Restoration and Subsequent Perpetual Operation of The Opera House in Marlinton, WV under auspices of Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission; Prepared by J.E. Pleasants, PE, P.O. Box 86, Slatyfork, WV 26291; dated October 28, 1993.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Marlinton Opera House  
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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

The boundary of the Marlinton Opera House is lot 15 and ½ of lot 14 of Block 34, locally known as the Old Opera House Property, in Marlinton, West Virginia recorded in Deed Book 37, Pages 617 and 618 of Deed Book 212 located in the Pocahontas County Courthouse.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The boundary encompasses the building that dates from the period of significance of the property.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

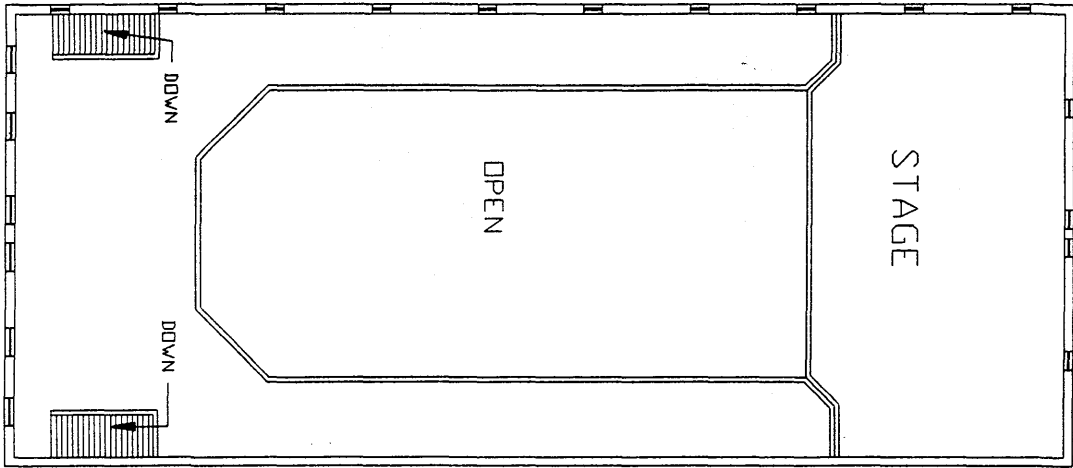
MARLINTON OPERA HOUSE  
Pocahontas County, West Virginia

Section Number: PHOTO

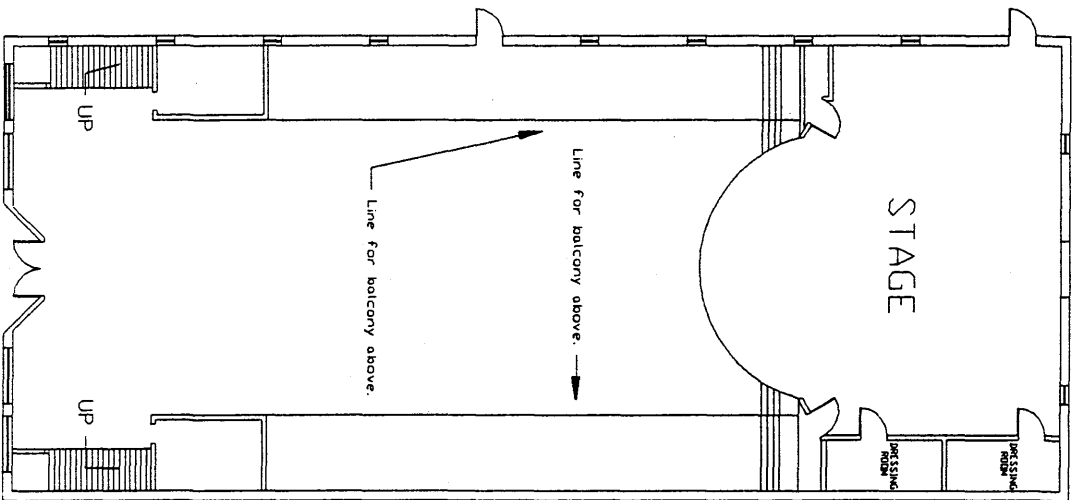
Page 1

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Name:	Marlinton Opera House
Address:	Third Avenue
City:	Marlinton
County:	Pocahontas
Photographer:	Michael Gioulis
Date:	September 1999
Negatives:	Michael Gioulis, Sutton, WV
Photo 1 of 8	Front elevation Camera looking west
Photo 2 of 8	Side and front elevation Camera looking northwest
Photo 3 of 8	Side and front elevation Camera looking southwest
Photo 4 of 8	Rear elevation Camera looking northeast
Photo 5 of 8	First floor Camera looking east
Photo 6 of 8	First floor Camera looking north
Photo 7 of 8	First floor Camera looking west
Photo 8 of 8	Second floor Camera looking northeast



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
NOT TO SCALE



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
NOT TO SCALE

OPERA HOUSE  
MARLINTON, WV

MICHAEL GIOLIS,  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTANT  
612 MAIN STREET  
SUTTON, WEST VIRGINIA  
(304) 765-5716

Date  
DEC. 1999

DWG.  
1 OF 1