

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE ~~IN IDAHO~~ TR)

✓ SITE NAME: Chinese Odd Fellows Building SITE NUMBER: 72

✓ LOCATION: 610-612 Front Street, Boise, Ada County (~~001~~), Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Joseph A. and Elaine Schmoeger
614 Front Street
Boise, ID 83702

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Boise South, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Chinese Odd Fellows Building and the property on which it stands, east 33.6 feet of lot 4, block 23, Boise City Original Townsite. Legal description on file at the Ada County Courthouse, Boise, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/5,64,390/48,29,40

DATE OR PERIOD: 1911

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture and Ethnic History

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: good altered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Chinese Odd Fellows Building is a very simple two-story brick commercial building facing south on Front Street east of Seventh Street. It was built to a simple rectangular thirty-by-sixty-foot plan, with shop space below and lodge hall and sleeping rooms above. The storefront level of the facade has been veneered to the top of the mezzanine lights with modern materials, and the disposition of apparent on the original drawings seems to be altered, but the upper facade, though painted, maintains its original fabric and disposition of elements. Three double-hung sash windows--the outer two with their original quartered upper sashes--are set into the second-story facade. The sills are outset and the segmentally arched window heads are constructed of triple rows of header bricks. Above the windows is a complex corbel table of outset brick, with broad stepped segments demarcating the bays and smaller stepped and toothed ranges between their flat upper sections. Above the plain band with header brick coping from which these elements fall is a plain low parapet, also with header brick coping, laid up flush with the main facade.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Chinese Odd Fellows Building has a degree of architectural significance as a simple brick commercial/fraternal building, with a readily restorable plate glass storefront; it is a type which was commonly built in Idaho towns and cities in the first decades of the century, and which is steadily disappearing. But the primary significance of the building is its historical association with the Chinese-American community in Boise. It is the only surviving building of several designed by Tourtellotte and Company and Tourtellotte and Hummel in Chinatown, and it is one of the very few buildings associated with the Chinese immigrant community to survive in downtown Boise.

The firm made several identifiable contributions to Boise's once sizable Chinatown. In 1901 and 1902, Statesman stories reported the firm's work on a Wah On building on Front Street near Seventh Street, which may be the same project. The Chinese IOOF went up in the 600 block of Front Street in 1911, and the very attractive Moon Wahsoon building in the 700 block in 1924. Front Street west of Seventh, the core of Chinatown, was cleared for urban renewal in the 1960s; the Chinese IOOF is the only survivor from this series of commissions and one of the few from its community. As an Odd Fellows hall erected by a particular ethnic group, in a city which already had an elaborate IOOF lodge a few block away (site 20), this building is an artifact of the segregated nature of the Chinese-immigrant community; of its relative poverty; and of its efforts to adopt those western institutions which seemed compatible with its own closely held culture.

The modesty of the building is further illustrated by the fact that Tourtellotte and Hummel seem to have simply recycled a generic plan for it. The collection of tracings for the project, only one of which bears the name of the client, shows that an existing plan for an ordinary commercial building with a single shop below and offices above was re-traced to accommodate the interior space to an extra store below and a meeting room above.

Contractors Clifton and Corbridge erected the structure in the winter of 1911-1912. The contract price was \$4,648.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

(Boise) Idaho Statesman, November 15, 1911, p. 3, c. 2; December 22, 1911, p. 2. c. 2; June 23, 1912, p. 3, c. 5.

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. File 410D. Certificate and collection Book references and correspondence, 1911-1912. Tracing signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.