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
   historic name Creighton Theatre
   other names/site number Creighton Orpheum Theatre; NeHBS #D009:123-24; OHBIN #04-04-01

2. Location
   street & number 409 S. 16th
   city, town Omaha
   state Nebraska code NE county Douglas code 055
   not for publication
   N/A
   N/A
   vicinity
   zip code 68101

3. Classification
   Ownership of Property
     ☑ private
     ☐ public-local
     ☐ public-State
     ☐ public-Federal
   Category of Property
     ☑ building(s)
     ☐ district
     ☐ site
     ☐ structure
     ☐ object
   Number of Resources within Property
     Contributing
     ☑ buildings
     ☐ sites
     ☐ structures
     ☐ objects
   ☑ Total
   Name of related multiple property listing:
     Opera House Buildings in Nebraska 1867-1917
   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register ☑

4. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
   ☑ 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 ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.
   Signature of certifying official
   James A. Harner
   Date May 18, 1988
   Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
   State or Federal agency and bureau

   In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☑ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.
   Signature of commenting or other official
   Date
   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
6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre:
Music facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Theatre:
Auditorium: Music facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (1910)
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Three-part vertical block

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Unknown
walls Brick
roof Unknown
other Granite detailing

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Creighton Theatre is unique among Nebraska opera houses included in this multiple property nomination, in that in 1927 the building was incorporated into Omaha's first skyscraper, the 1910 Holabird and Roche 16-story City National Bank Building. This structure, at the southeast corner of 16th and Harney streets, is of a riveted steel skeleton clad in buff colored brick with granite detailing. Interior bays are formed by the continuous steel columns. Each bay is reflected on the exterior by two large double-hung windows. The main structural divisions and the continuous mullions regulate the facade and give it a vertical emphasis. The facade, relatively free of ornament, depends on its scale and proportion for visual impact. Italianate detailing is subdued and used mainly as a proportioning element.

According to the Omaha World Herald's description when the theatre opened in February, 1895, it underwent considerable changes, even though it was regarded as "free from any and all unthinking copies of conventional dramatic architecture and appointments." Built on the former site of the Herald, the original Creighton exterior was Italian renaissance in style, constructed of buff brick, terra cotta, and gray stone, with square towers. The building was constructed with iron beams and with fireproofing for partitions and main floor, and with wire lath and hard plaster on all exposed and lower sides. The building itself measured 80 feet wide by 132 feet deep, with an annex on the west for heating plant, dressing rooms, and storage.

The ground-floor theatre was reached through one of four entrances: the main entrance, one into an arcade on the north side of the building, and one each to the balcony and gallery. The broad main entrance on 15th St. was sheltered by a porch, which extended to the curb. Three doors opened into the main vestibule, which measured 14 by 28 feet and housed the box office. From the 14-foot-wide foyer, stairways led to the balcony and gallery, with openings leading to two check rooms, a retiring room for ladies, and a smoking and toilet room for gentlemen.

The original auditorium contained a parquet holding 579 "broad and deep" leather opera seats, generously spaced; six loges with from four to ten chairs each; a balcony extending back to the east wall of the building with a total seating capacity of 625, sweeping from the front boxes in two graceful curves; and a gallery, seating 1000, similar in appearance to the balcony, with its own iron and slate staircase and a ticket office as well. Walls were finished in white oak. The general tone of the original frescoing was light brown, cream, and old

☑ See continuation sheet
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

gold. The boxes were decorated in sage green, with fleur-de-lis in pale tints. Carpets were dark sage green with brown fleur-de-lis. Frescoing in the ceilings was of designs filled with tropical plants. Four circular domes aided in showing off this effect. Over the proscenium, the goddess of the muses was surrounded by poetry, comedy, tragedy, and love, with a portrait of John A. Creighton at the dome of the arch.

Today, the theatre’s Renaissance design is heightened with gold leaf and ivory. The lobby is wainscoted in rose cavernette and red laventi marble. The foyer walls are covered with mirrors and panels of gold leaf and inlaid ivory, interspersed with draperies of Vatican crimson brocante, embellished with passementerie art. The decor includes Florentine drinking fountains and gilded furniture. It now seats 2,877.

The proscenium opening is 36 feet wide by 33 feet high. The stage measures 41 feet from the footlights to the back wall, and 76 feet from wall to wall. The fly gallery was 25 feet above the stage, while the gridiron floor was fully 70 feet high. The structural and historical integrity of the building and theatre has been preserved, despite exterior modifications, since the City National Bank Building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally  ☒ statewide  ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  ☒ A  ☐ B  ☐ C  ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  ☐ A  ☐ B  ☐ C  ☐ D  ☐ E  ☐ F  ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Performing Arts

Period of Significance
1895-1898

Significant Dates
1895

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Lawrie, Harry (architect)
Holabird & Roche (builders)

Significant Person
N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Creighton (later the Creighton Orpheum) Theatre 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 area of performing arts, 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 Omaha. As a facility for the performing arts, it offered productions such as touring stock companies; minstrel shows; Shakespeare; classics such as Charley’s Aunt, Trilby, Thelby, Pudd’nhead Wilson, St. Elmo, and The Prisoner of Zenda; dialect comedies; performers like Walker Whiteside, Joseph Jefferson, and Otis Skinner; and musical comedy. (See following table of Representative Entertainments 1895-1898.)

The period of significance derives from the original construction date of the building, 1895, when the Omaha World Herald touted it as “free from any and all unthinking copies of conventional dramatic architecture and appointments” (18 Feb. 1895:10). The period of significance continues through 1898, the year the theatre was sold to the Orpheum Vaudeville chain and ceased to function as an opera house.

☑ See continuation sheet
Creighton Theatre, Omaha  
Representative Entertainments, 1895-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Aug 1895 | Charles Frohman’s Co. in The Masqueraders, Liberty Hall, and Sowing the Wind  
            August Thomas’ Alabama  
            The Wife  
| Sep 1895 | A Fatted Calf, directed by Eugene Robinson  
            John Stapleton Co. in Americans Abroad and The Charity Ball -  
            The Derby Winner  
            A. M. Palmer’s Stock Co. in The Hustler and Trilby  
            Cleveland’s Minstrels  
            The Cotton King  
| Oct 1895 | Coon Hollow  
            The Merchant of Venice, The Scarlet Letter, Beau Brummel, A Parisian Romance, King Richard III, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde  
            by the Garrick Theatre Stock Co.  
            Edwin M. Royles’ Mexico and Friends  
            Human Hearts by Hal Reid  
            O’Flarity’s Vacation  
            Charley’s Aunt  
            The Defaulter  
            Thrilby, the burlesque  
            Hanlon Brothers’ Superba  
            The Prize Winner  
| Nov 1895 | A Run on the Bank by the Wareland Vokes  
            The Dazzler with Cosgrove & Grant’s Comedians  
            Walker Whiteside’s Company  
            Tompkin’s Black Crook  
            1492  
| Dec 1895 | Down in Dixie  
            Peasant’s Carnival  
            The Fast Mail by Lincoln J. Carter  
            The New Dominion  
            On the Mississippi  
            Pudd’nhead Wilson by Frank Mayo |
Creighton Theatre, Omaha
Representative Entertainments, 1895-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 1896</td>
<td>Tennessee’s Partner by Scott Harvell</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Charles Frohman’s Empire Stock Co. in Bohemia, Liberty Hall, and The Benefit of the Doubt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Columbia Opera Co. in Said Pasha, The Black Hussar, Mikado, Mascotte, Erminie, H.M.S. Pinfore</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chauncey Olcott in The Minister of Clare, Mavourneen, and The Irish Artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1896</td>
<td>W. E. Gorman’s Comedians in A Green Goods Man</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joseph Jefferson’s Rip Van Winkle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, The Lady of Lyons, and A Soldier of Fortune with Otis Skinner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Darkest Russia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A. M. Palmer’s Trilby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An American Beauty by Lillian Russell Opera Co.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Madam Sans Gene starring Kathryn Kidder</td>
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<td>Nov 1896</td>
<td>In Grey New York</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gathering of the Clans, Rob Roy, and A Pageant of Nations, home talent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walker Whiteside in Eugene Aram, Othello, The Merchant of Venice, and Hamlet</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charles Frohman’s Co. in Thoroughbred</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daniel Frohman presents The Prisoner of Zenda</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Omaha Musical Society Concert</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tompkin’s Original Black Crook Co., Ballet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Whitney Opera Co. in Rob Roy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Girl I Left Behind Me</td>
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<td>Dec 1896</td>
<td>May Irwin &amp; Co. in The Widow Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 1897</td>
<td>Hoyt’s A Milk White Flag</td>
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<td>Oct 1897</td>
<td>Miss Francis of Yale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>White Crook</td>
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<td>Charles A. Yale’s Twelve Temptations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>At Gay Coney Island</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An Irish Gentleman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ole Olsen, a dialect comedy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sowing the Wind</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>EVENT AND PERFORMERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1897</td>
<td>A Secret Warrant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A. Y. Pearson's Stock Co. in The White Squadron and Police Patrol</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Woman in Black</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Smith and Rice Comedy co. in My Friend from India</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Last Stroke ... For Free Cuba</td>
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<td>Dec 1897</td>
<td>J. J. McNally's adaptation of The Widow Jones</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hogan's Alley Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Broadway Girl, a comedy</td>
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<td>The Hoosier Doctor presented by Digby Bell</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hoyt's A Bunch of Keys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vaudeville stars</td>
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<td></td>
<td>At Piney Ridge starring Daniel Higgins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hoyt's A Contended Woman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Donnelly &amp; Girard in The Geezer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 1898</td>
<td>Woodward Stock Co. in Lynwood, Jim the Westerner, The Stolen King, and Forgiven, plus vaudeville</td>
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<td>Apr 1898</td>
<td>The Fatal Card</td>
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<td>May 1898</td>
<td>Bartley Campbell's My Partner</td>
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<td>Aug 1898</td>
<td>Woodward Stock Co. in Camille</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Captain Smith</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creighton Theatre Stock Co. in Trilby</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Woodward Stock Co. in Esmeralda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 1898</td>
<td>Woodward Stock Co. in Ferncliff and Men and Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1898</td>
<td>Julius Cahn's co. in The Girl I Left Behind Me</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French Marriage, Ingomar, and The Gladiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 1898</td>
<td>Our Honeymoon with John C. Rice and Sally Cohen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauline Hall, &quot;peerless operatic star&quot;, Beatrice Moreland, &quot;society's favorite actress&quot; and vaudeville acts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Major Bibliographical References

Omaha Excelsior. 16 Feb. 1895 - 10 Dec. 1898.
Orpheum Theatre, 3 exteriors. Postcards. Andrea Paul Collection, Lincoln, NE.
Orpheum Theatre, interior. Postcard. Andrea Paul Collection, Lincoln, NE.

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 # ____________________________
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 [ ] acre

UTM References
A [1,5] [215,410,0] [4,57116,5]
Zone Easting Northing
B [ ] [ ] [ ]
C [ ] [ ] [ ]
D [ ] [ ] [ ]

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as all of Lots 1 and 2 and the east 33' of Lot 3 of Block 147 in the Original City Lots of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire town lots that have been historically associated with this property.

11. Form Prepared By

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

NAME OF PROPERTY: Creighton Theatre
CITY, COUNTY, STATE: Omaha, Douglas, Nebraska
NEHBS SITE No.: D009:123-24
OHBIS SITE No.: 04-04-01
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Christian H. Ehlers

PHOTO NUMBER: Omaha #1
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 04-04-87 (8703/12:10)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Exterior view, looking north northeast at the south and the west (front) facades.

PHOTO NUMBER: Omaha #2
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 04-04-87 (8703/12:7)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking east and down at the stage from the front of the top balcony.

PHOTO NUMBER: Omaha #3
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 04-04-87 (8703/12:4)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, looking west at the north side of the auditorium area from the stage.

PHOTO NUMBER: Omaha #4
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH (and NEGATIVE NUMBER): 04-04-87 (8703/12:6)
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE: Nebraska State Historical Society
DESCRIPTION OF VIEW INDICATING DIRECTION OF CAMERA: Interior view, near the street entrance, looking northeast at the box office.