

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: New Hanover	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: City Hall-Thalian Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 100 North Third Street

CITY OR TOWN: City of Wilmington

STATE: North Carolina CODE: 32 COUNTY: New Hanover CODE: 65

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESIDENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
Comments: _____ _____ _____			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: City of Wilmington

STREET AND NUMBER: 100 North Third Street

CITY OR TOWN: Wilmington STATE: North Carolina CODE: 32

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: New Hanover County Courthouse - Register of Deeds Office

STREET AND NUMBER: 300 Princess Street

CITY OR TOWN: Wilmington STATE: North Carolina CODE: 32

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

S E L E C T I O N S

STATE: North Carolina
COUNTY: New Hanover
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Exterior: City Hall-Thalian Hall is a two-story building resting on high basement and is constructed of stuccoed brick. An old photograph of the structure taken in the 1880's indicates that the present light cream colored stucco may possibly not be original and that the walls may have been formerly rusticated. The exterior shows an interesting combination of restrained neo-classical design with flamboyant Victorian details. The five bay facade of City Hall facing Third Street features a tetra-style Corinthian Portico. The columns are fluted and the capitals are very delicately executed and lightly proportioned. A full entablature which carries around the whole building is employed and is quite freely fashioned with a minimum of decoration. The cornice is supported by sidely spaced acanthus consoles. The center bay of this facade features a semi-circular arched doorway beneath a pair of elongated arched windows. This double window is framed by an arched hood which has a fanciful key-stone and rests on consoles. The tympanum of the arch features a simple blind roundel. The bays flanking the central one have the same second floor windows with simple double rectangular ones below. The end bays of this facade, which flank the portico, are marked on the second floor level by coupled pilasters on the ends of the facade. On the Princess Street (south) side essentially the same scheme of fenestration and decoration is employed. The window treatment is the same as that on the main facade except that the second floor window arches are less elaborately finished and lack keystones. All second floor bays are divided by pilasters, with coupled pilasters marking each end of the facade. The entrance to Thalian Hall is off center being flanked by three bays to the left and four to the right. The inside entrance bay has a one-story porch with Corinthian columns supporting a full entablature. The original balustrade around the top of the porch has been removed. There are three double doors on the first floor level. Above the porch is a stylized Palladian window. The center section retains its glazing, the outer sections have been filled. The glazing has also been removed from the windows to the right of the entrance. The overall dimensions of the teatro wing is 60' by 110'.

Interior: On the interior Thalian Hall retains most of its original fabric. In the auditorium section, which measures 45' by 57', the two balconies are supported on diminutive columns of fanciful design decorated with spiral festoons of grapes and foliage. The seating area was originally augmented by loge galleries on the sides, the loges have been removed. The handsome proscenium galleries survive. From them rise fluted engaged columns and pilasters. Each of their major entrances is marked by a richly ornamented arch with a shell motif in the tympanum. The minor entrances are below semi-circular niches with repeat the shell motif and house urns. The proscenium is richly enframed in decorative plaster with a series of alternating Rococo cartouches and panels. Most of the interior decoration is executed in plaster. The original wall paintings have been lost, but the drop curtain painted with an idealized Greek scene has survived.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

10. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1858

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input 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

Professional theatre ban in Wilmington, North Carolina, during the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century. The city was first entertained by a number of traveling companies which acted on an improvised stage. After the turn of the century, traveling theatrical companies, as well as the Thalian Association, a well-known local amateur group originally formed in 1788, were able to perform on the stage of the Innes Academy. Also available for performances were the Mozart Hall and the Masonic Hall. Despite these early beginning, however, it was not until the old Innes Academy Building was demolished in 1855 and a new Thalian Hall was constructed on the same site, which opened on October 12, 1858, "that professional legitimate drama" that had flourished earlier in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans began in Wilmington. The new theatre had been conceived early in the 1850's by the Wilmington city fathers. The North Carolina General Assembly of 1854-55 authorized the town authorities to issue city bonds of up to fifty-thousand dollars for the construction of a new, combined City Hall and theatre. The plans for the rather unique combination of structures were drawn by Trimble of New York and they called for a building primarily of Corinthian design. The theatre was designed to hold a capacity audience of 950 people and the interior was illuminated by 188 gas burners. Mr. James F. Post of Wilmington, supervised the construction of the building. Conforming in architectural design to some of the great theaters of the world, Thalian Hall was admired and praised from the day of its opening. The interior design, with its tiers of balconies greatly impressed the citizens of Wilmington. The correspondent of the Wilmington Daily Journal wrote that: "merely as a work of art the new and beautiful drop curtain, scenery, and decorations will form a spectacle worth paying admission to see." Henry Bacon, the noted Wilmington architect, praised the construction of the theatre, observing that the building "was planned to be used by many generations. It was built with such judgement and care and honest workmanship. ..." The first full season, 1858-1859, was a continuing success for the new theatre. A wide variety of presentations, including classical works by Shakespeare, as well as, contemporary drama, were enjoyed by the public. The success of the theatre was exemplary of the prosperity enjoyed by the town. By 1858, Wilmington was served by three railroads, was an active port, and was the trading center for the Cape Fear Valley and beyond. As a result of the prosperity enjoyed during the years after 1858, Wilmington could afford to support a theatre program of high quality. With the coming of the Civil War, the activities at Thalian Hall were somewhat curtailed. Despite the tensions of the War and the serious yellow fever epidemic, public interest in theatre did not die. By 1863, the

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE North Carolina	
COUNTY New Hanover	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. increased trading brought about by blockade running, the theatre was "booming" once again. The season of 1863-1864 proved to be one of the fullest in the history of Thalian Hall. Subsequent to the capture of Fort Fisher in 1865, which had guarded the entrance to the Cape Fear River, and the Federal occupation of Wilmington, a decline in theatre activity occurred, a decline which continued until the end of the decade. During the years after 1870 a steady rise in Wilmington's prosperity occurred. Trade through the port, including commodities as cotton, lumber, turpentine, increased steadily. During the same period, the number of theatrical offerings increased gradually. By the 1899-1900 season, Wilmington audiences enjoyed 108 performances in Thalian Hall. The professional entertainment offered was of the highest quality. A remarkable variety of plays, operas, and variety shows were presented, including: Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas, grand opera, classical concerts, Shakespears, and amateur performances. The period 1870-1900 witnessed a succession of famous actors and actresses performing in Thalian Hall. During 1870, Edwin Forest played in Richelieu, Damon and Pythias and King Lear. In 1878, the noted European actress Fanny Janaschek played in Catherine of Russia and Macbeth. During the previous year Buffalo Bill (W.F.Cody) had appeared on the Thalian Hall stage with real Indians. Between 1900 and 1928, the year of the last regular season, audiences continued to enjoy a constant string of famous actors and actresses as James O'Neill, Otis Skinner, Lillian Russell, Job Griffith, Maude Adams, and Harry Lauder. Although the Thalian Hall theatre ceased to provide a stage for professional shows after 1928, it did provide a place for the reorganized Thalian Association to continue its seasons of entertaining productions. Thalian Hall remains, today, the best example of Nineteenth Century theatre architecture in North Carolina. Over its years of service Thalian Hall has undergone a number of repairs and renovations, but none of these have seriously altered the original lines of the structure. A full scale program of preservation and restoration sponsored by the Thalian Hall Restoration Committee was begun in 1968.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Grigg, Wilton L., FAIA. Thalian Hall, A Challenge. (Virginia: Charlottesville, March 1, 1968)
 New Hanover County Records, New Hanover County Courthouse, Wilmington, North Carolina. (Subgroups: County Commissioners Minutes, Deeds.)
 New Hanover County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: County Commissioners Minutes, Deeds.)
 Rulfs, Donald J. "The Professional Theatre in Wilmington," The North Carolina Historical Review, XXVIII(April, July, October, 1951).

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	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		34 14 14	77 56 48	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Two-thirds of an Acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Raymond F. Pisney, Assistant Administrator, Historic Sites and Museums

ORGANIZATION: North Carolina State Department of Archives and History
 DATE: March 17, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:
 109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh
 STATE: North Carolina
 CODE: 32

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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: H.G. Jones
 Title: Director, North Carolina State Department of Archives and History
 Date: March 18, 1970

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: _____

ATTEST: _____

Keeper of The National Register

Date: _____

July 1977

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

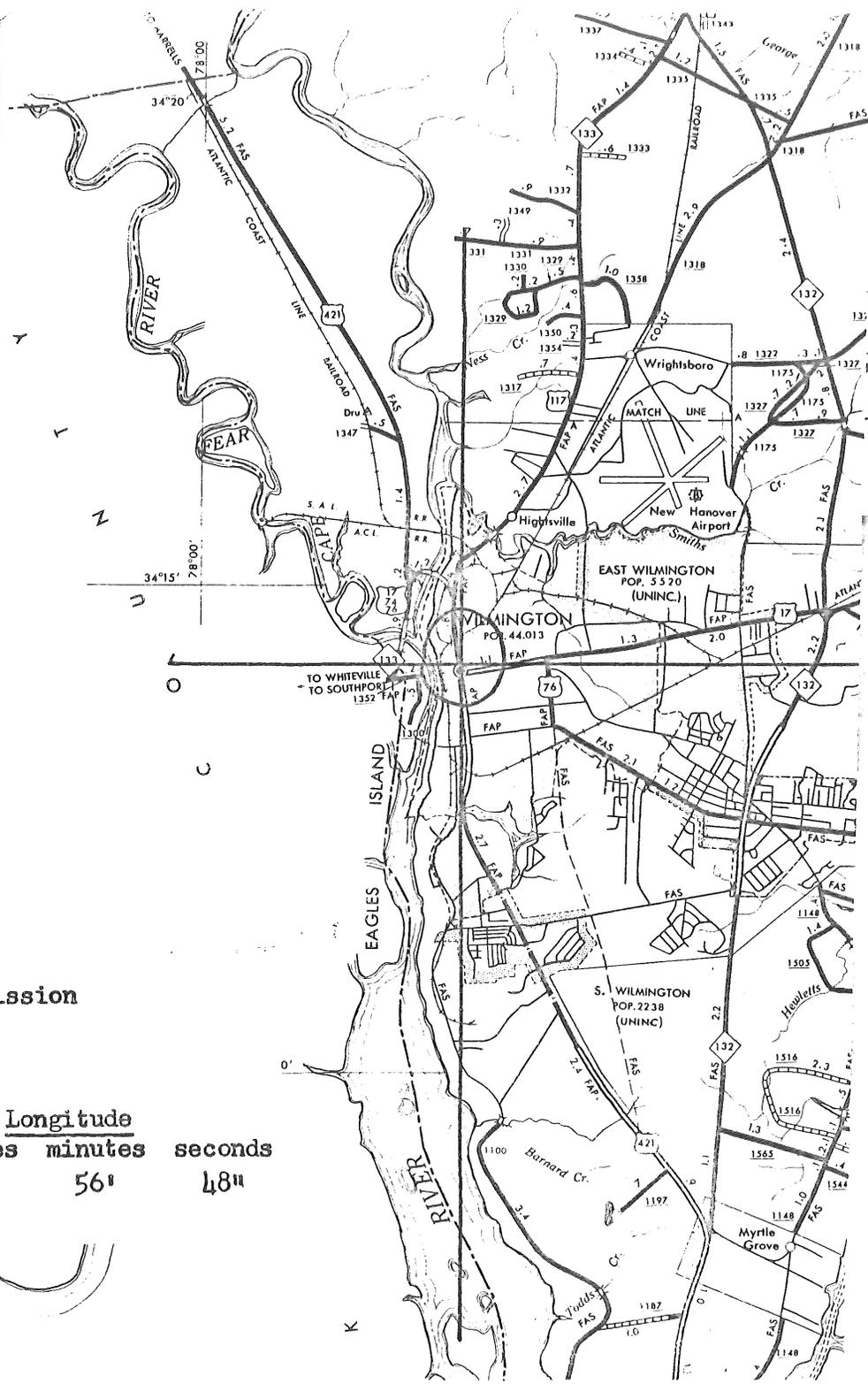
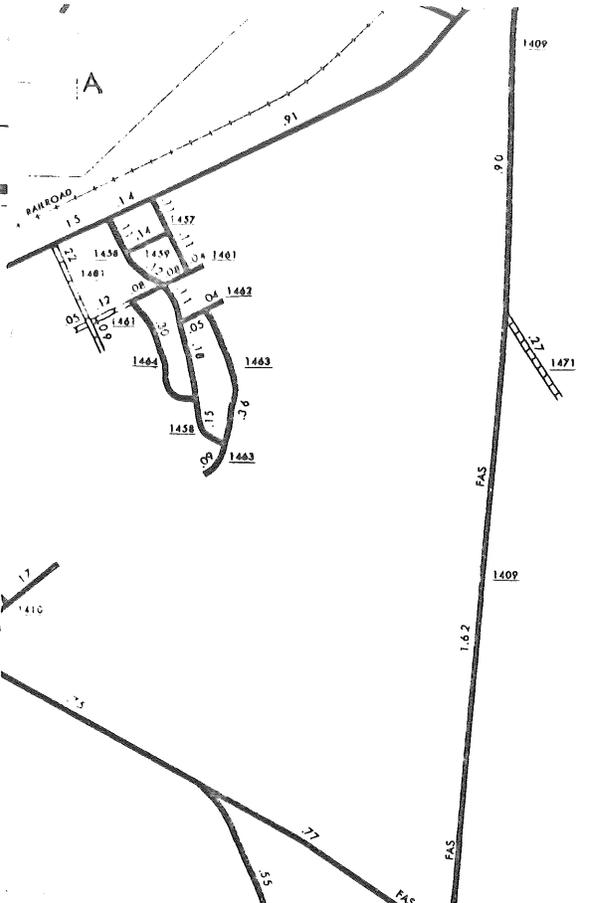
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE North Carolina	
COUNTY New Hanover	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

9. Thalian Hall Records, North Carolina Room, Wilmington Public Library,
Wilmington, North Carolina

The Wilmington Daily Journal, October 12, 1858; October 27, 1870.



City Hall-Thalian Hall

100 North Third Street
Wilmington, North Carolina

North Carolina State Highway Commission
Map of New Hanover County
Scale: One inch equals two miles
January 1, 1969

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
34°	14'	14"	77°	56'	48"

