

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: South Carolina	
COUNTY: Chester	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 30 1973



**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Chester City Hall and Opera House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Corner West End and Columbia Streets

CITY OR TOWN:  
Chester

STATE South Carolina	CODE 29706	COUNTY: Chester	CODE 023
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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"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT 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) _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
City of Chester

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Chester

STATE:  
South Carolina

CODE:  
45

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Chester County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Chester

STATE:  
South Carolina

CODE:  
45

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Survey of Historic Sites -- Chester County

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Central Piedmont Regional Planning Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P.O. Box 862, 107 Hampton Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Rock Hill

STATE:  
South Carolina

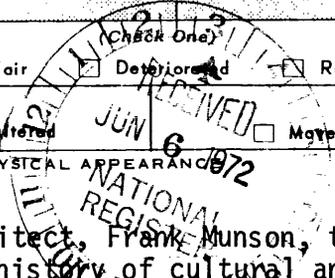
CODE:  
45

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	<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) <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

Built 1890-1891 by Columbia architect, Frank Munson, the Chester City Hall and Opera House has a long history of cultural and civic activity. The building's extensive and elaborate use of brick as principal construction material enhances its massive Romanesque Revival style.

The facade is arranged in three distinct phases. Tower at left dominates gabled central section which in turn dominates less ornate section on right. Originally all three entrances of the facade were recessed, Roman arches with ornate keystones and voussoirs formed by one stretcher/one header design, however, the right entrance has been squared to accommodate the needs of the fire department which is located there. Larger arch of central section has abutment formed by decorative terra cotta squares with circular design.

Stringcourse between first two floors has foliated design. On second level of central portion, there is a group of four Roman arch windows with voussoirs formed by three rows of header bricks. Pair of second level windows in tower portion identical to those of central section. All levels of portion connecting tower and central section have 9/9 sash windows with one stretcher/one header voussoirs.

There are four 9/9 sash windows on third level of central portion. Below windows is a date stone (1890) and a section of brickwork formed by squares of three stretchers arranged in an alternating vertical and horizontal pattern. Fourth level of central portion has decorative corbel table.

Third level of right section has one circular window, centrally placed.

Third level of tower section features three triple hung, 9/9/9 sash windows. Fourth level has three separate phases. The first is a group of three Roman arch windows identical to those of second level. Centrally placed above Roman windows is the second phase, a circular window. Corbel table under eaves forms third phase. Northeastern side of tower (Columbia Street side) identical to northwestern side described above.

Brick northeast wall has balanced fenestration except for side entrance and window above which were added. Windows are all 9/9 sash except for two circular windows at third level.

The original interior of the building was destroyed by fire in 1929 and many alterations were made during rebuilding. The major interior alteration was the omission of the Opera House. The fire also destroyed the original spire tower which contained a four-faced clock. Central gable slightly modified as a result of 1929 fire.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

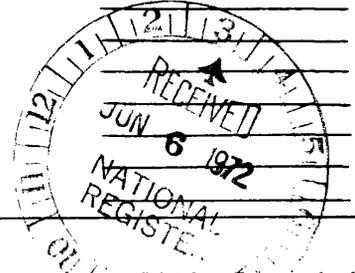
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <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) **1890**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input checked="" 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

Since 1891, this building has been the hub of Chester's political activity. The town's administrative offices have been located here since the building's construction. The city jail occupies a portion of the building but will soon be moved to a city-county law enforcement complex now under construction. The fire department is quartered here but facilities are inadequate and a new building has been requested.

Architecture: Situated on the top of Chester's town hill, the City Hall and Opera House is focal point of approximately twenty, 19th-Century commercial buildings. Its Romanesque style, massive proportions, artistic brickwork, and terra cotta ornamentation make it one of Chester's most outstanding architectural examples.

Theatre: The third floor was originally designed for use as an Opera House complete with gallery, box seats, dress circle and pit seats. Many well-known entertainers of the period performed here with traveling theatrical companies. The Opera House was also the scene of many community festivities such as talent shows, graduation exercises, recitals and concerts. When the interior was renovated following the 1929 fire, the Opera House was not restored.

Urban Planning: Because of the past and present importance of the City Hall and Opera House to the community's cultural and political life, a large group of citizens is anxious to see the building restored and revitalized. Chalmers G. Davidson, P.H.D., author, professor of history at Davidson College and Chester native describes the structure's visual significance to the townscape as follows: "The location is the commanding site of the county. The building can be seen from almost every approach to the town. It gives a tone to the town, the majority of whose historical buildings are of brick as is the Opera House." There is special interest in restoring the Opera House portion of the building for use as a civic auditorium. At present the city's only adequate auditorium is located in a very old junior high school which is rarely available for public use and whose future is in doubt. It is hoped that renovation of the City Hall and Opera House will stimulate rehabilitation of the entire historic downtown area.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Chester City Council Minutes: October 2, 1889; January 14, 1890; January 28, 1890; July 29, 1890; September 9, 1890; April 17, 1981; May 8, 1891; June 1, 1891; October 5, 1891; March 11, 1892; July 26, 1892; January 4, 1893.  
 Chester County Deeds. Volume 71, page 112.  
 Chester County Probate File 144, Folder 734.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			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	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **148 ft. X 92 ft. X 152 ft. X 92 ft.**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Nancy R. Ruhf, Historic Preservation Coordinator I  
 ORGANIZATION: S.C. Department of Archives and History DATE: 7/24/72  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
1430 Senate Street, P.O. Box 11, 188 Capitol Station  
 CITY OR TOWN: Columbia STATE: South Carolina CODE: 45

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

<p>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:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Charles E. Lee</u>                  Title <u>Director, S.C. Department of Archives and History</u>                  Date <u>May 24, 1972</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Robert W. Utley</u>                  Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>3/30/73</u></p> <p>ATTEST:  <u>Wm. D. [Signature]</u>                  Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>3.26.73</u></p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS