

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Pennsylvania
COUNTY:	Lancaster
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

## 1. NAME

COMMON:	Fulton Opera House
AND/OR HISTORIC:	Fulton Opera House

## 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:			
12-14 N. Prince Street			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Lancaster		#16	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Pennsylvania	42	Lancaster	71

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 (Specify) _____ _____

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:	The Fulton Opera House Foundation, Mr. Albert Wohlsen, President
STREET AND NUMBER:	12-14 N. Prince Street
CITY OR TOWN:	Lancaster
STATE:	Pennsylvania
CODE	42

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:			
Recorder's Office of Lancaster County			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
Lancaster County Courthouse			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE	
Lancaster	Pennsylvania	42	

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
Penn.COUNTY:  
Lancaster

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fulton Opera House is a large, four-story building located in the heart of the business section of Lancaster. When the Fulton Foundation purchased the theater in 1964, it bore little resemblance to the town hall erected in 1852, but it did retain much of its late 19th-century appearance; consequently restoration did not involve basic structural changes. To make the building look more like it did in the 1890's, workmen restored the facade of the theater under the marquee to its original condition, restored the vestibule area and refinished vestibule doors, replaced the box office with one obtained from Ford's Theatre in Baltimore, reupholstered seats in the auditorium and balcony, gilded and restored the eight ornate boxes on either side of the stage, restored the old orchestra pit and railing, installed new carpeting on the first floor, and painted the theater inside and out. At the same time, workmen made some alterations and additions to the building in order to make it comfortable and to meet the requirements of law. For example, they constructed new dressing rooms under the stage, improved the heating and air-conditioning system, added a fire escape to the left of the balcony, and modernized the theater marquee.

The Fulton Opera House rises to a height of 60 feet. It is 58 feet wide and 148 feet long. The facade of the theater is Victorian with an Italian treatment. The interior of the building is baroque in style, with elaborately ornamented and gilded boxes. The theater includes a street floor auditorium that seats 365 people, and eight boxes that seat 40 people. A second balcony accommodates a motion picture projector, spotlights, and other equipment. Beneath the stage is a large room approximately 30 by 40 feet, which the Fulton Foundation plans to utilize for a museum. There also may be seen part of the foundation of the old jail, used by the original contractor to help support one wall of the building. Some of the fixtures and furnishings date back to the late 19th century. The Foundation recently purchased 40 chairs used in the boxes in the 1890s.

Commercial films, symphony performances, opera, a children's series of plays, amateur productions, and professional stage shows are some of the varied entertainments now offered to the public by the Fulton Foundation. The work of the corporation is carried on by the revenue obtained from admissions and donations.

## Boundaries:

At approximately 300' north of the intersection of W. King Street and N. Prince Street on the west curb of N. Prince Street, proceed west to the east curb of North Water Street, thence proceed approximately 89' along the east curb of N. Water Street, thence east for 36', thence south for approximately 20', thence east for 63', thence south for 11', thence east for 49' to N. Prince Street, thence south to the point of origin.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1852-1930, 1873

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art

Architecture

☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☐ Military☒ Theater☐ Conservation☒ Music☐ Transportation

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1852 as Fulton Hall and completely remodeled in 1873 as the Fulton Opera House, this historic building at 12-14 North Prince Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania served until 1930 as one of the finest small town theaters on the circuit of professional touring companies. Restoration of the theater to its late 19th century appearance began in 1964 when the Fulton Foundation purchased the building. No basic structural changes were required, but the theater facade, vestibule area, and auditorium and balcony were restored, and the box office was replaced with one obtained from Ford's Theater in Baltimore.

Still an active theater, the Fulton offers a wide variety of entertainments to the people of Lancaster, including films, opera, and amateur and professional productions.

## History:

In 1850 Peter G. Eberman and Christopher Hager bought the old Lancaster prison for \$8,400 from the Lancaster County Commissioners. Dating back to pre-Revolutionary times, the prison had been the scene of the massacre of the last of the Conestoga Indians by the Paxton gang from Harrisburg in 1763, one of the bloodiest chapters in the town's early history. Hager soon became sole owner of the property. Tearing down the old jail, he had a new building constructed partially on its foundations to serve as a town hall and community center. Samuel Sloane designed the structure, and John and Gottlieb Sener were the building contractors. All of the men were natives of Lancaster.

In May 1852, the Lancaster Examiner and Herald carried a story on the building and noted that the first floor room was intended for political meetings, county conventions, and the like, while the second was to serve for lectures, and social entertainments. Societies might occupy the third floor. Hager named the building for Robert Fulton, co-inventor of the steamboat, who was a native of Lancaster County, and in 1854 he commissioned a statue of him from Hugh Cannon of Philadelphia, which he later placed in a third-story niche above the entrance. Fulton Hall formally opened to the public on October 14, 1852, with some 1,500 guests of the management in attendance. A week later the first professional company performed in the auditorium. Ole Bull, the famed Norwegian violinist, highlighted the bill.

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Fulton Foundation, The Fulton Opera House Restoration (Lancaster, 1964).  
 Walter C. Hager, Fulton Hall and Its Graven Image (Lancaster 1918).  
 Joseph T. Kinston, "History of Fulton Opera House," Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society, 54 (Lancaster, 1953).  
 H.M.J. Klein, Lancaster's Golden Century, 1821-1921 (Lancaster, 1921).  
 John D. McDermott, "The Fulton Opera House," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings Special Report (Washington, 1968).

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		UTM	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		18.388230.4432630	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .25

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:		DATE	
Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force		11/6/74	
ORGANIZATION		DATE	
Historic Sites Survey, Landmark Review Project		11/6/74	
STREET AND NUMBER:		Landmark	
1100 L Street		Designated: Aug. 11, 1969.	
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE	CODE
Washington		D. C.	11

## 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p><b>NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION</b></p> <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____              Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST: (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)</p> <p>_____              Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date 7/15/77</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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In 1853 and 1854, Fulton Hall served as the county courthouse, while a new one was being constructed, and in succeeding years provided space for a wide variety of social and political affairs, including military ceremonies, graduation exercises, State and local conventions, prize fights, and, of course, traveling entertainments of all kinds. During the Civil War, the building became an armory for Lancaster regiments, and, following the Battle of Gettysburg, it served as a clearing station for ambulant casualties.

In 1873 Fulton Hall underwent major alterations. The owner, Blasius Yecker, wanted to concentrate on the entertainment side of the business, and he engaged Edwin Forrest Duray, one of the top theatrical designers in the country, to completely remodel the structure. Duray was the grandson of the first American born actor in this country, John Duray, also from Lancaster. Renamed the Fulton Opera House, the revamped building soon came to be known as one of the finest theaters on the circuit. In 1887 a publication described the interior arrangements of the Fulton as a parquette, parquette circle, and balcony. It seated 1,100 people in numbered chairs. Further alterations occurred in 1893. C. Emblem Urban, a Lancaster architect, supervised the work, which included a change in the shape of the entrance to the lobby and the construction of a new fly gallery or rigging left above the stage. Sometime later the owner added a second balcony or "peanut haven."

The Fulton continued to serve as a live theater until 1930, and during the eight decades that it was a stopping place for traveling shows, it played host to most of the great names in entertainment. Among the notables who appeared on its stage were Joe Jefferson, Booth Barrett, Madame Modjeska, Adelina Patti, Edwin Booth, Sarah Bernhardt, Otis Skinner, George M. Cohan, the Barrymores, Eddie Foy, W. C. Fields, Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok and William S. Hart. Some national figures who lectured there were Lucy Stone on woman's rights, John B. Glough on temperance, and Wendell Phillips on abolition. Political figures who appeared at the theater were James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens (who watched a performance by John Wilkes Booth), Horace Greeley, William Jennings Bryan, and Woodrow Wilson. The last traveling show to play the Fulton in 1930 was "Blossom Time," which closed on January 18. In the decades that immediately followed, the old theater showed motion pictures exclusively.

The movement to preserve the Fulton began almost by accident in 1952. Early in the year, Eugene Barr, editorial writer for The Playbill, suggested in a column that since the American Theatre had decided that John Duray was the first American-born actor and since his birthplace was Lancaster, a monument should be erected there to honor him. The Lancaster Intelligencer Journal, however, had another proposition: restore the Fulton as a late 19th century theater. It would be a fitting memorial and one with practical consequences. Barr liked the idea and even went so far as to make a special trip to Lancaster to visit the theater. His subsequent editorials did much to create interest in the building, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania responded by recognizing the Fulton and placing a marker there. But it was not until 1963 that citizens

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of Lancaster took definite steps to preserve the structure. On February 11, a group of business and professional men banded together to form the Fulton Foundation and elected as their president a great grandson of the first owner of the theater. On January 2, 1964, the Foundation bought the building for \$75,000 and began raising funds to restore it to its former glory. In the past four years, the corporation has expended \$135,000 in the restoration of the building, which continues to function as a theater, specializing in high quality films and in stage productions.

FULTON OPERA HOUSE  
NAT HIST LANDMARK  
LANCASTER, PA.

