

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received **MAR 6 1984**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic REEDLEY OPERA HOUSE COMPLEX

and/or common Same

## 2. Location

street & number 10th and G Streets, (1712-20 10th St., 1001 G St.) N/A not for publication

city, town Reedley N/A vicinity of

state CA code 06 county Fresno code 019

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Arthur E. and Patricia A. Bergthold/Makijii Hase Kenneth L. Just

street & number 1708 10th Street

city, town Reedley N/A vicinity of state California 93654

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fresno County Hall of Records

street & number 2281 Tulare Street

city, town Fresno state California

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None known has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The 1903 Reedley Opera House Complex is a brick commercial building situated at the southern corner of 10th and G, in the heart of the downtown area. The complex was L-shaped in design, some 150 feet long, with the Opera House forming the base of the L. The remainder of the building contained a bank, a drug store, and a harness shop. A porch canopy once extended along 10th Street and G Street, but was removed at an unknown date. A curved parapet over the Opera House section was removed in 1950. Other major alterations have been reversed, re-creating the historic appearance to a high degree.

The building is composed of two distinct units. The Opera House forms the base of the L and has its own individual treatment of the facade. The broad central segmentally arched entrance is flanked by narrow segmentally arched windows. The edges of the facade are articulated by shallow piers which rise above the parapet and are capped by metal finials. A shallow arch in the center of the parapet has been removed but is scheduled for reconstruction. The parapet steps down to create a lower roofline in the commercial section to the left of the Opera House. This long expanse of wall is punctuated by segmentally arched windows and three doorways indicating the division into two shops in the central portion and the bank at the far end. The bank occupied the northernmost corner. The main entrance was angled across the north corner; the segmentally arched doorway was flanked by two shallow piers rising into metal finials and enclosing a small half-round parapet. The G Street side was treated in a similar manner, but with two large segmental arches instead of a doorway.

The brick in the structure consists of five distinctive colors ranging from tones of orange to deep red, and highlighted with many that are black. This brick was made in Reedley. Some of the brick came from the Gosling's brick store after the 1902 fire. The building has double and triple coursed supporting arches over the doors and windows. The original star patterned iron thresholds are still in each doorway. Distinctive tin decorative finials flank the entrance to the bank and the Opera House rising on three-foot supports. Two of the three curved masonry parapets still exist at the roofline of the building. The Opera House sign is located on the parapet above the entrance flanked on each side by two matching medallions.

In the basement of the Opera House is the 1903 carbide generator that was used for lighting until electricity came in 1907. Two frames of these lighting fixtures were found in the basement also.

The structure has been altered by the removal of the main parapet arch over the Opera House sign when a bond beam was added in the 1950s. The tin finials on top of the building were replicated by a tinsmith to match the ones in the historic photos. The main street frontage windows had to be restored back to the arched original appearance by removing a large square window. The building was sandblasted and coated with two coats of sealer. Many of the original windows were broken and have been replaced with stained glass. The metal canopy shown in the old pictures has been removed. Several of the original doors and windows have been bricked in, and some new doorways cut into the interior walls.

# 8. Significance

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Euro-American History
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

**Specific dates** 1903 **Builder/Architect** Jesse Jansen

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The 1903 Reedley Opera House Complex remains one of the finest examples of turn of the century brick commercial architecture in the local community. The building was designed and built by an important local entrepreneur, Jesse Jansen, after a fire destroyed downtown Reedley. It is located in the heart of downtown, and will play a major part in the current city revitalization program. This Opera House Complex not only contained a theatre, but from the beginning integrated commercial functions including the town's major banking facility. The Opera House's portable seating made possible theatrical performances with an audience capacity of over 300, and could be transformed quickly to a dance hall, church, boxing arena, or box-supper social hall.

Mr. Jansen, a native of Denmark, was born August 21, 1855. He followed the sea until he reached a captain's rank, then left it all for the "Land of Promise", the gold country. In Placer County, he settled into farming, a venture that led him to move to Reedley in 1889, the world's largest grain shipping capital. He became a grain agent, and soon added a real estate and insurance business. In 1902, there was a fire that burned all the buildings in the main two blocks of town. This entire area was all wooden structures except one brick structure; Mr. Jansen bought the brick from this damaged building and began the construction of his building. He organized the merchants to rebuild with brick. The paper has the following account: "The rebuilding of the old brick store was a doubtful proposition for sometime after the fire, but that public spirited citizen, JESSE JANSEN, came to the rescue by purchasing the lots and erecting the Opera House Block. There is very little doubt now as to Reedley's future. We have weathered the gale and from now on its plain sailing." Mr. Jansen put in his own waterworks for the downtown area. In 1913, when the city was incorporated, it bought out his waterworks and added the new city hall next to the Opera House.

The Opera House served the community in its original purpose until the silent movies entered the scene in 1912. The first performance on the stage was by a traveling company doing "Uncle Tom's Cabin". With numerous traveling professional performances and local events, the Opera House was the cultural and social gathering place of the area. The paper lists some of the following activities: operetta, community plays, recitations, political speeches, grand balls, square dances, dance and piano recitals, dance lessons, band concerts, town meetings, box-suppers, and boxing and wrestling exhibitions. The high school graduations were also held there as well as the "chautauqua" meetings. The churches held revivals there frequently. The Catholic Church used it every Sunday for four years, and the priest heard confessions out of the same booth used for ticket sales.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See separate reference sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.1928 Acres

Quadrangle name Reedley, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	1	2	8	0	7	6	0	4	0	5	2	7	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property occupies the yellow shaded portion of enclosed assessor's map (BK 368-pg.16, County of Fresno, Block 52, Town of Reedley). The building is L-shaped, with dimensions given counter clockwise from the northernmost corner: 150'x100'x50'x66'x100'x34'. Boundaries encompass the limits of

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** the historic resource.

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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state		code	county		code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia A. Bergthold (OHP Staff Revision: 10/83)

organization Owner date 4/15/83

street & number 417 S. Reed telephone (209) 638-4988

city or town Reedley state California 93654

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mervin Mitchell-Walker

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 2/27/84

**For NPS use only**

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

Entered in National Register

date 4/5/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

REFERENCE LIST

1. Anonymous. "Building & Real Estate." Reedley Exponent. March 7, 1903, p. 6.
2. Anonymous. "Local Brevities." Reedley Exponent. April 16, 1903, p.8.
3. Anonymous. "Local Brevities." Reedley Exponent. May 28, 1903, p.8.
4. Anonymous. "Local Brevities." Reedley Exponent. June 4, 1903, P.8.
5. Anonymous. "Local Brevities." Reedley Exponent. June 25, 1903, p.8.
6. Anonymous. "Opera House Receives Baptism." November, 1903, p.8.
7. Guinn, J. M. History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Record of the San Joaquin Valley California. The Chapman Publishing Co., Chicago, Illinois, 1905, p. 1275.
8. Nickel, Katherine, Beginnings in the Reedley Area. Max Hardison, Fresno, California, 1966, p. 131, p. 234
9. Personal Interview with Ernest Eymann, April, 1976.
10. Personal Interview with Esther Hardison, March, 1983.
11. Personal Interview with Gus Jansen, Nephew of Jesse Jansen, October, 1967.
12. Personal Interview with Esther Miller, niece of Jesse Jansen, October, 1967.
13. Personal Interview with Oscar Noren, January, 1983.
14. Personal Interview with Alberta Saile, October, 1982.
15. Personal Correspondence. L. M. Flewelling, Sunland, California.
16. Personal Correspondence. Catherine Frame, Porterville, California.
17. Reedley Historical Society. Reedley, A Pictorial History. Sequoia Savings and Loan, Reedley, California, 1981.