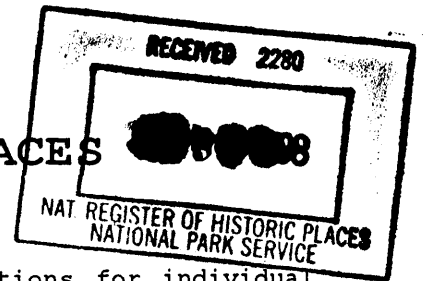


15a

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 Winona Masonic Temple
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 255 Main Street
not for publication N/A
city or town Winona vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Winona code 169 zip code 55987

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart 11/21/98
Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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): _____

Edward W. Beal 2/26/98

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: meeting hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: civic
meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS
Beaux Arts

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation LIMESTONE
roof UNKNOWN
walls BRICK
other TERRA COTTA
MARBLE
GRANITE

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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ART
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance 1909 - 1947

Significant Dates 1909

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder architects: Laird, Warren Powers and
C.F. Osborne
contractor: Lohse, John

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: Winona Masonic Temple Archives, Winona, MN

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	609030	4878200	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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 Christine A. Curran and Charlene K. Roise, historians
Charles W. Nelson, historical architect

organization Hess, Roise and Company

street & number 100 North First Street

city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55401

telephone (612) 338-1987

date August 1997

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 City of Winona

street & number 207 Lafayette Street telephone _____

city or town Winona state MN zip code 55987

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 Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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classical ornamentation executed in gray bedford limestone. This treatment is particularly evident in molded lintels and semicircular pediments capping second-story windows. A prominent modillioned cornice at the third-floor level is immediately under a coped brick parapet which extends around the perimeter of the building. The temple has a flat sloped roof which is concealed by the parapet.

The first story is separated from the upper floors by a secondary cornice; the brick wall on this level is articulated by horizontal recessed bands at regular intervals. Corners and the center bay are enframed by brick Doric pilasters with stone capitals and bases. The principal entry is flanked by white Georgian marble Doric columns that support a classical architrave and cornice. Windows on the auditorium are double-hung on the first and third stories, and casements on the second; those on the second and third stories have stone surrounds, whereas those on the office wing are segmentally arched double-hung units with stone keystones.

The rear (west) end of the auditorium, which holds the fly loft of the stage, is elevated approximately one-half story above the auditorium cornice. The exterior design of this section of the building repeats that of the auditorium. Both the west and north walls are essentially blank, with the exception of a bank of seven windows at the first-story level and a bank of five brick-enframed blind panels at the third-story level of the north wall.

The exterior of the building retains total original design integrity with the exception of the addition of a canopy extending from the north entrance to an automobile drop-off area, and the construction of a ramp for handicapped access to the south entrance elevator/stair, added after 1986.

As a facility intended to house a number of Masonic bodies and serve as a social and community center, the first floor was originally designed to provide space for activities of a more

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public nature. The principal space consisted of a large hall measuring 51 by 71 feet with a raised platform or stage at the west end measuring 51 by 28 feet. The primary use of the room was as a banquet hall; this space has a floor of hard maple. Associated with the banquet hall were a small dining room, kitchen, parlor or lounge, cloak room, and entrance lobby, all of which could be reached from Fifth Street, Main Street, and the south entry (opening onto the side yard between the temple and the Methodist parsonage). A grand staircase of mahogany provides access to the reception area and auditorium on the second floor. The first floor could accommodate a gathering of more than 500 persons.

In 1979, the Winona Masonic Benevolent Association (WMBA) sold the building to the city of Winona for the purpose of creating a center for senior citizens, which is currently known as the Winona Senior Friendship Center. The center occupies the first floor. Minor alterations required to accommodate this use included the construction of a handicapped-accessible entrance and modification of dining rooms to incorporate a pool room, craft room, gift shop, reception room, and offices for the center administration. The WMBA signed a lease on 25 August 1980 to retain the second and third floors for Masonic activities. In 1986, the WMBA installed an elevator to service the second and third floors at a cost of \$79,000.

Upon ascending either the grand staircase or the south elevator/stair, access is provided into a longitudinal corridor and a reception room. The office of the WMBA occupies the southeast corner. Furnishings include a large safe, glazed bookcases, and desks. Opening onto the corridor are a restroom, two wardrobe and props storage rooms, and a property room, which has direct access to the auditorium's backstage area. Along the front of the building, and opening onto the reception room, are a library/lounge and a small office with a walk-in vault. A lateral wall divides the reception room from the auditorium ante-room, candidate preparation room, and two small chambers.

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Undoubtedly, the premier element in the design of the auditorium is the fully outfitted stage for the use of the Scottish and York Rites. It retains original accoutrements and special features required for live theater of the turn of the century. All features are present, intact, and operational. The stage retains an early electrical switchboard made of marble, which controls all stage and auditorium (house) lighting. Original stage scenery remains, including free-standing theatrical props and 98 hand-painted scenic drops. The drops were designed by Sosman and Landis of Chicago, procured by M.C. Lilley and Company of Columbus, Ohio, and installed under the direction of Lilley's western representative, Bestor G. Brown of Wichita, Kansas. When grouped in various combinations, the individually numbered drops create 59 stage scenes. A list of the scenes is provided below. A double door for delivery and removal of large props is located in the center of the west wall.

As both the Scottish and York Rites required special provisions for the performance of their ritual work, each was provided with adequate storage spaces for paraphernalia and preparation rooms. Several rooms on the second and third floors contain wardrobe cabinets for the storage of costumes and uniforms. As mentioned above, these rooms are situated with access to a longitudinal corridor accessing both the auditorium and stage areas, a deliberate feature of the design that emphasizes the importance of support areas for theatrical productions.

The plan of the third floor includes rooms that border the auditorium and stage on the south and east sides. Rooms on the south are wardrobes, robing and makeup rooms. The east end, which is fitted with a set of wide, shuttered wooden doors opening onto the balcony, originally functioned as a small lodge/meeting room. With the conversion of the first floor for use as a senior citizens center, this area now comprises a dining room with adjacent kitchen for use by the Masons. Access to the organ loft is also provided on the third floor.

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The basement was never finished for formal use, with the exception of spaces provided near the staircases for cloak rooms and toilet rooms. These rooms were to be used in connection with functions held in the first-floor hall. Other spaces are relegated to storage and the heating plant. The city of Winona has installed a sprinkler system throughout the building since its purchase.

List of Stage Scenes with Corresponding Drop Numbers

<u>Title of Scene</u>	<u>Drop Numbers</u>
Arched Vault	6, 11, 31, 54
Ascension	4, 21, 46, 75
Audience Chamber	8, 27, 50
Blue Curtain with "G"	3
Boat Scene	94
Building of Temple	6, 23, 35, 61
Burning Bush	42, 60, 84
Castle Wall	7
Cathedral Interior	6, 13, 34, 63, 88
Cave Scene	4, 21, 42, 69, 89
Classified Temple in Cloud	65, 87, 98
Clouds	94
Court of the (Egyptian) Dead	6, 23, 48, 73, 97
Court of St. Andrew	6, 25, 49
Crucifixion	4, 21, 45, 78
	4, 21, 44, 85
Curtain of Tears	4, 21, 42, 66
Dungeon	6, 11, 36, 57
Eight Pillars in the Clouds	65, 87, 98
Flag Drop Scene	6, 12, 33, 65, 84
Forest Scene (#1)	9, 21, 42, 66
Forest Scene (#2)	4, 21, 46, 67, 93
Garden Column with Word	4, 21, 45, 78

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<u>Title of Scene (cont.)</u>	<u>Drop Numbers (cont.)</u>
Geometrical Camp	4, 20, 39, 76
Hall of Great Pillars	6, 11, 31, 54
Hell Scene	6, 11, 30, 55, 90
Hiram's Tomb	28
Key Stone Arch	10
King Solomon's Apartment	5, 15, 41, 70, 96
Man on Pale Horse (death)	82
Man on Red Horse	80
Man on White Horse (with crown)	79
Mausoleum	6, 11, 36, 57
Moonrise over Moor and Castle (ruins in forest)	4, 26, 51, 72, 92
New Outside Pillars	33
Ocean Scape Between Mountains	94
Orders of Architecture	97
Outside of Egyptian Tomb	4, 21, 42, 66
Peristyle	4, 21, 45, 78
Pontiff's Garden	42, 61
River Scene	4, 21, 42, 68, 99
Roman Aqueduct Garden	5, 15, 41, 76, 96
Rose Garden	4, 21, 45, 78
Ruins of Temple	4, 18, 56, 91
Scales of Justice	81
Sepulcher	4, 21, 32, 53
Soldiers at Ford	57
Stairs Behind Colosseum	9, 29
Sunset Above the Clouds	85
Sunset Behind Greek Ruins	4, 18, 56, 91
Sunset Behind Three Caves	77
Temple of Justice	6, 12, 33, 61, 65, 97
Temple Scene (with checkerboard floor)	61
Temple View (Upward Egyptian Cypress Garden)	8, 22, 40, 64
Throne Room	8, 27, 50

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<u>Title of Scene (cont.)</u>	<u>Drop Numbers (cont.)</u>
Tomb	3, 17
Tormented Souls Under Altar	83
Treasury	6, 24, 52, 95
Vault	6, 11, 31, 54
Volcano Scene	4, 26, 43, 62

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The first Masons to organize in Minnesota were members of the Blue Lodge, AF and AM. James M. Goodhue, publisher of the first newspaper in the territory, the *Minnesota Pioneer*, called the area's first Masonic meeting at St. Paul in 1849. Members of that lodge included territorial officials, tradesmen, craftsmen, and merchants.⁷ A second lodge assembled in 1850 at Stillwater, and a third at St. Anthony in 1851. Representatives from these first three lodges formed the Grand Lodge of Minnesota in 1853, which immediately began dispensing charters for new lodges and establishing consistent rituals and procedures for the members to follow. Two years later, Henry D. Huff, John Iams, and G.R. Tucker made the first efforts to organize a Masonic lodge in Winona, Minnesota, a nascent Mississippi River port with a population of 350 in 1855. The three Masons successfully petitioned the Grand Lodge of Minnesota for a Masonic lodge in their town, but let the dispensation lapse before a formal charter was issued. The Grand Lodge granted a second dispensation shortly thereafter, and a formal charter was issued for Winona Lodge No. 18 in January 1857.

The city of Winona incorporated that same year. Within six years of its founding, Winona had grown to a small city with over 3,000 residents.⁸ A constant stream of steamboats provided transportation and communication to the community, and the first of many logs arrived from western Wisconsin forests, feeding sawmills established by William Harris Laird and his cousins James and Matthew Norton. The Laird, Norton Lumber Company would eventually play a leadership role in Winona's rise as one of the most productive lumber towns on the Mississippi River.

⁷ Edward Johnstone, "Beginning of Masonry in Minnesota," Bulletin No. 9 of the Educational Lodge, No. 1002, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 25 January 1949.

⁸ William L. Crozier, "A Social History of Winona, Minnesota, 1880-1905" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1975), 32.

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Blue Lodge Masons: Winona Chapter No. 5 Royal Arch Masons in September 1863, and Coeur de Lion Commandery, No. 3 Knights Templar in 1864. As Masonic membership in Winona grew, the Masons found it necessary to relocate in 1873 to a new building constructed by the Laird, Norton Lumber Company. The new building provided first-floor space for Winona's post office and second-floor rooms for rental offices, leaving the entire third floor for the Masons. According to an early newspaper account, the owners of the building, Simpson, Lambertson, Mitchell and Norton, had the interior of the third floor designed to the Mason's specifications. For the first time in their history, the Winona Masons enjoyed "a number of wardrobes and closet rooms, fitted up expressly for the convenience of the different orders of Masons that will occupy the rooms."¹³ The Post Office Block was to remain the center of Masonic activity in Winona until 1909.

The space in the Post Office Block was large enough to accommodate continued growth in membership, and leaders of Winona Lodge No. 18 decided to organize a Scottish Rite Valley in Winona. In the late 1890s, a group of Masons led by Will Hayes Laird, cousin of prominent Winona lumber baron William Harris Laird, petitioned the Scottish Rite headquarters, known as the Orient of Minnesota, for a dispensation to charter the new organization.¹⁴ The ritual of the Scottish Rite was perhaps the most complex of the Masonic orders. In contrast to the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, the Scottish Rite had 29 degrees, progression through which was accompanied by dramatic and theatrical initiation rites and

¹³ "Dedication of Masonic Hall," *The Winona Weekly Express*, 1873. Clipping from the files of the Winona County Historical Society, Winona, Minnesota.

¹⁴ Will Hayes Laird probably petitioned the Scottish Rite headquarters in St. Paul for the Winona charter. St. Paul was one of three headquarters that existed in the state of Minnesota at the time the Winona headquarters were chartered. The other two headquarters were established at Minneapolis and Duluth.

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ceremonies. Lessons of the Scottish Rite were consistent with Masonic tradition in that they focused on morality and ethics taught through role playing, symbolism and allegories. However, the Scottish Rite rituals were much more dramatic than those of the Blue Lodge Masons, using spectacular theatrics to examine mystical traditions and esoteric thought.¹⁵

The petition for a Scottish Rite body in Winona, known as the Winona Lodge of Perfection, was granted in February 1898, and with fifteen charter members, was designated the Scottish Rite Valley for southern Minnesota. Two years later, charters were granted for several allied Scottish Rite bodies, "Winona Chapter of Rose Croix," "Winona Council of Kadosh," and "Winona Consistory."¹⁶ In May 1900, the Masons also welcomed the Winona Chapter 141, Order of the Eastern Star, the only Masonic-affiliated order that allowed female members.¹⁷

Establishing the Scottish Rite Valley in Winona dramatically increased the number of people using the Masonic facilities in the Post Office Block. Therefore, it is not surprising that officers of Winona Lodge No. 18 soon began planning to construct a building of their own. On 10 April 1906, lodge leaders began the process by incorporating the Winona Masonic Benevolent Association (WMBA). A newspaper article announced the formation of the new corporation and described its primary mission:

¹⁵ Kenneth L. Ames, "The Lure of the Spectacular," in *Theatre of the Fraternity*, 21; Clawson, 54.

¹⁶ "Masonic Charter Issued to Winona Lodge," 18.

¹⁷ A woman had to be closely associated with a member of the Masonic fraternity to be eligible for membership in the Order of the Eastern Star. Because it was the only Masonic order that allowed women, the majority of Eastern Star members were women.

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ran dry. This prosperity was reflected in the mix of Queen Anne-style commercial blocks and Period Revival-style churches and civic buildings that rose on Winona's downtown blocks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Masonic Temple's red-brick and stone Beaux-Arts design was one of many eclectic Period Revival styles in the area, which included the Richardsonian Romanesque Winona County Courthouse, the Gothic Revival Second National Bank, the Richardsonian Romanesque Central Methodist Church, and the Beaux-Arts Winona Free Library, also designed by Warren Powers Laird.²⁸

In June 1909, with the construction of the temple well underway, the attention of the WMBA turned to the issue of procuring scenery and stage equipment for the building. The design for the Winona Masonic Temple included a large proscenium-arch stage at the west end of a two-story main lodge room, the heart of the temple. The stage and its accompanying scenery, props and equipment were a key component in the Scottish Rite and York Rite initiation rituals. Although all the Masonic orders used role-playing in their work, the Scottish Rite dramatics were far more involved, requiring different rituals and settings for each of 29 degrees. Masonic historian William D. Moore explains the differences between the Blue Lodge role-playing and that of the Scottish Rite:

The story line of the first three degrees of Freemasonry was a relatively simple tale that occurred in one location, in one time period, and with one set of characters. By contrast, the Scottish Rite rituals attempted to school initiates in varying esoteric traditions by incorporating characters from throughout Europe and the Middle East and by focusing on events that spanned millennia. To accept an enclosed room in an American city as Solomon's temple required a leap of faith and imagination. To picture that same room as,

²⁸ City of Winona, *River Town Winona*, 45.

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erecting a stage with "new scenery and properties, and all the paraphernalia for displaying panoramic scenes, with a handsome illustrated drop curtain and rich drapery in front."³² The Masons embraced the use of painted scenery because it had many advantages over earlier practices. As Masonic historian William D. Moore explains, "The use of painted scenery both expedited the job of preparing the ritual space and resulted in more convincing settings. Members no longer needed to hang elaborate draperies and move quantities of furniture; instead, by pulling ropes and changing drops they easily could transform rustic caves into royal Persian palaces."³³ With the advent of electric lighting in the 1890s, state-of-the-art theatrical lighting systems were installed with the scenery in new Masonic temples. The results were quite spectacular. Three colors of border lights, red, blue and white, were controlled by mechanical dimmers, making it possible to portray mystical visions, changing moods, and the passing of time during the dramatizations. The theatrical effects of the Scottish Rite stage successfully provided the "suspension of disbelief required by the rituals."³⁴

The introduction of elaborate theatrical techniques prompted a change in the way rituals were performed by the Scottish Rite. In the past, new members were inducted in individual ceremonies. With the addition of scenery, costumes, lights, and public-address systems, the fraternity did not have to "focus their efforts on a single initiate for the experience to be effective," and the Rite

³² *Semi-Annual Reunion Program* (Chicago Scottish Rite Bodies: October 8-10, 1884), 6. Quoted in Brockman, "Creating Scenic Illusion, 99.

³³ Moore, 40.

³⁴ Moore, 43; Lawrence J. Hill, "The Changing Light of Dramatic Initiation," in *Theatre of the Fraternity*, 116.

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began initiating members in groups.³⁵ One member, called the "exemplar," represented the entire group of initiates and participated in the rituals, while a group of candidates observed.

The addition of theatrical techniques also made the Scottish Rite more appealing than ever before, and its membership across the country skyrocketed by the turn of the century. More members moving through the degrees more efficiently meant more initiation fees for the organization. The greater revenue was spent on larger and increasingly well-equipped buildings, and by 1901, large auditoriums with fully equipped proscenium stages were standard in Masonic temples built to accommodate the Scottish Rite.³⁶ Since it was often impractical for most established Masonic lodges, such as the ones first organized in the East, to renovate their spaces to include an auditorium with a fully equipped stage, the most elaborate Scottish Rite facilities belonged to newly organized lodges across the Midwest, South and West.

As the southern Minnesota Valley for the Scottish Rite, the Winona Masons had the need and the opportunity to outfit their new temple with the best and most modern theatrical furnishings available. The WMBA purchased 98 hand-painted scenic drops through a large fraternal supplier, M. C. Lilley and Company of Columbus, Ohio. The drops depicted exotic historical settings with a highly illusionary, multi-dimensional perspective. The drops were sheets of cotton muslin or linen painted with dry pigment, and consisted of three parts: the backdrops, leg drops, and cut drops. The backdrop depicted the central image, the general background of the scene. The leg drops portrayed secondary images such as rocks, trees, or interior walls. Leg drops framed the backdrop and provided the depth critical to the illusory quality of the scenery. Cut drops also depicted secondary features, but, in contrast to the

³⁵ Moore, 41.

³⁶ Brockman, 102.

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leg drops, represented ground compositions, such as foreground roads or distant hills. Both leg and cut drops hid the "wings," or offstage areas of the theater. The leg and cut drops were supported by black netting, which became invisible under the stage lights.³⁷ The Winona drops were produced by Sosman and Landis Scene Painting Studios in Chicago.³⁸ Sosman and Landis had been established in 1875, as the first scenery studio creating illusionary scenes for commercial theaters. Co-founder of the firm Prince J.S. Sosman was a Scottish Rite Mason, and was the first to realize the potential of the fraternal scenery market. Senior staff artist Thomas G. Moses was responsible for designing and painting the Winona drops. During his long tenure with Sosman and Landis, Moses designed and painted thousands of scenes for commercial and fraternal theaters across the Midwest, including those for Masonic temples in St. Paul and Duluth, Minnesota.³⁹ Scenery created for commercial theaters was often discarded when productions ended, so fraternal theaters hold much of the Sosman and Landis work that remains today.

In addition to distributing scenery, M.C. Lilley and Company was well known for producing Masonic furniture and for providing state-

³⁷ C. Lance Brockman, "Creating Scenic Illusion for the Theatre and the Fraternity," in *Theatre of the Fraternity*, 97; C. Lance Brockman, "Appraisal of Scenery from the Scottish Rite Temple -- Winona." Typed manuscript in files of Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, St. Paul.

³⁸ "Scenic Decoration for Theatres, Road Shows, Scottish Rite Cathedrals, Commanderies, Shrines, Amusement Parks, Etc. . . by Thomas G. Moses, with Armstrong Studio, Inc." Advertising brochure for Thomas G. Moses, produced after he left Sosman and Landis, which lists the temples across the country containing his scenery and the dates of their installation. The scenery at Duluth was installed in 1906, Winona in 1909 and St. Paul in 1910. In the archives of the Winona Masonic Benevolent Association, Winona, Minnesota.

³⁹ Moses became president of Sosman and Landis in 1915.

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of-the-art lighting equipment for commercial and fraternal stages. WMBA entered into a contract with Lilley in June 1909 to purchase not only scenery, but also costumes, furniture, and mechanical equipment for the stage, at a total cost of \$16,598.93.⁴⁰ Lilley's western representative was Bestor G. Brown, a Scottish Rite Mason, who assisted the Winona Masons in 1909 in "assimilating the scenery, costumes, and lighting on arrival."⁴¹

Construction crews completed the Masonic Temple at Winona by December 1909. The interior spaces, richly finished in mahogany paneling, reflected Masonic ideology in arrangement, furnishings and details.⁴² The only element that was not in place for the 9 December opening-day ceremonies was a three-manual Weikhardt pipe organ, which had been purchased from the Wangerin-Weikhardt Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for \$13,000. The enormous organ was installed the following year into pipe chambers and an organ loft that were included in the original design of the temple.⁴³ The *Winona Republican* announced the opening of the new edifice with a front page spread, heralding it as "a welcome addition to the architectural beauty and ornamentation of our city. . . [which] reflects great credit upon its designers, Warren Powers Laird and C.F. Osborne of Philadelphia." The article went on to praise the Winona Masons, stating that the lodge:

⁴⁰ Itemized invoice from M.C. Lilley and Company to Will Hayes Laird, 9 December 1909. In the archives of the Winona Masonic Benevolent Association, Winona, Minnesota.

⁴¹ Brockman, "Creating Scenic Illusion," 103.

⁴² For more information on the ideological significance within Masonic interiors, see Moore, 31.

⁴³ Charles Nelson, historical architect for the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, interview by Christine Curran, 8 August 1997.

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early gained and ever since has retained an enviable reputation in Masonic circles for the high standard and efficiency of its work. Its charity, hospitality, and the public spirit of its members, have reflected splendidly upon its great prototype. In numerical strength and the superior character of its membership, it has attained to a position of great influence and usefulness. It has no peer in any community no larger than ours in all the land.⁴⁴

The Masons were highly respected in Winona, and the construction of the temple only served to heighten their presence in the community. There is sketchy information on the Mason's specific contributions in the years before the Masonic Temple was built, but evidence suggests that they were very active in the general community, as well as within their organization:

The Lodge in its early days was noted for its public spirit and hospitality. It took great pride in the city of Winona and, as an organized body, was a force in matters affecting the city's progress and welfare. The Masonic banquets at the old Huff House, then the leading hotel in Southern Minnesota, were affairs of great social interest and were well attended. The first public Masonic Festival and Ball were held there December 6, 1864, and up to that time they were the greatest society events in the Southern part of the state.⁴⁵

It is not surprising that the Winona Masons were held in such high regard. Winona Lodge No. 18 could count among its roles some of the most prominent, well educated and influential men in the

⁴⁴ "Winona Masons Dedicate Their New Temple," *The Winona Republican*, 9 December 1909, 1.

⁴⁵ J.J. Hillmer, n.p.

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region. As a group, they established a well organized and involved fraternity that played a significant leadership role in the community. J.J. Hillmer, Winona Mason and past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, wrote in 1902 that:

The Lodge records and the recollections of old members show that from the founding of the Lodge to the present time it has numbered among its members the leading men of the city and county, men who have accomplished things and who have led public thought. . . .The Lodge itself has always been a prominent factor in Winona affairs, and it early took and has always maintained the leadership among organized fraternal bodies.⁴⁶

Masonic events held at the temple consistently brought large numbers of people to Winona. The dances sponsored by the Acacia Club, a social club formed in 1913 by members of the Blue Lodge and the Eastern Star, attracted first-rate orchestras and guests from all over the region. Because Winona was the Valley for the Scottish Rite bodies of southern Minnesota, twice-yearly group initiations were held at the Masonic Temple. A *Winona Daily News* article from 1955 noted that "the spring and fall reunions bring members to Winona for four days from many communities from the Mississippi to the South Dakota border."⁴⁷ Winona's role as the Scottish Rite headquarters also brought regional Masonic conferences to the city for over eighty years. At some point, members of the Scottish Rite began a theater production known as "Exemplification of the Second Section of the Lecture of the Third Degree." In contrast to their initiation rituals, this event was produced for the benefit of the entire Masonic body and was presented at least once a year in conjunction with a banquet to raise funds for various Masonic projects. According to a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Masonic Charter," 18.

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term facilities until a new college was built, so the Masons offered the use of the temple, excluding the lodge room. The school held classes in the building until the new Teachers College was completed in 1925. A similar use was made of the Masonic Temple in 1946, after the local Young Mens Christian Association building burned. The Masons furnished office space to the organization until operations could resume in a new building.

The comfortable, intimate, and informal gathering rooms inside the Winona Masonic Temple provided a less tangible but undoubtedly significant contribution to the community by giving members a place to communicate, to trade thoughts and ideas, and to form opinions. Because many of Winona's Masons were prominent and influential leaders in the community, the rooms inside the temple could well have been privy to the discussions and decisions that shaped Winona's development.

After the 1930s, the popularity of fraternal organizations across the country began to wane. The Great Depression had triggered a slow but steady decline in membership, which was exacerbated by World War II. Because the Winona Masonic Temple was the regional center of Masonic activity, it fared better longer than others. The social Acacia Club continued to plan parties into the late 1930s. Activities connected to the war effort kept the Masonic orders busy with charity events in the early 1940s. A decline in membership, however, eventually became apparent. The greatest setback occurred in 1978, when the Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the Orient of Minnesota decided that the Scottish Rite Valley for the southern region, a large geographic area with 1,700 members, should be established in a more centrally located community. The relocation of the headquarters to Rochester was an enormous blow to the Winona fraternity. The following year, the

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WMBA voted to sell the temple to the city of Winona.⁵¹ Winona Lodge No. 18 continues to use the second and third floors of the Masonic Temple under a lease agreement. The city remodeled the first floor to accommodate a senior citizens center, preserving the large ballroom space with its maple floor. Although the Scottish Rite left Winona, the 98 scenic drops remain, in their original configuration, in the Masonic Temple. The electrical and mechanical stage equipment is also intact and operational, and is still used on occasion. With the exception of some changes to peripheral spaces in the building, the Masons have left the majority of the interior unaltered, including the spaces most important to their rituals: the main lodge room and stage area, and the surrounding robing and meeting chambers.

The Winona Masonic Temple remains an imposing structure in its central location on a busy downtown block, the exterior virtually unaltered from the year it was built. Although local Masons continue to pursue their ritual and charitable work, the temple speaks more clearly to a time when the organization played an important role in the social and fraternal life of the community. Winona Lodge No. 18 grew up with the city of Winona. Many of the same men who guided Winona from a frontier settlement into a prosperous regional hub also helped create one of the strongest and most active Masonic lodges in the state of Minnesota. Consequently, the Masonic Temple is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A. The Winona Masonic Temple also merits nomination to the National Register under Criterion C for the artistic value of the scenic drops and stage equipment contained within the temple. The collection remains, unaltered, as an excellent example of turn-of-the-century theater technology. The

⁵¹ The connection between the exodus of the Scottish Rite and the sale of the property is unclear. Newspaper accounts suggest that the impending sale might have precipitated the move, but other sources indicate the reverse. ("Scottish Rite Headquarters Moving to Rochester in '78." Clipping in the files of the Winona County Historical Society; Edstrom, "Masonry in Winona," 9.)

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intact installation offers a rare look at the vanishing art form of painted scenery, produced by the company that first tapped the fraternal market for this nineteenth-century craft.

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