

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED APR 21 1980  
DATE ENTERED JUN 3 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Masonic Temple of Fairbanks, Alaska (AHRs SITE NO. FAI-032)

AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

809 1st Avenue

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

Alaska At Large

STATE

Alaska

CODE

02

COUNTY

North Star Borough

CODE

090

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Social

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Masonic Temple Holding Company, Mr. George Rayburn, President

STREET & NUMBER

Box 170

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska

99701

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

North Star Borough Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

520 Fifth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

STATE

Alaska

99701

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

City Historic Building Survey / Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (State)

DATE

1978

Division of Parks, Anchorage

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

619 Warehouse Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

STATE

Alaska

99701

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Masonic Temple, which has served as a meeting hall for the Tanana "Blue Lodge" 162 since 1908, stands today as a unique example of the Eclectic Renaissance Revival style. The two-story wooden building is located in its original site overlooking the Chena River. A facade made entirely of sheet metal creates the appearance of a massive brick-and-stone structure. The cornice decorated with small brackets and a frieze with garlands tops the facade (see Photograph 1). On the first level are four arched semi-circular windows with quoins on either side. Of the six second-floor openings, five contain rectangular windows. In the third from the right, a single-leaf door provides access to the upper porch. The main door on the first level consists of two sets of double-leaf, seven-panel doors. A wide set of steps descends from the lower porch. Two additional doors in the rear of the building provide emergency exit (see Photograph 2). The low gabled roof is covered with sheet metal. The roof height is 12 meters with a rear portion covering a 1908 addition (as described below) that is 70 cm higher. At the rear center of the old lower roof section, there is a concrete chimney. The building is 14 meters wide and 32 meters long.

The interior rooms consist of a large ballroom, a small meeting room, an office, and other service rooms on the first level, with a main meeting hall, a small conference room, a kitchen, and storage rooms on the second level. The large second-floor meeting hall retains its original design incorporating wall panels outlined and decorated with dark wood trim. A perimeter platform in the first floor ballroom accommodates antique auditorium chairs. Carpets cover the hardwood floors and the stairs.

Built in 1906, the Masonic Temple originally housed the Tanana Commercial Company, Miners and Outfitters. At this time the two-story building had a low gabled roof and horizontal plank siding. In 1908 the Tanana Commercial Company moved next door and the Masons purchased the building (see Photograph 3). The Masons enlarged the building in the back by 20 meters, giving it the overall shape it shows today. Further changes occurred in 1913 when the entire building was raised, providing a seven-foot basement ceiling, and in 1916 when the present facade was constructed (see Photograph 4). The general appearance of the building has not changed appreciably since that time.

Subsequent changes have continued along pragmatic lines. In 1929 the Holding Company replaced the decaying wooden foundation with a concrete foundation. They have also added steel beams beneath the floors on both levels and aluminum siding to both sides and the rear of the building. On the facade, they have removed the two center bays on the lower level, relocated the main door to the center, and built a small entranceway. They have also removed the molded cornice, the decorated frieze, three columns, and an elaborate balustrade on the porch.

Interior changes include gradual modernization of the small upstairs kitchen, reconstruction of walls and ceiling in the upstairs conference room, and periodic repainting. Although in some cases, original interior furnishings have been removed, the large downstairs ballroom and second-floor meeting hall remain generally unaltered.

Eight Hundred Nine First Avenue is just on the fringe of the downtown Fairbanks commercial district. The Masonic Temple Holding Company owns both the lot on which the building stands (Lot 3, Block 17 TWN) and the adjacent lot to the east (Lot 1a2a, Block 17 TWN). A residential area of older Fairbanks homes lies to the west. Until

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

**SPECIFIC DATES**

Built in 1906

**BUILDER/ARCHITECT**

Unknown

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Fairbanks Masonic Temple is significant for the following reasons: it illustrates the architectural style and building techniques of an Alaska boom town; it represents the valuable role in the city's development played by local fraternal organizations; it symbolizes events in the lives of individuals important in this development; and finally, it symbolizes feelings and associations of people in the community. The building's general appearance from the street, its architecture, its integrity of location, and its tradition of use all contribute to its present-day historic value.

The Masonic Temple is significant architecturally because it illustrates specific elements of style and an approach to construction consistent with the pragmatism of a young booming Fairbanks. The Renaissance Revival style, popular during the 1880's and 1890's in the lower 48 states, appeared in Fairbanks as late as 1916. Thus, the "new" face from the 1916 remodeling is as representative of early Fairbanks as the original front it replaced. The absence of stone and brick material in the construction of the facade is most striking. The Masons created the entire effect with sheet metal, painted a light redish-tan color and affixed to an underlying wooden support. Kits for such facades were once available from mail-order catalogues. The facade not only furnishes a low-maintenance exterior but also provides visual affinity with Masonic Temples in the lower 48 states, without the expense of stone and brick construction.

This pragmatic approach has remained an ongoing tradition in later alterations during the Mason's lengthy tenure. Starting with basically a warehouse, the Masons enlarged it, strengthened its foundation and floors, added a more energy-efficient compound front door and low-maintenance aluminum siding, replaced a weakened porch balustrade with a less elaborate metal rail, and displayed reserve on interior remodeling.

The building's integrity of location dates to its original construction. The great fire of 1906 spread west only as far as Barnette Street, one block away. Having survived the fire, the temple joins a small group of historically valuable buildings in the First Avenue area. These include the George Thomas Library (901 1st Av), the Northern Commercial Building (629 1st Av), the Model Cafe (549 1st Av), and the First Avenue Bathhouse/Odd Fellows Hall (825 1st Av). (The value of a First Avenue Historic District warrants further study.)

The Masonic Temple has social and humanitarian significance because the Masons have long played an important role in the development of the Fairbanks community. The fraternal organization has regularly contributed to needy families. They show concern for children who require special medical facilities, and they have maintained a special blood bank at the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. The Masons traditionally keep their contributions anonymous.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY <1

QUADRANGLE NAME Fairbanks D-2 SE, Alaska USGS

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24 000

UTM REFERENCES

A 0,6 4,6,5,6,8,10 7,1,9,11,1,5  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B                    
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James R. Marcotte

April 1979

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Cooperative Park Studies Unit, Anthropology and Historic Preservation

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Gruening Bldg., University of Alaska

907-479-7050

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*William Marshall*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 4/15/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*W. Ray Luce*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6/3/80

ATTEST: *Kristin O'Connell*  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 6/7/80

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The Masonic Temple, AHRS Site No. FAI-032

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1959, the house of Fairbanks founder, E. T. Barnette, stood next door (see Photograph 3). From the Temple there is a good view of the Chena River and development to the north.

The Masonic Temple and the lot on which the building stands (Lot 3, Block 17 TWN) are included in the nomination. These boundaries are established to insure protection of the visual qualities of the building. A view of the building front is most important, although a view of the entire structure adds an important visual dimension.

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The boundary for the Falcon Joslin house conforms to the dimensions of lot 10B of block 64 of the Fairbanks townsite (see sketch map). This boundary contains the entire area of the original house and yard contemporary with the earliest construction but does not include the more recent greenhouse structure.

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Although the Tanana Lodge was comprised of all types of Fairbanks citizens, a few of the prominent charter members include: James H. Caskey, newspaper publisher; Andrew Nerland, furniture retailer; and Volney Richmond, president of the Northern Commercial Company. Events in the lives of the Mason members are symbolized by the building. Forbes Baker, who came to Fairbanks in 1905, recalls the important role "lodge life" played through the long Alaskan winters, especially in the absence of today's forms of amusement. The members take great pride in their degree work and have always impressed visiting Grand Masters.

The Masonic establishment in Fairbanks began as a club in 1904 after Edwin H. Van Patten, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in Washington, received a request for information about organizing a Masonic lodge. Van Patten recommended the formation of a club since he doubted the group's stability in such a remote location. The club members quickly proved their sincerity and were granted a dispensation on February 28, 1907, and full Charter on June 17, 1908. A search for a permanent home for the lodge ended in 1908 when the present temple was acquired with the aid of bonds held by the individual members. In subsequent years additional Masonic Orders were organized. These include the Royal Arch, Commandery of the York Right, and the Scottish Rite. Other related groups to use the building are Job's Daughters, Eastern Star, DeMolay, and the Rainbow Girls.

Finally, the Masonic Temple is historically significant because it symbolizes feelings and associations for people in the community. Certainly for the members of families who have received a helping hand from the Masons, the building holds special importance. Frank Young, one of the Fairbanks Pioneers, is typical of many citizens for which the building is a tangible component of recollections from earlier years. He recalls the address President Harding delivered from the Temple steps in 1923. Because the Masons played an important role in the development of Fairbanks, because both Masons and others in the community have strong feelings associated with the building, and because the building is a fine example of Renaissance Revival style in Alaska, the Masonic Temple is a significant historic site.

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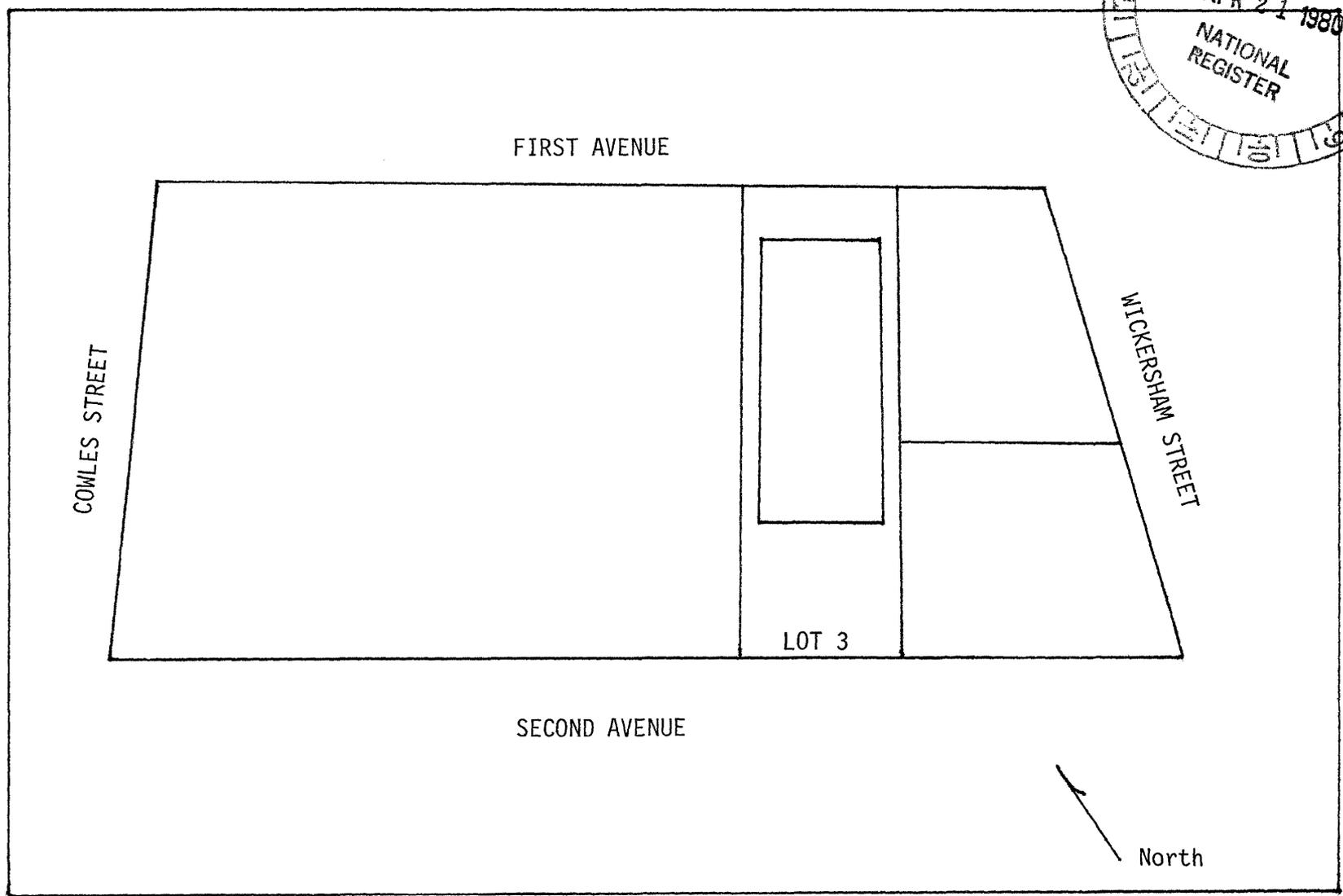
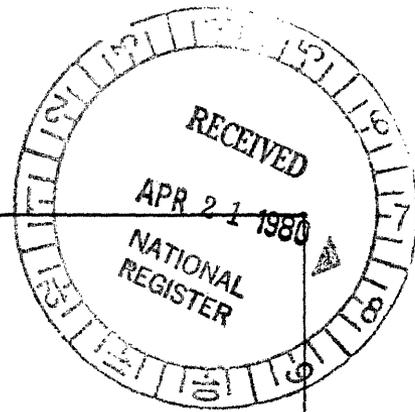
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Lot 3, Block 17 TWN, extends from First Avenue a distance of 105.3 feet to Second Avenue (see Map 3). The northeast corner is at a point 49.2 feet from the northeast corner of the block at Wickersham Street and First Avenue. The northwest corner of the lot is 98.2 feet from the block corner, giving the lot a width of 49 feet along the First Avenue border. The southeast corner of the lot is 86.8 feet from the southeast corner of the block at the corner of Wickersham Street and Second Avenue. The southwest corner of the lot is 136.8 feet from the southeast corner of the block giving the following overall dimensions: 105.3x 50 x 105.3 x 49 feet. This property is located in the SW 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 10, T15S, R12W, Fairbanks Meridian.



1"=50'

Map 3. Block 17 TWN, Masonic Temple, Fairbanks, Alaska  
UTM Reference: 06/465680/7191115

