

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received AUG 31 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Scottish Rite Consistory Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number ^{6th} ~~Sixth~~ Avenue and Park Street not for publication

city, town Des Moines vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Polk code 153

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: fraternal

4. Owner of Property

name Des Moines Consistory

street & number 6th Ave. and Park St.

city, town Des Moines vicinity of state Iowa 50309

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number Polk County Courthouse

city, town Des Moines state Iowa 50309

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title n/a has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Scottish Rite Consistory Building in Des Moines (1926-27) is a late example of the Neo-classical style, and evidences some Art Deco influence. It is a notable accomplishment by one of the state's leading architects, Roland Harrison.

The Scottish Rite Building, located in downtown Des Moines, is surrounded by major insurance company buildings, and presents two "public" facades to the south and the west. The building is rectangular on plan (117' by 164') and is eighty feet tall. The stone-veneered facades have short wrap-around extensions which terminate on the north and east walls.

The building typifies the Neo-classical style by virtue of its monumental proportions, its smooth stone veneered surfaces (Bedford Indiana limestone), its recessed colossal portico with six ionic order columns, and the vertical division of the exterior into base, intermediate, and attic components. The uppermost of these three components, an attic story, is devoid of ornamentation or fenestration. A series of horizontal ornamental elements visually break up the building's mass. A projecting foundation wall and rounded water table are exposed by the gradual decline in elevation towards the building's front. A heavy plain cornice line caps the first floor, and a series of ornately carved (egg and dart, and water leaf designs) belt courses underscore the upper termination of the colonnade. A heavy denticulated cornice establishes the base of the attic level. The attic wall is capped with a thin stone coping and shallow sloped pediments are centered on each of the two main facades. A vertical sense is imparted by the inclusion of very shallow carved pilasters which flank and in some instances define the corners of the middle floors of the building. On the main facade, the columns and vertical alignment of windows reinforce this effect. Corner pilaster effects are interrupted by recessed vertical corner lines. On the west facade, two sunken panels enclose the stairwell windows above each entrance on that side. These in turn flank seven recessed vertical window panels. A slightly projected pavilion effect, only inches in depth, connects the Both public facades present a central pavilion effect. The main facade does so by virtue of its vertical alignment with the sides of the recessed portico.

The Art Deco influence is reflected in the carved stone phoenix-like symbol which is centered above the main entrance, the multi-light window sash, and the metallic spandrels which separate the recessed windows above the entrances on the west facade and a pair of elaborate bronze doors (weighing 750 pounds each) are placed beneath a delicate bronze transom grill with a phoenix symbol. The stepped horizontal bands of stone which separate the finely carved belt courses below the main cornice also indicate this stylistic influence.

While elaborate stone ornamentation is uncommon, this building exhibits three stone window hoods with scrolled bracket supports on the second floor level, stone slip sills on the first floor and central west facade windows, and stone surrounds on the flanking second and third floor windows. Each of the six solid Bedford Limestone columns (33' tall and 29" wide) weighs twenty-two tons. Windows are of the metal central pivot casement type. Windows on the levels below the mezzanine are taller and narrower, consisting of two lower vertical lights which fill two thirds of the window area and two upper square

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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1927

Builder/Architect Roland Harrison

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Scottish Rite Consistory Building in Des Moines (1926-27) is a late date example of a Neo-classical style fraternal building with some Art Deco influence. It is a notable work by one of the state's more notable architectural firms, Weatherall and Harrison.

Roland Harrison (born in 1889, now aged ninety-five), a partner in the firm of Weatherell and Harrison, designed the building in 1926. Harrison was a partner with Frank E. Wetherell (1869-1961) of Des Moines. This firm was responsible for many Masonic Buildings and designed all of the Iowa State Fair buildings. In addition, they designed numerous churches, schools, and Y M C A buildings.

The cornerstone of the Scottish Rite Consistory Building was dedicated 8 June 1927, and the completed building was dedicated 2 December that same year. Major contractors included A. H. Neuman & Company, general contractor, Walker Plumbing & Heating Company, Electrical Equipment Company, and Younker Brothers (interior furnishings). Total cost was approximately \$900,000. At the time of its construction, the building was well regarded. The editor of the Des Moines Tribune Capitol stated (1 August 1927) that the building "...is to be one of the most satisfactory pieces of architecture in Des Moines...The building has dignity and character that are often missing in our new structures." The building was praised for its compactness, and simplicity. The Iowa Grand Lodge Bulletin (December 1927) was predictably generous in its praise, stating "The new building is one of the finest in the middle west. It is a massive structure of white cutstone and contains every facility for handling modern lodge work and housing the large membership of Des Moines Consistory No. 3, now approximately 4,500."

The construction of this building took place during a difficult period for Iowa's Masonic Order. During the early post-war years, statewide membership had soared, over 16,000 new members being received in the years 1920-1922 alone. For this and other reasons, many Iowa Lodges embarked upon overly ambitious building plans. The huge expense for the Des Moines building is all the more remarkable when its cost is compared with those of similar facilities which were raised in the larger cities six years earlier. New York City's cost \$6,000,000., Detroit's \$4,000,000., and that of New Orleans was \$2,000,000. Additional economic burden on Iowa Lodges was imposed by the construction in 1925 of the "State Home" or masonic sanatorium. Membership plummeted during the second half of the decade of the '20's because of deaths and suspensions for non-payment of dues. Repeatedly, Iowa's Masonic leaders urged caution in local building efforts. By 1930, local lodges were required to have the state organization approve their building plans, but by that time it was too late for many local lodges. There is no indication that the Des Moines lodge suffered unduly from financing this project. It is interesting to note that the Des Moines building did not choose to incorporate rental spaces and storefronts into their plan in order to supplement building and operating costs.

The Des Moines Scottish Rite Consistory #3 was chartered April 5, 1892 and is the oldest of four lodges in Des Moines. These lodges originally held their meetings at the old Masonic Temple at 7th and Walnut Streets. In 1913 meetings were held in the Masonic Building at 10th and Locust Streets. The Consistory has met in this building since 1927 and presently consists of 5,000 members.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Des Moines SW

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A	1 5	4 4 17 9 1 0	4 6 0 4 3 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 6, 7, and 8 in Block "S", Grinnel's Addition, City of Des Moines.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
n/a			

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 24 August 1983

street & number Historical Building
E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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 Alvin H. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 8/25/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Entered in the
National Register**

date 9/29/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

lights. Those mezzanine level windows consist of four rectangular lights.

The remaining two wall exteriors are of commercial brick, laid in American bond. A heavy stone belt course at top of the first floor level is set into the brick, and the single entrance on the east side is executed in stone so as to match those on the west facade. The building projects the illusion of a large public building through its second floor recessed collonade and large front staircase. The small frontal entrance, heavy stone balustrade which flanks the steps, and the austere first floor fenestration, contradicts this illusion.

Internally the building has only a partial basement level, located with the southernmost third of its area. A central dining room and side stage is recessed half a story, dominates most of the ground floor plan and vertically extends for a story and a half. A lounge occupies most of the second floor, and the main auditorium fills the remainder of the vertical space within the center of the building. A pitched gable roof area covers the auditorium and a gridiron roof covers the stage area. Stair and elevator penthouses also occupy the roof top. The interior features heavy walnut paneling, molded and carved hardwood trim, inlaid marble floors, brass and wood stairway handrails, and cast ornate ceilings.

The building survives virtually unchanged since its construction. Most of the exterior windows on the north facade were bricked in at some date.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

Moore, Ernest R. History of Grand Lodge of Iowa, A.F.&A.M., III,
Cedar Rapids; Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1939, pp. 71-73, 86-87, 98-103.

Grand Lodge Bulletin, 28:10 (December 1927), pp. 302 (photo), 303, 398.

Des Moines Tribune Capitol, 1 August 1927, 28 January 1927.

Des Moines Register, 2 December 1927, and 27 November 1927.

Letter from Wetherall and Harrison, architects, dated 20 July 1927.

Billing from architect, dated 1 October 1927.