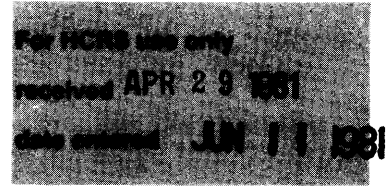


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



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

1. Name

historic Rapides Opera House
and/or common Paramount Theatre

2. Location

street & number 1125 Third Street ^{3rd.} not for publication
city, town Alexandria vicinity of congressional district 8th-Gillis Long
state La code 22 county Rapides Parish code 079

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name City of Alexandria
street & number P.O. Box 71
city, town Alexandria vicinity of state La. 71301

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rapides Parish Courthouse
street & number _____
city, town Alexandria state La.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title La. Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1981 federal state county local
depository for survey records La. State Historic Preservation Office
city, town Baton Rouge state La.

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rapides Opera House is a brick 3 story building set in the old central business district of Alexandria. It has floor seating (seats replaced) and one balcony (original seats), which makes for a total seating capacity of approximately 800. Built of brick and steel, the building has a type of exterior articulation which was common to many of Alexandria's grander commercial buildings at the turn-of-the-century. Features include Romanesque sets of round arch windows with continuous label molds, Doric pilasters, and brick rustication above and below the second story. At one time the ground story had a central Romanesque arch entrance. This was removed when the marquee was installed in the 1940's. Around that time the store which occupies the corner of the ground story received a new front and the entire main facade acquired a parapet.

The auditorium space has a crisscross beam ceiling and shallow pilaster walls. Bas relief panels of cast plaster ornament the fenestration and the balconies. Boxes rest upon acanthus leaf consoles. The proscenium is of cast plaster and consists of a series of coffers with inset patera and moldings enriched with fruit, flower and ribbon forms. The orchestra pit is extant, but in recent years the loft was blown off by a hurricane.

Some of the arched windows have been filled in, but this change is easily reversible.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input 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 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 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1903 **Builder/Architect** Architect: Favrot and Livaudais
 Contractors: F.B. and W.S. Hull Contractors
 (Jackson, Miss.)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria A and C

The Rapides Opera House is significant in the area of theatre for the following reasons:

- (1) It is the oldest extant theatre in central Louisiana and one of the oldest in the state.
- (2) Since its opening in 1903, it has been the largest and best equipped theatre in the Alexandria-Pineville area. It opened as one of a number of theatres in Alexandria, but rapidly became by far the most important one. This was partly because of its size and its status as the most stylish theatre in Alexandria, but it was also because of its connection with the Keith organization and later the Lowe circuit which brought the finest acts in the country to the Opera House. Many of the acts had played the Palace Theatre in New York. For example, the Marx Brothers played the Rapides Opera House in the teens.

When professional touring companies were not playing in the Opera House, residents would take to the stage. Community talent was wide and varied. Every imagined act from a low-keyed soft shoe to a period melodrama to operatic arias were performed by local citizens.

Because the Opera House was considered the best equipped and most stylish theatre in the city, church benefits, school graduations and other programs of community concern were held on its stage.

In 1927, with the advent of the "Talkies", the Rapides Opera House Company, Limited sold its interest and the theatre became the "Paramount". For almost a decade during the thirties it was the only theatre in the Alexandria-Pineville area.

The Rapides Opera House also enjoys a lesser degree of significance as what is probably downtown Alexandria's only example of the work of the prominent New Orleans architectural firm of Favrot and Livaudais.

9. Major Bibliographical References

*Research Report Prepared by Joseph Ticheli, Located in Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, Paramount Theatre National Register File.

*Based upon research in primary sources such as newspapers, courthouse records, etc.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property approx. 1 acre

Quadrangle name Alexandria, LA.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	5	5	12	9	16	10	3	14	6	13	9	18	10
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

See attached sketch map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries.

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joseph A. Ticheli

organization _____ date March 1981

street & number 3822 Norman Street telephone home 318-443-7921
office 318-473-7425

city or town Alexandria state Ia. 71301

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Robert B. DeBlieux

Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 20, 1981

For HCRS use only

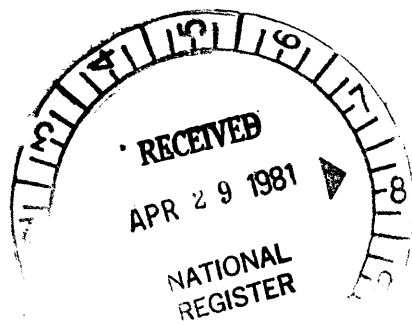
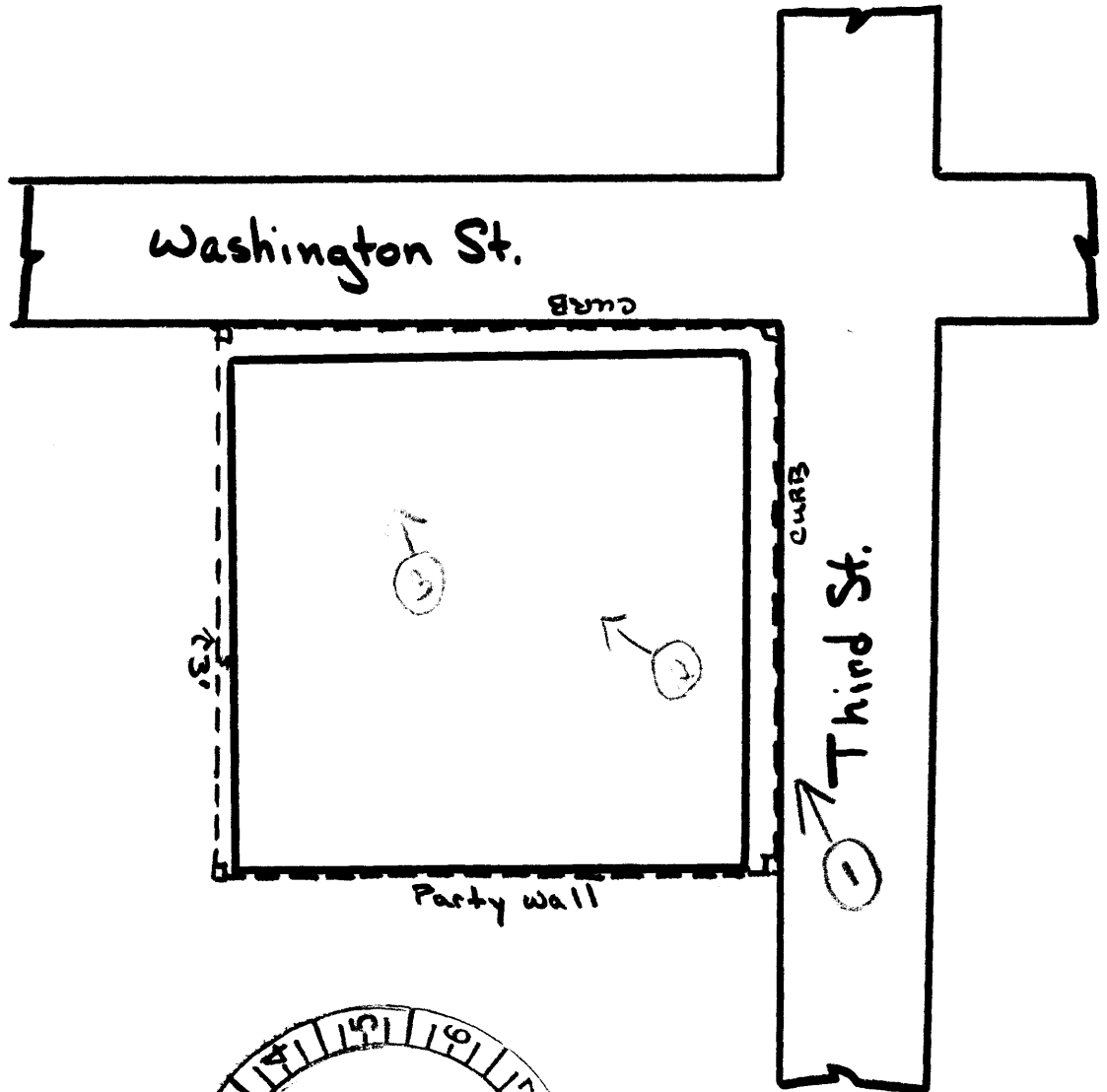
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Bill Grovna date 6/11/81
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

Park ... TA-... ..



JUN 11 1981