

(The 1971 NE Nomination)

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:
Playmakers Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Smith Hall

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Cameron Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Chapel Hill (Fourth Congressional District)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Orange	CODE 135
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	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"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<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
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

Agricultural
 Commercial
 Educational
 Entertainment
 Government
 Industrial
 Military
 Museum
 Park
 Private Residence
 Religious
 Scientific
 Transportation
 Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
University of North Carolina

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Chapel Hill

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Orange County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
East Margaret Lane

CITY OR TOWN:
Hillsborough

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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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
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Orange

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input 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

Playmakers Theatre is a temple-form building of rusticated stucco on brick with a prostyle tetrastyle Corinthian portico on the front (east) facade. The fluted columns display an individualized rendering of the Corinthian order with full Attic bases and elaborate capitals composed of sculptured corn, wheat, and tobacco. The central entrance contains a large paneled double door surmounted by a five-light transom and framed by a crossetted architrave. The flanking windows, which have lost their original sash, now serve as a ticket window and a billboard for the Playmakers Theatre which occupies the building. The portico has a most interesting entablature which is quite simplified from the usual Corinthian ones, being embellished only with widely spaced stylized modillions. The entablature carries around the building.

The north and south sides have fourteen bays separated by pilasters above a high stucco watertable. Each alternate bay is accented by a large window with nine-over-nine sash. There is a side entrance under the window in the seventh bay on either side.

The pedimented rear facade has a central entrance which is like that on the front, except that there is additional paneling above the double door instead of a transom. The doorway is flanked by pilasters like those along the sides of the building.

The interior retains little evidence of its original arrangement, for when the building, designed as a ballroom, was adapted for use as a library, a bath house, the school of law, and a theater, various alterations were made. At present the interior consists of a transverse hall with the theater beyond. At either end of the hall is a stair which rises to the balcony. The auditorium, entered through two doors located on the west wall of the hall, features a steep sloping floor and plaster walls. The walls are divided by molded stringers with fourteen bays separated by attenuated paneled pilasters which support an entablature. Each third bay contains a large window with the glass painted to keep out light. Dominating the west wall of the auditorium is the proscenium opening which is surrounded by heavy moldings with an ornamental cartouche in the center of the top.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. 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)

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

In 1848 the Di and Phi Literary Societies petitioned the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina to erect a building to be used for dances and alumni meetings. The building is thought to have been designed by A. J. Davis, of the New York architectural firm of Town and Davis, who had designed the Capitol in Raleigh (1833-1840). The contractor for the structure was John Berry of Hillsborough, designer and builder of the Orange County Courthouse, built in 1844. The new building was completed in 1850 at a cost of \$10,363.63 and was named Smith Hall in honor of former Governor Benjamin Smith, who had given the university 20,000 acres of land.

During the century that followed, Smith Hall was used for a wide variety of university activities. By 1885, since another building had been provided for dancing, the library was moved into Smith Hall, and a chemistry laboratory was set up in the basement. In 1893 the building became the University Bath House, serving 500 students. The University of North Carolina School of Law, the next occupant of Smith Hall, remained there until 1925. On November 23, 1925, Smith Hall was dedicated as the Playmakers Theatre, the home of the Carolina Playmakers to the present. Among the notable alumni of this group are novelist Thomas Wolfe, actor Andy Griffith, editor and writer Jonathan Daniels, dramatists Paul Green and Kermit Hunter.

The Playmakers Theatre's superb inventive order is quite important architecturally in that it varies from tradition by having capitals decorated with wheat, corn, and tobacco, rather than the usual acanthus leaves or other classic motifs and employs an entablature with only minimal detail. The building is one of the oldest on the campus of the University of North Carolina and houses the nationally recognized Carolina Playmakers.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Henderson, Archibald (ed.). Pioneering A People's Theatre. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1945.

Lefler, Hugh and Paul Wager (eds.). Orange County: 1752-1952. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The Orange Printshop, 1953.

Spearman, Walter, The Carolina Playmakers: The First Fifty Years. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970.

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			LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0	'	"	35°	54'	43"
NE	0	'	"	79°	03'	09"
SE	0	'	"			
SW	0	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 Acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: April 7, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

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 H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date April 7, 1971

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

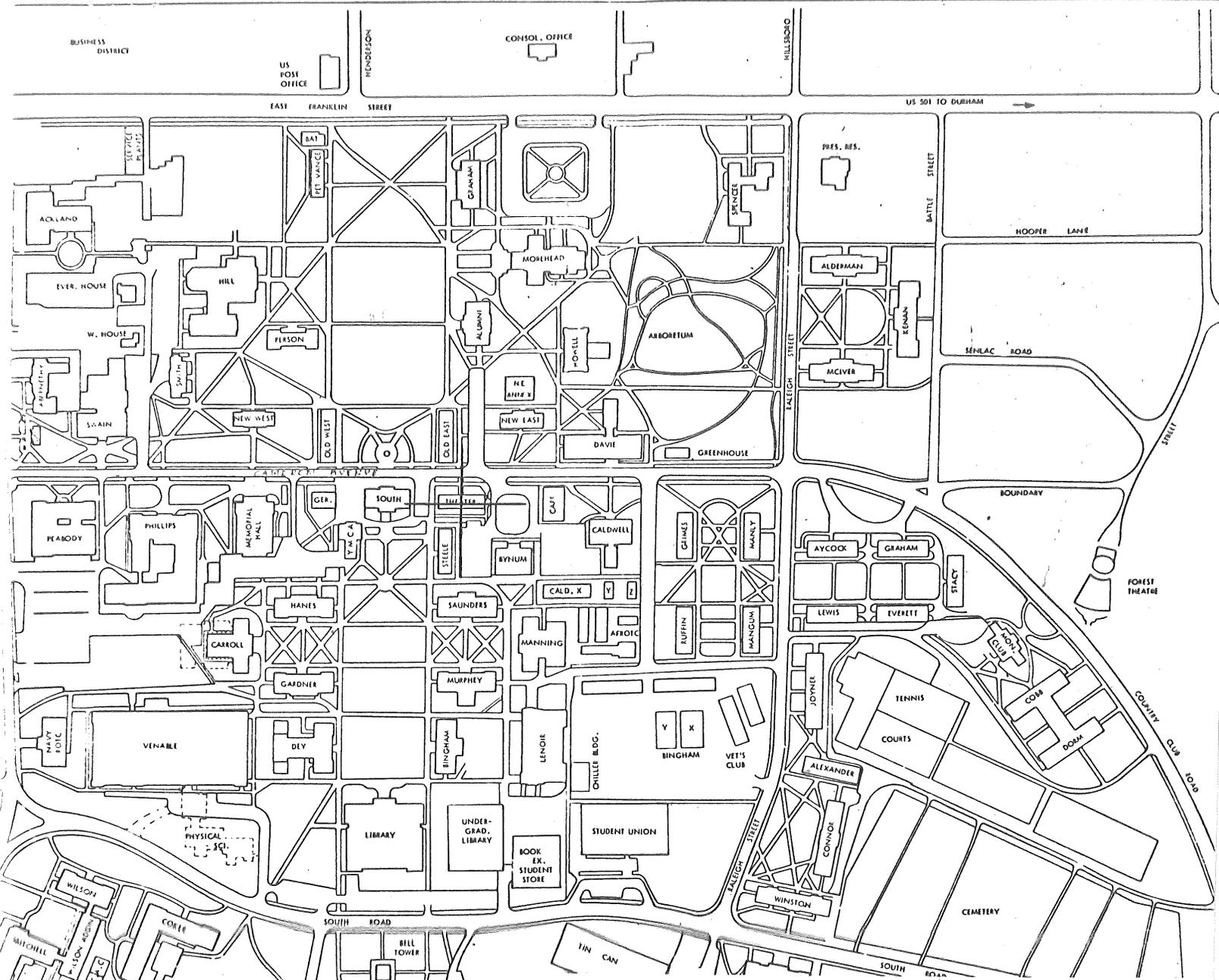
Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



Playmakers Theatre
 Cameron Avenue
 Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The University of North Carolina
 at Chapel Hill, North Carolina
 (Office of the University Engineer)
 Scale: 1"=400 feet
 June, 1968

Latitude Longitude
 degrees minutes seconds degrees minutes seconds

35° 54' 43" 79° 03' 09"

