United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Jewel Building (D009:6-10)
and/or common Dreamland Ballroom

2. Location

street & number 2221-2225 North 24th Street
NA not for publication
city, town Omaha
NA vicinity of
state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>occupied</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>in process</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Owner of Property

name Omaha Economic Development Corporation
street & number 5620 Ames Avenue
city, town Omaha
NA vicinity of
state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha-Douglas County Civic Center
street & number 1819 Farnam Street
city, town Omaha state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title A Comprehensive Plan for Historic Preservation in Omaha
has this property been determined eligible? yes X no
date 1980

depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Department
city, town Omaha state Nebraska
7. Description

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jewell Building is a two-story commercial building erected in 1923 in a vernacular interpretation of the Georgian Revival style. The first floor accommodates two storefronts which are divided by the entrance and stairway to the second floor dance hall and two apartments at the rear. The building has been vacant and boarded up for the last several years, but appears to be relatively unchanged from its original plans. Rehabilitation plans are underway.

The Jewell Building, designed by local architect Frederick A. Henninger, exhibits eclectic elements of the popular Georgian Revival style, one of the historical styles frequently applied to Omaha's vernacular commercial and residential buildings in the years between 1900 and 1940. The structure's first floor accommodates two 1600 square foot storefronts with individual entrances and display windows. Two apartments are located at the rear of the first floor with main entrances on the north (2233 and 2235 Grants Street) and rear doors in a recessed open-air corridor on the south. The northern storefront, on the corner of 24th and Grant streets, has a corner entrance, quite unlike the southern example.

The storefronts are separated on the west (24th Street) facade by a central straight-topped entry which leads to the second floor ballroom. This entrance, flanked by brick pilasters and surmounted by an arch and brick gable composition, provides the major pedestrian level focal point. The arch, which surrounds a brick and stucco field, is repeated over straight-topped second-story windows on the west and north. A parapet composed of brick string courses frames a limestone slab inscribed "Jewell Building, 1923." Smaller stone tablets, located above a free-standing brick corner column, are inscribed with the street names, "24th Street" and "Grant Street." Additional relief is found on the northern (Grant Street) facade where a limestone arch leads to two first floor apartments and on the southern facade where a four-bay portico is inset within the structure's walls.

The ballroom and auxiliary rooms encompass the second floor. The original stage covers the east end of the floor, flanked by small side rooms, later converted into restrooms. In addition to the original stage, the other noteworthy interior feature is the original pressed metal ceiling which survives intact and in good condition. Office rooms are located in the east end of second floor on each side of the stairway. At the doorway to the ballroom, there is a ticket window with cloak room and refreshment stand, respectively, on each side of the doorway with openings from the ballroom.

The Dreamland Ballroom was in operation until 1965; the barber shop and pool hall on first floor were open until the mid-1970's. The building has been vacant since that time. James C. Jewell, Sr. and then Jr., retained ownership of the building until March, 1983, when it was sold to the Omaha Economic Development Corporation for rehabilitation. In 1980 the building was designated a landmark by the City of Omaha Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission.
The Jewell Building has served an important role in Omaha's musical, social, and Black heritage. As the Dreamland Ballroom, it was a music center where nationally-prominent jazz musicians performed from the 1920's to the 1960's. It has served as a gathering place for the Black community, located in the heart of the Black business district.

The Jewell Building represents an important era in the cultural evolution of Omaha's Black community. Erected in 1923, the structure indicates the beginning of Black movement into the Near North Side neighborhood. Before the 1920's, the center of the Black business district was proximate to 14th and Dodge Streets, where James C. Jewell, Sr., operated "Jewell & Phannix," a billiard parlor. The influx of Blacks into Omaha during World War I, due to expanding wartime industries, forced increasing numbers of them to settle in the Near North Side where housing was available. Consequently, the Black business district jumped to the area surrounding 24th and Lake Streets so that it could more efficiently serve its customers.

During 1923, James C. Jewell, Sr., (1873-1930) employed John Lof and Sons to construct a vernacular, two-story, steel frame, brown brick veneer structure at 24th and Grant Streets. The 46' by 130' flat-roofed structure when complete would accommodate shops and apartments on the lower floor, and a large public hall on the upper level. James C. Jewell and his son lived in one of the apartments and operated a billiard parlor at the "2221" storefront and a barber shop at the "2225" storefront, as well as the ballroom.

This second story hall assured national prominence for the structure, for it housed the Dreamland Ballroom, a center for jazz and home to a variety of America's greatest jazz entertainers from the 1920's until the early 1960's. Among those who appeared on the Dreamland stage were Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Barnet, Dizzy Gillespie, Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, Sarah Vaughan, Earl Hines and Louis Armstrong. Prior to the erection of the Jewell Building, Blacks had rented halls at Krug Park and Peony Park or the downtown Brandeis Theater for special programs or community group activities. Thus, the establishment of the ballroom provided the Black community with its own entertainment facility.
James C. Jewell, Jr., took over operation of the Jewell Building and Dreamland Ballroom after the death of his father in 1930. He was known as "Omaha's Ace Promoter," and it was through his efforts that Dreamland Ballroom became a renowned jazz center. Jewell's dedication to the establishment of this center is evidenced by his refusal to obtain a liquor license so that young people could attend the performances.

The Jewells were an influential family in the growing Black community due to their many business and political activities. Thus it was natural that Dreamland served for over four decades as a meeting place for the Black neighborhood. It was said that any Black coming through Omaha eventually met Jimmy Jewell, since his business attracted travelers and residents alike.

In 1945 the United States government took over Dreamland Ballroom and established a U.S.O. Center for Black soldiers. Although the structure was returned to Jewell after a year, he sued the government for compensation and in a landmark court battle was awarded $3,000 in damages. He continued to operate Dreamland Ballroom until 1965, when it ceased to be a profit-making enterprise. A barber shop and the Tuxedo Pool Hall, on the first floor, remained open until the mid-1970's.

The unpretentious Jewell Building exists as a monument to Omaha's tradition as a jazz center. Dreamland Ballroom gave Omaha a reputation among Blacks as one of the prime music locations in the United States. In addition, the structure is a meaningful part of Omaha's Black community in that it was one of the first substantial commercial buildings to be constructed in their developing neighborhood during the 1920's. The Jewell family's involvement in community affairs also led to the building's use as a gathering place and focal point for Blacks in Omaha.
9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: less than one

Quadrangle name: Omaha North, NE

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1 5</td>
<td>2 5 3 2 3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 5 7 3 7 6 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Easting Northing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 9, Block 1, Foster's Addition, City of Omaha, Nebraska, the land historically associated with this property.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name/title</th>
<th>Omaha City Planning Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>Nebraska State Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>street &amp; number</td>
<td>1500 R Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city or town</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- [X] 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: [Signature]

date: 6/7/83
A Comprehensive Program for Historic Preservation in Omaha. Omaha City Planning Department, 1980, p. 70.

Deed record, Register of Deeds Office, Omaha/Douglas County Civic Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Omaha City Directories, 1928.


Peters, Robert, Jewell Building Landmark Designation, Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, Omaha City Planning Department, June, 1980.


Smith, Alonzo N., "Omaha's Dreamland Ballroom: A Black Cultural Landmark," MS. presented at the Popular Culture Ass'n. Annual Meeting, April, 1983. Copy from Alonzo N. Smith, Black Studies Department, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska.
View to the southeast. Photo by Penny Sodhi, 1983, Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS 8305/1:12)