

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 21 1980 JUN 3 1980  
DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Oddfellows Hall (First Avenue Bathhouse) AHRIS SITE NO. FAI-038

AND/OR COMMON

Oddfellows Hall (Golden North Rebekah Lodge)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

325 First Avenue

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska 99701

CODE

02

COUNTY

Fairbanks

CODE

090

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

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

**OWNERSHIP**

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

**STATUS**

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

**PRESENT USE**

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

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Golden North Rebekah Lodge No. 4 A

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 508

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Alaska 99701

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

District Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

607 Barnette Street

CITY, TOWN

Fairbanks

STATE

Alaska 99701

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Fairbanks: A City Historic Building Survey, by Janet Matheson, architect, 1978.  
Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRIS site no. FAI-136).

DATE

2 Feb. 1977

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Alaska Division of Parks, 619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210

CITY, TOWN

Anchorage

STATE

Alaska 99501

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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

The Oddfellows Hall, which began as a bathhouse, stands at its original location in downtown Fairbanks on First Avenue. Built in 1907 by Madame Renio, a fortune teller, and her partner Doc Overgaard, the structure is a typical turn-of-the-century, two-story building with horizontal shiplap siding and a peaked roof of corrugated metal. In the rear the building drops abruptly to one story and originally it tapered to a low shed containing the bathhouse boiler.

The entrance on First Avenue is set back about fifteen feet from the front of the building. Historically the door led into a small entry-room to the right of which was the health clinic fronting on First Avenue. The bathhouse receiving room stood to the left of the entry, and from it a long hallway extended back to the boiler shed. A door off the right of the hallway led into the three back stalls, each partitioned by walls open at top and bottom to allow warm air circulation, and a steam room with a slab for massages. Small rooms, each with a high window, were located behind the bath stalls. Customers could rest after bathing or spend the night in these rooms. At the end of the hallway was another small room with one high window.

The stairway to the second story rises opposite the front entry. On the second floor, to the right of the stairs, the owners cut a skylight into the roof to light the bath area on the first floor. Under the stairs Doc Overgaard had a small living apartment. To the left of the stairs Madame Renio had her second floor rooms. She entered through the kitchen that contained a stove, woodbox, sink and open shelves fitted against the slanting roof. Her main room, above the clinic, had one long window overlooking First Avenue and the Chena River and another window on the west side facing toward Cushman Street. This room and the clinic below both measured about twelve by eighteen feet.

During the winter of 1909-1910 the water and steam pipes of the bathhouse froze, the business closed, and the local chapter of Oddfellows purchased the building. They modified the interior to meet their needs as a meeting hall, converting the clinic into a kitchen, the downstairs apartment into a bathroom, and the bath area into one large hall approximately seventy-five feet long and twenty-four feet wide. The organization has also painted both the exterior and the interior periodically and removed the skylight.

In 1963 the Golden North Rebekah Lodge, a sister organization to the Oddfellows, purchased the building for use as their meeting hall. They have made some alterations, removing the original boiler room in the early 1970s and remodeling the kitchen. To provide greater privacy for meetings, the lodge boarded up the high windows along the west side. The old barrel stoves that heated the building have been replaced with steam heat provided by the city. Today the Rebekahs continue to own and maintain the hall.

In 1967 the Chena River flooded, but the Oddfellows Hall, sitting on high ground, was not damaged. However, over time the extremes of freezing and thawing have caused the rough stone foundation to deteriorate. The poor condition of the foundation has led to settling noticeable in the uneven alignment of the shiplap

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-present	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		civic group meetings, youth gatherings.

SPECIFIC DATES      1907 - present                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Oddfellows Hall is significant for architectural, historic, humanitarian and social reasons. Architecturally it represents a traditional turn-of-the-century wood frame building--only a few examples of this style remain in Fairbanks. Socially, its beginnings as a bathhouse and subsequent use by a prominent civic and humanitarian organization reflects the changing social character of the city.

Architecturally the hall is of traditional turn-of-the-century wood frame construction. The unusual positioning of its components in conjunction with the clean and simple moldings and corner trim give the structure a feeling of stature, grace, and balance, a visual landmark in the minds of local people and visitors alike.

Built in the gold rush town of Fairbanks in 1907, "Mrs Madole's First Avenue Bathhouse and Clinic," located on First Avenue overlooking the Chena River, is one of several early structures still standing in Alaska's major interior city. During its brief but colorful history as a bathhouse for the town's leading citizens, as well as miners from outlying districts, made use of the baths. Run by Madame Renio, fortune teller, and her partner Doc Overgaard, the baths were a luxury.

With Doc Overgaard from Denmark, Mrs. Madole (Madame Renio) built the bathhouse on First Avenue, opening for business in 1907. They were in competition with five or six such businesses operating in Fairbanks at the time--hot running water was a luxury and bathhouses served the entire population of the town and mining region. Not surprisingly, some of the bathhouses were less respectable than others and Doc Overgaard, not a real doctor, did a brisk "health clinic" trade sobering men. An excellent description of the bathhouse in these early days can be found in This Old House: The Story of Clara Rust written by Jo Anne Wold, prominent Fairbanks journalist.

In the winter of 1909-1910 the water pipes froze, forcing the business to close. Soon afterwards, the Oddfellows Lodge purchased the building. Since this purchase, the "Hall" has matured as a focal point for the activities of civic organizations essential to the cultural growth of the community. This change in ownership paralleled the changing social character of Fairbanks from raw mining town to more stable permanent community.

The Oddfellows and their sister Rebekahs, owners of the building since 1910, are an international civic organization dedicated to public service. For seventy years they have used the hall to hold fund-raising activities for community projects, to shelter and offer first-aid to victims in times of disaster, and to house churches

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alaska-Yukon Magazine. Seattle, 1906-1912.

The Pathfinder: Magazine of the Alaska Pioneers. Valdez, 1912.

This Old House: The Story of Clara Rust, by Jo Anne Wold, Northwest Publishing Co., Anchorage, Alaska.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES			UTM REFERENCES		
A	0, 6	4, 6, 5	6, 9, 5	7, 1	9, 4
					1, 2, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING
					NORTHING
C				D	
E				F	
G				H	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 8A, Block 17, Fairbanks Townsite.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE	DATE
David Libbey, archeologist	10 May 1979
ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE
Cooperative Park Studies Unit	(907) 479-7370
STREET & NUMBER	STATE
Gruening Building, University of Alaska	Alaska 99701
CITY OR TOWN	
Fairbanks	

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *William M. Mendenhall*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 4/15/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>W. Ray Luce</i>	DATE 6/3/80
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
ATTEST: <i>Rustin J. O'Connell</i>	DATE 6/2/80
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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siding. In addition the roof of corrugated metal, a popular material in northern climates, is rusting and in poor condition.

Structural changes to the building's exterior have been minimal. While interior changes have been of a more extensive nature, details of the original construction are still visible. The structure sits on its original townsite lot, important to the historic integrity of the building as it continues to command a view overlooking the Chena River. The boundaries of the nomination conform to the original legal description on file at the District Recorder's Office in Fairbanks.

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newly arriving in Fairbanks. Active with youth, the lodge encourages gatherings for Fairbanks' young people. It also allows fellow civic organizations to rent the hall at a nominal fee for business meetings.

In keeping with their motto, "Friendship, Love and Truth," the work of the Oddfellows and Rebekahs encompasses many aspects of public service. Between 1910 and 1920 the Fairbanks chapter gave support to the newly built St. Matthews and St. Josephs hospitals. They held fund-raising plays and bazaars at the hall in addition to making direct donations. The lodge continues this support today donating the use of hospital beds and wheel chairs, visiting hospitals and the Fairbanks Pioneer Home to sit with the bedridden, entertaining the infirm with music provided by local talent, taking the elderly for drives, and assisting them in shopping. The local chapter contributes to an eye bank run by the International Lodge as well as donating yearly to such charities as the Heart Fund and the Cancer Fund

In times of general distress the Oddfellows and Rebekahs have been active. In 1914 and again in the 1940s when a large downtown fire burned part of the Cushman Street area in Fairbanks, the lodge opened its doors providing first-aid, food, clothing, and shelter to the needy and the rescue crews. The lodge performed the same services during the destructive earthquakes of 1937 and 1967 and again after the Chena River flood in 1967.

Always active with youth the Fairbanks chapter encourages the use of their hall for social gatherings of young people. At one time they ran a coffee house for teenagers "The One-Way Inn." The local lodge sponsors their own youth groups, gives scholarships to high schools students, and in support of civic awareness, sponsors a local student in the national student group visit to the United Nations.

Throughout its history the Oddfellows Hall has provided a home-away-from-home for associate members, often military personnel from other chapters. Here they congregate and participate in the community service that is the hallmark of their organization. To encourage civic awareness, the hall has long been made available for rent to community groups. Organizations that regularly use the Fairbanks hall include: the two black masonic chapters and their sister chapters of the Eastern Star, the Sons of Norway, the German Club, and the Curling Club which holds its social meeting here during the annual statewide "bonspeil".

While the Oddfellows and Rebekahs are non-denominational, they are church oriented. The hall is available for services by churches newly arriving in Fairbanks. Churches that had their start in the Oddfellows Hall include: the Corinthian Church, the Polar Evangelistic Church and several Baptist churches. The Pentecostal Youth Group currently meets at the hall.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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The Hall stands for a continuing social tradition. Often Oddfellows are also members of the Rebekah Lodge showing the close relationship between the two organizations. In the late 1930s the Fairbanks Oddfellows disbanded and did not reactivate until 1945. In the interim the Rebekahs maintained and used the hall, finally purchasing it in 1967.

The simple but traditional lines of their building symbolize the quiet and dignified character of these brother and sister organizations. But they also remind the community of the service that has contributed significantly to the social well-being and cultural continuity of Fairbanks.