United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property
pressive name 1000 F. Hall and Opera House
other names/site number Ne-HS = WT02-8 C881N = 04-26-06

2. Location
street & number Main St., N/A not for publication
city, town Bladen N/A Vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Webster code 181 zip code 68928

3. Classification
Ownership of Property Category of Property Number of Resources within Property
private (X) building(s) Contributing Noncontributing
public-local (X) district 1 buildings
public-State district
public-Federal site
structure
object

Name of related multiple property listing: Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1367-1917
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 3

4. State/Federal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this (X) nomination ( ) request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property (X) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property (X) meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification
I, hereby, certify that this property is:

( ) entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet.

( ) determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register.

( ) removed from the National Register.

other, (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
The I.O.O.F. Hall and Opera House is located on the west side of Main Street on the block between Frances and Mariel Streets, at the edge of the business district. Constructed in 1912-1913 by the I.O.O.F. Lodge of Bladen, the utilitarian One-Part Commercial Block brick building has understated brick arches above a row of five second-story windows on the front façade, above both doors on the main level, and a double row of decorative bricks along the top of the building. The structure is approximately 95 feet long by 40 feet wide. Access to the auditorium is through a double door under a small wooden semicircular awning into a 10-foot deep lobby.

The auditorium is 58 feet long from the proscenium opening to the back wall of the house, by 37 feet wide. The theatre has no balcony, although a raised projection booth fills the rear of the auditorium above the lobby space. The burnished arch is surrounded by a border of lights. The floor of the auditorium is raked. Permanent seats, believed to be original, fill the auditorium space, with the exception of a center aisle.

The proscenium arch measures 20 feet wide by approximately 12 feet high. Wings of 8 feet, 6 inches fill each side of the stage. No dressing rooms exist. The stage measures 23 feet from the curtain line to the back wall. The backstage area is accessible from the auditorium through narrow doors on each side of the auditorium in the proscenium wall. The original apron has been replaced by a larger one to increase the acting space. No trap doors are visible.

The structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved.
Floor plan, I.O.O.F. Opera House, Bladen

Credit: P. Leitner, Draftsman
The I.O.O.F. Hall and Opera House is significant for its association with and in reference to the historic context "Aesthetic Systems: Itinerant and Local Performing Arts in Nebraska" and the property type of "Opera House Buildings in Nebraska, 1867 to 1917." Under Criterion A, this opera house is significant in the areas of the performing arts; entertainment/recreation; and social history, on a state level, as a well preserved example of an opera house building in Nebraska. The building retains a high degree of historical integrity, possessing the physical and associative characteristics to make it an eligible member of its property type.

This opera house is significant in the area of performing arts for bringing a variety of entertainment to the community of Bladen. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as musical concerts, touring stock companies, dialect plays, magicians, minstrel shows, and Hawaiian specialties. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1913-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of entertainment/recreation, since it provided a place where the whole community could gather to attend moving pictures, lectures, and dramatic readings. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1913-1917.)

This opera house is significant in the area of social history, because it gave Bladen a neutral location for fraternal and agricultural meetings. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1913-1917.) In the days before radio, television, and sound movies, activities at the opera house were anticipated for days or weeks ahead of time. It provided a place for people to get together to have a good time and forget their troubles over crops, weather, taxes, the railroads, and the generally hard life of settling the Great Plains.
The period of significance is derived from the original construction date of the building, 1913, when the Oddfellows erected a "long needed place for entertainment and public gatherings" (Bladen Enterprise 24 Jan. 1913). The period of significance continues through 1917, the year considered to signal the end of the opera house era in Nebraska, based on declining numbers of touring companies nationally and rising numbers of movie houses and automobiles. The proximity of Red Cloud (18 miles) and Hastings (27 miles), which had moving picture theatres and large community auditoriums meant that as more Bladen residents bought cars, activities in those nearby cities became a more viable option. Limited choices in the I.O.O.F. Hall and Opera House doomed it to a dwindling number of sporadic events, primarily significant under the category of social history.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet  

Section number 8  
Page 2  

I.O.O.F. Hall and Opera House, Bladen  
Representative Entertainments, 1913-1917  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1913</td>
<td>Illustrated lecture by MWA Camp at Bladen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1914</td>
<td>Meeting of the Farmer's Grain &amp; Supply Co.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social History  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1913</td>
<td>Moving pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1913</td>
<td>Lecture by Dr. James Hedley on 'What Is a Man Worth?'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1914</td>
<td>Lecture by H. V. Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1915</td>
<td>Granville Jones, humorist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1916</td>
<td>Lecture by Clyde Wilson McCord on 'Loyalty to the Home Town'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1916</td>
<td>Dramatic readings by J. Frank Fouche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entertainment/Recreation  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1913</td>
<td>The Starrs, musical entertainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 1913</td>
<td>William F. Lewis Stock Co. with Just Plain Molly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1913</td>
<td>Hillman No. 1 Ideal Stock Co. with Ida Root-Gordon and Harry Sohns in The Thoroughbred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1914</td>
<td>Peterson &amp; Vierra's Concert and Dramatic Co. of Hawaiians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 1914</td>
<td>Hillman's Ideal Stock Co. with Ed Furguson and Shirley Mayberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terry's Uncle Tom's Cabin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1915</td>
<td>Edna Earle Crum Concert Party</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Two Oles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William F. Lewis Stock Co. in The Maid and the Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 1915</td>
<td>The Frame Up with Miss Floy Mann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1916</td>
<td>The Trail of the Lonesome Pine with Marie Fuller &amp; City Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William F. Lewis Stock Co. in The Gypsy Outcast and Polly and Her Pals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1916</td>
<td>Polu$hni &amp; Co., magicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1917</td>
<td>Vierra's Royal Hawaiians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Star Minstrel Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 1917</td>
<td>The Cambridge Players in The Rivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Clara Dyer recital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fred Byers Stock Co. with Jones of the U.S.N.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Major Bibliographical References

Cooper-Skjelver, Mabel R. *Webster County: Visions of the Past.* N.p.: Mabel Cooper-Skjelver, n.d.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
☐ has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # __________
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # __________

Primary location of additional data:
☒ state historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Specify repository:
☐ D. Layne Ehlers (see below)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one [1] acre

UTM References

| A 4 | 5 3 4 4 2 0 | 4 4 6 3 4 1 0 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | |

| B | | |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

| D | | |

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as Lot 8 and the north half of Lot 9 of Block 6 in the Original Town of Bladen, Webster County, Nebraska.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lot(s) that have been historically associated with this property.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title D. Layne Ehlers, Principal Investigator
organization OHIN Study
date April, 1988
street & number 2302 South 11th
state NE
city or town Lincoln
telephone 402/435-6946
zip code 68502
The following information is the same for all Bladen photographs:

NAME OF PROPERTY:  I.O.O.F. Hall and Opera House
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Bladen, Webster, Nebraska
NehBS SITE No.:  WT02-8
OHBIN SITE No.:  04-26-06
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER:  Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER:  Bladen #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER):  04-28-87 (8704/2:6)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA:  Exterior view, looking southwest at the east (front) and north facades.

PHOTO NUMBER:  Bladen #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER):  04-28-87 (8704/1:37)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA:  Interior view, looking west at the stage.