

Purpose & Goals

The Harrington Opera House Society (HOHS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of the Harrington Opera House for the purpose of sharing the local heritage, providing and promoting cultural and arts opportunities, and contributing to the economic development of the community and surrounding area.

Events & Activities

Since 1992, the HOHS has brought a variety of events to Harrington. Some were held in the school, churches or other local buildings when the Opera House space was under construction. In recent years, most were held in the Opera House auditorium, lobby, or art room. From folk to opera, from school chorus & bands to professional musicians and even a harp and vocal group from Edinburgh, Scotland, afternoon teas, book reviews, barber shop choral groups, art shows, Humanities Washington presentations, theatrical performances, art classes, dance classes, and more, the Harrington Opera House Society has provided a broad spectrum of arts and culture for area residents and visitors.



Projects & Costs

Over \$315,000 has been raised and spent on this historic building since the inception of the Society in 1992.

Recently completed projects include the installation of sound equipment, a video feed from the auditorium to a large screen T.V. in "The Art Room" located on the first floor, and central air conditioning in the auditorium.

Upcoming projects include renovating the auditorium stage, lighting, curtains etc.; installing a new ceiling and soundproofing in The Art Room; installing an elevator with access to the basement, first floor, and second floor auditorium; and adding accessibility, and fire suppression and security enhancements for the entire building.

The costs for these future projects are estimated to total \$580,000.

Support our efforts! Membership & Donation form available from web site: www.harringtonoperahouse.org or:

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Harrington Opera House and Bank Block



The Harrington Opera House Society was founded on January 11, 1992 to preserve the Bank Block Building, a.k.a. "the old Opera House." Membership is open to anyone interested in restoring the building and auditorium to its former grandeur.

The Harrington Opera House and the Bank Block are registered on Washington and National Registers of Historic Places.



History of Harrington

In 1882 Mrs. Horace L. (Emily Harrington) Cutter purchased a quarter section of land where Harrington now stands, believing that the Northern Pacific Railway would build a railroad. It was not until 1892 that the Great Northern Railway began construction on a line through the Crab Creek section of Lincoln County and the Harrington Town site Company began selling Mrs. Cutter's lots.

The town of Harrington grew from a hotel, saloon, store, and post office into a busy wheat farming community. The California Land Stock Company, which had purchased 1,500 acres of farmland in 1882, added 25 sections to their holdings and did much to build the country around the town.¹

Today, many of the buildings from Harrington's early history are still standing, providing the opportunity to showcase the region's cultural past as the community builds for the future.

⁽¹⁾ Richard F. Steel and Arthur P. Rose, eds. *An Illustrated History of the Big Bend Country Embracing Lincoln, Douglas, Adams, and Franklin Counties, Spokane, 1904*



The Bank Block

The **Bank Block** is an imposing building sitting on the corner of Willis and South Third Streets. It was developed by John F. Green, Marion F. Adams, and Albert G. Mitchum, all pioneers who came to the Washington Territory in the 1880's.

The two-story brick building (the bricks were made locally) was designed and constructed by J.R. Burrill and Company, a Harrington firm, for \$25,000. Its hipped roof, dormers, lintels, balcony and arched entry to the Opera House hints at Romanesque Revival architecture used in the early twentieth century.

Completed in December 1904, the Bank of Harrington was located on the main floor. L.V. Sisum, owner of the Harrington Planing Mill, provided the wood interior and furnishings of the bank. Also on the ground floor were J.W. Dow's shaving parlors, R. Benchly's cigar and confectionary store, and the Harrington Citizen. There was a bowling alley under the cigar store and the Opera House was on the second floor separated by a wall from a lodging house which was above the cigar store.

The Harrington Opera House

On December 16, 1904 the **Harrington Opera House** opened with *The Lady Minstrels* to the "largest attendance in the history of Harrington"* and continued as a venue for local entertainment until mid-century. There were vaudeville acts, boxing matches, recitals, dances, school commencements, black minstrels, balls, and church services.

The auditorium could seat 350 (160 being reserved seats) but often 400 spectators were in attendance. The "large and roomy stage" contained two dressing rooms and a "toilet room." Acetylene gas was used for lighting and a hot air furnace heated the auditorium.

Eight scenic canvases have survived, the first depicting the Alps surrounded by advertisements from Harrington firms and painted by Spokane Scenic Studios. Actor's signatures, graffiti and beautiful drawings, done while actors were waiting to go on stage, can still be found on the scenery, walls, & in the dressing rooms. The oldest date is 1906, over 100 years ago. (**Citizen*, Dec. 23, 1904)

