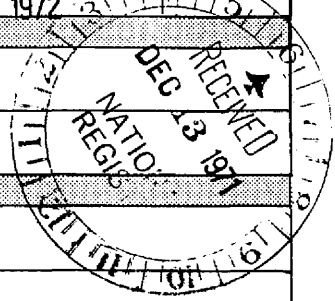


PH0000833

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Connecticut	
COUNTY: Litchfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
APR 26 1972	15



1. NAME

COMMON:
Thomaston Opera House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Thomaston

STATE Connecticut	CODE 09	COUNTY: Litchfield	CODE 005
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Town of Thomaston

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Thomaston

STATE: Connecticut	CODE 09
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Thomaston Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Thomaston

STATE: Connecticut	CODE 09
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Connecticut Historic Structures and Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1966
 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Connecticut Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
54 Pratt Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Hartford

STATE: Connecticut	CODE 09
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Connecticut	ENTRY NUMBER APR 26 1979	DATE
COUNTY: Litchfield		
		FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The solid mass of the building, three full stories and attic space beneath the hip roof, set upon a high basement, is dominated by the tall square tower near the right front corner. The tower roof suggests the Second Empire and Mansard styles even to slate shingles in hexagonal shape, but continues upward in a square, pilastered clock stage and then a triple-arched belfry, terminating in a pyramidal roof, similarly shingled, that carries a large weathervane. Cornices all around the roof lines of both the tower and the main building mass are supported on large brackets or reverse-curve profile interspaced by pairs of smaller brackets of similar shape. Third story windows all show Romanesque arched headings with voussoirs of contrasting red brick and light gray granite springing from a belt course of the latter. Similar belt courses surround the main building at the general sill level of both the first and second floors, except that the sills are placed higher in the tower and in the left bay. Most window lintels below the third floor are flat, of dressed granite which also forms the random-sized blocks of the elevated basement. An entry porch, arched on three sides and topped by a low balustrade, fronts the tower, granite steps leading up to the floor level of the building proper. A side entry is found in a central extended bay, with a wide granite-lined arch crowned with an A-shaped cornice, the arch and cornice repeated at the roof line three stories above, where they form part of a cable on the end slope of the roof. The contrasting colors of brick and granite, the varied angles of the roof, and the multiple projections of wall surface all combine with the impressive mass and height of the whole to create a striking example of public architecture.

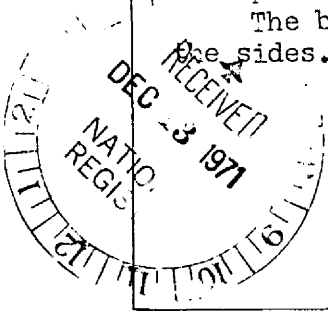
Restoration of the interior has sought to duplicate as nearly as possible the original appearance. This will include complete renovation of the auditorium, manager's office, stage area, understage, dressing rooms, and fly loft, and installation of a new ventilating system. A massive chandelier which once hung in the Naugatuck National Bank building is being restored and readied for hanging. When all is accomplished, red carpet will again cover the floors and the frescoing on the ceiling will be repainted. The interior, which is quite representative of the period in which it was built, will be restored to its former grandeur.

The ceiling is divided by intersecting beams into rectangular panels, each filled with decorative paintwork, which in a swag pattern also ornaments the deep cove between ceiling and wall. The walls are covered with red paper in a leaf pattern.

The proscenium arch has an inner and an outer section; the outer has a design of Greek anthemion, the inner, a repeating floral motif. There is a painted boss in the center with the date 1884 inscribed.

The balcony has lacy grill work, extending with the seats around to the sides. In all, there are 627 seats in the Opera House.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1883-1885

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Part of the historical interest in the Thomaston Opera House, housed in the Town Hall Building, comes from the significance of the Thomas family in the Town's history. The land on which the building stands was given to the Town by Aaron Thomas, a son of Seth, founder of Seth Thomas Clocks, and for whom the Town was named. Old town records state that the Town Hall/Opera House was built between 1883 and 1885 at a cost of \$50,000. Robert W. Hill of Waterbury was the architect; A. I. and C. S. Chatfield were the contractors. The original specifications and plans were discovered during restoration work and are preserved in the Town Hall. Pages are filled with minute details on materials and construction methods, and the document is signed by Aaron Thomas, members of the building committee, the architect, and the contractors.

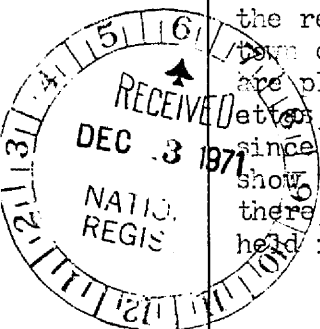
The large floor of the Opera House served for school dances, fire company and church bazaars, graduation exercises, and social events, such as the Annual Hayseed Ball at Halloween. Soon it became a center for touring theatrical companies as well. Old advertising posters discovered during restoration heralded such attractions as "The House and the Lion", "Cripple Creek", and "Uncle Joshua's Variety Shows", played by New York touring companies on Friday and Saturday nights. Many notable people came to Thomaston; Enrico Caruso, Ignace Jan Paderewski, and Ray Bolger, all performed at the Opera House.

During the 1930's the Opera House was converted into a movie house, where children spent Saturday afternoons. One resident recalls, "they used to give out free fudgicles then." Around 1938 a new movie house was built, and live shows were again presented. The Opera House was in operation until 1963 when town officials discovered several fire code violations and ordered the building closed.

In 1965 interest was stirred with a threat that the old, unsafe building may be torn down. By 1966, as the result of a tremendous civic pride, restoration work was begun, and September 14, 1968 was the dedication of the re-opening of the Thomaston Opera House. The first floor now houses town offices, and the second floor is devoted to the Opera House. There are plans to bring summer stock to Thomaston, as well as concerts, operetta, and light opera all year round. There have been numerous events since the re-opening. Once again the Stag Club Minstrels hold their annual show there, as they have since 1940. The High School graduation is held there; dance recitals, plays by the Civic Theater, and Art Festivals are held in the Opera House.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Express, Thomaston, Connecticut, June 19, 1969.
 Express, Thomaston, Connecticut, August 14, 1969.
 "The Lore of the Litchfield Hills", Spring and Summer, 1969, Vol XXIX, No.1.
 p. 4.
 Notes from the Restoration Commission, Thomaston Opera House.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	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
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	41°	40'	22"
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"	73°	04'	31"
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"			
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Susan Babbitt, Administrative Trainee

ORGANIZATION: Connecticut Historical Commission DATE: November 19, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 54 Pratt Street

CITY OR TOWN: Hartford STATE: Connecticut CODE: 09

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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:

National State Local

Name: *[Signature]*

Title: State Liaison Officer

Date: November 19, 1971

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

Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

RECEIVED
 DEC 23 1971

Date: 4/26/72

ATTEST: *[Signature]*
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: APR 26 1972

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Connecticut	
COUNTY	
Litchfield	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 26 1972

(Number all entries)

#8 Significance

1.

The most gratifying aspect of the restoration is the enthusiasm of the residents of Thomaston. Thus far, no money has been spent on labor; all work has been done by volunteers, working regularly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. Many fund raising projects have been undertaken and much material has been donated. The spirit of restoration has pervaded the entire town--the Opera House has become a point of pride in Thomaston.

