

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 23 1975

DATE ENTERED JUN 11 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Washington Opera House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

116 West Second Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Maysville

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

07

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Mason

CODE

161

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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Maysville Players, Incorporated

STREET & NUMBER

c/o William B. Chamness 636 Forest Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Maysville

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mason County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Third Street

CITY, TOWN

Maysville

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1974

— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Washington Opera House is a two-and-a-half-story structure whose upper portion rises above the older neighboring commercial buildings at the west end of the main shopping street of downtown Maysville. The sides and rear of the theater are of red brick, the facade of buff brick trimmed with red brick, stone, and castiron. There are five main bays of the facade, which is frankly decorative, relating primarily to the street and expressive of the festive character of the theater, yet permitting effectively subordinated shopfronts flanking the lavishly decorated recessed entrance to the auditorium.

The wider central bay of the three-part composition projects slightly and is distinguished by a triangular pediment capped by freestanding anthemion. The ground floor has brick piers with the wide openings for the shopfronts at the sides under a plain continuous entablature broken only by the central balcony. The plate glass windows of the shopfront on the left are divided by slender castiron columns flanking the entrance; the opening on the right, which originally housed Fire Company No. 1, is a later addition to match those on the left. The entrance to the theater has a stone segmental arch with projecting voussoirs and heavily sculpted spandrels with an applied cartouche under the truncated center bracket of the balcony. The consoles, balustrade, and upper entablature are of galvanized iron.

The second story, which actually incorporates the third, has two round-arched windows on either side of the central pavilion, where an elaborate stone doorframe with a bullseye window above gives onto the balcony, almost as if public appearances to a crowd below were expected. The redbrick arches of the windows and the central feature rise into the band of diapered red and buff brick that underlies the rich entablature and modillioned cornice with brick parapet above.

The unknown architect has managed to create an expressive facade, both decorative and orderly, within a Beaux-Arts framework. It has recently been sandblasted without ill effects because of the hard surfaces of brick and stone, and an incompatible marquee has been removed. The exterior box office, used when the theater was a movie-house, will soon be returned to its original position in the foyer.

The appearance of the auditorium is very much as it was originally except that a fire at the rear in 1930 caused the removal of the private boxes flanking the balcony. The dimensions of the auditorium are 56' x 55', almost square. The stage opening within the proscenium arch is 36' wide and it is more than 30 feet deep. Although an early account boasted of over a thousand seats, there are 426 seats downstairs and about 175 in the balcony and gallery. The interior has recently been completely refurbished in shades of gold highlighted with red. An entertainment hall above the main entrance and shops measures 28' x 45' with a 22-foot high arched ceiling; a staircase to the gallery rises to one side.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 1898-1899

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On September 30, 1797, a Washington, Kentucky weekly newspaper, The Mirror, printed a notice of a performance by the "Theatrical Society" to be acted in the "Court House" on Thursday evening, October 12. This is the first record of a stage performance west of the Alleghenies to reveal play titles and advertise dates, site, and prices of an evening's entertainment, and may well have been performed by some of the ancestors of present Maysville Players, who are helping revive the present Opera House as a community center for the performing arts.

By 1817 Limestone, or Maysville as it was to become, could boast of a theater where local as well as visiting thespians could display their talents. The first theater was at the corner of 2nd and Fish Streets (now Wall) on the northwest corner.

A disastrous fire occurred in April 1850, and destroyed a great deal of property on West Second Street, including the Presbyterian Church known as the Old Blue Church. When the Presbyterians decided to rebuild on Third Street, two events took place which were to affect the physical and cultural well-being of Maysville residents. In 1851, two fire companies were formed to protect the life of the citizens and an elegant theater was built upon the site of the Old Blue Church to enrich their living.

The "Opera House" was the pride and joy of Maysville, and became not only a place of entertainment, but filled a community need for school commencements, patriotic rallies, and great political debates. However, it, too, was to be struck by fire, in January of 1898.

Perhaps the Washington Fire Company, which was one of the two fledgling companies to appear at just about the time the Opera House was built, felt a deep guilt for its destruction, for in 1898 they decided to rebuild the theater at a cost of \$24,000. After this the theater was known as the "Washington Opera House."

In the early days of theater here, many famous names could have been handwritten on the dressing room walls--names like Marguerite Clark, Tom Mix, Lou Tolligan, John L. Sullivan, Harry Garey, and the great John Philip Sousa and his band. Year after year, came Al G. Fields or Lasses White and their famous minstrels. Maysville was a one-night stop between Cincinnati and Lexington for dozens of Broadway shows.

After a long career as a legitimate theater, the Opera House succumbed to the cinema. Since 1972, however, it has been reclaimed by an active group of local citizens for its original purpose, and been carefully restored and refurbished. In its Beaux-Arts

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Howard Stickley, ed. The Historical Revue (Maysville, n.d.).
 Maysville newspapers circa 1898-1899.
 West Hill, Early Theatre in Kentucky.
 Mason County Museum Archives, Maysville, Kentucky.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than an acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1 7	2 5 9 1 7 0	4 2 8 1 2 0 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Mary R. (Mrs. Robert B.) Anderson

WEL

ORGANIZATION

The Maysville Players, Incorporated

DATE

12-4-74

STREET & NUMBER

R. R. 1 Box 14

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Maysville

STATE

Kentucky

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.

SIGNATURE

Cedric W. Melton

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5/20/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

A. R. Montgomerie

DATE

6/11/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

W. J. ...

DATE

JUN 10 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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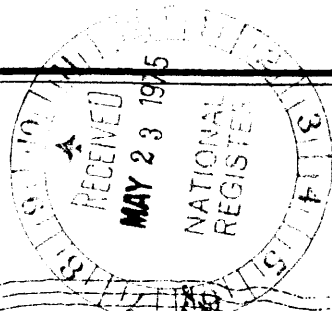
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Washington Opera House

dignity yet suitably festive demeanor, the facade declares its original functions--an interesting example of mixed use combining theater, shop, and fire station. This type of facade, as well as the interior, is the obvious precursor of the later movie palace, but not yet as florid as the confections Hollywood was soon to provoke.



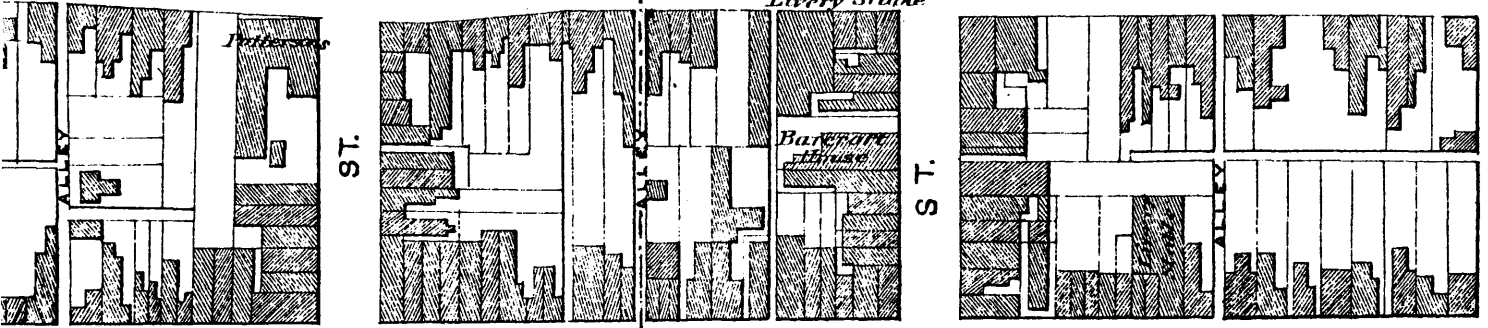
Scale 700 feet to an Inch

H O R I V E R

UPPER GRADE

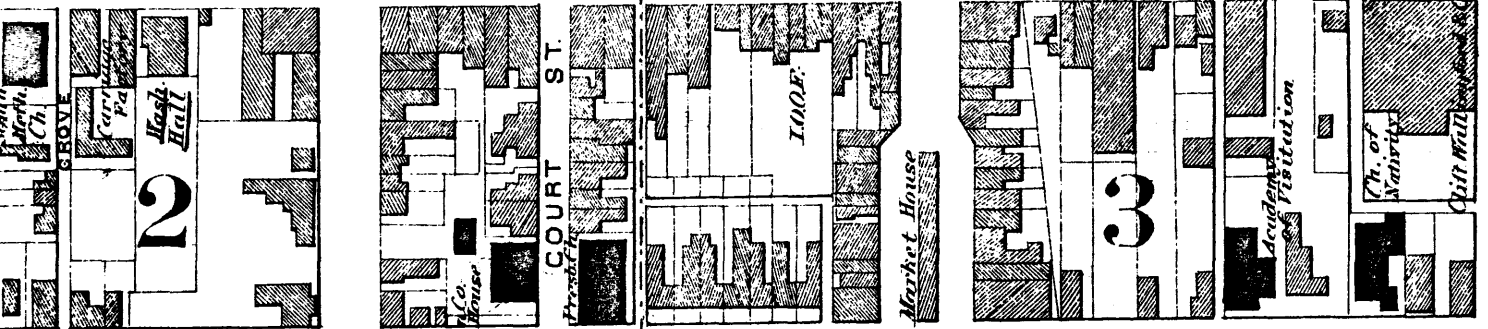
FRONT

ST.



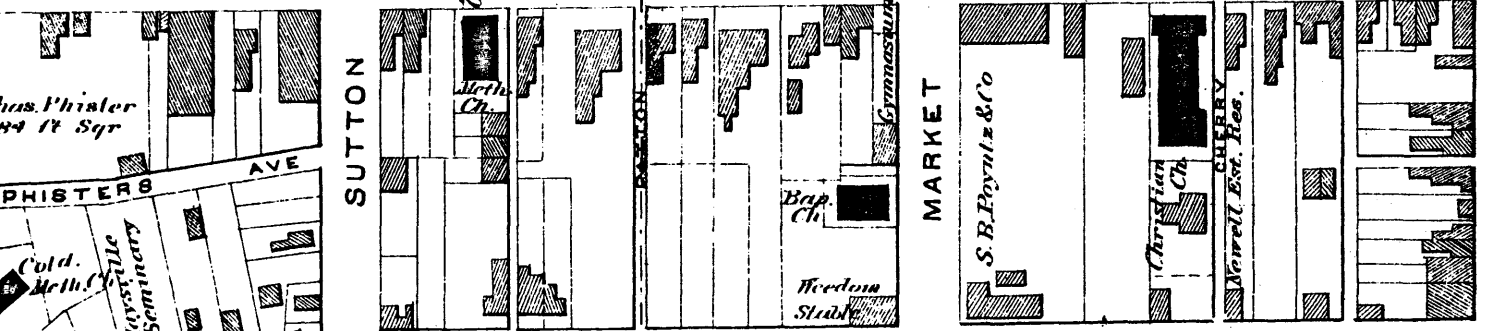
SECOND

ST.



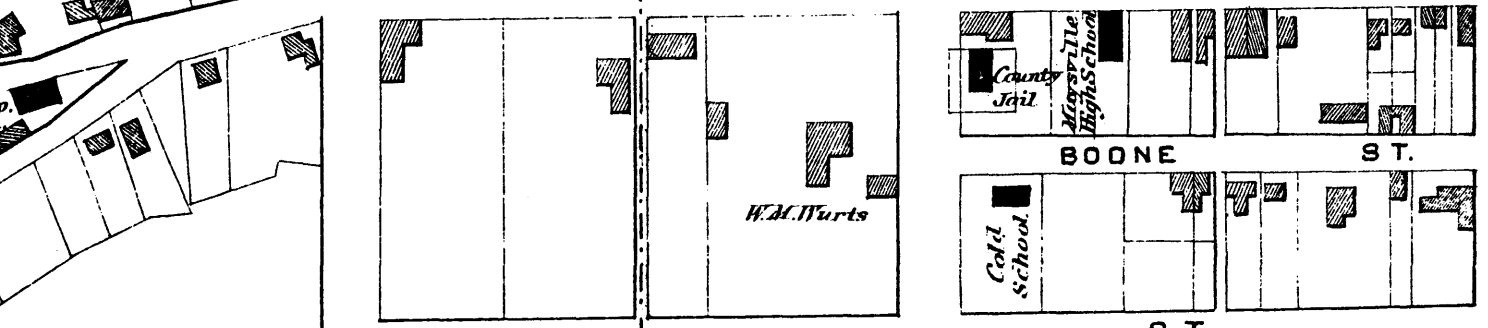
THIRD

ST.



FOURTH

ST.



FIFTH

ST.

LIMESTONE