Chautauqua Pavilion

Chautauqua Park (Old Prospect Park)

Hastings

Nebraska

City of Hastings

Hastings

Adams

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

Adams County Courthouse
The Hastings Chautauqua Pavilion is located near the center of Chautauqua (old Prospect) Park in the west residential section of the city (Photo #1's 1-3). Oriented along a north-south axis, this unique structure is octagonal in plan and measures 18.4 m along each side except the eastern and western sides which measure 11 m (see Photocopy #4). The structure is basically open except at the three southern-most sides where walls enclose the space behind the stage and the choir to provide an interior back-drop and storage space beneath the choir.

The stage is a slightly raised platform set between the two choir sections at the southern end of the axis (Photo #5). An orchestra pit is depressed below the main floor level in the space in front of the stage and the choir. The remainder of the concrete floor space is open, allowing room for movable seating to accommodate crowds for the many varied activities held in the pavilion.

Structurally the pavilion is quite unique and nearly indescribable. The roof is carried on lattice-braced channel columns located around the perimeter of the building at the intersections and in the center of each side and by columns set just inside the perimeter of the building along the ridge lines of the pyramidal hipped roof (see diagram, Photocopy #5). These columns support the lower end of an unusual triangular shaped truss which runs along the ridge lines of the roof and which acts as the superstructure for the entire building (Photo #7). The upper ends of these trusses are supported by the geometry of the Howe trusses which shape and support the large vent at the apex of the roof. Two tiers of single span Howe trusses frame into the triangular trusses supporting the roof rafters while two-span Howe trusses support the rafters near the eave line (Photo #8).

A subsidiary purlin circumscribes the building and supports the rafters at a point between the two tiers of columns. These purlins are supported by two subsidiary triangular trusses which run between the interior ridge columns and the column at the center of each side of the perimeter (see Photo #7). This holds true for every segment of the structure except the three southern-most segments above the stage and the choir where the purlin is supported by braced timber columns. The purlin over the stage (which required a wider spacing between columns to avoid disruption of the stage) is reinforced with a steel rod utilizing an inverted Queen Post truss configuration.

1. Donald Jackson of the Historic American Engineering Record has stated that HAER has never seen a structure like this one nor do they have a name for some of the constituent elements of the structure.
Formally, the result of this complex structural system is a bi-laterally symmetrical, pyramidal hipped roof of rather massive proportions. An elongated octagonal vent caps the roof providing excellent ventilation on hot summer days while small wall gablets enhance the cardinal sides of the building.

The building remains fundamentally unchanged. The original walling material was clapboard and remained that through a WPA refurbishing of the building in the 1930's. Today, vertical grooved paneling has replaced the older clapboard but does not substantially lessen the character of the structure. The diamond-shaped windows which formerly enhanced the gablets have been closed off, however, the framing for these windows can still be seen from the interior.
### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than one acre**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Prospect Park, City of Hastings

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**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BORDERS**

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**FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME / TITLE**

Janet Jeffries Spencer, Preservation Historian; D. Murphy, Architect

**ORGANIZATION**

Nebraska State Historical Society

**STREET & NUMBER**

1500 R Street

**CITY OR TOWN**

Lincoln

**STATE**

Nebraska

**DATE**

April 1978

**TELEPHONE**

402-432-2793

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**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL [ ]

STATE [x]

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**

**DATE**

5/2/78

**TITLE**

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

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**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

**DATE**

**DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST**

**DATE**

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

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CHS 852.451
SIGNIFICANCE

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

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SPECIFIC DATES 1907

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In November of 1905, Georgia Evangelist Lincoln McConnell conducted a series of revival meetings in Hastings. Speakers on Gladstone and puritanism, musical programs and religious exercises made up the week-long revival that was highly successful. The Hastings community was so inspired by this educational phenomenon that a group of local businessmen and the Rev. Hiram B. Harrison of the First Congregational Church formed the Hastings Chautauqua Association.

On January 13, 1906, the group elected a board of directors and began to plan a summer assembly. A large tent, 80 x 120 feet, with a seating capacity of 2,000 was purchased as were 150 smaller, family-sized tents. This first regular assembly was widely accepted with 8,000 people in attendance. Families who could afford to rented tents and camped on the grounds for the entire eight days. Some came to town in specially chartered trains from outstate communities.

The success of this first assembly resulted in a decision to build a permanent pavilion before the next assembly. A large, trussed pavilion measuring 121 x 151 feet was erected at a cost of $5,000. Capable of seating 3,500 people, the pavilion was dedicated on July 19, 1907. It was purportedly the finest and largest pavilion in the state. Several tents were still used to house some of the activities and as temporary homes for visitors.

The Chautauqua movement began in 1874 with a summer training program for Sunday School teachers in Chautauqua, New York. Two men of the Methodist faith founded what came to be known as the Chautauqua Institution on the shores of Lake Chautauqua. Soon programs were expanded to include more than religious topics. Visitors came from various parts of the country and were so inspired by the program, that many organized their own summer assembly.

Though many Chautauqua organizations were part of the National Lyceum Circuit, the Hastings Chautauqua was locally controlled until 1913, when due to waning interest, the association found itself in financial difficulties and was forced to join the national system.
Serving as the community's educational stimulus, these summer assemblies brought music, religious and philosophical discussions, and literary readings to people who were relatively isolated from such cultural advantages. The latest news of the nation was transmitted by these traveling Chautauqua performers and lecturers. The Chautauqua movement played perhaps an even more significant role on the plains than in the east in bringing people together in more sparsely populated areas. Chautauqua programs played a significant role in the educational, philosophical, musical and entertainment lives of the community.

Chautauqua remained alive in Hastings until the early 1920's, when improved communications, movies and radio replaced it as a cultural and educational diversion.

As an engineering structure, this unique building represents a significant solution to a major engineering problem—that is, to cover a large space without interfering interior columns. Based on a somewhat eclectic (and perhaps original) approach to the problem, the major constituent elements include the large triangular trusses and the interdependent Howe trusses. The triangular trusses give form to the roof and support the Howe trusses which play a major esthetic as well as structural role. Patented in 1840 by William Howe, the Howe truss with its vertical iron tension and diagonal wood compression members is one of the earliest wood-iron truss designs to be developed in the United States. This truss type saw widespread use in this country during the 19th and early 20th centuries for bridge and roof superstructures.

Architecturally the structure has significance, not only as a fine example of a particular and rare building type, but also because of the esthetic distinction achieved through its form and subtle structural modulations. The modifications to the pure geometry of the building, seen in the wailing of the sides at the south end and the modification of the structure over the stage and choir, combine to focus attention on the stage end of the building. This effect is considerably enhanced with the white painted walls and ceiling which accent the structure above the stage. The lowest tier of Howe trusses play a textural role at the back of the stage. Their exposure around the perimeter of the building lends credence to the floating form while establishing a strong visual image to the structure from the exterior.


CHAUTAUQUA PAVILION (1907)
HASTINGS, NE (ADO4 -154)
FLOOR PLAN DIAGRAM
NO SCALE
JUNE 15, 1972

NORTH

ORCHESTRA PIT
STAGE

CHOIR

DOOR UNDER CHAIR

SHED DOOR

UP STAIRS

DONATE

CHOIR

DOOR UNDER CHAIR
CHAUTAUQUA PAVILION (1907)
HASTINGS, NE (ADO 4-154)

STRUCTURAL DIAGRAM
(REFLECTED CEILING PLAN)
NO SCALE
JUNE 15, 1978

KEY
--- HOME TRUSS
- TRIANGULAR TRUSS
--- PHRILIN, BEAMS
--- RAFTERS, ETC.

ELEVATION, PHRILIN BEAM ABOVE STAGE.

NORTH

DRAWN BY S. RYAN
FROM FIELD NOTES
OF D. MARSH.
General view of N front, looking S
Photo by J. Jeffries, NSHS, June 1976 (7606/28:21)
General view of W elevation, looking E
Photo by D. Murphy, NSHS, June 1976 (7606/21:20)
General view of stage end of building, looking N
Photo by D. Murphy, NSHS. June 1976 (7606/21:19)
View of interior showing stage, choirs and orchestra pit, looking S
Photo by D. Murphy, NSHS, June 1976 (7606/21:30)