

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received **AUG 16 1985**

date entered **SEP 12 1985**

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

1. Name

historic W. T. Thorne Building (NeHBS # KN04-4)

and/or common Hostetler's Opera House

2. Location

street & number Mid Block, North Side of Fifth Street
between Minden and Colorado Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Minden N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Kearney code 133

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Hostetler Land Investments - Florence (Hostetler) and Spencer H. Raymond

street & number One IBM Plaza, Room 4400

city, town Chicago N/A vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kearney County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Minden state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Hostetler's Opera House is located in Minden (1985 Pop.: 2,939), Nebraska, the county seat of Kearney County. The three-story brick commercial building, which represents a fine example of the late Renaissance Revival Style, was constructed in 1891 by W. T. Thorne. The main level currently houses retail businesses and the second level is vacant. A local group is interested in leasing/purchasing the building with plans to include a rehabilitation of the second floor for use as a dance hall and meeting place. Structural and historical integrity have been preserved except for alterations made to the street level facades and interior modifications which occurred in past years.

Hostetler's Opera House is located in the downtown business district of Minden, Nebraska. The three-story commercial building, designed in the late Renaissance Revival Style, was constructed in 1891 by W. T. Thorne, and is rectangular-shaped in plan and rests on a brick foundation. The front outer facade consists of four buttresses which divide the facade into three equal bays. Each bay contains six equally spaced windows, with the upper row having pedimented hoods and the lower having linteled hoods. The center bay displays a round-arched plaque which reads, "Hostetler's Opera House 1891." The center top row windows are arched as is the door at the bottom center of this upper level. The door, now enclosed, originally opened onto a front balcony, which is evidenced by lighter colored brick expanding across the width of the building. On the back (north) side of the building, a piece of heavy timber extends from the roof area which was originally used with a block and tackle to lift heavy objects to the second level.

Distinctive interior features of the opera house include detail woodwork around doorways, decorative capitals on supporting columns, and the oak floor that was added in 1919. The original ticket office displays old wallpaper and advertisements for past events. The pressed tin wainscoating in the hallway on the second floor adds historical character to this area as also does the original ticket window. Pressed tin also lined the back stairwell until it was recently removed. Large six-paneled double oak doors leading to the main hall are intact.

Remnants of a bygone era include old chairs originally used in the opera house, a piano, and a stand which announced upcoming dances.

A local group is in the process of wanting to convert the upper level into a useable space for square dancing and meetings. There is also strong community support to preserve the Opera House. The building is presently being stabilized with preservation/rehabilitation plans to begin in the near future.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1891 Builder ~~XXXXXXXX~~ W. T. Thorne

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Hostetler's Opera House is architecturally significant on a local level as a good example of a 19th Century opera house block, a building type which played an important part in the cultural life of small towns in Nebraska. Stylistically, the building is a fine example of the late Renaissance Revival style in the state. Today these structures serve as architectural landmarks and contribute to civic pride. The Hostetlers' were significant in governmental, political and business circles of early Buffalo County and Kearney County in Nebraska. Bruno O. Hostetler was a prominent lawyer and mayor in the County. He also served 37 years as District Judge. The period of significance (1891) is derived from the construction date of the building.

Hostetler's Opera House attains local significance in the area of architecture as an example of an opera house block, a building type which was evident in Nebraska during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and which played an important part in the development of social activities in Nebraska. This building is an excellent example of a Main Street opera house, still intact, that can be found in small Nebraska towns. These opera house blocks were designed to incorporate office and retail space on the lower levels, with the auditorium occupying the top story. The building served as a meeting place for community social, political and cultural events. Formally and stylistically the building conveys architectural significance for the period of construction. Representative of the finest opera house traditions, the strict symmetry and the raised parapet reinforce the public formal nature of the building. Stylistically the building is a very fine example of the late Renaissance Revival in Nebraska, a style reserved primarily for dignified public functions. The building's date of construction marks it as one of the earliest uses of this style for public halls in Nebraska.

Bruno O. Hostetler came to Nebraska in 1887 after studying law at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City. In June of 1887 he settled in Kearney. In November he went back to Iowa to marry his fiance Margaret Belle Miller. They then returned to Kearney to make their permanent home.

B. O. Hostetler practiced law in Buffalo County for six years. Politics and public affairs were important all his life. He served as mayor in Kearney for three years. From January, 1904 to January, 1941 he served as Judge of the 12th Judicial District of Nebraska. His 37-year term of office was the longest of the District before or since. He had a statewide reputation for "prompt disposition of pending cases and for keeping his docket clear." Records show that as District Judge, less than three percent of his decisions were appealed to the Supreme Court. Thus he was termed the "fearless" and "fair" Judge.

Judge Hostetler was active in Kearney in securing a public library for the city and also in getting the State Normal School for Kearney. His wife was active in club and social circles and was a noted artist in the area.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Minden South, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	4	5	0	4	3	7	0	4	4	8	3	0	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is described as lots 3, 4, 5 Burton's Subdivision of Lots 7, 8, 9, Block 21, original town of Minden, Kearney County, Nebraska, including all historically associated real estate.

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

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jenifer Sheary, Student Intern

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date April, 1985/July, 1985

street & number 1500 R Street

telephone 402/471-4767

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska

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 James A. Hanson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date 8-2-85 (date of letter)

For NPS use only

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

for Melissa Byers
Keeper of the National Register

NATIONAL REGISTER

date 9-12-85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

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BOOKS

Bang, Roy T., Heroes Without Medals, Warp Publishing Company, Minden, Nebraska, copyright 1952.

OTHER

Jepsen, Sally and Janice Garrett "Hostetler's Opera House," Unpublished Manuscript on file, Nebraska State Historical Society, 1984.

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, file KN04-4, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

NEWSPAPERS

Kearney County Democrat, July 7, 1891, Minden, Nebraska.

_____, June 2, 1893, Obituary of W. T. Thorne, Minden, Nebraska.

Minden Gazette, June 1, 1893, Obituary of W. T. Thorne, Minden, Nebraska.