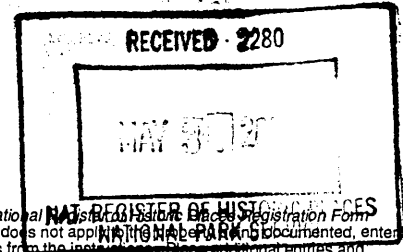


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

1772



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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, mark "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 Fremont Municipal Auditorium

Other names/site number DD05:A-077

2. Location

Street & number 925 Broad Street

Not for publication []

City or town Fremont

Vicinity []

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Dodge

Code 053

Zip code 68025

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] 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 [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [x] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Laurence Sommer

Date 5/24/02

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society State or Federal agency and bureau

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[x] 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):

Signature of Keeper Edson H. Beall 7/11/02

Signature of Keeper [Signature]

Date of Action

Fremont Municipal 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		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	NA	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

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
- SOCIAL/Clubhouse and civic
- GOVERNMENT/City Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
- SOCIAL/Clubhouse and civic
- GOVERNMENT/City Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick Veneer

Roof Composite

Other

Narrative Description

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

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.)

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.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1937-1952

Significant Dates

1937 – completion of construction.

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George Grabe, Architect

Busboom and Ruah, Builders

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 Dodge County Historical Society, Fremont, Nebraska

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

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

Table with 3 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing. Rows 1, 2, 3, 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 By

name/title Jill M. Ebers/Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator
organization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office
street & number 1424 P Street
city or town Lincoln, Nebraska
date February 21, 2002
telephone (402) 471-4773
state Nebraska zip code 68501

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 Fremont
street & number 400 East Military
city or town Fremont
telephone (402) 727-2630
state Nebraska zip code 68025

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings.

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.

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Fremont Municipal Auditorium

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The Fremont Municipal Auditorium is located on Highway 77 just north and west of Fremont's Central Business District. The auditorium looks out onto a public park area that is surrounded by fine public buildings, including the Junior High, the High School and the Power Plant. The Art Deco building was constructed in 1937 in a project funded by the Public Works Administration, in an effort to bring employment opportunities to Fremont during the Great Depression. The building has a large auditorium space and a public meeting space, and has served Fremont as a community meeting place, a gymnasium, a playhouse, a movie hall, and a commencement hall for many years. The Municipal Auditorium also served as Fremont's city offices for many years, now housing the offices of the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Art Deco auditorium is a rectangular, three-story structure with a flat roof. It has a concrete foundation and decorative cast concrete and brickwork on the primary façades. There are two main facades on the auditorium. The façade with the main entrance to the auditorium space faces south, while the façade with the entrance to the city offices faces east, into the city park across Highway 77. There are eight pilasters of decorative brickwork on the south façade, four on either side of the main entrance. Each of the pilasters is crowned with fluted cast concrete caps with graduated steps that emphasize a sense of verticality. Decorative brickwork in a zigzagging pattern is found between the two pilasters that frame the south entrance, and near the cornice. The façade has been further embellished with a decorative crosshatched brick pattern beneath the zigzagged brickwork. The entrance lies under a large marquee that is decorated with geometric finials and a diamond-lozenge design. The historic doors have been removed and replaced with modern steel and glass doors. In addition to the door leading into the main auditorium space, this elevation also has a door to a smaller public meeting space, and a door that provides access to stairs that lead to what was once was a caretaker's apartment, but now houses a daycare program.

Two sets of windows are located between each of the four sets of pilasters on either side of the entrance on the south elevation, and on each of the three floors. The majority of the windows have been altered; they were all previously six-over-six, double-hung windows. The windows on the third floor have all been partially filled in with brick, leaving small slits to allow for only a small amount of light to enter the auditorium space. Windows on the second floor on the south façade are original double-hung, six-over-six windows. The first floor windows have been altered with modern steel windows.

The east elevation of the auditorium is less decorative than the south façade, but it does contain some of the same embellishments. Three decorative pilasters wrap around the southeast corner of the building, and are topped with cast concrete caps. Six modest pilasters separate spaces that once held windows into the auditorium space, but have since been bricked in to keep light out of the auditorium. A second marquee covers the main entrances to the city offices. Two of the doors are original, and feature eight-light glass panels. A third door has been replaced with a steel and glass door.

Upon entering the building, one enters a sizable foyer with a multi-colored terrazzo floor in a compass pattern and a tile ticket booth. The ticket booth is self-contained, and has a small door for entering the booth from a hallway behind the foyer. A large glass window separates the ticket salesman from his customer, with a cutout arc to facilitate the exchange of money and tickets. A brass railing keeps the customers in a straight line. The walls of the foyer are decorated with blond colored tile on the lower half of the wall, with plaster above. The terrazzo is laid in a compass design with the four points of the compass in green, surrounded by circles of gray and black. A pathway of pink and green terrazzo in a diapering design leads the entrant into the main auditorium space through four twelve-light paneled doors with brass rails.

A corridor with a multihued terrazzo floor leads into a hallway with several doors to city offices on the right and the kitchen and a coat check room on the left, but culminates grandly in three notched arches that lead to the auditorium space in the middle and stairs to the balcony on either side. The main space is cavernous, with the roof and walls supported by steel

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trusses, eliminating the need for support columns that would obstruct views. The walls of the space are covered with blond tile halfway up the wall, and plaster above. The tile was used to make decorative geometric designs behind the basketball hoops. The main space also has plaster pilasters with decorative geometric caps.

The auditorium space seats approximately 2800 people, with 1,043 permanent tiered seats, approximately 1,294 folding chairs on the floor, and "knockdown bleachers" that would seat 340. The balcony has a wrap-around wing of seats that makes the most of the seating space available. A corridor located in the balcony provides access to a lounge and men's and women's restrooms that are located under the tiered seating, with windows that face out on the second story of the south façade. Decorative details in the bathroom, including light fixtures and the marble and wooden doors of the bathroom stalls exhibit elements of its Art Deco style. At the top of the tiered concrete bleachers opposite the stage is a projection room that enabled the auditorium to serve as a movie theater as well. The folding chairs that provided seating on the main floor of the auditorium were stored in a room under the tiered balcony, east of the passageway into the auditorium space. The knockdown bleachers were removed to provide more space for basketball games and activities on the gymnasium floor.

The stage lies toward the rear of the building, and has dimensions of 29 feet deep and 58 feet wide. The hardwood stage has panels of stage lights that could be opened from the floor and used to illuminate the players. Small frame dressing rooms were built on either side of the stage opening. The maple floor of the auditorium also serves as a basketball court and volleyball court. Two small drinking fountain alcoves were built into the walls on either side of the entrance to the main floor of the auditorium, and are decorated with the blond tile. They used to house porcelain drinking fountains, but unfortunately they were inefficient at cooling water and were replaced with modern steel fountains. Two locker rooms are located downstairs under the stage, with entrances on either side of the stage. The utilitarian locker rooms have marble shower partitions and simple benches and clothes hooks for storage. The auditorium floor is still used on a daily basis by junior high gym classes and people who wish to walk indoors for exercise during winter weather.

Under the seating in the front part of the building are several meeting spaces. The room on the southwest corner of the building was established as a public meeting room. The room is 30 feet by 48 feet, and has a separate front entrance on the main façade. The meeting room is a utilitarian space with little embellishment. A hallway leads from this room to the kitchen, which was fully equipped with all the necessary appliances, and had three windows with which to serve the public in the main auditorium space. One original window remains. It was made of two panels of wood, which opened up in a bi-fold fashion. Two of the windows have been altered, but appear to have been changed during the historic period. The new serving windows are counter-weighted steel, which slide up to serve concessions. Across the hall from the interior entrance to the kitchen, lies an office that once served as a coat check room. A window into the main passageway allowed for the exchange of coats and claim tickets. The window has now been filled in with glass. One would go through the coat check room to enter the ticket booth. A hallway takes you further south into the building, and to a stairway that led to the second floor caretaker's apartment. The apartment was a four-room suite with a kitchen, living room, bath and a bedroom with a Murphy bed. The apartment now serves as a daycare.

On the southeastern corner of the building, located under the tiered seats, are the city offices. These offices once held the offices of the mayor, the city clerk, and the city treasurer. They now hold the offices of the Parks and Recreation Department of the city of Fremont. The city office spaces still contain two vaults that were added for the storage of city documents.

The Auditorium remains a lovely example of an Art Deco public building. The interior remains intact, and decorative elements on the exterior remain that exhibit the building's Art Deco exuberance. It contains the sharp, angular and zigzag

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surface forms and ornaments that typify this style of architecture. Vertical roof projections provide a sense of height and formalism, and other decorative elements display stylized geometric figures common to Art Deco.

INTEGRITY

The exterior of the Fremont Municipal Auditorium has been altered over its lifespan of 65 years. Windows that allowed for too much light to illuminate the auditorium space were filled, and other windows in the office spaces have been replaced with steel windows. Likewise, several of the external doors have been replaced with modern steel and glass doors. The historic window and door openings are still apparent in the masonry. In any event, the auditorium retains sufficient integrity to support its eligibility under criterion A, as a structure with significant association with the Public Works Administration's programs that provided work for the able-bodied unemployed in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

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The Fremont Municipal Auditorium is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A for its association with public work projects as means of alleviating widespread poverty during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

While the stock market crash in October of 1929 created a crisis in America's business and industry, agricultural areas throughout the United States had been in a depression for most of the decade of the 1920s. Farm prices that spiked during and after World War I fell as drastically as they had risen. As prices fell in mid-1920, farmers were faced with debts they were unable to pay. Farmers' incomes did not keep pace with inflation, and a devaluation in land prices contributed to their financial problems. Suffering in the agricultural economy caused economic problems for the rest of Nebraska at large. Black Tuesday was simply another devastating blow to an already depressed economy. As the authors of *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* described the Depression,

"The condition of the farmers affected Nebraska merchants, lumber dealers, realtors, school teachers, laborers, and artisans. Housewives stocked their pantry shelves with the simplest essentials; construction lagged; school administrators curtailed their programs as tax receipts went down; day laborers, formerly sure of a place on Nebraska farms and in Nebraska industries, began the long trek of the unemployed."¹

By December of 1932, farm prices were the lowest in Nebraska history. In addition, Nebraska, and the rest of the Midwest, was suffering from a severe drought that caused valuable topsoil to erode, damaged crops and reduced agricultural production. Nation-wide, there were more than 12 million people unemployed and in need of assistance. Twenty-five percent of the American labor force was jobless.² State governments were incapable of supporting the vast numbers of destitute citizens who required help. The Federal government was forced to intercede, and with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932, the New Deal was instituted. Roosevelt's New Deal policies came in many manifestations, from the Social Security Act that provided monthly pensions to the elderly to direct relief payments from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and perhaps most importantly public work relief projects that provided jobs to America's able-bodied unemployed. Some of these projects took the form of road construction, sewer repair, ditch digging, reforestation projects, and the construction of public buildings, among many other projects.³ Throughout much of the Roosevelt administration, from 1933 to 1940 when public assistance was most required, billions of dollars were spent on projects intended to provide the working man with an opportunity to work. Under the Public Works Administration, programs administered by various administrations including the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, led to the construction of 11,000 public buildings, including courthouses, firehouses, hospitals, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and schools, as well as over 100 airfields and 800 parks. They made repairs and improvements on more than 30,000 other pre-existing buildings, laid out 40,000 miles of public roads and repaired 150,000 miles of roads. They constructed 1,400 athletic fields and 1,800 swimming pools, and reforested 20,000 acres with trees and bushes.⁴

The Fremont Municipal Auditorium is one such project. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 created the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works for the purpose of giving employment and enabling local and state

¹ Works Progress Administration, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (1939; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 67; quoted in James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 313.

² Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.

³ Page Smith, *Redeeming the Time: A People's History of the 1920s and the New Deal* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), 598.

⁴ Smith, 814.

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governments to undertake public construction works that had been on hold during the early depression years.⁵ According to a study of work relief projects completed at the close of the Great Depression, public works projects were provided

“not primarily as a test of willingness to labor but rather as a means of conserving the skills, work habits, and morale of the able-bodied unemployed. Work-relief projects...are not conceived of merely as a means of frightening off applicants for relief. True work-relief undertakings therefore, cannot be selected in a haphazard fashion, emphasis is placed, rather, on securing projects which when completed will be of value to the community.”⁶

FEAPW, under the Public Works Administration, provided grants to local governments for public works projects. The PWA provided 45% of the cost of labor and materials on qualifying projects. When this opportunity for assistance in public building became available, the city rushed to prepare a grant application before the deadline. Mayor Fred Drew and other city officials gave much attention to the need for the relief of unemployment.⁷ They wanted to ensure that Fremont participate in the federal program to the fullest extent possible, especially since the federal government had been threatening to “get out of the relief business.” Plans had to be submitted to Nebraska’s State Public Works Administration (PWA) Engineer, John Latenser, Jr., who was in charge of selecting worthy projects.

Fremont had been wrangling with the idea of building a public auditorium for many years. Four bond issues had been brought before the public for a vote beginning in 1917, but none had ever passed. An auditorium was important to Fremont, but the city also recognized the need for other public institutions as well, such as public schools, and made them a priority. At the same time Fremont was applying for a federal grant to build the auditorium, the Fremont School Board applied for a Federal grant to build a new school. There was concern that a new school building would be required within the next several years, and they would rather have the federal government help pay for it if possible. It was agreed that the voting public would never pass two bond issues, so the city postponed proposing a bond issue until they had received word on the school project. The PWA never approved the school building initiative. The auditorium project could go forward without dividing any loyalties.

The Junior and Senior Chambers of Commerce circulated petitions to obtain a sufficient number of signatures to allow the city council to call a special election.⁸ The election for the \$66,000 bond issue was set for November 20, 1935. The bond issue required 60% voter approval in order to be passed. As the day of the election approached, civic groups began to speak out in favor of the auditorium initiative in order to rally the support of the public. The twelve members of the American Legion auxiliary executive board went on record at their meeting as heartily endorsing the municipal auditorium project.⁹ The Fremont Senior and Junior Chambers of Commerce placed a large ad in the Fremont Tribune, which provided information regarding the added taxes that would be required of each citizen as part of the shared burden of supporting the auditorium project. “It will require an average of 55.2 cents per year for each thousand dollars of property assessed. This is an increase of only 1 3/10 per cent over your present taxes. If your assessed valuation is \$2,000 your donation over a twenty year period would be \$1.10 per year.”¹⁰ The ad went on to add that “...The government is getting out of the relief business, passing such as necessary back to local communities. If we do not take advantage of such generosity we as citizens of Fremont will still have our relief problems confronting us.” Members of the Chambers of

⁵ Arthur E. Burns and Edward A. Williams, *Federal Work, Security, and Relief Programs* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 3 September, 1935.

⁸ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 11 October, 1935.

⁹ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 13 November, 1935.

¹⁰ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 14 November, 1935.

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Commerce also canvassed door to door to ensure that all of Fremont's citizens were aware of the upcoming election and the benefits of voting in favor of the bond issue.¹¹

On November 20, 1935, the bond issue was passed with an approval rating of 80%. This was an enormous show of support for a project that would so heavily strain the city's coffers and create more taxes for the public to pay. The public was overjoyed by the results of the election.

The result was received jubilantly by Fremonters and an impromptu celebration followed that provided lively scenes on the streets during the early hours of the evening. There is no longer any doubt but that the people of Fremont want a municipal auditorium for they voted it in with a bang at a special election held Wednesday. The polls closed at 7 o'clock and five minutes later the result of the election was posted in the Tribune windows for a crowd waiting to see the returns. Such expressions as "now we are going somewhere," "isn't that grand" were heard.¹²

The mayor, Fred Drew, who had staunchly supported the auditorium effort, quickly planned a spur-of-the-moment celebration for Fremont. He had the whistle at the water and light plant blown. He asked Luther Larson to assemble some musicians for a band, and gathered fire engines and friends in cars to stage a raucous parade through the business district. Clearly, the community boosterism had brought Fremont's excitement on the matter to a feverish pitch, and the vast majority of Fremont's citizenry was quite pleased to be sponsoring such an ambitious project.

The auditorium was built at a cost of approximately \$130,000, which paid for the construction of the structure and furnishings. The cost of the building was paid for through a number of sources. The FEAPW provided a grant of \$62,000 toward the total cost, and the city passed the bond issue for \$66,000. Finally, Miss Louise Miller donated half a block of land on Broad Street between 9th and 10th Streets valued at \$15,000, in memory of her father, John Miller, a prominent local builder and contractor.¹³ John Miller had always wanted to do something for his community. Miss Miller fulfilled that wish by donating the land for the auditorium in his name.

Under the terms of the grant from the PWA, the construction of the auditorium was supposed to be underway by December 15, less than a month after the vote was taken. George Grabe had already drawn up the plans for the new auditorium. A few alterations were necessary in order to accommodate city offices, but the excavation of the site was able to proceed on schedule. Mr. Grabe was appointed Special City Engineer for the duration of the construction of the auditorium by the City Council. George Grabe was also the designer of the Wayne Municipal Auditorium, which was constructed in 1935, and nominated for the National Register of Historic Places in January 2002.

The City Council also set a wage schedule for the construction of the building.¹⁴ For instance, a common laborer would make 40 cents a day, while a brick mason could make \$1.10. Roosevelt was convinced that public works projects were far better for America's morale than public relief, or "the dole", because such projects were not simply handouts to the needy, they were a means of providing the unemployed with a way to help themselves. The project, as it was intended to do, provided not only employment for a group of deserving men, but also bolstered Fremont's citizens with civic pride and a renewed self-confidence. It was very important to the people of Fremont that unemployed workers of Fremont be given the first opportunity to obtain work at the new auditorium site. The PWA had decreed that 90% of the workers on any PWA and WPA project be found on federal relief rolls, or on the dole. The federal government was seeking to get its

¹¹ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 19 November, 1935.

¹² *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 21 November, 1935.

¹³ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 21 November, 1935.

¹⁴ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 22 November, 1935.

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citizens off the dole, and projects such as this one were designed for this purpose. However, the Fremont City Council felt that the number of builders and artisans on Fremont's relief rolls was insufficient to supply labor for the construction of the auditorium building, and did not even begin to account for the number of qualified workers who needed relief in Fremont. The Council resolved to petition the PWA to exempt the project from the federal labor clause in order to allow more Fremonters to obtain work at the auditorium site.¹⁵ They feared that workers from other communities or states who were on the relief rolls would be imported to Fremont, and take jobs from local workers who desperately needed them.

The general contract was let to the Busboom and Ruah firm from Salina, Kansas. Under the contract, the construction of the building was to be completed 300 days after the start.¹⁶ PWA state engineer, John Latenser, Jr., approved the bid on April 10, 1936. The bid for the auditorium, \$84,265, was the largest bid approved in the state of Nebraska during 1936.¹⁷ The ground was ready for laying the footings of the building by April 27. The City Council approved the selection of the face brick, which was to be Des Moines Twintex in mingled shades of dark and light red, buff, green and chocolate.¹⁸

The building was completed in time for its formal dedication March 1, 1937.¹⁹ It was said that the formal dedication was held before the largest crowd assembled in Fremont history up to that point. The evening began with a program given by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Band, followed by the Midland College a cappella choir. Distinguished guests were introduced, and letters of congratulations from mayors and other communities in the state were read. Those assembled recognized Miss Louise Miller for her gift of the land on which the auditorium was built, and she was honored with one of three standing ovations given during the evening's events. Acting on behalf of the federal government and Fremont's taxpayers, Dan V. Stephens, prominent Fremont banker, officially presented the building to Mayor Fred Drew. Governor Cochran gave the main address.

An impressive ceremony was held to honor the occasion, and additional events were scheduled for the remainder of the week. Following the dedication on Monday evening, a community night and style show were scheduled for Tuesday night, a dance was held on Wednesday, and a basketball tournament was held Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with a multi-denominational religious service held Sunday evening.

The Fremont Municipal Auditorium is an exceedingly significant building worthy of listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is an attractive example of an Art Deco public building, a style that is relatively rare in Nebraska. Physical changes to the exterior of this building preclude nomination of this WPA-era building under criterion C for Architecture. However, the interior of the building remains virtually intact and still exhibits the details that would signify the building as an Art Deco design.

¹⁵ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 13 December, 1935.

¹⁶ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 28 March, 1936.

¹⁷ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 10 April, 1936.

¹⁸ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 27 April, 1936.

¹⁹ *Fremont Evening Tribune*, 2 March, 1937.

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The auditorium is significant for its association with Federal relief programs that sought to alleviate the extreme poverty of the American public during the Great Depression. The citizenry of Fremont committed themselves to higher taxes in order to bring this construction opportunity to their town. Many jobs were created in a community that sorely needed them, and a lovely facility was constructed that has contributed to the livability of Fremont as a charming mid-sized community for the last sixty-five years.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Fremont Municipal Auditorium

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 9 and 10, Block 83, Dorsey's Subdivision

Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the property encompass only the lots occupied by the building.