Capitol Arts Center - Bowling Green, Kentucky (MSS 538)

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The Capitol Arts Center is a performing arts theater that also features two art galleries located at 416 East Main Street in downtown Bowling Green, Kentucky. The Crescent Amusement Company of Nashville opened the Columbia Theater in a building at this location in 1911. It seated 200 in folding cane-bottomed opera chairs. The theater offered daily matinees and evening shows. In the late-1920s, two additional buildings near the Columbia were remodeled and the resulting three-building business was named the Capitol Theatre. This facility was razed in the late-1930s and a new theater constructed, which opened in March 1939.

Movies were shown at the Capitol, but the facility was also used for minstrels, recitals, musicals and other special events. The theater closed in the early-1970s and remained empty for over a decade. It was purchased in 1979 to house a performing arts center for Bowling Green. The Bowling Green-Warren County Arts Commission, a quasi-governmental body orchestrated the purchase, fundraising and renovation work. Over $900,000 was raised in a three year period by this group of hard working volunteers. The total cost of renovations was $1.2 million. Local banks loaned the commission the $300,000 needed to complete the facility. The renovated facility opened on 22 September 1981 to a full week of arts activities.

The facility served well for over twenty years, but then began to show its age and wear, even closing during one season because of a partial ceiling collapse. The facility was updated, but it was becoming clear that to host larger and more complicated shows would require a new building. A group of concerned civic leaders, not only interested in creating a new, larger venue for the performing arts, but also creating an attraction that would help stimulate downtown development, sought support for such a center. In July 2000, Warren County created the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center, Inc. (SKYPAC) to accept a $6.77 million dollar appropriation from the Commonwealth of Kentucky designed to fund early architectural and feasibility studies, acquire land, hire architects and fund early operating costs. Fortuitously, the construction contract for the Center was bid in January 2009 which coincided with the bottom of the construction market when steel and concrete were at an all-time low; accordingly SKYPAC was able to take advantage of these significantly lower building costs. SKYPAC was completed
and opened in the fall of 2012; it also has operational responsibility for the Capitol Arts Center on Fountain Square.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection contains material related to the Capitol Arts Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky. It should not be construed as a complete archive for the organization, because there are many gaps. However, it does contain many items associated with an archive including administrative papers, correspondence, minutes, historical information, financial records, etc. Most of these items are found in Box 1. The collection is particularly strong for the early years of the facility, 1977-1985.

Box 2 contains information about fundraisers, such as the Picnic Pops event and the annual Gala, both of which the Bowling Green community enjoyed for decades. The remainder of the collection includes information about performing and visual arts programming.

**SHELF LIST**

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<th>BOX 1</th>
<th>Capitol Arts Center</th>
<th>1977-2007</th>
<th>309 items</th>
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<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Inventory</td>
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<td>1 item</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Administrative papers – By-laws, policy manual, etc.</td>
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<td>Folder 3</td>
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<td>Correspondence</td>
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<td>Folder</td>
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<td>Financial papers</td>
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<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Job descriptions, organizational chart</td>
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<td>Folder 2</td>
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<td>1998-1999</td>
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<td>Picnic Pops</td>
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<td>seating chart, etc.</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS CAPITOL Arts Center – 1977-2008
538 Bowling Green, KY

Administrative papers, correspondence, financial records, fundraising material, minutes and membership lists for the Capitol Arts Center in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Also includes information about performing and visual arts programming at the Center.
2 boxes. 25 folders. 618 items. Originals, photos, and photocopies.
SC2012.114.2

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

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Bowling Green Warren County Arts Commission, 1977-1990 B1,F3,5,7
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SEE and SEE ALSO

Blenkhorn, Barry William, b. 1954
   See:
   Williams, Barry, b. 1954

Combs, Gerri
   See:
   Combs, Geraldine D.

Womack, Molly
   See:
   Teague, Molly (Womack)

Jeffrey 05/11/2015