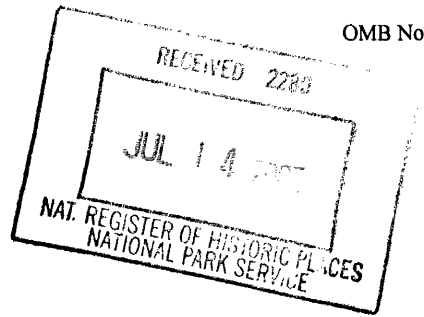


913

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



**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 any 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 Mizpah Lodge Building
other names/site number Mel's Country Grocery 32 RM. 159

2. Location

street & number 260 Front Street N/A not for publication
city or town Sheldon vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Ransom code 073 zip code 58068-4000

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 36 CFR 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 of certifying official/Title *Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr.* 7-11-05
Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr. Date
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

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 commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this 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 *Edson H. Beall* Date of Action 8-24-05

Mizpah Lodge Building
Name of Property

Ransom County, ND
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- SOCIAL: meeting hall
- COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
- COMMERCE/TRADE: business
-
-
-
-
-

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: department store
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation GRANITE
- walls BRICK
- roof ASPHALT
- other SANDSTONE, STEEL, CAST IRON, ALUMINUM, GLASS BLOCK, PLYWOOD

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 a 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.

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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: _____

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1905-1955

Significant Dates

1905

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Mizpah Lodge Building
Name of Property

Ransom County, ND
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	14	5160606	615488	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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 Louis N. Hafermehl

organization _____ date March 1, 2005

street & number 610 North 7th Street telephone 701-250-8544

city or town Bismarck state ND zip code 58501

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mel's Country Grocery, Inc.

street & number 260 Front Street telephone 701-882-3111

city or town Sheldon state ND zip code 58068-4000

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 the 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 Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Description

The Mizpah Lodge Building is a fraternal/commercial block located in Sheldon, North Dakota. The town is located in Ransom County, in the southeastern corner of the state, and on the western edge of the Red River Valley, an area extending from Minnesota and North Dakota into the Canadian Province of Manitoba. The rich sediments of clay, silt, and sand left by glacial meltwater form the floor of this valley and make it one of the continent's most productive agricultural areas. Sheldon sits atop the sediments of a delta deposited by rivers flowing in glacial Lake Agassiz and is, today, located roughly equidistant between the Maple and Sheyenne Rivers, where their courses turn northeast leading them to their junction west of Fargo, North Dakota, and then ultimately to their confluence with the Red River, north of Fargo. Sheldon lies approximately thirty-five miles southwest of Fargo on the line of the Red River Valley and Western Railroad (originally the Fargo and Southwestern branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad).

The Mizpah Lodge building is located in the approximate center and on the north side of Front Street, the town's three block-long main commercial street, and opposite a town park that parallels the tracks of the Red River Valley and Western Railroad. The building shares a common wall on the west with a single story brick block. The lot to its east is presently vacant, the building at that location with which it once shared a common wall having burned and been subsequently razed sometime after 1982. The building retains integrity of location. It has lost some degree of integrity of materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association as a result of repairs necessitated by fire damages in 1921 and 1929 and by a later first-floor storefront remodel. This integrity loss is not, however, so substantial as to disqualify the Mizpah Lodge Building for National Register designation.

The building is a two-story brick block over a granite-walled, dirt floored, cellar. It has a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 30' x 80'. The façade is of salmon-colored brick laid in running bond with pink mortar in flush, buttered, joints. Red sandstone is used on the façade to accent pilaster bases, as continuous sill and lintel bands accenting second story windows, and as a keystone and name/date block.

The second story presents three bays recessed between the corner pilasters. The center bay contains a large four-light deadlight flanked by narrow one-over-one double hung sash. The flanking bays contain single larger one-over-one double hung sash. Between the window heads and the stepped corbeled cornice the bays are visually emphasized by the symmetrical placement of recessed panels. A narrow corbeled band of brick with a centered, rounded, keystone arch spans the façade just above second floor window lintel level.

The first floor façade has been substantially altered. Its only remaining original elements are a steel I-beam lintel, a cast iron fluted column with a molded base and acanthus leaf capital, and a large deadlight, clear glass transom above the doorway that leads to the second floor stairway. Beneath the lintel is a glass block transom supported by two large brick pilasters

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Description (continued)

framing the first floor doorway. To either side of these pilasters is a single deadlight set into plywood-faced wooden framing mounted atop a brick "kick." Both pilasters and "kick" are constructed of dark red vermiculated brick.

Secondary walls are constructed of yellow common brick laid in common bond. Side walls have shallowly stepped parapets. Window heads on the secondary walls are segmental arches comprised of a tripled row of headers laid flush to the surrounding brick. Windowsills are single header courses projecting slightly from the surrounding walls. Most window openings have been covered with plywood panels; those whose windows remain visible from either interior or exterior include one-over-one, two-over-two, and single light deadlight sash. A thin coat of cement has been laid over large portions of each of the secondary walls. A wood-framed, chipboard faced, shed-roofed addition has been constructed on the building's rear wall. The addition serves as a rear entry vestibule. Its roof is covered with corrugated metal.

The Mizpah Lodge Building has been twice damaged by fire, once in 1921 and then again in 1929. The former fire was the most significant of the two; it started in a bank building located two doors to the west and destroyed that building, a one story building to its east, and caused substantial damage to the second floor of the Mizpah lodge building, including complete destruction of the roof.¹ According to one report, the fire entered the building through the openings for water and sewer pipes in the common wall it shared with the building to its west and ". . . run [sic] up back of the lath into the floor joists. . . . [and] the floor was pretty badly damaged by water and we hardly think they are going to have money to relay it."² Likely the floor damage was limited to the front part of the lodge; we do know (see fn 6 quote below) that new flooring was laid in the club room and kitchen area, which were toward the front of the building. There the flooring is one-and-a-half-inch wide maple tongue and groove in contrast with the three-and-a half-inch wide painted boards used in the lodge room. Additional damages listed in *The Sheldon Progress* and the *Sheldon Enterprise* in the weeks following the fire were to roof rafters, roofing boards, window frames, lodge furniture and a piano.³

¹*The Sheldon Progress and Sheldon Enterprise* (hereafter cited as *Sheldon Progress*), "3 Buildings Burn; Loss \$65,000", January 20, 1921, p. 1.

²Ransom County Immigration Society Collection, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies Collection, North Dakota State University, April 4, 1921 letter, Frank E. Shaw, Sheldon, North Dakota to Ed Pierce, Lake Alfred, Florida.

³*Sheldon Progress* "Local News," p. 5, March 10 and 31, 1921.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Description (continued)

The fire resulted in one documented floor plan change on the first floor, that being the construction of a wall toward the building's rear and across its width to create a storeroom.⁴ Floor plan changes on the second floor possibly also occurred as a result of the fire, though this is less certain. Our suspicion is based on the only descriptions of the building interior we have found. Those appeared in *The Sheldon Progress* and *Sheldon Enterprise* at the time of both the building's dedication in January 1906 and following the January 1921 fire. Neither of the descriptions is necessarily thorough. On the occasion of the lodge hall's first reported use for social purposes it was described as containing a dining room, club room, and main lodge hall.⁵

Following the 1921 fire, the second floor was described as having a main lodge hall, club room, kitchen, and club room lavatory. These rooms remain today, along with another small room of unidentified purpose and a broom closet. Because trim and finish materials used in these latter two rooms conform to those used in the described areas, we assume they date from no later than the post-1921 fire renovations. It is quite possible that they are part of the building's original second floor plan. Common to all Masonic Blue Lodges were "a foyer where members can put on their aprons and register with the tyler or door guard and for closet storage of the office's jewelry, . . . a preparation room where the candidate can be stripped of his personal effects and clothed in a white uniform, and the main lodge room, invariably rectangular."⁶ The small room characterized above as being of unknown purpose is quite likely the preparation room; quite likely, too, is that the broom closet once housed the referenced jewelry.

Our best description of the lodge interior also comes from news coverage following the 1921 fire. In mid-May, *The Sheldon Progress* and *Sheldon Enterprise* reported that "the lodge room will be decorated practically the same as before being destroyed." A month later they followed with a description of the finished product:

The lower part of the lodge hall is done in a blue while the upper part is in a stone gray. The ceiling is paneled off and the squares and compasses and other emblems painted in each corner. The kitchen is in flat white. The club room is in two colors and looks very neat. A hard wood floor is being laid

⁴*Sheldon Progress*, "Local News," March 16, 1921, p. 5.

⁵*Sheldon Progress*, "Local News," Jan. 5, 1906, p. 5.

⁶ Paul Rich and Marie Avila, "The Symbolic Blue Lodges: The Oddfellow of the Masonic Order," *Material Culture: The Journal of the Pioneer America Society*, vol. 36, No. 2, Fall, 2004, p. 63.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Description (continued)

this week in the club room and kitchen. An ingrain carpet has been ordered for the lodge room the club room and kitchen. An ingrain carpet has been ordered for the lodge room.⁷

The building's first floor plan remains substantially as it appeared after the 1921 fire damage was repaired. As previously mentioned this change resulted in construction of a wall across the building's width so as to create a storeroom at the rear of the building. Access to the cellar is via an enclosed stairwell located in the southwest corner of the storeroom, though whether this was the original access point to the cellar, or one of the post-fire alterations, we do not know. In subsequent years, changes included construction of a small furnace enclosure in the northwest corner of the front room, a vestibule inside the building entryway, a bathroom tucked beneath the staircase leading to the second floor, and a cooler in the northeast corner of the storeroom. We have found no documentation for construction dates of these building features.

Other changes owing to the 1921 fire probably included replacing lighting fixtures and enclosing the lodge hall window openings. The single remaining globe of the two ceiling mounted lodge hall light fixtures appears to be close stylistically to the 1921 fire date. The lodge hall also contains four wall-mounted single-bulb incandescent lighting fixtures, none of which retain their globes or shades. The club room contains three ceiling mounted fixtures, two of which retain their globes. Based on their style, they could date from an earlier time than those in the lodge hall. In any event, the paucity of light fixtures, each with a single incandescent bulb, speaks to a time when a profusion of artificial light was far less important, or perhaps simply not possible given the technology of the day, than it is in the early 21st Century. In any event, we have found no information to inform us of the building's original lighting system. We do know that the town had no power plant of its own until 1915, for it was not until that year that the City Council provided an ordinance for one's establishment.⁸

Neither have we been able to establish a date for the enclosing of the lodge hall windows. News reports of the post-fire repairs to the lodge space in several instances mention re-lathing and plastering.⁹ Possibly the plastering over of the window openings on the interior walls

⁷ *Sheldon Progress*, "Local News," May 19, and June 16, 1921, p. 5.

⁸ Alice Marie Krueger, ed., *Sheldon Community History*. (Enderlin, North Dakota: Enderlin (ND) Independent Printing, 1981), p. 23.

⁹ *Sheldon Enterprise*, "The Local News," April 14, 1921, p. 5, and May 5, 1921, p. 5.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Description (continued)

occurred at this time. At this point the most we can say is that they had been plastered over by at least the 1940s.¹⁰

About the 1929 fire, we know only that it occurred on Sunday, October 20 of that year, that it started in the first floor storeroom and caused heavy smoke and water damage to the business room as well.¹¹ Within a week and a half damage repairs were being made.¹²

First floor interior finishes originally appear to have been lath on plaster walls and ceilings and wooden floors. A drop ceiling has been installed, the floor has been covered with asphalt tiles, and most wall spaces have been covered with plywood paneling – some in a simulated rough-sawn, vertically-laid, pine board pattern (storeroom walls), some in a simulated smooth-sawn, vertically-laid, pine board pattern (east wall and north wall east of the storeroom doorway). Evenly spaced down the center of the building from its front to rear are four steel posts, round in section with molded bases.

At the southeast corner of the building and accessed directly from main street and leading to the second floor is an L-shaped staircase approximately five-and-a-half feet wide. Arranged around the stairwell at the second story level are a twelve foot by twelve foot kitchen on its south and on its west are a four foot by six foot bathroom, a six foot by seven foot storeroom, and six foot by seven foot enclosed stair landing. To the north and west of these rooms is an L-shaped club room. North of the club room is the main lodge hall. Floors are wood throughout, though that in the kitchen space has been covered with asphalt tiles. Those in the bathroom, storeroom, stair landing and main lodge room are painted battleship gray; that in the club room is varnished or shellacked. Walls throughout are lath on plaster. Ceilings are cel-o-tex over lath on plaster. A six inch-high platform, seven feet wide on the north wall and three feet wide on the east and west walls, runs around three sides of the twenty-nine foot by forty-two foot main lodge room.

¹⁰ Telephone interview with Alice Marie Krueger, May 25, 2005. Ms. Krueger recalls attending Presbyterian Church services in the lodge hall in 1940, when the Masons provided the space to that congregation in the aftermath of a fire to its building. She remembers that there were no windows in the lodge hall at that time.

¹¹ *Sheldon Progress*, "Johnson Store and Masonic Temple Hit in Sunday's Blaze," October 24, 1929, p. 1.

¹² *Sheldon Progress*, "Johnson Sells Store to Audubon, Minn. Man," October 31, 1929, p. 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Statement of Significance

The Mizpah Lodge is significant under National Register Criterion A as the continuous seat of a series of retail businesses important to the town of Sheldon, North Dakota, from 1905 to the present. It is also significant under Criterion A as an example of the one-time popularity and importance of fraternal organizations in general, and Freemasonry in particular, in even the smallest of North Dakota communities, and of their influence on the development of the commercial face of those communities. The building is also significant under Criterion C as Sheldon's most prominent example of the Early Brick Commercial Style.

The building was constructed for the Mizpah Lodge #39, whose charter was granted in 1893. This lodge was one of the masonic "blue" lodges, the common denominators of Masonry inasmuch as it was in such lodges that the initial three degrees – Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason – were conferred on the candidate.¹³ The lodge had eleven charter members – this at a time when the town of Sheldon had a population of approximately 250 and at least two other fraternal organizations. During the first dozen years of the lodge's existence meetings were held first in Sheldon's I.O.O.F and then in the A.O.U.W. halls.¹⁴ By the time the lodge began construction of its own building in 1905 the town's population had increased to approximately 400, the lodge's membership to fifty-four and the number of fraternal organizations (both men's and women's) to at least seven, the meeting times of which were carefully scheduled so as not to conflict with one another.¹⁵

Sheldon's economic base at the time of Mizpah Lodge building construction, as it has been throughout the town's history, was agriculture. Business directories of the day note that wheat and livestock accounted for the majority of items shipped by rail from Sheldon, and the listing of the town's businesses are very much what one would expect to find in most any town located on a railroad line in the early 20th Century on the northern Great Plains: draying, dry goods, groceries, clothing, hotels, liveries, lumber, farm implements, harness making,

¹³ Paul Rich and Marie Avila, "The Symbolic Blue Lodges: The Oddfellow of the Masonic Order," *Material Culture: The Journal of the Pioneer America Society*, vol. 36, No. 2, Fall, 2004, p. 66.

¹⁴ Harold Sackett Pond, *Masonry in North Dakota, 1804-1964*, (The Record Printers, Grafton, ND, 1964), p. 160-161.

¹⁵ That this was an important consideration attests to the popularity of fraternal life in early 20th Century America – we were substantially a nation of "joiners". One M.N. Hudnall, for example, was listed in the January 6, 1905 issue of *The Sheldon Progress*, p. 8, as holding offices in four out of five of the men's fraternal organizations then active in Sheldon!

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

blacksmithing, hardware, newspapers, and grain elevators. Of the latter there were three in 1898 and by 1912 a fourth had been added.

The town was located in an area that in the mid-1960s was inhabited substantially by people of Norwegian (75%) and Anglo-American (25%) ancestry. At the town's incorporation in 1884, however, its 182 inhabitants seem to have been of almost exclusively English-speaking heritage, if scrutinizing their surnames is a valid basis for making such a determination. It is likely that in Sheldon's early years its "power brokers" were of English-speaking heritage as well. This phenomenon was more the rule than the exception on the northern plains, particularly in communities that owed their existence, as did Sheldon, to the rail line around which the town grew. Not surprisingly, most of the lodge's charter members – surnamed Ayles, Mitchell, Turnbull, Durbin (Durgin?), Folsom, Jennings, Russ and Wright – were drawn from those of English-speaking heritage. It should be noted, however, that charter members also included a Strachan and Motschenbacher.¹⁶ Of the founders we have found information about only three. James P. Ayles was a physician, Robert J. Mitchell was an attorney, and C. K. Durgin was an early the proprietor of an opera house.¹⁷

Of the lodge's seven officers (out of ten) a decade after its founding, at about the time the Mizpah Lodge building was constructed and about whom we have found biographical information, all but one were of English-speaking heritage. The remaining one was of German-

¹⁶ The percentages cited come from William C. Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota*, (North Dakota Institute of Regional Studies, Fargo, North Dakota, 1983), pp, 76-77. Please note Sherman's term "Anglo-Americans" (see p. 79 for his definition of the category) refers to Americans whose ancestries date to colonial times. We substitute the term "English-speaking Americans" because many, if not most, of the families of those about whom we have found biographical information migrated from the British Isles in the post-colonial period. Where we have used the term "Anglo-American" we have used it as Sherman intended.

For a list of Sheldon inhabitants in 1884 see Alice Marie Krueger, *Sheldon Community History*, (Enderlin Independent Printing, 1981), p. 16. The list of charter members comes from the Mizpah Lodge No. 39 A.F. & A.M. Golden Jubilee Program, one of the records, along with index cards on approximately 100,000 North Dakota Masons from the inception of the Grand Lodge in 1889 to date and annual lodge returns (listings of lodge members), held in the library of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of North Dakota, Fargo, North Dakota.

¹⁷ Krueger, pp. 37-39. Note that the charter member listed on the lodge Golden Jubilee program was Durbin, not Durgin. We assume this was a typographical error, since we have found no record of a Durbin residing in Sheldon at the time of the lodge's founding. It may also be interesting to note that none of the charter members are listed among the town's 182 citizens in 1884.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 8

**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Statement of Significance (continued)

American heritage. Two of the seven were farmers, one was a county judge, one was a banker and businessman involved in the lumber, livery, and furniture businesses, another was the owner of a cheese factory, and about the professional life of the last we know nothing.¹⁸

While the lodge may have been a haven for the area's socio-economic elite, lodge membership did not, at least during the first quarter century of lodge existence, include the area's most prominent citizen. Edmund Pierce was the child of Irish immigrants. The family came to North Dakota in 1878 and Edmund arrived in Sheldon in 1881, at age 19, as an employee of the railroad; he assisted in platting the town. Before the decade ended he was admitted to the state bar and began practicing law. He was an organizer, and ultimately president, of the State Bank of Sheldon and the Enderlin State Bank and founder of the Ransom County Immigration Association (later the Ransom County Trust Company), which specialized in real estate transfers, mortgage loans, and insurance. His real estate activities extended to Florida, where he founded the Winter Haven Company, the Florida Fruit Lands Company, and the Aasheim Land Company. He was also the founder of Fargo's Northern Trust Company, later known as the Northern and Dakota Trust Company. Pierce served in the state senate for a decade, from 1903-13. His perceived importance to the community is attested to by the Sheldon Commercial Club's publication of the proceedings of the public memorial services held in Sheldon following Pierce's death.¹⁹

When the lodge hall was dedicated, Pierce was the only non-Mason among the 104 lodge members and guests. He gave a speech, which, according to the local paper, paid "glowing tribute" to the value of Masonry. That the town's most prominent citizen was not a member of the lodge is due to the fact that Pierce's Catholic faith was at odds with Freemasonry. Between 1738 and 1890 eight different popes had made at least seventeen pronouncements on the topic, none of them encouraging Catholics to become Freemasons and several of them rewarding those who did with excommunication. That Pierce was an invited guest perhaps speaks to the absence of anti-Catholic sentiment in the Sheldon area at the time as well as to the esteem with which Pierce was held by his fellow citizens who happened to be Masons.²⁰

¹⁸ Mizpah Lodge No. 39 Returns to the Grand Lodge of North Dakota and Krueger, pp. 28, 217, 219, 224, 253, 312 and 316.

¹⁹ Sheldon Commercial Club, *In Memoriam, Edmund Pierce, July 6, 1863 – November 23, 1927* (Sheldon Commercial Club), N.p, n.d.

²⁰ *Sheldon Progress*, "Impressive Ceremonies, p. 5, January 19, 1906. Catholic Encyclopedia, "Masonry (Freemasonry), Section VIII, Action of State and Church Authorities," at <http://www.newadvent.org/cahten/09771a.htm>.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

By the time the lodge celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1943, the ethnic heritage of its officers about whom we have found biographical information was essentially the same as it had been when the lodge was founded. One was of German-American heritage, five of English-speaking heritage, and one of unknown ethnic heritage. Professionally, however, four of the seven were farmers, one was a minister, and one was an attorney involved in real estate and insurance.²¹

By the mid-1950s, at the zenith of lodge membership, surnames of decidedly more Scandinavian and German origin were to be found among the members: Anderson, Arntson, Bjugstad, Hahn, Johnson, Lonbaken, Olsgard, Omdahl, Pederson, Rogne, Sturlaugson, Torfin, Torgeson, Trome, Vangness and Bueling, Discher, Froemke, Heyer, Kuhn, Luther, Oeder, Petrich and Schroeder. This is not a surprising change given the ethnic make-up of the surrounding area by that time. Relatively small enclaves (i.e., geographic areas in which at least ninety-five percent of the population was of the same ethnic group) of Anglo-Americans and Germans were located just east of Sheldon and of Norwegians just southeast. Larger enclaves of Germans lay to the south, west and north of the town, with lodge membership likely being drawn from each of these areas given the increasing ease of travel that had occurred in the half century intervening between the lodge's founding and its maximum membership.²²

Announcement of the building's construction was greeted in the local paper as being "what Sheldon has needed badly for many years" insofar as it was originally conceived as a building that would provide ground floor meeting and banquet space for use by the town's other fraternal societies while devoting the upper floor to purely Masonic purposes.²³ That the building's first floor was instead rented as commercial space may well have been due to a

²¹ Krueger, pp. 227, 238, 268, 290, 300, 318, and 335.

²² Mizpah Lodge No. 39 membership list, December 31, 1959. Sherman, pp. 76-77. Please note that the brief discussion, in this and the several paragraphs preceding, regarding ethnic and socio-economic makeup of lodge leadership and membership is provided at the request of the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Review Board. It is not intended to address in any way issues of significance set forth in the nomination. While the study and analysis of ethnic and socio-economic membership of North Dakota Masonry, whether lodge-by-lodge or in toto, may be an interesting and potentially important topic of research, the study of the ethnic and socio-economic make-up of a single lodge without a similarly intensive study of the population from which the lodge draws its membership holds forth little opportunity, in our opinion, to contribute in any meaningful way to an understanding of any particular lodge's significance.)

²³ *Sheldon Progress*, "Lodge Hall Assured," June 2, 1905, p. 8.

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**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Statement of Significance (continued)

discrepancy between estimated and actual construction costs for the building, which, if newspaper articles of the time can be trusted, differed by 250%.²⁴ Upon announcing its plans to construct a building, the lodge noted that its members had pledged “the greater part” of the estimated \$4,000 construction cost.²⁵ Reasons for the cost increase are purely speculative. Perhaps it occurred due to lodge members’ inexperience in pricing construction costs. It seems unlikely to us that, had the lodge procured professional architectural advice before deciding to construct such a building, the estimated/actual cost differential would have been so great. But the fact is that we have found no written documentation indicating that the building was designed by a trained architect, though we have reason to believe it was.

That the first floor of the building has been used for retail purposes throughout its history, rather than being provided for rental use by the community’s other fraternal groups as originally intended, may be due to the differential between estimated and actual cost and the necessity arising therefrom to find funds to pay for a much more expensive building than was originally anticipated. It should be noted, however, that the combination of commercial and fraternal use, with commercial on the ground floor and fraternal above is common enough in both North Dakota and nationwide contexts to have been commented upon by other observers.²⁶

We do know that while the building was under construction the Hancock Brothers, a Fargo partnership that was one of the pre-eminent architectural firms then practicing in eastern North Dakota, was engaged in at least one project in Sheldon. An item in the local press little more than a month following the lodge’s announcement of its new building plans claimed that one of the firm’s principals was in town “inspecting the building operations of which his firm has charge.” Whether the use of the plural suggests one or more projects remains open to question. The same news item noted that construction projects then underway in the community included a house for the town’s most prominent citizen, Senator Edmund Pierce, improvements to Sheldon’s Catholic Church (the original design for which was a product of the Hancock Brothers firm), and

²⁴ Ibid. Also, *Sheldon Progress*, “Prospects and Retrospects of Sheldon and Ransom County,” October 23, 1905, p. 1.

²⁵ *Sheldon Progress*, “Lodge Hall Assured,” June 2, 1905, p. 8.

²⁶ See for example Rich and Avila, p. 59, regarding the combination of commercial and lodge uses nationwide and Mark T. Fiege, Mary McCormick, and Frederic Quivik, *Multiple Resource Area Nomination*, “Historic Resources of Minot, North Dakota,” 1986, p. 4.

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Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

construction of a warehouse.²⁷ Of these projects we know that the Pierce residence was designed by the Hancock Brothers.²⁸

Notwithstanding the lack of written documentation to support the contention, two pieces of evidence suggest the Hancock Brothers designed the Mizpah Lodge building. First and foremost, the building's facade contains many of the design elements found in other of the firm's late 19th and early 20th century commercial designs. Chief among such elements are a multiplicity of shallowly stepped surface planes created by stepped decorative bands, recessed panels and shallowly corbeled cornice, and continuous stone lintels and sills contrasting with the surrounding brick, and use of the roman arch as a focal point.²⁹ Second, both of the firm's principals, George and W.B. Hancock, were Masons. Neither bit of evidence can be considered conclusive. Many of the state's commercial buildings of the period designed by other firms contain the same decorative design elements. Also, it is unlikely that the Hancock Brothers were the only area architects of the time who were also Masons. Furthermore, there was no Masonic requirement that lodges were to be designed by fellow-Masons, though it is likely that most of them were. The one thing we can conclusively report is that from the announcement of the building's intended construction until it

²⁷ *Sheldon Progress*, "The Local News," July 7, 1905, p. 5. We should point out that we examined every issue of the *Sheldon Progress* for the period from which announcement was made of the lodge's intention to build until the building's dedication. The only architect mentioned as having projects underway in Sheldon during that period was W. B. Hancock; no other architect or architectural firm found mention in the local press. In addition to the *Sheldon Progress*, we also examined an index held in the files of the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office of the North Dakota architects, construction projects and their locations mentioned in *The Weekly Improvement Bulletin* for the same period. Please note, however, that this index, which covers the period August 23 1895 and October 1, 1910 and which was compiled by James P. and Anne Wilson in 1998 by virtue of a contract with the State Historical Society of North Dakota, was based on the examination of only every fourth or fifth issue of that publication. A final source reviewed was the Hancock Brothers file held in the North Dakota Architect Files of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

²⁸ *Sheldon Progress*, "The Local News," March 25, 1905, p.5, and the architect's rendering of Senator Pierce's house used as an illustration on p. 1. of the July 21, 1905 issue.

²⁹ Similar design motifs can be seen in the firm's buildings of similar vintage such as the Stone Block, 613-615 First Ave. North, the Elliot Hotel Annex, 606-612 First Ave. North, and the Dixon Block, 305-307 Broadway, all located in Fargo, North Dakota.

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Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

was dedicated as a Masonic lodge hall six months later, the Hancock Brothers was the only architectural firm mentioned in *The Sheldon Progress* and *Sheldon Enterprise* as being engaged in any work in the community.

Regardless of the building's design origins, it remains both the most imposing building of the Commercial Style in Sheldon, as well as the only commanding visual commercial presence on the main street of this once thriving prairie town. The Mizpah Lodge Building is, in our opinion, clearly eligible for National Register designation under Criterion C as an example of the Commercial Style within the Sheldon context.

Sand and rock were being hauled to the site to be used in building construction by the end of June 1905, and by the end of October the building was sufficiently complete for the Eastern Star to host an oyster supper in the lodge space. The building's second floor, which housed the lodge hall, was formally dedicated on January 18, 1906.³⁰

The perceived value of Mizpah Lodge membership must surely have varied from member to member. In discussing the increase of fraternal organizations and in their membership during the "Gilded Age" – the last three decades of the 19th Century, near the end of which period the Mizpah Lodge was established – one academic writes that "fraternalism represented a reaction against the individualism and anomie of this era of rapid social change, asylum from a disordered and uncertain world. Fraternal groups provided both the material benefits (for example, life and health insurance) and social solidarity and ritual. Mutual aid, resting on the principle of reciprocity – today's recipient, tomorrow's donor – was a core feature of the groups."³¹ Other observers have credited aspects such as the provision, whether implicitly or explicitly, of a set of values, business training, thrift, leadership skills, self-government, the promotion of good moral character, pastime from the monotony of work, a chance for parade, and insurance against misfortune as aspects of fraternal membership.³² To these we might add networking to position or better oneself socially and/or economically, and the historical importance in American life, presently in some decline, of club and organizational membership examined in such scholarly works as cultural anthropologist Francis L. K. Hsu's, comparative study, *Clan, caste and club* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold,

³⁰ *Sheldon Progress*, "The Local News," June 23, 1905, p. 5, October 27, 1905, and Jan. 19, 1906, p.5.

³¹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000), p. 389.

³² *Ibid.*, 389-91. Quoting David Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000): 3,10,14, and 27, and W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1967 [1899]: 224-233.

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Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

1963). One, or more likely several, of these perceived benefits inspired Mizpah Lodge No. 39's creation and its existence for nearly a century.

The building housed lodge activities for eighty-one years. By 1984, however, membership had dropped to forty-seven -- fewer than when the building was constructed -- and the following year the building was sold. In 1987, the Mizpah Lodge merged with Casselton Lodge #3, and in 2001 those lodges merged once again with the Sunrise Lodge #130 of Fargo, North Dakota.

In what is today North Dakota, one hundred and thirty-five Masonic Lodges have been chartered. Thirty-one of those were granted in the fifteen years before statehood (which was granted in 1889). Mizpah Lodge was one of a dozen chartered in the first five years after statehood. The number of active lodges in the state has declined to fifty-nine, with one more scheduled to close in 2005. And, as a testimony to Americans' declining interest in fraternal organizations in general, and in Freemasonry in particular, only one new lodge has been chartered in North Dakota in the last forty-three years.³³ While no comprehensive surveys or other architectural studies have been made of the extant buildings associated with these lodges, many remain standing in North Dakota's communities, both large and small. Several are individually listed, including lodge buildings in Fargo, Grand Forks, Cooperstown, Devils Lake, and others, by virtue of their location within designated historic districts, may be listed as well.

The building's first ground floor tenant was William Finney, a general store owner who was, perhaps not surprisingly, a member of Mizpah Lodge.³⁴ Subsequent operators, business types, and operation dates of businesses in the ground floor space were: Peter J. Hoff, Drug Store/Pharmacy, ca. 1908-Nov. 1920; William J. Shelver, Drug Store/Pharmacy, Nov. 1920-Jan. 1921; Ransom County Immigration Association, Real Estate/Real Estate Loans/Real Property Insurance, ca. June 1921-Sept. 1921; Ole M. Johnson, General Mercantile, April 1922-Oct. 1929; E. C. Haugen, General Mercantile, Nov. 1929-March 1931; Robert and Martha Weiss, General Mercantile, March 1931-1941; Joseph Spiekermeier and Winston Marsden, General Mercantile, 1947-1959; Arnold and Toddy Spiekermeier, Grocery Store, 1959-1977; Eugene O. and Marion D.

³³ Statistical information gathered from information provided in Harold Sackett Pond, *Masonry in North Dakota, 1804 - 1964* (The Record Printers, Grafton, ND, 1964), and from telephone conversations with Tracy Voulagarakis and Allen Ohrt, Librarian, Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M., State of North Dakota.

³⁴ *Sheldon Progress*, "Impressive Ceremonies," Jan. 19, 1906, p. 5.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Thompson, Grocery Store, 1977-1990; Melanie M. Krueger, Grocery, 1990-1993; Mel's Country Grocery, Grocery, 1993-present.³⁵

The Mizpah Lodge Building's century-long and continuing role as the location for a series of retail business activities providing goods to the town and immediate rural area, its importance over eight decades as the location for Masonic activities in the community, and its commanding presence and existence as the preeminent example of the Commercial Style in the town of Sheldon warrant its listing in the National Register of Historic Places and its continued preservation and use.

³⁵ This chronology of businesses is derived from advertisements and news items found in *The Sheldon Progress and Sheldon Enterprise*, deed records, and family and business entries found in *Sheldon Community History* (Michael Stein, publisher, printed at Enderlin Independent Printing, 1981). Please note that Eugene O. and Marion D. Thompson purchased the property from the Mizpah Lodge in 1985 and that the subsequent businesses listed were also the property owners; businesses listed prior to 1985 leased the first floor from the Mizpah Lodge.

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Ransom County, ND**

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**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Verbal boundary description

Lot 9 of Block 21 and the east 7' of Lot 10 of Block 21 of the Original Town Site of Sheldon, North Dakota. (Ransom County)

Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Mizpah Lodge Building.

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**Mizzpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Photographs

#1 – Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of façade and east wall, from southeast

#2 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of west and north (rear) walls, from northwest

#3 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of north (rear) wall, from northwest

#4 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of stairwell to second story lodge hall, from south

#5 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of lodge hall stair landing and doorway into lodge, view from
northwest

#6 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of lodge hall vestibule, view from west

#7 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of club room (doorways l.-r., bathroom and kitchen), view from northwest

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**Mizpah Lodge Building
Ransom County, ND**

Photographs (continued)

#8 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of club room, with door in center background leading to lodge hall, view from southeast

#9 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of club room with doors (rear wall) leading to lodge hall and door on the right hand wall leading to the storeroom/preparation room, view from southwest

#10 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of lodge hall from southeast corner of the room

#11 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of lodge hall from northwest corner of room

#12 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of first floor business room, view from north looking toward entrance

#13 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of first floor business room, view from southwest corner

#14 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of first floor business room from southeast corner

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Mizpah Lodge Building Ransom County, ND

Photographs (continued)

#15 - Louis N. Hafermehl

November 16, 2004

610 N. 7th Street, #11, Bismarck, ND 58501

View of first floor business room from northeast corner

#16 – Photographer unknown

ca. 1910 photo

location of original negative unknown

view of south side of building from the southwest

#17 – Photographer unknown

ca. 1925 photo

location of original negative unknown

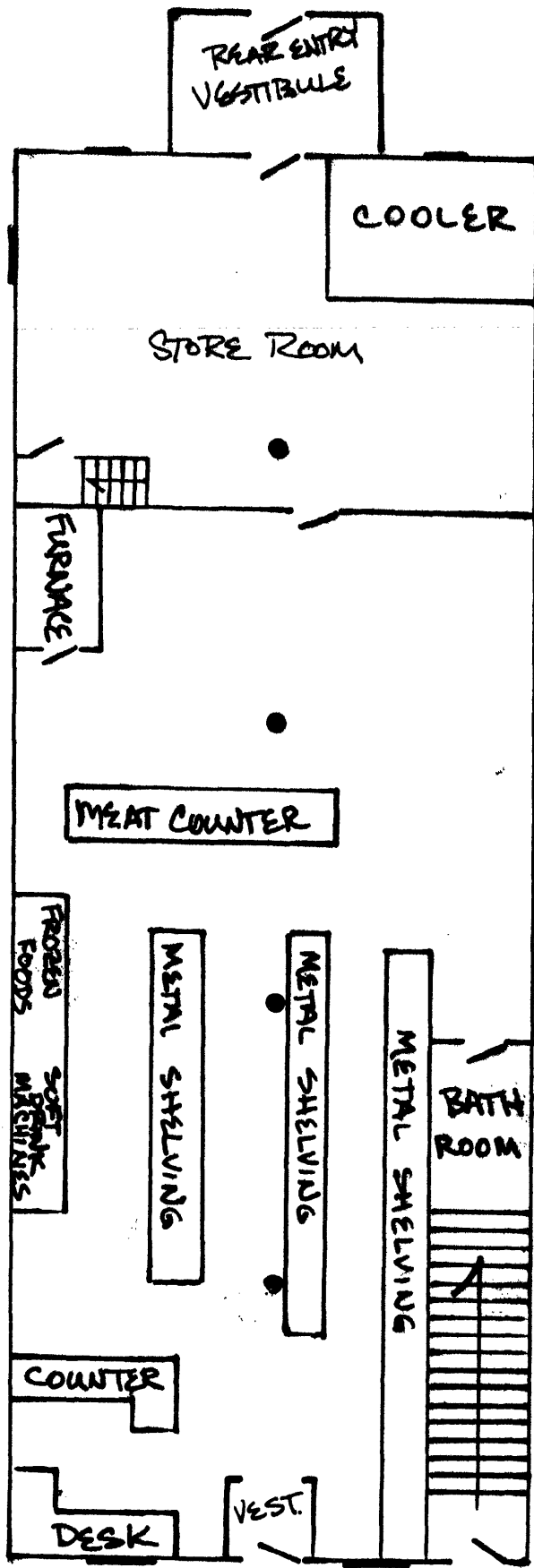
view of first floor interior, east wall, from the southwest

#18 – Photographer unknown

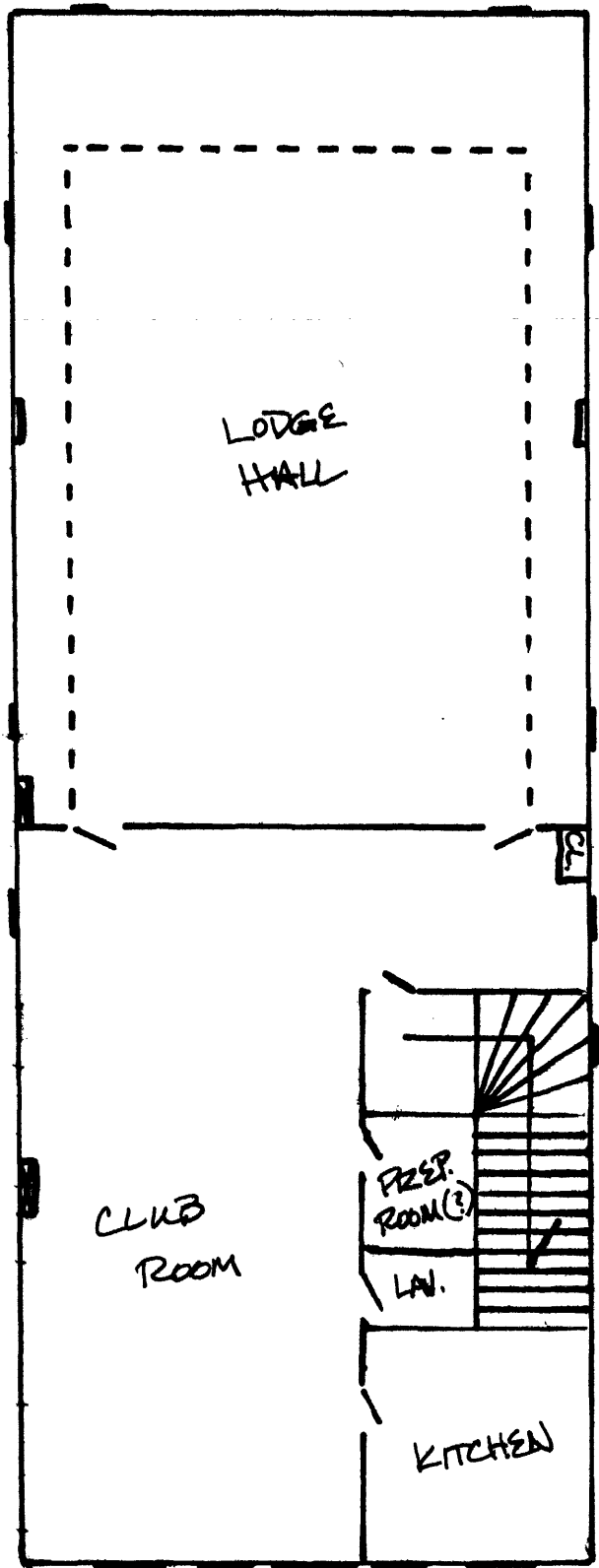
ca. 1910 photo

location of original negative unknown

view of first floor interior, west half, view from south



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

MIZPAH LODGE BUILDING
RANSOM CO., NORTH DAKOTA