

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FINAL

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Delphi City Hall
other names/site number Assion-Ruffing Building, Opera House 015-162-401497

2. Location

street & number 105-109 Washington Street N/A not for publication
city or town Delphi N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Carroll code 015 zip code 46923

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/2/95
Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building, district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Music Facility, Theater
COMMERCE/TRADE: Department Store, Specialty Store

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other STONE: Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

PERFORMING ARTS

Period of Significance

1865-1915

Significant Dates

1865

1881

1915

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Delphi City Hall
Name of Property

Carroll IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	527590	4492710	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martha B. Justice
organization Delphi Preservation Society date 8-30-97
street & number 6046 W. 500 S. telephone 219/652-4236
city or town Logansport state IN zip code 46947

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Delphi Preservation Society, Paul Brandenburg, President, also see continuation sheet
street & number 503 E. Franklin St. telephone 765/564-3923
city or town Delphi state IN zip code 46923

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 7- Description

The Delphi City Hall is a three story, red brick structure located on Washington Street on the east side of the Courthouse square in downtown Delphi, Indiana. The building was completed in June, 1865 with an approximately 60 foot front and a 50 feet depth. The lot on which it stands is 60 feet by 120 feet. (see photo 1)

The first floor of the Delphi City Hall building opens onto a level cement sidewalk where two 20 foot high shade trees are growing. Three storefronts make up the first floor. No original materials appear to remain on the first floor storefronts. The first floor storefronts once had a brick and limestone arcade. (see continuation sheet 13) Historic photos indicate that changes to large glass window storefronts most likely occurred in accordance with the style of the 1920s. The north store front has a 3 foot wide doorway indented 10 feet and a display window 4 feet wide. The remainder of the 20 foot space is consumed by Craftsman style wooden double doors which are painted red, and have glass panels and 6 inch wide side lights. (see photo 15) These doors lead to the grand stairway which runs to the second floor. The whole door frame is slightly shaded by a cedar shingled canopy. Board siding runs from above the north storefront to the second floor window sills.

The 20 foot wide center storefront has an indented doorway between two glass display windows. The door is 3 feet wide with sidelights. A cedar shingled canopy extends 6 feet over the sidewalk. The south storefront measures 20 feet wide, and has an indented doorway between two glass display windows. A 12 foot metal awning with long supporting rods extends over this section. A strip of brick, painted white, runs from above the center and south storefronts to the bottom of the second floor windows. The window sills have been replaced with brick.

The center of the second floor facade has two 4 over 4 double hung sash windows with limestone sills and brick hood molding. The top sashes are rounded double lancets. (see photo 21) The facade on each side of the center contains three 4 over 4 double hung sash windows with limestone sills and segmental arched tops. (see photo 16) Storm windows have been installed on the three north section second floor windows.

The center of the third floor facade has coupled 6 over 6 double hung sash windows with limestone sills and brick hood molding. The top sashes are rounded double lancets topped by a double trefoil tracery. The windows are located slightly under an arch of two limestone slabs in which the words "CITY HALL" are inscribed. (see photo 22) At the base of the double windows is a balcony measuring 3 feet by 10 feet. It contains an iron railing which sits on a platform supported by three scroll shaped brackets. (see photo 18) The facade on each side of the center contains three 6 over 6 double hung sash windows with limestone sills and round arched tops with brick hood molding. (see photo 17) The windows on the center and south sections of the third floor have been covered with asbestos panels.

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The front roof line in the center of the building is an open bed pediment. (see photo 19) The north and south sections of roof line are flat. The cornice of both the central pediment and the south section of roof line are supported by scroll shaped brackets below which is a band of scroll shaped dentils. (see photo 20) All appear to be in good condition. The cornice and brackets of the north section of the roof line were removed, and replaced with siding. The dentils still remain.

The back facade of the building has windows on the second and third floor similar in size and alignment with those on the front. (see photo 14) All are visible only from the alley behind the building. The rear first floor of the building has two additions of one story sheds of brick and concrete block extending to the alley. The additions contain storage rooms, with a variety of supports and air conditioning systems. The south section second floor windows have been covered with metal siding. The center and north section second floor windows are visible. Storm windows have been installed on the center section windows. The south and center section third floor windows have been covered with metal siding, and the north section third floor windows are in place but have been covered with plywood.

The north and south sides of the building have solid walls in common with adjoining buildings of size and material similar to that of the Delphi City Hall. The building rests on a foundation of cut limestone. The basement is divided into three equal sections which are divided by brick partition walls.

The first floor is divided into three bays of equal space. The interior walls are plaster over brick, and the bays contain dropped ceilings. A Mexican restaurant is located in the north bay. This area contains commercial shelving and partition walls. The center bay is occupied by Public Service of Indiana. Office spaces have been created using partition walls. The south bay was most recently occupied by a drug store/pharmacy, but is now vacant. This area contains commercial shelving and partition walls.

The second floor interior is composed of vacant apartments, offices, and storage rooms. The layout of the second floor rooms roughly corresponds with that of the first floor as they extend away from the east wall to a back hallway. Part of this hallway and the rooms beyond are the result of remodeling done in the 1950s. The walls are generally plaster on brick with wallpaper covering some walls. Most of the rooms contain original 10 inch baseboard and wood trim around the windows which has been painted white. The west facade windows contain semi-circular fanlights, which are all that are still in place from shutter blinds which were once on the windows. (see photo 2) A three-part folding door is located on the second floor landing at the entrance to the original third floor stairway. (see photo 13)

The stairway to the third floor branches to the east and west to provide two access points to the seating area and upper gallery. The third floor interior is a room 60 feet by 50 feet and consists of a stage, main seating area, and upper gallery. The stage is 20 feet by 16 feet with two trap doors and dressing areas 15 feet square on each side. The dressing areas once extended into the building neighboring to the south, but the

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access openings have since been filled with brick. The front of the stage protrudes into the seating area 3 feet and has fixtures for footlights along the outer edge. (see photos 4) The stage is framed by fluted wood trim with bull's eye corner blocks. One bull's eye block is also found midway down each piece of side trim and two are found midway in the top trim. (see photo 3) The trim has been covered with gold paint. The proscenium wall is wood paneling, and appears to have once had a fabric covering. The wall behind the stage is covered with the fresco "A Bay of Venice" by local artist John Ennis. Old play programs, names of cast members, and other small drawings are also painted on the wall in the dressing room areas. (see photos 10,11)

The seating area consists of a series of six levels, each level being elevated 5 inches above the preceding one. The upper gallery is 6 feet above the rear of the main floor, extends the full width of the third floor, and is 8 feet deep. (see photos 8,9) The upper gallery is capable of housing two rows of chairs. A 4 foot square compartment takes up each end of the balcony. These compartments are lined with tin, and once housed stoves which heated the theater. The front of the upper gallery is decorated with an ornate grill of iron, the majority of which has been removed. The trim around the upper gallery area has false wood graining.

Three large circular medallions which contain lighting fixtures are set in the ceiling. (see photo 7) One is in relatively good condition, one contains a large crack, and the third is missing one half due to deterioration.

The window surrounds are chamfered with a stop midway down the length of the window. The surrounds also have false wood graining and hood molding with finials. It appears that the west facade windows once had the same shutter blinds and grille work mentioned for the second story west facade windows. Some of the blinds and grille work with false wood graining stored within the third floor seating area.

The building remained unchanged from its completion in 1865 until 1881, when John Lathrope, Jr. began remodeling the third floor auditorium into an opera house. At this time, a tin roof was placed on the building, and many interior changes occurred. Lathrope enlarged the stage, made dressing areas, and built a gallery. He also removed the steps leading to the second floor, and built the existing grand stairway from the entrance on street level to the second floor.

The Delphi City Hall was condemned by the fire marshal in December of 1914, and was closed the following year. The first and second floors remained in use after the closing of the opera house. The third floor has experienced deterioration due to its vacancy for over 80 years. The deterioration mainly takes the form of peeling paint, wallpaper, and plaster, missing floorboards, and structural weakening of the upper gallery area. The seating area is now serving as storage space for many wooden boxes. Besides the remodeled first floor storefronts and the shed additions on the rear, the building retains much of its historic fabric.

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Section 8-Significance

The Delphi City Hall, Carroll County, Indiana is eligible for the National Register under Criteria C for its impressive architecture, and under Criteria A for its contribution to the early culture of the Delphi area. This Italianate building is significant because of its elaborate front facade which maintains high integrity on the second and third floors. In the field of entertainment, the third floor auditorium space was locally important as a community site for live performances and town gatherings.

Delphi, in Deer Creek Township, Carroll County, Indiana was platted in 1828 on one hundred acres of land donated by William Wilson. It also became the county seat of Carroll County in 1828, and in 1836 the first courthouse was completed. The city is located on Deer Creek near its junction with the Wabash River, and its development was first tied to the Wabash River and the transportation it provided. The Wabash and Erie Canal was a travel route used later from 1840 until the mid-1850s. Then railroad transportation came to Delphi in 1856. In 1866 Delphi was incorporated as a city. The 1882 City Directory describes Delphi as a bustling city of 3,000 people with "two saw mills, cooperage, flax mill, hub and spoke factory, three flour mills, machine shop, cigar factory, and three large lime kilns; and supports two banks, opera house, two grain elevators, and two weekly newspapers, three hotels and a volunteer fire company." The opera house mentioned was surely City Hall as it was newly renovated into such by John Lathrope.

Plans for construction of Delphi City Hall were underway by 1864, according to a *Delphi Journal* article of March 2 of that year. Joseph Assion, a grocery and liquor businessman and future City Councilman, and John Ruffing, a grocery businessman, had contracted with a Mr. Cook of Lafayette to do the stonework on their building. Mr. Miller, a local man, completed the plaster work. Construction of Delphi City Hall was completed in June of 1865.

One of the first celebrations held in the building was a ball given in June 1865 to welcome Company B, 86th Indiana Volunteers home from the Civil War. The 89th anniversary of the United States was celebrated at the hall on the Fourth of July 1865. According to newspaper reports, many other Fourth of July celebrations were held in the Hall in following years, along with a variety of other community meetings and performances. Over the years, lecturers and musicians graced the building with their presence and the Hall was the scene of several balls and dances. Other activities that occurred in the hall were high school commencement exercises, dramatic club and opera company performances, and class plays.

John Lathrope, Jr. began to update the auditorium of Delphi City Hall into an opera house in 1881. Lathrope was a musician of special talent who achieved national fame with his favorite instrument, the cornet. His family immigrated from England in 1841. Lathrope volunteered for the Civil War in 1861, and served as leader of the regimental band of the Ninth Indiana Volunteers. After his war service, he returned to Delphi where his family had settled. He served four terms on the City Council and became a leader in many

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benevolent institutions of the day. In 1868 he married Caroline C. Assion, only daughter of City Hall financier Joseph Assion. In 1870 he opened a confectionary, bakery, and restaurant in one of the first floor storefronts of City Hall. His love of music probably spurred him to renovate the Hall into an opera house. Lathrope enlarged the stage, made dressing areas, and built a gallery. Local artist John Ennis was hired to paint "A Bay of Venice" on the plaster wall behind the stage in 1882. Lathrope also removed the steps leading to the second floor, and built the existing grand stairway from the entrance on street level to the second floor. Opening night for the opera house was held on April 7, 1882, and according to newspaper reports of the day, the event was a success.

The opera house was a favorite place of Indiana poet James Whitcomb Riley. Riley is acknowledged as Indiana's outstanding poet. He often illustrated "Hoosiers" in his poems, and was a spokesman for farmers of the 1850s-1870s. He performed at Delphi City Hall on several occasions in 1882, 1884, and once in 1885. In March 1886, he performed with humorist Bill Nye.

Newspaper accounts show that the opera house portion of Delphi City Hall was in active use until the turn of the century. It was at this time that the opera house started to become an outdated facility in the minds of the citizens of Delphi. After 18 consecutive years of graduation ceremonies in the City Hall, Delphi High School held its last commencement there in 1900, and in the years to follow other activities began to happen there less frequently as well. The Delphi Dramatic Club gave the opera house a short new lease on life when it performed there from 1908 until 1914, but this partnership was not enough to counteract changing technology and the changing mind sets of the people.

The arrival of motion picture theaters in Delphi, and the thought that the new century should bring a larger, and more modern performance facility were factors in the Hall's demise. Advertisements for movie theaters began appearing in Delphi newspapers in 1907, and they offered a full evening of entertainment for a very low price. It was hard for performances in the opera house to compete, especially since some of the public had grown to regard the opera house as an unsafe building. Several newspaper articles of the day began to push for a new facility in which the Dramatic Club and other groups could give performances. The Delphi City Hall was condemned by the fire marshal in December of 1914, and was closed the following year. In 1916, Delphi received its new performing facility with the opening of the new high school auditorium. The third floor of Delphi City Hall has been vacant since it was condemned by the fire marshal.

In the nineteenth century, the Delphi City Hall saw a variety of uses on the first and second floors. The first business to move into the first floor was Mount and Jackson Hardware. Clothing stores, dry good stores, and bakeries were some of the other businesses which were to move in and out of the first floor of City Hall in the years to come. The variety of stores occupying the first and second floors can be seen from the 1887

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Delphi City Directory. The address of "Lathrope and Ruffing's Opera House" is given as 70 Washington. Located at 68 Washington was "Lathrope and Kiely." This partnership was listed under several business categories: boots and shoes, clothing, gents furnishing goods, and hats and caps. The following business names were also in the directory, and could have been located in the City Hall Building: Bowen Brothers, grocery, 72 Washington; Thomas Brown, merchant tailor, 74 Washington; Frisbee Brothers, bakers, 66 Washington; James Morrow, physician and surgeon, 68½ Washington; John Myers, barber, 70 Washington; and Charles E. Shells, physician and surgeon, 68½ Washington. Delphi City Hall was fully utilized as a prime downtown commercial building.

In the twentieth century, various specialty shops have occupied the first floor storefronts. The north bay is now occupied by a Mexican restaurant. Public Service Indiana is located in the center bay, and the south bay was most recently occupied by a drug store/pharmacy, but is now vacant. The second floor has been most recently used as apartment and office space, but is now vacant.

The Delphi City Hall was purchased in 1996 by the Delphi Preservation Society. A feasibility study was completed in 1997 concerning the potential renovation and reuse of City Hall. The Delphi Preservation Society hopes renovate the building in such a way that it can become a mixed-use facility for the community. Commercial space would exist on the first floor, apartments and/or offices would exist on the second floor, and a multi-purpose meeting room would exist on the third floor.

The Delphi City Hall was rated "outstanding" in the 1980 *Carroll County Interim Report* as part of the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Survey, and is an excellent example of a nineteenth century combination meeting hall and commercial building. Of the 22 other commercial Italianate buildings identified in the city of Delphi, 10 received an "outstanding" rating. Most of these buildings do not maintain as much integrity as the City Hall or do not have as elaborate a facade. The exceptions are the Holt-Rinehart Building (1857), the Nieworth Building (1874), the Carl Brother's Block (1876), and the Ives Building (1885). The Nieworth Building has a very nice unaltered facade and cornice, the Carl Brother's Block retains an elaborate first floor arcade, window trim, and cornice, and the Ives Building has maintained a nice first floor arcade. The Holt-Rinehart Building is the only one among them which dates before the City Hall, and as with the City Hall it also served as a commercial building and had a community meeting hall. The building retains a fine second and third floor facade, but this facade is not original to the building and is circa 1915. The Masonic Temple (1875) is another example of fine Italianate style architecture, but it was not used commercially as was City Hall.

The Delphi City Hall is important locally as an excellent example of commercial Italianate style. It is one of the oldest commercial Italianate buildings in Delphi to retain much of its historic fabric. The second and third floor facades as well as the third floor opera house interior maintain a high level of integrity. The

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Delphi City Hall is also important as a past opera house, community meeting hall, and place of commerce, and comes from an age when the downtown area was a focal point for small town residents' social lives.

Section 9-Bibliography

Esarey, Logan, Ph.D. *A History of Indiana from 1850 to Present, Volume II*. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen and Company, 1918, pp. 1136-1141.

Gerard, Charles E. *First Research on Lathrope and Ruffing Opera House*. Delphi: Delphi Preservation Society, Inc., 1997.

Helm, T.B. *History of Carroll County, Indiana*. Chicago: Kingman Brothers, 1882.

H.L. Mohler and Associates, P.C. *Feasibility Study for Old Delphi City Hall*. Lafayette, 1997.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. *Carroll County Interim Report*. Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1980.

Kramer, H.L. *Delphi General Business Directory*. Lafayette: Spring, Emerson and Co. Printers and Stationers, 1882.

O'Dell, John C. *History of Carroll County*. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen and Company, 1916.

Sutton Brothers. *Illustrated Directory: Lafayette, Crawfordsville, Delphi, etc.* Cincinnati: Spencer and Craig Printing Works, 1887.

Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

Forty feet of even width off the north side of lot number sixty-three (63) in the Original Plat of the town, now city of Delphi, Carroll County, Indiana.

The south one-third (1/3) or Twenty feet of even width off the south side, of lot number sixty-four (64) in the Original Plat of the town, now city of Delphi, Carroll County, Indiana.

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These two parcels containing exactly the building know as City Hall in Delphi.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire historic building. The property was legally divided for some unknown reason at some point, but this boundary includes the building and no other adjacent properties.

Section 11-Owner

continued-additional property owner

William and Doretta Bradshaw
415 East Main Street
Delphi, IN 46923