Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

PH0133671 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIO NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

RECEIVED	MAY 2-3	1975	
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FOR NPS USE ONLY

DA

TA SHEET

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS **TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**

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AND/OR COMMON				
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OBJECT	_IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
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CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
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GOOD	RUINS	ALTERED	MOVED DATE
FAIR	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 affects 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	AF	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
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_1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
_1700-1799	ABT	ENGINEERING	X_MUSIC	X THEATER
X 1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	_TRANSPORTATION
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	_INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		_INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1898-1899

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On September 30, 1797, a Washington, Kentucky weekly newspaper, <u>The Mirror</u>, 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

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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

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Form No. 10-300a (Rev 10-74)

> UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY MAY 2 3	1975				
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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.

inst west of the opera house. Sparks from the first fire are supposed to have started the blaze, which was between the slate roof and eeiling. In extinguishing the flames, the church was damaged to the extent of about \$3,000. The structure was immediately repaired.

The total loss on the opera house and stable was about \$50,000, with only about \$20,000 insurance. The buildings were replaced by more modern structures, the opera house being the pride of the town.

RECURRENCE-On June 30, 1906, Mr. Parker's stable was again destroyed by fire, together with almost the entire stock of McIlvain &



NEW WASHINGTON OPERA HOUSE.

This picture shows the opera house as it appears today. The structure is owned by the Washington Fire Company and has a seating capacity of one thousand.

Humphreys' furniture and undertaking establishment, and a part of Murray & Thomas' marble works. All were repaired at once and Mr. Parker was again forced to rebuild and completely restock his stable.

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FOREST AVENUE FIRE-APRIL 7, 1893.

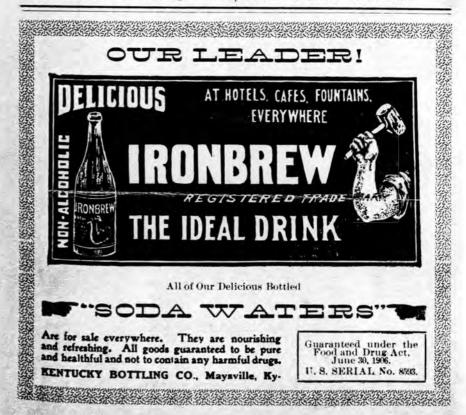
Shortly before 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, April 7, 1893, an alarm of fire was sounded from the East End. The wind had been blowing a gale all day and soon dense clouds of smoke were seen whirling across the Fifth ward from Forest avenue, the highest location in that part of the city, and where the wind had full sweep.

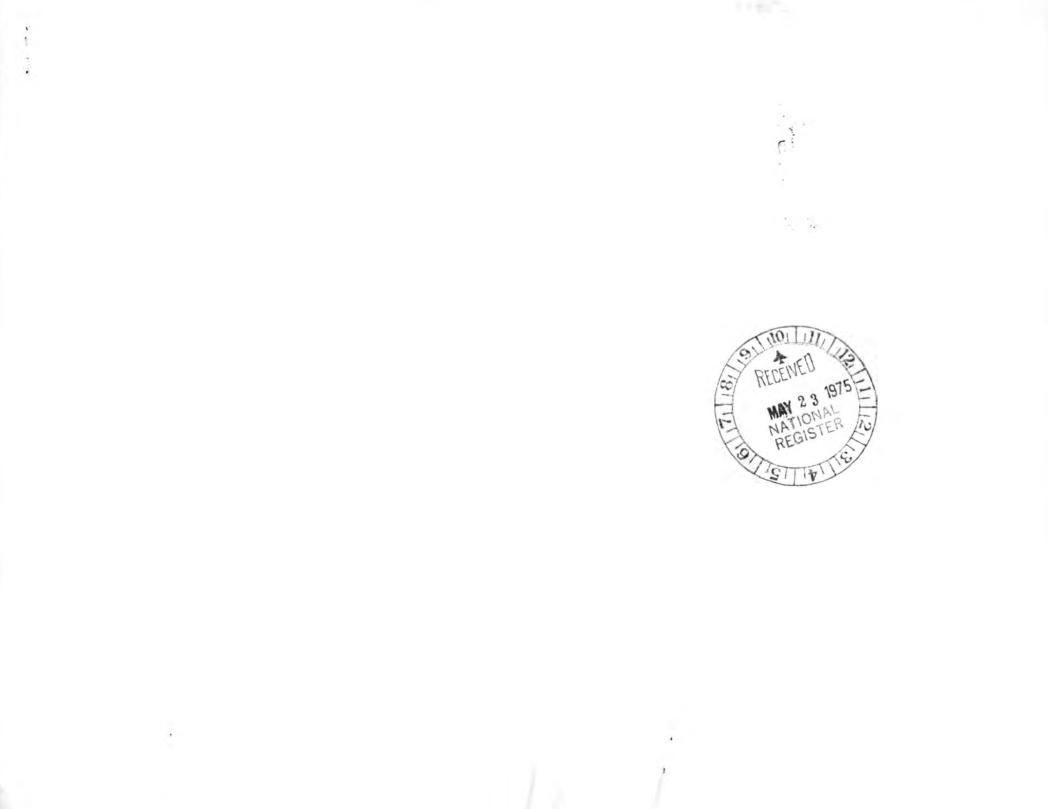
The afternoon train on the L. and N. had passed out only a few

minutes before and the opinion is that a spark from the engine started the blaze, which was first discovered on the roof of a stable in the rear of one of the houses. Fanned by such a wind as was blowing, the flames spread with frightful rapidity and before the Amazon fire company, which is only two squares away, could get to the scene three houses were burning fiercely, and pieces of burning wood were raining against the houses on the opposite side of the street.

Everyone realized the danger and the entire fire department of the city was soon on the spot battling with the blaze. The street was thronged with people and all lent a helping hand wherever possible. The wind carried the blaze clear across the street at times and the smoke was unbearably hot and stiffing, but against these disadvantages the firemen worked nobly, throwing stream after stream of water on the burning buildings. Burning shingles were carried clear across the city to the river, setting fire to several houses on Second and also on Poplar street.

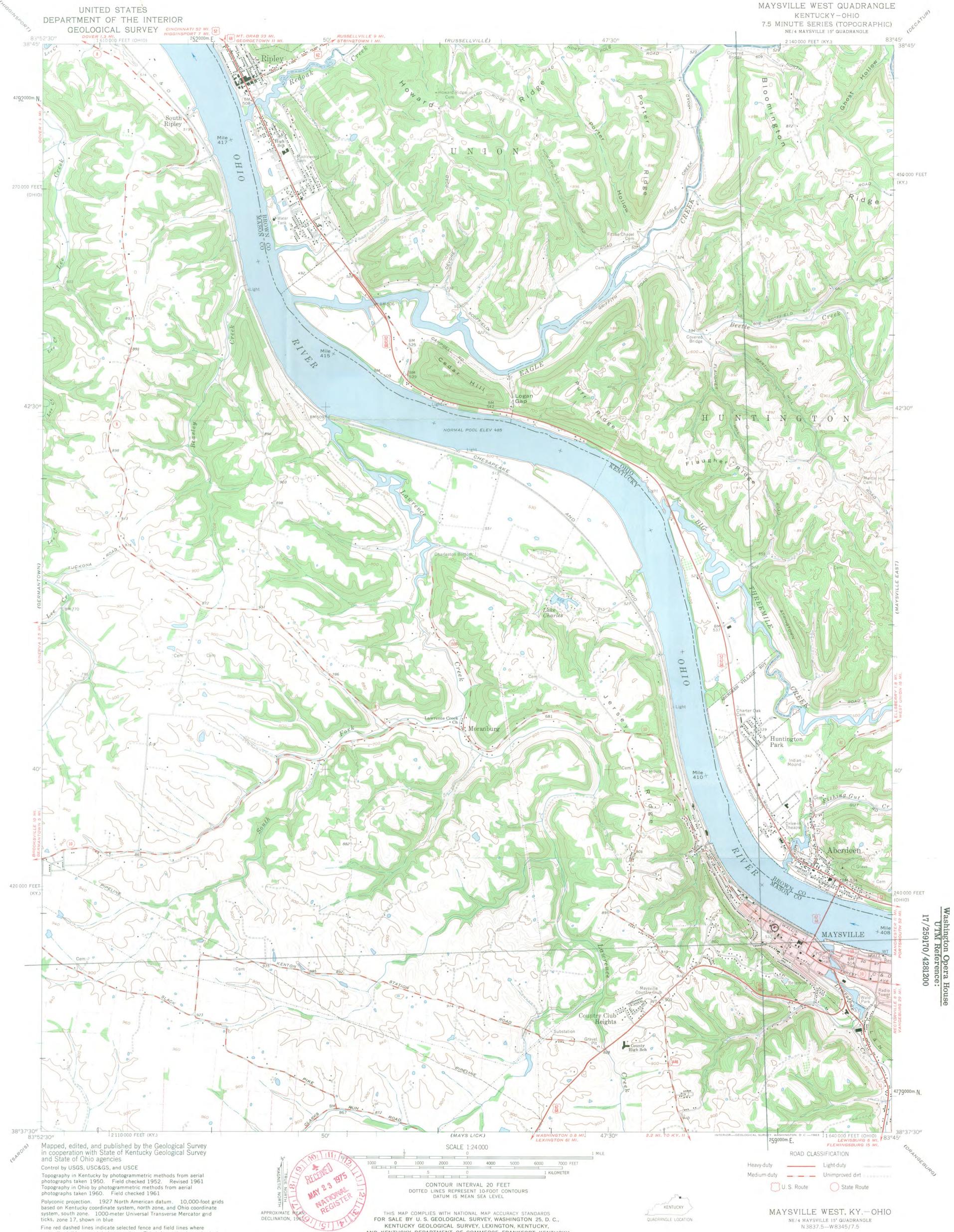
This was one of the most destructive fires in the history of the city, and a large portion of the Fifth ward was saved only by the excellent water works system and the heroic work of the firemen. By 4 o'clock in the afternoon the destruction was almost complete, and what had been seven happy homes at noon-time was now a mass of smouldering ruins. The total loss amounted to about \$12,000, with only \$6,000 insurance. At one time fifteen buildings in the path of the flames were on fire





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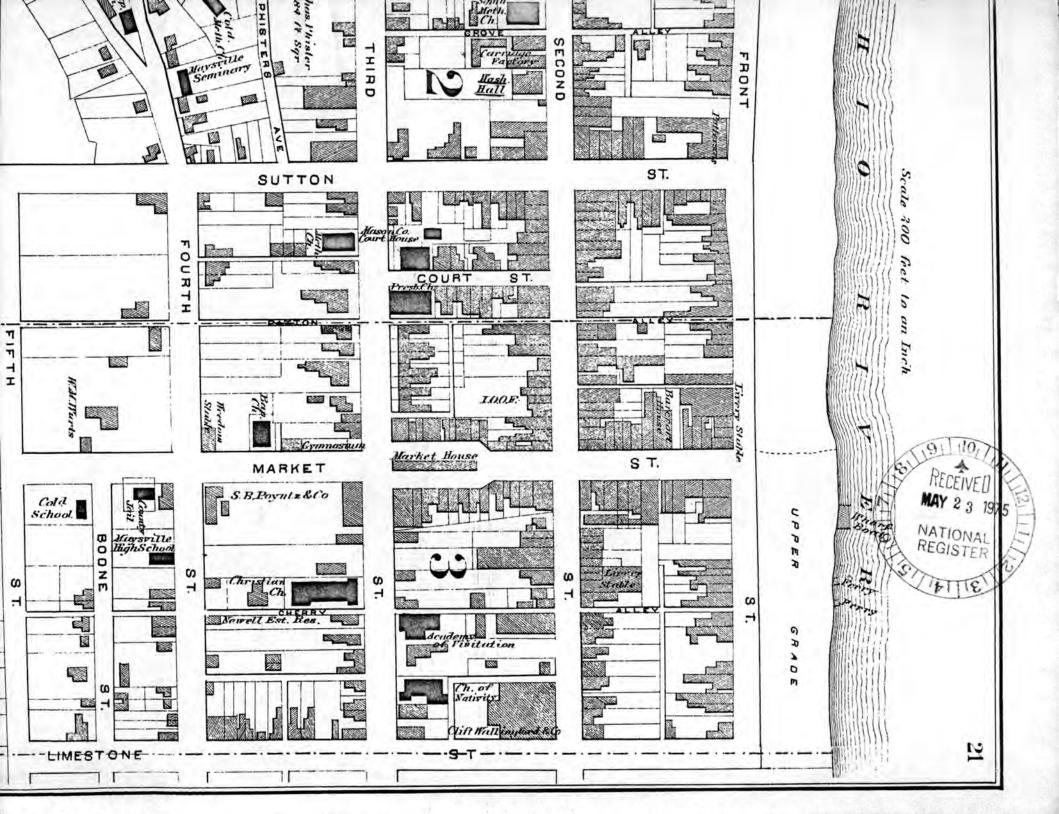




generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked The state boundary as shown represents the approximate position of the low waterline as determined from U.S. Corps of Engineers Ohio River charts, surveyed 1913, and supplementary information Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown Ohio area lies within the Virginia Military District

AND KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

1961





Kentucky Heritage Commission

401 Wapping Street Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

May 20, 1975

Dr. William J. Murtagh, Keeper National Register of Historic Places United States Department of the Interior National Park Service 18th and C Streets, N. W. Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Doctor Murtagh:

Enclosed is the National Register Nomination Form for the <u>Washington Opera</u> <u>House, 116 West Second Street, Maysville, Mason County, Kentucky</u>. This nomination was approved by the Kentucky Historic Preservation Review Board on March 25, 1975. As State Historic Preservation Officer, I recommend it be entered on the National Register of Historic Places.

The restoration and adaptation of this building is an ongoing community project for which additional funding for later phases of the work is being requested from the National Park Service.

Your early consideration of this nomination will be appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Eldred W. Meeton

RECEIVE

MAY 2 3 1975

NATIONAL

REGISTER

(Mrs.) Eldred W. Melton State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures (see attached list)

cc: Mrs. Robert B. Anderson Mrs. Frank Wise, Co. Rep.

APPORTIONMENT WARRANT NOMINATION

Doctor William J. Murtagh May 20, 1975 Page Two

List of Attachments

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form 10-300 Washington Opera House

Continuation Sheet Form 10-300a Item Number 8 - Page Two

Property Photograph Form 10-301a Photo No. 1 - facade from northeast Photo No. 2 - elevation drawing of facade in it original condition

Property Map Form 10-301 An Illustrated Atlas of Mason County, Kentucky U.S.G.S. Map - Maysville West Quadrangle

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE KENTUCKY

Date Entered . 1 1 1975

Name

Location

Old Normal School Building, Administration Building

Old Wash Place

Crossfield, R. H., House

Logan, John, House

The Opera House and Yates Book Shop Building

Kingdom Come Creek School

Washington Opera House

Murray Calloway County

Lawrenceburg vicinity Anderson County

Lawrenceburg Anderson County

Stanford Lincoln County

Lexington Fayatte County

Oscaloosa vicinity Letcher County

Maysville Mason County

Also Notified

Hon. Walter (Dee) Huddleston Hon. Wendell H. Ford Hon. Carroll Hubbard, Jr. Hon. William H. Natcher Hon. Tim Lee Carter Hon. John B. Breckinridge Hon. Carl D. Parkins Regional Director, Southeast Region State Historic Preservation Officer Mrs. Eldred W. Melton Director Kentucky Heritage Commission 401 Wapping Street Prankfort, Kentucky 40601

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SANDARD FORM 424 PAGE 2 (10-75)

NE Data Sheet DATEI 15.77 Reviewer INITIALSIC (6-11 NAME AS IT APPEARS IN FEDERAL REGISTER. Washington Opera House OTHER MANES: LOCATION: 116 W. 2nd St. STREET & NUMBER CITY. TOWN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT / Maysville VICINITY OF Suren STATE code Kentucky Mason 101 OWNER OF PROPERTY: (Circle) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHEP. ADMINISTRATOR (underline) FEDERAL (AGENCY NAME) : NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N.ATLANTIC MID ATLANTIC SCUTHEAST MIDWEST SOUTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST PACIFIC NORTHWEST FEATURES: IUPEFICR EXTERIOR ENVIRONS Substantially intact-1 Substantially intact-2 Substantially intact-3 - unknown - 4 unknown .-5 _.unknown -6 - not applicable - 7 __ not applicable - 8 _ Net applicable-9 _Interior, exterior, environs not intact-0 EXCELLENT CONDITION -_DETERIORATED _UNALTERED LORIGINAL SITE _6000 _RUINS ALTERED MOVED FAIR _UNEXPOSED _Reconstructed _Unknown Unexcavated _Excavated ACCESS -Yes-restricted Yes-unrestricted No access Unknown historic district? YES NO WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES NO IF YES, NAME: WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES NO IF YES, NAME: ADAPTIVE USE: YES NO Saved ? YES NO C in FUNCTION (S): (use vocabulary words) 3 ---TO NOS (RCT) then-С unS. now-SIGNIFICANCE: - UNIT NOA ARCHEULUGY PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE _RELIGION entertainment 26 ARCHEOLOGY HISTORIC _CONSERVATION _LAW/Gov't/politics _SCIENCE health AGRICULTURE _ECONOMICS -LITERATURE MARCHITECTURE - 4 _recreation _EDUCATION __MILITARY _SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN _settlement ART _ENGINEERING _MUSIC _COMMERCE _socio/cultural _.EXPLORATION -PHILOSOPHY _TRANSPORTATION _COMMUNICATIONS _urban & consum _INDUSTRY _POLITICS GOVE ANNIENT DIHLR ISPECIFY) planning INVENTION Ciaims 32(c)-Theatre "first?' YES

NO

"oldest" YIS "only" NO YI:S NO

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: SECOND RENALSSANCE REVIVAL

architect/m.builder: landscape/garden designer: interior decorator:

engineer: artist/artisan: builder/contractor:

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ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES: (label role appropriate date) events

institutional

DATES: DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1898-89 DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS: HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S):

SOURCE: (OF NOMINATION) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV"T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHER FEDERAL AGENCY: ACREAGE: (to nearest tenth of an acre) Liss that 1

COMMENTS: (include architectural information here) Brick, Stories, rectangular, flat roof, front.center segmental-arched entrance portal surmounted by galvanized iron concele Console is balustraded balcony, roundel and decorated pediment, 1st-story symmetrical shop fronts, flark Contend frequence other canded 2nd-story openings with glazed spandrels and failights, polychrome diapered brick surflark attic last, mounted by carved and lettered frieze, modillion cornice, rusticated corners; restored. faile attic last. And unusual example of Second Renaissance Revival, rare in the state.

SIGNIFICANCE: (maximum two sentences)