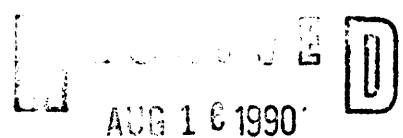


NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8/86)  
Wisconsin Word Processor Format (1331D)  
(Approved 3/87)

OMB No. 1024-0018



United State Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register form (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Madison Masonic Temple  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 301 Wisconsin Avenue N/A not for publication  
city, town Madison N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Dane code 025 zip code 53703

**3. Classification**

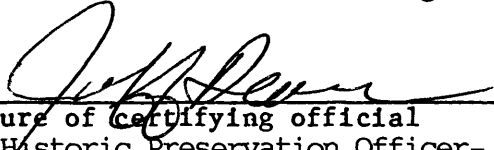
Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>      </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.      See continuation sheet.

x 

8.1.90

Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer- WI  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.      See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

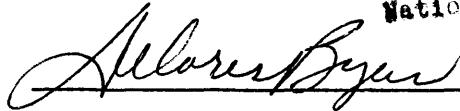
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

**Entered in the  
National Register**

entered in the National Register.  
     See continuation sheet




9/13/90

     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

Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

SOCIAL/meeting hall

---

**7. Description**

---

**Architectural Classification**

(enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**

(enter categories from instructions)

---

**Classical Revival**

---

---

foundation Stonewalls Limestone

---

roof asphaltother stone

---

---

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

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The Madison Masonic Temple is a large Neo-Classical Revival fraternal hall that was built between 1923 and 1925 to house the Masonic organizations of Madison. Appropriately grand in size and scale, the Masonic Temple sits on the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and East Johnson Street in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Avenue is a large boulevard that runs north from the center of Madison--the Capitol Square. The Masonic Temple is about two blocks north of the State Capitol. East Johnson Street is a one-way street running east and is a major thoroughfare through the east side of Madison.

The immediate neighborhood around the Temple is one of mixed uses. Originally part of one of the most prestigious nineteenth century neighborhoods in Madison, many of the large homes of prominent families in this area have been altered into multi-family and apartment housing. Other houses have been altered for office or commercial uses. Some modern apartment or office buildings have been built in the area on vacant lots or on the lots of historic houses that were demolished. Several of the prominent downtown churches of Madison are in close proximity to the Masonic Temple as well. Because the area around the Temple still contains a concentration of fine nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture, much of it is in a locally-designated historic district, the Mansion Hill Historic District. The Temple is also only a couple of blocks away from the eastern edge of the National Register-listed Langdon Street Historic District, an area that was once part of the Mansion Hill neighborhood, but was transformed in the twentieth century into a "fraternity row" for the nearby University of Wisconsin.

The three-story Masonic Temple fronts on Wisconsin Avenue but also has an entrance on East Johnson Street. The large building takes up almost all of the lots it occupies and there are only some small lawn areas and bushes decorating the building's site. The main foliage comes from medium-sized trees that the city has planted in the street right-of-way that, during the summer, block the view of the front facade of the building. At the rear of the building is a newly constructed parking lot.

A large set of stairs leads to the main entrance of the building on Wisconsin Avenue. While this is the main entrance to the first floor of the Temple, the building is built on a raised foundation and because the lot slopes gently down toward the rear of the building, the raised foundation becomes an additional story, or, as it is called in the Temple, the ground floor. A separate entrance to this ground floor is on the East Johnson Street facade of the building.

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The Masonic Temple was built in two sections. The front section of the building is slightly smaller and contains the reception lobby, club room, library, lodge rooms, and offices of the Temple. The rear section is slightly larger and taller than the front section and primarily houses the Temple's large auditorium. Under the auditorium is the Temple's large banquet room. There is also a small attic above the auditorium that is used for storage. A large skylight lights this attic. Under the ground floor is a basement that houses the boiler and other maintenance equipment.

The exterior of the building is faced with Indiana Bedford limestone except for the rear wall which is constructed of tan bricks. The width of the front facade is 112 feet and the length of the building is 182 feet. The building has a plain parapet roof that becomes the attic story of the rear section. There are small, narrow openings that punctuate the attic story on the south facade. There is also a small cornice line that defines a parapet roof over the attic. Engraved on the main parapet on the front facade of the building are the words "Temple of Freemasonry" and "Let There Be Light" in the architrave. Otherwise, the parapet is unadorned.

The parapet is defined by a prominent cornice line with mutules that runs around the front and south facades of the building. Under this cornice line is a wide frieze that is defined by a narrow stone architrave molding that is interrupted by sets of triglyphs. Evenly spaced in every other triglyph along this frieze on the front and south side facades of the building are carved stone medallions, each depicting a Masonic or Masonic-related symbol. Dominating the front facade of the building is a large but shallow projecting entry pavilion. The entry pavilion features four colossal fluted Doric columns in antis. Flanking the columns and framing the sides of the entry pavilion are two large, shallow pilasters.

The three main entrances to the building are set back from but are not obscured by the four colossal columns. These entrances are made up of double sets of wood and glass doors, each with a transom split by transom bars. The glazing of the doors is made up of eight individual panes of glass with muntins set in a criss-cross pattern. The doors have architrave style frontispieces topped with elaborate carved stone carved architrave moldings. Engraved in the architrave atop each door are three separate phrases; "Our Faith is in God," "Our hope is in immortality," and "Our Love is Toward All Mankind." Above these phrases are elaborate cornices featuring a classical molding, scrolls, and anthemions.

Flanking the entrances are sets of double casement windows with transoms. Above these windows and extending to and between the entrances is a carved stone fret

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band. Above the entrance level are windows of the second and third stories. They are simple single-light, double-hung sashes separated by metal spandrels. The massive staircase leading to the front entrances completes the front facade. It has two wide, low stone balustrades that are topped with large classically-appointed urns.

The south side facade of the front section of the building features five recessed panels that contain paired single-light double-hung sashes on the first floor level. At the second and third floor levels only the first recess has window units. According to historic depictions of the building, this facade was originally built in this manner. The raised foundation, or ground floor openings in this part of the building are also simple sets of two single-light, double-hung sashes.

The south side facade of the rear section of the building has five recessed panels, separated with simple pilasters. The first and the fifth recessed panel is filled in at the top with a square spandrel featuring a carved eagle and a carved shield. The first floor recesses have sets of two single-light double-hung sashes. The raised foundation or ground floor has three entrances made up of double wood and glass doors flanked by very narrow single-light openings.

The rear facade of the building, although not stone-faced, is similar to the front and side facades in that it features recessed panels and single-light double-hung sashes in the raised foundation. The north side facade of the building is faced with stone and decorated in a similar manner to the south side facade. Drawings from the era the building was completed show that the exterior of the building has almost all, if not all, of its original detail.

There are three main floors inside the Temple: the ground floor contains kitchen and banquet facilities; the first floor contains the lobby, public, and club rooms; and the second floor contains offices and the two lodge meeting rooms. At the rear of the first and second floors is the auditorium. The third floor is actually a mezzanine floor that contains a small group of offices and the upper levels of the auditorium. There is a small storage attic above the auditorium and a basement under the ground floor that contains maintenance equipment.

The building is classically appointed throughout. The main entrance doors off of Wisconsin Avenue open into a vestibule; then three sets of wood and glass french doors with transoms open into the main lobby or foyer. Both the vestibule and foyer are clad with polished tan marble. The walls are interrupted frequently by marble pilasters. The floor is made up of terrazzo laid in a geometric pattern with a

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circular design at the center of the foyer. Original brass light fixtures sit over wood and glass-encased announcement boards. Oval globe lights hang over these boards, while brass arms of the same fixture support candle-style electric lights above. The coffered ceiling of the foyer has three recessed areas from which original crystal chandeliers hang. These ceiling areas are defined by plain marble moldings that are decorated with gold-painted wooden moldings in the leaf-and-tongue and egg-and-dart patterns.

To the right of the foyer is a staircase with a delicate wrought-iron balustrade that leads to Lodge Room #1 on the second floor or downstairs to the kitchen and banquet halls. A small office and a ladies lounge and bathroom are also off of this side of the foyer. To the left of the foyer is an identical staircase that leads to Lodge Room #2 on the second floor or to the downstairs kitchen-banquet rooms. To the left of the staircase is the building's elevator.

Directly ahead of the foyer is the main first floor hallway that leads to the auditorium, but also provides access to the club room and the library. This hallway has a barrel-vault ceiling and plaster walls. There are several sets of wood and glass french doors that sit in arched reveals along the hallway. Two brass light fixtures hanging from the ceiling have oval opaque glass globes. Most of the doors of this floor are french-type doors. Other doors are simple single-paneled wooden doors. All doors have simple dark wood moldings surrounding them.

To the left of the main hallway and through more sets of french doors is the club room or former billiard table-card room. This simply decorated room features plaster walls with a chair rail and large Neo-Classical brackets supporting the ceiling beams. The room is carpeted and still functions as a billiard table-card room today.

To the right of the main hallway is the more elaborately decorated library or, as it was originally called, the lounge. The room features plaster walls and a painted beamed ceiling. The terrazzo floor is covered with fine oriental rugs and furnished with traditional upholstered chairs and sofas. One of the highlights of the room is a large table made of 6,000 pieces of 38 different types of wood found in Wisconsin. On the far wall of the library is a grey stone fireplace with a rectangular opening and mantel. The mantel is decorated with swags in the entablature and is supported by pilasters that flank the opening. Also on this side of the room is a large arched opening filled with french doors that leads to the auditorium. On the opposite wall are three large bookcase units that take up most of the wall space. Like the openings of this room, they sit under arched reveals.

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The second floor has a small office, cloak rooms, and two lodge rooms. The lodge rooms are entered through sets of wood paneled doors that lead to vestibules. Additional sets of wood paneled doors lead directly into the lodge rooms. Both lodge rooms are carpeted and have plaster walls and ceilings. They are also decorated in classical motifs and both lodge rooms have similar plans. In each room there is a large open center area, a small stage or podium at the front of the room, and tiered upholstered auditorium-style seats along each of the walls.

The classical motifs of the lodge rooms are seen primarily in the podium area. One of the lodge rooms has six large, but simple pilasters separating panels of polished grey marble. The other lodge room features a recessed podium flanked by two colossal fluted Doric columns. The side walls of this room also have an upper tier of large painted panels. Both rooms have original decorative brass and opaque glass globe hanging lights and classical moldings.

The third floor of the temple is called the mezzanine level and has only a small set of offices that have lowered ceilings and carpeting. The bulk of the third floor and much of the first and second floors is taken up by the 1200-plus seat auditorium. Again, here in the auditorium, little appears to have changed from the original interior except for the installation of modern carpeting (carpeting was original to the auditorium). Directly outside of the auditorium on the first floor of the building is an original cork floor, installed to keep the noise level down from hallway traffic.

The stage area features most of the interior design of the auditorium. It has its original dark red velvet curtain and flanking classical appointments. Among the most prominent of these appointments are the colossal corinthian pilasters that flank the stage. Above the stage is a rinceau of foliated scrolls. In the center of the rinceau is a panel with a "G" within an oval molding.

On either side of the stage are, on the left, the organ balcony, and on the right, a faux balcony. These balconies have balustrades of square posts and small square panels with the same criss-cross pattern that is seen on the entry doors of the building. This same pattern of squares also make up the large screens that cover the mechanical elements of the grand organ in the auditorium. Above these screens are classically-decorated panels. Another set of colossal corinthian pilasters flank the two boxes. Other classical details in the auditorium include moldings with classical motifs such as dentils, acanthus leaves, and wheat ears.

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Seating in the large auditorium consists of the main set of seats that rise two stories in height from the first floor of the building. There is a large balcony over this set of seats, and at the very rear of the balcony more seats steeply rise to the ceiling of the auditorium. There are two large and four smaller lantern-like chandeliers that hang from the ceiling of the auditorium. They feature brass fixtures, oval opaque glass globes, and applied metal decoration in classical motifs. The auditorium is well-designed and its size has lent itself well to recent uses for the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra and the Madison Boy Choir.

Entering the Temple through the East Johnson Street entrances leads to the large banquet hall on the ground floor. While this entrance is not as elaborate as the main lobby, it displays the classical elegance found in the rest of the Temple's interior. The entry doors open into a vestibule and three sets of french doors open to a hallway with plastered and wood paneled walls. A staircase with the same kind of delicate wrought-iron balustrade as seen in the lobby leads to the first floor auditorium entrance, while additional french doors open to the large banquet hall of the ground floor. At the entrance to the banquet hall there is a staircase with more wrought iron balustrades. The room is simply decorated with plaster walls and a terrazzo floor. An original 1920s-style revolving mirrored ball and stage are elements that suggest this room was used for dances as well as large banquets. Also on this floor are a smaller dining room, offices, service and storage rooms, and a well-appointed large kitchen facility.

Throughout the interior there has been little, if any, modernization of the Temple's original facilities. Wall surfaces, doors, floors, windows, and classical appointments have been little touched except for the occasional addition of modern carpeting. Taking a walk through the interior of the Temple is like taking a walk back to a more elegant time, when craftsmanship and high quality materials were blended together into an exclusive private facility for one of Madison's most prominent fraternal organizations. And, today, as the Temple increasingly opens its facilities to more public uses, more and more area residents are able to see the interior of what is one of Madison's truly elegant historic buildings.





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World War I interrupted the Masons' plans for a new temple, but after the war, the Law Brothers drew up new plans for an even bigger temple for the Masons. In November of 1922, the Masons announced their plans to build a new Masonic Temple that would cost at least \$500,000. They stated that they expected to break ground for the new building in the spring of 1923 and that the plans by the architectural firm of Law and Law were completed. (6)

In May of 1923 the Masons broke ground for the new temple. It was pointed out in newspaper articles at the time that the building would be completed in about two years and that it would be constructed in an unusual manner. Because the Masons needed to use their old facility (the old Presbyterian Church they had altered) for as long as possible for their activities, the rear section of the building would be constructed first. Then the walls of the front section would be constructed around the old temple. The old temple was to be demolished right before the last phase of construction of the front section of the new temple. Local contractor John H. Findorff and Son was the general contractor for the building. (7)

In April of 1924, it was reported that the project was on schedule and that the rear section of the new building would be completed within six months. At this time, it was also reported that the old temple would soon be demolished so extensive work on the front section of the new building could be started. It took almost another 18 months to complete the new temple and it was dedicated in a four-day ceremony at the very end of September of 1925. The final cost of the new temple and its furnishings exceeded \$650,000 and the two and one-half years of construction resulted in a building that received praise from Masonic organizations across the country. When the building was completed, the Masons appropriately boasted in their Masonic publication that their temple was ". . . by far the most beautiful and costly Masonic structure in Wisconsin and, so far as can be ascertained, has no equal in any city of anywhere near the size of Madison in the country." (8)

The new temple was large enough to house all of the existing Masonic organizations in Madison and to house the youth and the women's auxiliary Masonic organizations. It was also to be a regional center for Scottish Rite Masonry, a group that encompassed the lodges of the higher degrees of Masonry. The actual ownership of the temple fell to a board of trustees of the Masonic Union. The Masonic Union included the six main Masonic organizations in Madison: the Madison Lodge #5, the Hiram Lodge #50, the Commonwealth Lodge #325, the Madison Chapter #4 Royal Arch Masons, the Robert McCoy Commandery #3, the Knights Templar; along with the Madison Consistory. In addition to the above groups, the following auxiliary groups were affiliated with and met at the temple at the time of its completion: DeMolay (a

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youth group), Eastern Star, White Shrine, and Wimodaughsis. With the addition of the Scottish Rite organization, altogether 11 different groups used the facilities of the new temple. (9)

The four-day dedication of the new temple was as elaborate as the building itself. It included one day for strictly Masonic activities, one day of activities for members of other fraternal and civic organizations in Madison, one day for an open house for all Madison residents to view the new temple, and one evening for a reception for the builders of the temple, including all the tradesmen who worked on the building and their families. The most elaborate day was the day set aside for Masonic activities. Thousands of Masons from throughout the state came to Madison to help formally dedicate the new temple. Activities included a parade around the Capitol Square that included three Masonic bands, dedication exercises in the new auditorium with speakers and music, and an evening banquet followed by dancing. (10)

Since 1925, the temple has served as the headquarters for all Masonic organizations as well as their auxiliary groups. At the time the temple was opened in 1925, there were 2,450 Masons in the various lodges. Today, the Masonic organizations that use the temple regularly number around 4,500. The temple is also the center for the 4,800-plus members of Scottish Rite Masonry in the area. And, the over 5,000-member Zor Shrine in Madison holds many activities in the temple.

In the past, private Masonic activities filled the temple to capacity. But, today, due to changes in membership and the financial needs in maintaining a large, historic building, the Masons have opened up their temple to many community or convention type activities. Their auditorium is well-suited as a rehearsal hall for such groups as the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, the Madison Opera, and the Madison Boy Choir. In fact, the Boy Choir keeps its office in the temple, as well. Many public concerts and meetings are also held at the temple. One unusual combination of events held in the temple in 1987 illustrates the scope of activities the facility can accommodate. While the Madison Opera was rehearsing its production of "Tosca" in one part of the temple, a state-wide body building contest was being held in another part of the temple.

Along with opening the temple to the public for non-Masonic activities, the Madison Masons are currently involved in a fund drive for the maintenance and renovation of their historic building. As part of this fund drive, the Madison Masons are establishing a tax-exempt Madison Masonic Center Foundation which would hold title to the temple and operate a public Masonic Museum and Library. This move will not only make the temple building fund attractive for contributors, but would result in

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the financial security to maintain this fine historic building. Rather than taking the step of abandoning this building for a cheaper, modern structure suited only for Masonic activities, the Madison Masons are engaged in a plan that would maintain their historic temple as a first-class private club facility for the Madison Masons, and a first-class historic public building.

Architecture

The Madison Masonic Temple is locally significant for architecture under criterion C because it is an outstanding example of the Neo-Classical Revival style. There are several outstanding examples of the Neo-Classical Revival style in downtown Madison, including the Beaux Arts State Capitol, the Neo-Classical Madison Municipal Building, and the old Christian Science Church (right next to the Masonic Temple). All of these outstanding examples of Neo-Classical architecture merit National Register Status and the State Capitol and the old Christian Science Church have already been listed in the National Register. The Masonic Temple is among these outstanding examples of Neo-Classical architecture and deserves National Register listing in its own right.

According to Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan, the Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture was popular in Wisconsin between 1895 and 1935. The style was spurred on in the United States by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago that featured the famous "white city" of white buildings all executed in classical forms using classical details. Because the style stressed large, conservative classical details, it became an ideal form for public and institutional buildings throughout the United States. Neo-Classical details also appeared frequently on commercial buildings of the era, but fully developed examples of the style in commercial buildings were frequently limited to banks. (11)

Neo-Classical buildings are primarily symmetrically arranged buildings of large proportions. They are most often built or faced with smooth ashlar stone finishes. Colossal columns in porticos or in front of recessed entrances are very common. Windows are generally single-light sashes. Attic stories and parapet roofs are common. Unlike the related Beaux Arts classical style, statuary, arches, and enriched moldings are not frequently seen. (12)

The Masonic Temple is a fine example of the Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture because it has almost all of the features described above and because these features are all executed with a high level of skill in both design and construction. The temple was built toward the later period that the style was

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popular in the United States, but not particularly late for Wisconsin. As a clubhouse for a prominent fraternal group, it functions as an institutional building, so the style is particularly appropriate. It is symmetrically arranged with large proportions and is faced with smooth Indiana Bedford limestone on all but the rear facade. Its main entrance with the colossal columns in antis is a popular Neo-Classical entrance and the large columns, reportedly weighing 50 tons each, are a fine and monumental element of the building's design. The building also has the parapet roof, classical cornice, and other classical details that add to its style, yet it is not overwhelmingly decorative, making it distinctive from the beautiful Beaux Arts State Capitol, for example.

The interior of the Temple is as finely crafted as the exterior. The marble-walled lobby with its elegant chandeliers, stone staircases with wrought-iron balustrades, and the terrazzo floor makes an elegant statement about the purpose of the building one has just entered. The library details, with its fine stone fireplace and wall of bookcases is also an elegant, yet comfortable room. The two lodge rooms of the second floor could have been constructed identically in a less inspired interior plan, but their distinctively different classical details make them each an important individual entity of the temple. The classically appointed auditorium, with most of its original features intact, is, perhaps, the highlight of the building and makes a grand statement about its occupants.

But, more importantly, the Madison Masonic Temple is significant not just because it contains all the typical elements of the Neo-Classical Revival style but because these classical elements are executed on the building so well. The result is a well-proportioned building made up of the finest materials by the best craftsmanship available. This factor in the significance of the building can probably be attributed to the architects, the Madison firm of Law and Law, one of the best architectural firms practicing in the city at the time this building was constructed.

Law and Law, and later Law, Law, and Potter was one of the most respected and prolific architectural firms in Madison between 1920 and 1930. James R. Law, a Madison native, worked for noted architects Claude and Starck and the state architect Arthur Peabody until beginning his own firm in 1914. His brother, Edward J. Law, joined the firm within the year. Ellis Potter was the senior draftsman for the brothers, and was made a partner in 1925. The Law Brothers and Ellis Potter practiced adeptly in all of the early twentieth century styles, including the Neo-Classical Revival style. They were responsible for some of the most outstanding office and commercial buildings in Madison, such as the Tenney Building, the

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Holstein and Friesian Association of America Building, and the Manchester's  
Department Store (demolished). (13)

The firm also designed eight fraternity-sorority houses in the Langdon Street  
Historic District and showed their versatility by not only designing fine large  
Greek houses in period revival styles including the Colonial Revival, Mediterranean  
Revival, and Tudor Revival styles, but by making each building a special work that  
reflected the individuality of each Greek organization. The firm also designed a  
number of noted smaller period revival residences throughout Madison. (14)

There were other fine architectural firms in Madison that could have designed an  
impressive Neo-Classical Masonic Temple for the Madison Masons, but Masonic members  
James and Edward Law created an elegant interpretation of the style for their  
brother Masons. This fine design may have been a product of their personal interest  
in the temple, but a look at their other major designs in Madison indicate that  
whether they were Masons or not, they were a talented firm that created one of the  
outstanding Neo-Classical buildings in Madison. And, the Madison Masonic Temple has  
to be included in the prestigious list of their most important designs in the city.

The Masonic Temple has a very high level of integrity. Almost all of its exterior  
and interior details are intact and well-maintained down to the original light  
fixtures. The Masons are justifiably proud of their historic building, as evidenced  
by their maintenance of its historic exterior and interior and their commitment to  
the facility as a continuing and future home for Madison Masonic organizations.

Social History

The Madison Masonic Temple is locally significant for social history under criterion  
A because it was home to the most important fraternal organization in the city. The  
Masonic Temple is the only historic fraternal clubhouse still extant in Madison.  
The size, scale, and design of the Madison Masonic Temple suggests that the Masons  
were men and women of prominence and social standing in the community. In fact much  
of the social significance of Masonry in Madison probably lies in who belonged to  
the Masonic lodges. These people were, in large part, important leaders in  
industry, commerce, and the professions in Madison. Because they chose to gather  
socially under the auspices of Masonry probably had significant overtones for the  
development of Madison both economically and politically.

According to Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan, fraternal groups  
identify one type of social order in American society and perform many important

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social and charitable activities in American communities. There are two types of fraternal groups. The first is the social club that emphasizes fellowship and secrecy. The second is the benevolent or insurance-providing society, emphasizing financial planning or insurance to their members. The Masons are the most well-known and prominent in the social fraternal group category. (15)

The origins of Masonry date back to medieval stonemasons who formed craft guilds to protect and pass on the secrets of their trade. In the 1600s, in England, these guilds accepted prominent men in the community as honorary or "accepted" masons. Eventually these masons formed their own society known as Freemasonry. Freemasons believe in a strong family; religious, community, and moral values; and democratic government. Of the five million Masons worldwide, at least three and one-half million live in the United States. (16)

Masonry came to the United States with English immigrants. They established Masonic Lodges as early as 1730 and by the time of the Revolution, the organization was firmly in place in the colonies. The Masons are proud of the fact that George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John and Samuel Adams were Masons. As eastern Americans moved west, Masonry went with them. The elaborate rituals and secrets of the society drew many to Masonry, especially since being a Mason often carried with it status, privilege, and prestige in the community. (17)

Masonry is a hierarchical system based on 33 degrees of achievement within the society. The first three degrees are Symbolic or Blue Lodge Masonry. A Third Degree Mason is known as a Master Mason, considered the highest Masonic degree. A Master Mason may then join one of two branches of Masonry to attain the fourth through the 33rd degrees that enhance the member's understanding of Masonic principles. One branch is the York Rite of Royal Arch Masons, Royal and Select Masters, and Knights Templar. The other branch is the Scottish Rite and consists of the Lodge of Perfection, the Council of Princes of Jerusalem, the Chapter of the Rose Croix, and the Consistory. The individual lodges within each branch are hierarchical and represent a member's achievement of higher degrees of Masonry. (18)

The Masons are the oldest of the social fraternal groups in Wisconsin. Their first lodge was established at Green Bay in 1823 and by 1843, there were three more lodges at Platteville, Mineral Point, and Milwaukee. By 1865 there were about 150 Masonic lodges in the state. Other fraternal groups popular in Wisconsin include the Odd Fellows, Good Templars, Shriners, Eagles, and Elks. Between 1866 and 1910, fraternal activity peaked. Female auxiliaries were founded; the most well-known being the Order of the Eastern Star, the Masonic auxiliary. After 1910, fraternal

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groups ended their rapid growth and the social changes of the late twentieth century have diminished the importance of lodges. But most communities in the state still have at least one or two active fraternal groups, and larger cities have larger, more numerous, and more active groups. (19)

The Masons and the International Order of Odd Fellows are the oldest and largest social fraternal societies in Madison. Masons formed Madison Masonic Lodge #5 in 1844 and the Odd Fellows formed Hope Lodge #17 in 1847. Both groups grew rapidly, and by 1902, the Masons had 350 members and the Odd Fellows had 85 members. The Odd Fellows had only 85 members, but they were some of the most important business and professional men in Madison. The Masons held some of the earliest social gatherings in Madison and they eventually became preeminent in the community. (20)

Other fraternal groups formed in Madison were both social and insurance-providing organizations. Of the social groups, the Elks, Eagles, and Moose all established fraternal lodges prior to 1930. Insurance groups included the Madison Relief Association, founded in 1866; the American Order of United Woodmen, founded in 1879; and the Fraternal Benefit Society, founded in Dane County in 1902. The Fraternal Benefit Society eventually became the Beaver National Mutual Benefit company, a large fraternal insurance group with its home office in Madison. Other social groups in Madison concentrated on civic improvements and are in a different category than the Masons or the Odd Fellows, or even the Fraternal Benefit Society. These groups included the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Optimists. Several other ethnic-related social groups existed in Madison in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but they were short-lived or were of little importance in the community. (21)

Early in Madison's history, fraternal groups met in the upstairs halls of many commercial blocks in downtown Madison (most demolished). At the end of the nineteenth century, the larger groups built or purchased their own lodge buildings. The Masons were the first to do so when they acquired the old Presbyterian Church in 1891 (demolished). Other groups soon followed suit. The Elks built a lodge in 1901; the Eagles purchased a lodge prior to 1910; the Odd Fellows built a lodge in 1906; and the Moose acquired their lodge prior to 1929. Of the insurance-providing fraternal groups, the Beaver National Mutual Benefit organization built a fine office and lodge in downtown Madison. The only historic lodges of social or benevolent fraternal groups still extant today are the Beaver office building and the current Masonic Temple. (22)

Of the other buildings constructed for social or fraternal groups in Madison, only two are still extant, and they were built for groups that had and still have a



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different purpose than the Masons. These buildings include the Madison Club, founded as a business development club; and the YWCA, a national service group for women. All other historic fraternal halls have been demolished. This makes the Madison Masonic Temple unique, as the only extant historic building related to a social fraternal groups in the city.

The Masonic Temple is not only important because it is the only remaining historic building related to Madison's most significant social fraternal societies. It is also significant because the Masons helped define the social structure in Madison during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Masons were some of the most prominent men in the community. And, while the gathering together of important people in the community in a social or fraternal setting may not, in and of itself, be significant, it is well known that important business and political connections were made between the members of fraternal lodges, and that these connections often had an indirect, if not direct, effect on the growth and development the city. There are no written records that establish the Madison Masonic Temple as a place where such connections were made. But, since the Masons were the most prominent fraternal group in Madison, it is likely that such connections were made and that they resulted in important economic or political developments in the city.

In recent years, the Madison Masons have been directly involved in many charitable and civic activities. They support the Wisconsin Masonic Home near Dousman for retired Masons and their families. They support a diagnostic health care facility at Deaconess Hospital in Milwaukee. The Wisconsin Masonic Foundation funds college scholarships. The Royal Arch Masons support research aimed at helping children with learning disabilities. The Council of Royal and Select Masters supports Cerebral Palsy research. The Knights Templar supports eye research, college scholarships, and hearing aid assistance. The Knights of the York Cross of Honour funds research aimed at finding a cure for leukemia. The Scottish Rite Masons fund research on the nature and causes of schizophrenia; and they fund college scholarships, and a national heritage museum. Auxiliary groups also are involved in charitable activities, particularly college scholarships. These charitable and civic activities illustrate that Masons do not only participate in social activities, but that they also participate in activities that attempt to better society as a whole.

Because the Masons were a prominent and long-time social fraternal group in Madison and because such social fraternal groups made both direct and indirect contributions to the growth and development of social service in Madison, the Madison Masonic Temple, the culmination of the Masons' prominence in the community, is significant for local history. Also, as the last extant historic facility associated with an

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important social fraternal groups in Madison, the Masonic Temple is a significant landmark in the community.

Notes to Section 8:

- (1) The period of significance encompasses the date of construction and historic era of the building up to the last 50 years.
- (2) "Madison Masons to Lay New Temple Cornerstone After Parade Wednesday," The Wisconsin State Journal, 30 October, 1923; "Masons Ready for Dedication," The Wisconsin State Journal, 29 September 1925.
- (3) "Madison Masons to Lay New Temple Cornerstone."
- (4) "Masons Will Dedicate New \$650,000 Temple Wednesday, September 30," The Wisconsin State Journal, 27 September, 1925.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Ibid.; "Masonic Temple at \$500,000 to Start in Spring," The Wisconsin State Journal, 19 November 1922.
- (7) "Masonic Temple at \$500,000;" "New \$500,000 Masonic Temple Nearly Finished," The Wisconsin State Journal, 4 January 1925.
- (8) "New Masonic Temple May be Ready Ahead of Time," The Wisconsin State Journal, 13 April 1924; "Masons Ready for Dedication;" "Masons Will Dedicate New \$650,000 Temple Wednesday."
- (9) "Masons Will Dedicate New \$650,000 Temple Wednesday."
- (10) Ibid.; "Masons Ready for Dedication;" "Thousands Aid in Ceremonies at Artistic Building," The Wisconsin State Journal, 30 September 1925.
- (11) Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. II, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture, p. 2-18.
- (12) John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1981, p. 69.
- (13) Information on Law and Law and Law, Law, and Potter is from the architect's files of the Preservation Planner for the City of Madison, Municipal Building, Madison, Wisconsin.
- (14) Langdon Street Historic District nomination form, on file at the Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.
- (15) Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. III, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Social and Political Groups, pp. 5-1--5-2.
- (16) Ibid., pp. 5-2--5-3.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Information from the Madison Masons, Madison Masonic Temple, Madison, Wisconsin.

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- (19) Wyatt, Social and Political Groups, pp. 5-1--5-6.
- (20) Katherine H. Rankin, unpublished thematic study of fraternal groups in Madison, Wisconsin. On file at the Preservation Planner's Office for the City of Madison, Municipal Building, Madison, Wisconsin.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical References

  x See continuation sheet

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:

  x State Historic preservation office  
   Other State agency  
   Federal agency  
  x Local government  
   University  
   Other

Specify repository:

City of Madison Planning & Development Dept

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property   Less than one

UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/0/5/7/0/0</u>	<u>4/7/7/1/9/8/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>

   See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The verbal boundary description consists of the legal description of the property: Original Plat, Block 92, Lots 3, 4, and 5.

   See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the historic setting of the property since its date of construction and up to the present time.

   See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Carol Lohry Cartwright, Historian  
organization prepared for the owners  
street & number Rt. 2, 5581A Hackett Rd.  
city or town Whitewater

date December 27, 1989  
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state WI zip code 53190

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MADISON MASONIC TEMPLE, 301 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin.  
Photos by C. Cartwright, August, 1989. Negatives at the State Historical Society of  
Wisconsin. Views:

- # 1 of 15: Site view, from the southwest.
- # 2 of 15: Front facade, view from the west.
- # 3 of 15: South side facade, view from the southwest.
- # 4 of 15: Rear facade, view from the southeast.
- # 5 of 15: Interior, main lobby doors.
- # 6 of 15: Interior, main lobby.
- # 7 of 15: Interior, first floor main hallway.
- # 8 of 15: Interior, library.
- # 9 of 15: Interior, library.
- #10 of 15: Second floor lodge room.
- #11 of 15: Second floor lodge room.
- #12 of 15: Auditorium.
- #13 of 15: Auditorium stage.
- #14 of 15: East Johnson Street entrance lobby.
- #15 of 15: Large Banquet Room.