

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

**1. Name**

historic Orpheum Theatre

and/or common Sioux Falls Community Playhouse

**2. Location**

street & number 315 North Phillips Avenue NA not for publication

city, town Sioux Falls NA vicinity of congressional district First

state South Dakota code 046 county Minnehaha code 099

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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"/> <u>NA</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Sioux Falls Community Playhouse

street & number 315 North Phillips Avenue

city, town Sioux Falls NA vicinity of state South Dakota

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Minnehaha County Courthouse

street & number 415 North Dakota Avenue

city, town Sioux Falls state South Dakota

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Historic Sites Survey of Sioux Falls  
title Downtown Sioux Falls and Inventory of has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1972 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historical Preservation Center

city, town Vermillion state South Dakota

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The theatre consists of four rectangular shaped units: the lobby, auditorium, dressing rooms and backstage. Two stories in height, the building is three stories in the rear backstage area. The structure is most likely wood frame with a common stretcher bond brick veneer on the three non-public facades. Four exits are located on the rear wall, while the side facades remain unarticulated. The terra-cotta-faced front facade presents a lively public side of the theatre. Finally a wooden truss system spans the auditorium area.

Divided into three bays, the front facade has a recessed, central entrance covered with a metal marqu e. The flanking bays have large, plate glass windows. On the second floor are three windows placed centrally within each bay. A recessed panel decorates each bay of the cornice area and a sign outlining the word "Orpheum" appears again in the molded terra-cotta.

On the interior the lobby has marble wainscoting and simple tile floors. The auditorium has a balcony and murals decorate the ceiling and frieze areas. The building has undergone some renovation work and seats have been replaced and new heating, lighting and sound systems installed. In addition, other work included remodeling the stage and backstage, new stairs to the stage gridiron, new sprinkler system, new fire curtain and new restrooms. The lobby has been restored. Unfortunately, early remodeling efforts painted over a portion of the murals located above the dado. Two shop areas, now converted to a business office and storage area, flanked the central lobby.

The theatre is the earliest & best preserved theatre in the city. The terra-cotta exterior and interesting blend of classical and prairie motifs remains in near original condition.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input checked="" 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** 1905; 1913      **Builder/Architect** unknown  
**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** remodeling, J. J. Liebenberg, Minneapolis MN, architect  
The Spitznagel Partners, Sioux Falls, architects, 1975-6  
murals (believed to be) Borger Down

Significant in the areas of theatre and architecture, the Orpheum Theatre is the oldest remaining theatre in the city. In addition, the terra-cotta facade is a fine example of the severe, yet pleasing classical style employed in commercial structures. While white terra-cotta was intended to imitate the more costly granite and marble used in Neo-Classical structures, the material was so pliable it lent itself to more three-dimensional ornamental details such as garlands and molded trim. This can be seen in the decorative panels and egg-and-dart molding of the cornice.

The theatre was constructed over three months and opened on October 6, 1913 according to one source. Another gives the construction date as 1905, which seems to be varified by the architectural details. Both sources agree that the theatre was built for F. J. and L. J. Solari. In 1919 the building was sold to Finklestein and Reuben, a major theatre management firm, who employed Fred Beecher as general manager. J. J. Liebenberg was a major Midwestern theatre architect who did many commissions for Finklestein and Reuben and therefore it is surmised that he worked on the building at this time. From 1913 (or 1905) to 1927 the Orpheum was a vaudeville theatre, which booked acts from New York and Chicago. Performers for these variety, dramatic and musical shows included Jack Benny, Stan Laurel, Edgar Bergan and Charlie McCarthy, the Eddie Foy Family, Phil Baker, Dr. Rockwell and Lyle Abbott. Among the shows were Blossom Time, No No Nanette and The Student Prince.

In 1927 the Minnesota Amusement Company purchased the Orpheum and converted it to a movie theatre for B movies. The theatre eventually fell into disuse until 1954 when the Community Playhouse purchased the property. Since then, the Playhouse has presented both community theatre and traveling shows such as the Minneapolis-based Guthrie Theatre road company.

Through its long theatrical history and architectural elegance, the Orpheum represents a cultural landmark for the city of Sioux Falls.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Sioux Falls Argus Leader, September-October, 1913, 17 April 78

The Fred J. Beecher Papers

Interview with Miss Judith Beecher, November, 1972

Smith, Charles A. Minnehaha County History. Educator Supply Co.: Mitchell SD, 1949, p. 343

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name East Sioux Falls

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

A 

1	14	6	13	6	12	0	4	18	2	14	2	18	0
Zone				Easting				Northing					

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing					

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The lot lines of the property form the boundaries of the site which is located in the North Half of Lots 13 and 14 of Block 13 of J. F. Phillips Addition to the City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Putz technical editing: Carolyn Torma

organization Historical Preservation Center

date 29 Apr 83

street & number 216 East Clark

telephone 605-677-5314

city or town Vermillion

state South Dakota 57069

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Office of Cultural Preservation

date

For HCERS use only

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

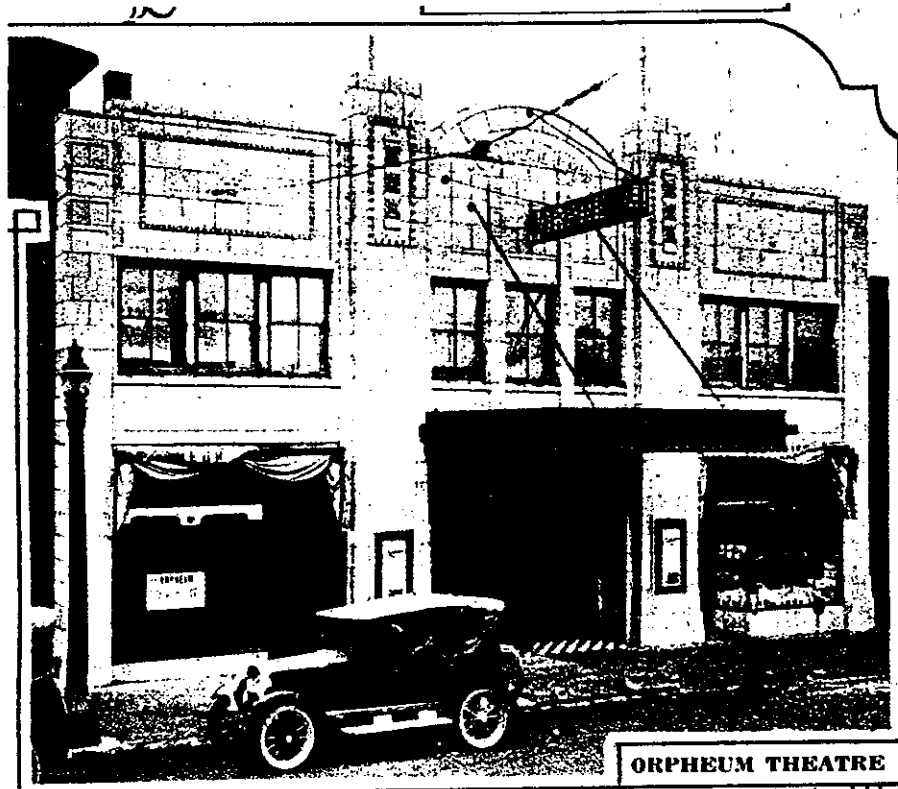
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



ORPHEUM THEATRE

Mar. 30, 1927

(KX)

