

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

(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Kansas</b>
COUNTY: <b>Cloud</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

29-1120-012

G 79160

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Brown Grand Theater**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Brown Grand Opera House (preferred name)**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**310 West Sixth**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Concordia**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**Rep. Keith Sebelius, District #1**

STATE: **Kansas** CODE: **66901** COUNTY: **Cloud** CODE: **029**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Jack L. Roney**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**510 West Sixth**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Concordia**

STATE:  
**Kansas**

CODE:  
**20**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Register of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Cloud County Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Concordia**

STATE:  
**Kansas**

CODE:  
**66901**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None**

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

STATE: <b>Kansas</b>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1906-1907**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Brown Grand Opera House was built in 1906-1907 at a cost of \$40,000 by "Colonel" Napoleon Bonaparte Brown, who had settled in Concordia in 1876 and established the city's first bank in 1878. Already a rich man when he arrived, Brown capitalized on the West's need for capital as well as the lack of banking supervision and regulations to become extremely wealthy before retiring in 1883.

There was an earlier facility in Concordia which had been used for cultural activities, lectures and theatrical performances, but after a fire in 1895 there was considerable local interest in a new opera house. However, all efforts came to naught until N. B. Brown announced in November, 1905, that he intended to build an opera house at Sixth and State streets.

By January 24, 1906, the stone for the building had been quarried and transported to the site. In February Mr. and Mrs. Earl V. D. Brown (the son and daughter-in-law of N. B. Brown) inspected a number of opera houses in Kansas and Missouri to obtain ideas. In March, 1906, Brown engaged Carl Boller, a well-known Kansas City theater consultant, to prepare the plans. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on April 3 and the blueprints were ready on May 31. Bids were solicited for construction of the building, but when none were received, N. B. Brown determined to build it himself. His son Earl Brown was the director of the project and W. T. Short was the construction supervisor. All workmen were Concordians and all materials were bought in Concordia. The local newspapers offered either daily or weekly accounts of the building's progress.

The formal opening of the Brown Grand Opera House on September 17, 1907, featured the Joseph M. Gaites production of "The Vanderbilt Cup." In the opening night programme was the following statement:

"The entire structure has been erected by Concordia workmen; all the material has been either made or bought in Concordia; it belongs to a Concordia man; is a Concordia institution in every particular and it is the sincere hope of the builder that it may prove a source of education and clean entertainment to the people of Concordia for all time to come."

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

8. Agreements were concluded with two booking agencies to bring good road shows to the Brown Grand. The peak years were from 1907 to 1911 when Earl Brown took a personal interest in the opera house. But by September, 1911, both N. B. and Earl Brown were dead. The opera house passed to their widows, who deeded it to the city in 1912 with a variety of stipulations, including one barring the use of the hall as a regular motion picture theater. In an era of declining road shows the large building and its upkeep was too much for the city, and in 1916 the city council returned it to the Brown estate. Earl Brown's widow had by that time married Ray Green, and for a time he managed the opera house with some success. On March 23, 1925, the building was sold to the Concordia Amusement Co. for use as a motion picture theater, a use continuing to the present.

During its years as a legitimate theater the Brown Grand hosted many nationally known stars and road troupes. These shows were enjoyed not only by the people of Concordia but also by large numbers of residents from neighboring communities.

An organization has been established in Concordia with the stated purpose of acquiring and restoring the Brown Grand Opera House for use by the community concert association, the area arts council, the community junior college, local and regional cultural events, and as a possible convention site. The restoration of this building is seen as a significant link to the community's cultural past in that it could once again be used in the manner envisioned by N. B. Brown.

The Brown Grand Opera House was an important element of the cultural heritage of Concordia and as such it is deemed worthy of National Register nomination.

11. Preliminary nomination form submitted to the Kansas State Historical Society by the Brown Grand Theater Restoration Steering Committee, Concordia, Kansas.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Brown Grand Opera House is a rectangular brick and stone structure measuring 60 by 120 feet. The distance from the basement floor to the roof is 64 feet. The foundation and first floor of the Renaissance style building are of local limestone and the remaining portion of the exterior consists of locally made brick trimmed with Cottonwood Falls (Kan.) stone.

Originally there were four double doors on the front, two paired in the center and the others at the sides. The center entries have been considerably modified and the other two have been covered. A theater marquee has been added to the front over the central entrance.

The front entrances led into a tiled lobby which contained the owner's private office and ticket offices. The lobby led into a foyer which was separated from the orchestra floor by a railing. Balcony stairs led to the right and left off the foyer. Presently a concession stand occupies the office area.

Seating capacity of the theater was about 1000: eight boxes and 400 seats on the orchestra floor, 200 seats in the balcony and 300 chairs in the gallery. The original interior color scheme of green, gold and white was planned by the Emery, Bird, Thayer Co. of Kansas City. The seats have been replaced and reset but the capacity remains around 1000. Two movie projection booths have been added, one in the balcony and one in the gallery. Windows have been boarded over on the interior, but they are still in place, including panes.

The stage measured 57 by 34 feet. Backstage were two dressing rooms, a restroom, scene gallery and scene shop. The second floor backstage had four dressing rooms, and the area under the stage had two large dressing rooms and the entrance to the orchestra pit. A screen and speakers have now been installed on the stage and an air conditioning unit occupies part of the former dressing rooms in the basement.

The original drop curtain, which features a copy of the painting "Napoleon at Austerlitz" by Vernet, was painted by one of the best known contemporary American scenic painters, J. A. Lewis.

The building is today 60 to 80 per cent as it was originally in 1907.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Atchison Champion, June 2, 1880.  
 Concordia Daily Blade, 1905-1907.  
 Concordia Empire, December 28, 1877.  
 Concordia Kansan, 1905-1907.  
 Doyen, Peggy, History of Theater in Concordia (n.p., 1969), pp. 1-120.  
 Emery, Janet Pease, It Takes People to Make a Town, The Story of Concordia, Kansas, 1871-1971 (Salina, Kan., Arrow Printing Co., 1971), pp. 13, 30, 55-57, 62, 84-86, 134.  
Prairie Portrait Centennial Book, Concordia, Kansas, 1871-1971 (n.p., 1971).  
 Topeka Capital, May 7, 1912.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		39°	34'	17"
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0		97°	39'	47"
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

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

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Richard Pankratz, Planner**

ORGANIZATION: **Kansas State Historical Society** DATE: **June 18, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **120 West Tenth**

CITY OR TOWN: **Topeka** STATE: **Kansas 66612** CODE: **20**

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Nyle H. Miller  
 Nyle H. Miller

Title Exec. Dir., Kan. State Hist. Society

Date June 20, 1973

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS