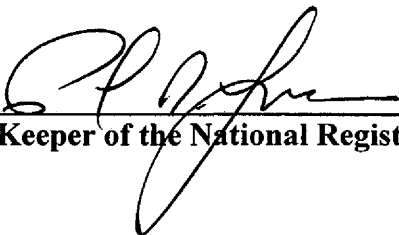


United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The attached property, the New Britain Opera House in Hartford County, Connecticut, reference number 77001421, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register on 10/07/1977, as evidenced by the FEDERAL REGISTER/WEEKLY LIST notice of Tuesday, February 6, 1979, Part II, Vol. 44, No. 26, page 7441. The attached nomination form is a copy of the original documentation provided to the Keeper at the time of listing.


Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

1/26/2009
Date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FILE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

New Britain Opera House

AND/OR COMMON

Palace Theater

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

466-468 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

New Britain

VICINITY OF

6th District

STATE

Connecticut

CODE

09

COUNTY

Hartford

CODE

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Steven E. Perakos and Peter Perakos

STREET & NUMBER

468 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

New Britain

VICINITY OF

Connecticut

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New Britain Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

New Britain

STATE

Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

New Britain, Ct., Architectural Inventory

DATE

1972

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

New Britain City Plan Commission

CITY, TOWN

New Britain

STATE

CT.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

6

PAGE

2

CT Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

1975

State

Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect St.,
Hartford, CT

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The 3½ story New Britain Opera House is a red brick building located in downtown New Britain. It is part of a row of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings. Attached at the south is a 4 story yellow brick Romanesque Revival block. Attached at the north is an undistinguished 2 story 20th century building with some colonial revival details. Across Main Street are several benches and recently planted trees in front of the large parking lot of a shopping center. Just south of the city block on which the Opera House is located a depressed, 4 lane highway is being constructed.

The Opera House's main facade is a sturdy, utilitarian version of a Italian Renaissance Revival composition. Above the altered first story the main (east) facade is a carefully ordered design with restrained dignity. The two center bays of the six bay wide facade form a slightly projecting pavilion which rises above the building's hipped roof and is crowned by a decorated triangular pediment. The red Tranton pressed brick walls are pierced by windows with brownstone trim. Second floor 2/2 windows are rectangular with shaped lintels. Third floor 2/2 windows have semi-circular arches with keystones. Four narrow windows with straight-heads are found at the attic level of the pavilion. Plain brick pilasters with corbelling at the main cornice level give emphasis to the central pavilion, while similar pilasters without corbelling define the corners of the building. Above the stepped corbel tables of the south pilaster are the letters "AD" and in the same position on the north pilaster is the date "1880." The name "OPERA HOUSE", is found between the two corbel tables. Between the second and third story windows is a stringcourse created from bands of terra cotta and of bricks set edgewise to the facade. The boldly projecting metal cornice with modillions and a frieze ornamented with the Greek key motif and dentils is repeated on the pavilion.

The remodeled first-story of the main facade has two intrusive 20th century storefronts and the central recessed entrance to the auditorium. This entry is also a 20th century remodeling and carries a movie theater marquee. Originally the first story facade was faced with granite and Portland stone.

Exterior side walls are common brick and are unadorned except for a brick cornice. A rear wing with flat roof was added at an undetermined date to the rear (west side) of the building. Most side windows have been bricked closed. A fire escape is attached to the south side. The roof is broken by several projections including chimnies, a large ventilator, and what appears to be an elevator shaft. The rear (west) wall has no openings.

The auditorium is located on the second and third floors and is reached by a central staircase. Originally the main floor of the auditorium had a seating capacity of 800 while the balcony sat 300. Seating has been altered and the entire theater now seats about 700. The restraint of the exterior disappears when one enters the auditorium. It has lavish ornamentation added in the early 20th century as well as original features. An elaborate chandelier hangs from a painted plaster ceiling with plaster mouldings. On either side of the elliptical arch

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

New Britain Opera House, New Britain, CT.

7. Description

above the stage are Ionic columns and murals. Decoration at the balcony level includes large statues of women.

6 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

1880

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Robert W. Hill

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

During the late 19th century opera houses were erected in many communities throughout the United States. New Britain was not an exception. Its New Britain Opera House Association was formed in 1880 and the Renaissance Revival style opera house designed by Robert W. Hill opened in November 1881. The association was somewhat unusual as it was composed not of members of the city's most prominent families but of men of Irish descent described in a contemporary newspaper article as "comparatively speaking, working men."¹

From the beginning the cultural facility was located on the upper floors and the ground floor of the building was occupied by income-producing business establishments. Eventually the auditorium was converted to a vaudeville house and then to its current use as a movie theater. The exterior of the building, which is a restrained design, is little altered above the first floor, while the auditorium is a remarkable space with original features enhanced by murals and other ornamentation added when it became a movie palace.

The New Britain Opera Association with Ambrose Beatty, president; Thomas McCabe, treasurer; and Bernard Moffitt, secretary, was formed in 1880. By June 29, 1880, Robert W. Hill had designed the building and by July 20 excavation for it had begun. The walls were nearing completion in November and Eugene A. Burt had been chosen agent and manager. Mr. Burt on November 30, 1880, defended the rental of space for a liquor bar. An interesting fact since a bar occupies one of the storefronts today. On May 24, 1881, the opening performance - a production of "Faust" - was held.

Quote from the New Britain Observer, July 6, 1880, in report on New Britain Opera House (Palace Theater) in files of Connecticut Historical Commission.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

David N. Camp, History of New Britain, New Britain: William B. Thomson & Co., 1889, p. 374.
Report on New Britain Opera House (Palace Theater) in files of the Ct. Historical Commission, Hartford, Ct.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 1/2 acre
UTM REFERENCES

A | 18 | 618,466.0 | 461,513.80 |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

T. Robins Brown, Consultant in Architectural History

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

September 1976

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203-568-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

JAN 3, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

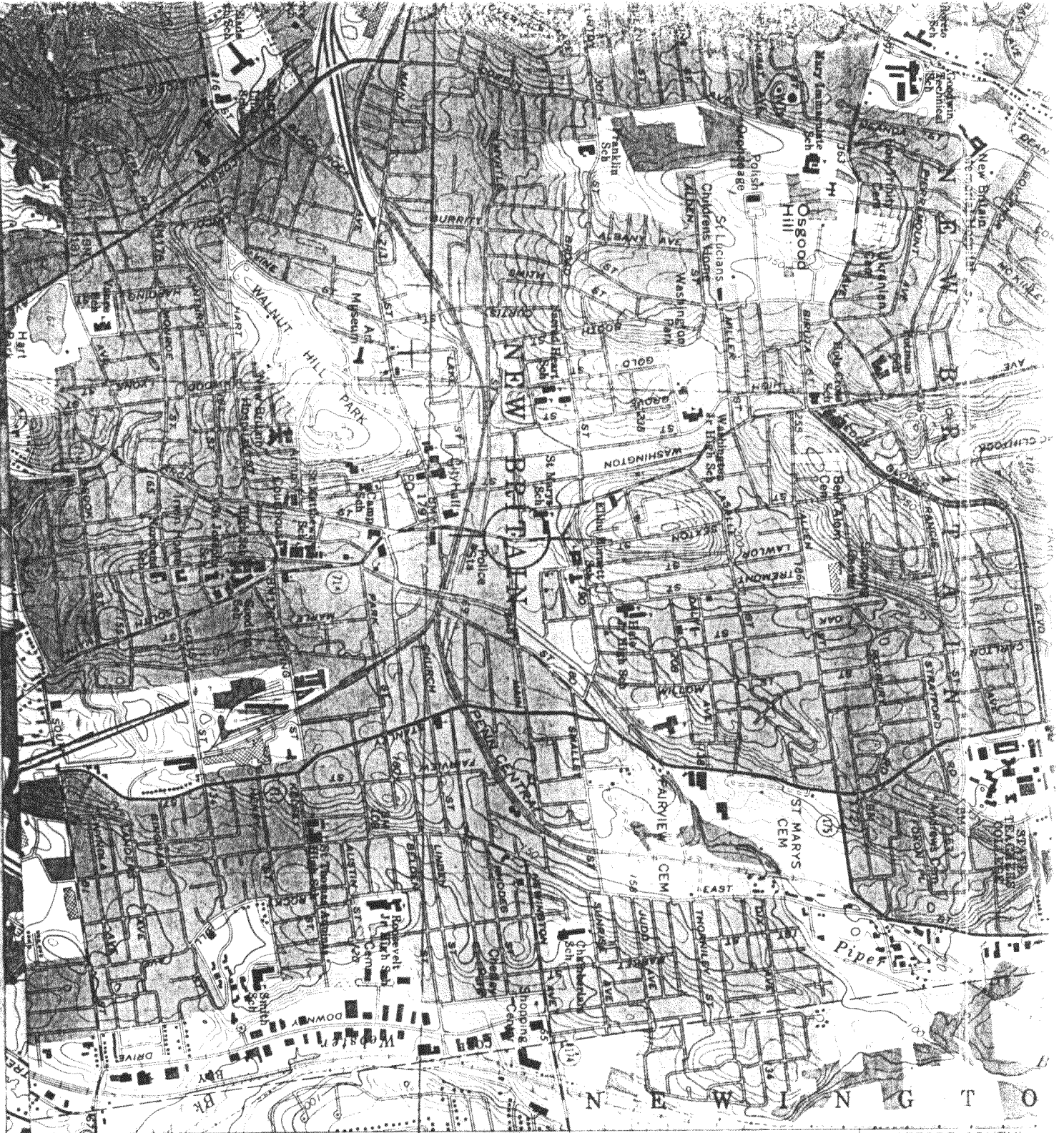
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



(HARTFORD SOUTH)
6467 11 NW

New Britain Opera
House
New Britain, CT.
UTM Reference:
18/604660/461538

4814