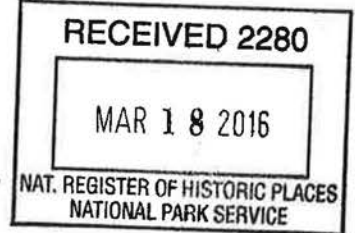


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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Bay City Masonic Temple

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

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

N/A

**2. Location**

Street & number: 700 N. Madison Avenue

City or town: Bay City State: MI County: Bay

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

    national      X statewide          local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A      \_\_\_ B      X C      \_\_\_ D

Martin J. Matlock      3/8/16  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of certifying official/Title:**      **Date**  
**Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer**  
**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

---

**Signature of commenting official:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Title :** \_\_\_\_\_ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*John Edward W. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*5-3-16*  
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



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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Dolomitic limestone

Wall: Rock River brownstone, terra cotta panels

Roof: Flat-built up asphalt

Other: Granite columns, copper bay window, copper  
cornices, wood doors

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

**Summary Paragraph**

The Masonic Temple is a nearly square-plan, three-story building with a raised basement level and stands on a rusticated sandstone foundation. It has two primary facades fronting on Sixth Street and North Madison Avenue. The two street-facing sides have steeply sloping pent and mansard roofs, currently asphalt, but once clad in red clay tile. The exterior walls of Rock River brownstone, a red-brown sandstone quarried in Marquette County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, remain from the original temple, which was built in 1893 but burned in 1903. The temple is built with walls of rock-face random ashlar masonry suggestive of Richardsonian Romanesque in the repeated use of rounded arches; however, ornamentation is Moorish Revival, in particular the use of horseshoe arches over the windows, carved sandstone column capitals, delicate terra cotta tiles, and the onion domes that once topped the building.

---

**Narrative Description**

The Masonic Temple is located on the northeast corner of North Madison Avenue (M-25) and Sixth Street, and it is a contributing building in Bay City's Center Avenue Historic District. The area immediately to the north and south comprises small-scale office and commercial buildings with ample surface parking. The northern adjacent lot, now parking for the Scottish Rite Cathedral, was once the site of the First Baptist Church, which was demolished during the 1970s (Bloomfield, 11). The Scottish Rite Cathedral, still used by the Masons, abuts the Masonic Temple's eastern side.

The main façade faces west onto Madison Avenue and is symmetrical except for a three-sided corner bay at the south end. The main façade is visually broken into three parts: a central three-part bay with a projecting entrance portal and four additional narrow bays on each side. Originally a large onion dome on a drum base rose above the main entrance and the outer tower-like bays were topped by smaller onion domes. The smaller domes were reconstructed following the 1903 fire; however, they have since been removed. The corner bay with a copper-faced bay window in the second story faces the intersection of Madison and Sixth Streets.



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The main entrance portal is crowned by a copper cornice with pointed trefoil-like cutouts. Six steps taper to the raised entrance landing and double wooden doors. Four thin, round granite columns, standing on sandstone plinths and capped by sandstone Moorish capitals, flank each side of the entrance opening. The doorway is topped by a semi-circular stained-glass window set in a horseshoe arch. The window contains the words MASONIC TEMPLE in an arc with the Masonic logo beneath. A round Knights Templar stained-glass window is located over the portal in the second story, with taller arched window openings on either side. The windows on the first and second stories are double hung with stained-glass windows bearing the names of lodge members within the horseshoe arches above. Column-faced piers capped by composite capitals separate paired window openings. Terra cotta tiles, a darker red than the sandstone, face first floor window bulkheads and first- and second-floor window spandrels and surround the round window over the main entry. The tiles alternate between two designs: one a quatrefoil and the other an eight-point snowflake-like geometric pattern.

The southern façade of the building, facing Sixth Street, is divided into three parts east of the three-part corner bay facing the intersection of Madison and Sixth Street. Two narrow projecting sections flank a broad, recessed central one. The southern facade has a secondary entrance marked by a heavy rusticated sandstone horseshoe arch and a recessed stone panel within it that reads: MASONIC CLUB. A delicately carved rosette encircled with a carved rope motif has the Masonic emblem at the center. The entrance is in a projecting rusticated sandstone tower-like structure that was topped by an octagonal minaret prior to the 1903 fire. The minaret was not reconstructed. The double doors are at grade. A one and one-half-story portico with granite columns, slender in comparison to the otherwise heavy sandstone construction and topped by Moorish arches, supports the wall of the second-story Blue Lodge Room in the center of the façade. The seven second-story windows that light the Blue Lodge Room are stained-glass rectangular windows with stained-glass semi-circular uppers. Like the windows on the western side, these also bear the names of lodge members. The closely spaced windows are divided by columns that support horseshoe arches. At the east end under the colonnade, a half-flight of steps goes down to an entry door that provides access to the kitchen in the basement. The third part, a second rusticated tower-like projection that had a truncated round dome prior to the fire, contains a round stained-glass window near the top and three double-hung Moorish arch windows, separated by more columns, on the main level. The dome was not rebuilt following the fire. As in the main façade, bright red terra cotta tiles fill in the spaces above and below the windows.

The north and east elevations of the Masonic Temple were constructed of common brick and stand on a foundation of rock-face random ashlar dolomite with a sandstone water table. The east elevation is obscured by the Scottish Rite Cathedral, which directly abuts the temple. The north elevation, which was once obscured by the First Baptist Church, is plain.

The Masonic Temple interior comprises grand ceremonial and recreational spaces as well as some smaller preparation rooms and lounges. The main doors of the Masonic Temple open into a narrow vestibule with four stairs that rise to an interior set of double doors opening into a small lobby. In the lobby one has the option of moving right into a **large anteroom** for the main Blue

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Lodge Room, or left into a stair hall. A **small anteroom** space for the Red Lodge Room also opens off the lobby, as does a small **Trustees Room** located the building's northwest corner.

### First Floor

#### **Anteroom**

The anteroom or formal lobby has original wood trim around the windows and doorways as well as wainscoting. Clear double-hung windows have horseshoe arched stained-glass transom sash bearing the names of donors who were members of the lodge. Old pendant light fixtures remain. Rounded-corner columns with Tuscan capitals supporting an entablature frame a broad square-head opening into a reception area just outside the Blue Lodge Room. The space also contains a doorway into the Blue Lodge Preparation Room, which has a wall of closets.

#### **Blue Lodge Room**

All Masons begin their membership in a Blue Lodge, which is for first- through third-degree Masons. This requirement, combined with the popularity of Free Masonry during the nineteenth century, dictated that the Blue Lodge Room be the largest gathering space in the temple building. The space was primarily used by Joppa Lodge members. The Blue Lodge Room has light blue walls and ceiling, royal blue walls under the balcony and white wainscoting, trim and window and door frames. It occupies much of the building's southern half in the first and second stories.

The Blue Lodge Room is finished largely in the Neoclassical style and includes a stage at the east end with a fly gallery and balcony seating on three sides. Single fluted Ionic pilasters, each with three small blue flowers centered between the scrolls, flank the wide proscenium arch at the stage. The ornamental plasterwork proscenium arch has a central medallion at the top of four decorative bands of varying widths and decorative painting in pink, light green, royal blue and white accented with anthemion motifs. Ionic pilasters also subdivide the north and south walls. These support a classical entablature that rings the room beneath the ceiling. The ceiling is formed of flat areas framed by cased beams in from the long side walls. Spanning the room between them are longer panels that, framed by more of the cased beams, have coved sides with the flat ceiling deeply recessed.

Opposite the stage at the west end are two single doorways, one that leads to the lobby and a second that leads to the preparation room. Stairways on the north and south walls lead to the balcony. The west end balcony contains the large pipes for the pipe organ at center with three rows of seats on either side of the pipes. The north and south balconies have three rows of seats as well.

The balcony breastwork is decorated with egg and dart and other classical ornament and alternating royal blue squares and rectangles framed in white with gold accents. Some of the squares have double light sconces that light the space below. The room is furnished with blue velvet-covered removable bench seating that is original. Some Blue Room furnishings are in storage elsewhere in the building.

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### **Red Lodge Room**

Left of the entrance lobby is a small anteroom leading to the entrance to the Red Lodge Room and its corresponding preparation room, which, located along the building's north side, were used primarily by the Knights Templar Commandery. The seating area of the Red Lodge Room is much smaller than that of the Blue, and the room is one story only. There is no proscenium. A shallow stage is raised slightly, up three steps from the floor, and its recess is framed by single fluted pilasters. There is no balcony. Like the Blue Room, opposite the stage at the west end are two single doorways, one that leads to the lobby and a second that leads to the preparation room. In addition, a pair of fluted pilasters decorate the west wall between the doorways. Single pilasters also flank a horizontally oriented three-part window on the north wall, and another pair breaks up the opposite (south) wall. The pilasters rise to the lower side of a coved edge to the ceiling that, enriched with bands of classical ornament, forms a kind of entablature for them. The central part of the ceiling is flat. A "property" or storage room behind the Red Lodge has wooden lockers and presently contains extra furniture and materials used during activities that take place in the building. An additional storage room up the stairs and behind the Red Room also contains lockers.

### **Hallway Access to Scottish Rite Cathedral**

A hallway runs longitudinally between the Red Lodge Room and the Blue Lodge Room from the main lobby to an access to the Scottish Rite Cathedral. The door is presently locked prohibiting access from either direction. The hallway also provides access to the Blue Lodge stage and the Property Room behind the Red Lodge Room.

### **Second Floor**

A stair hall north of the entrance vestibule and a stairway inside the south entrance near the Blue Lodge Room provide access to the second floor. The north stairway culminates in a landing that leads to a small **anteroom** or lounge with two large, clear, double-hung windows that rise from the floor and are crowned by stained-glass windows set in horseshoe arches and bearing the names of lodge members. An elaborate fireplace has a glazed tile-faced firebox and an ornamental metal grate. The tall mantelpiece is finished with unfluted Corinthian columns that rise from tall square-plan bases and flank the firebox and a large rectangular mirror above, and support a simple bowed-front entablature cap. The mirror is located above a bowed-front shelf supported by a bracket at each end, atop the firebox.

Two steps on the east wall of the anteroom lead to a passage with one door into the Purple Lodge Room and a second into the Purple Lodge Preparation Room.

### **Purple Lodge Room**

The Purple Lodge Room, which was used by Masonic women's lodges, Eastern Star and Job's Daughters, is directly above the Red Lodge Room along the building's north side and is accessible from a passageway. In size it is smaller than the Red Lodge Room, but its general form and finishes are similar. Single fluted pilasters flank a blank wall without a recess at the back of a small platform "stage" that is just one short step up from the floor. The pilasters are the same design as those in the Red Lodge Room except that details are painted purple rather than

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red. A triple double-hung window lights the north wall and has a single pilaster on each side. Again, as in the Red Lodge Room, a pair of pilasters decorate the opposite wall. The ceiling is coved around the edges and flat in the center.

Like the other lodge rooms, the west end of the Purple Lodge Room contains two doorways, one leading to a preparation room and the other leading to the passage. A pair of fluted pilasters decorate the wall between the doorways. A fly gallery behind the Purple Lodge Room contains the mechanical equipment for the Red Lodge Room stage. Beyond that is a large store room.

### **Club Room**

The Club Room is a long narrow space that runs from the stair hall south along the front of the building above the main floor anteroom. The west wall of the room contains six large, clear, double-hung windows topped by horseshoe arch transom sash that contain stained glass bearing the names of lodge members. The walls are lined with wainscoting. Just inside the doorway a large Knights Templar window, depicting a knight in armor on horseback and set within a deep window frame, honors one of the orders of the Masonic organization. The room still contains a beaded wire used for score-keeping, which hangs across the room from west to east, as well as the original cue stick rack and billiard table.

### **Third Floor**

The third floor spaces consist of the Fly Gallery for the Blue Lodge Room, storage and attic space that presently contains furniture and equipment related to events held in the building.

### **Lower Level**

The lodge's large kitchen and dining room and a fourth lodge room are located on the Lower Level: the dining room with the kitchen behind it in the south half of the building and the lodge room in the north half. The Lower Level is more spartan in detail than the other floors; however, wood paneling, elaborate light fixtures, decorative plasterwork, and built-in cabinetry demonstrate that in addition to containing the building's utilities, this level functioned as an important social space.

A large, elaborately carved wood buffet stands against the west wall of the dining room. The buffet has a counter-height surface above a single row of drawers running the length of the buffet and five double-doored cupboards below. Paired columns separating mirrors at each end rise from the "counter" to an ornate cornice with a delicate spindled railing at the top and a curved spindled apron below. The sideboard mirror is divided into three parts: a middle section with one large mirror, and the two side mirrors (flanked by the columns) each comprising five pieces of glass in a vertically oriented rectangular space where a diamond-shaped central mirror is outlined by four other pieces of mirror filling in the space of the rectangle.

The plaster dining room ceiling is flat and recessed, framed by boxed beams. The open floor space is broken up by simple, supporting, Doric columns that go from the floor to the plaster



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boxed beams that are decorated with egg-and-dart detailing. All of the original wood trim, light fixtures, and wainscoting remains.

On the east wall, two doors lead into an expansive commercial kitchen outfitted with preparation tables, metal storage cupboards, and appliances.

A lodge room makes up the last of the communal spaces in the lower level. Evidence of electrical and plumbing functions in the building can be seen in the lodge space, which retains some of its plaster detailing. Like the other lodge rooms in the building, the focal point of the room is a stage area, in this case identified by wide flat pilasters with Corinthian capitals and two decorative bands with scrollwork that divide the pilasters into three unequal parts. A single step provides access to a narrow "stage" in front of a recessed wall. The space was used at times as overflow seating for dinners that took place in the dining room. A dance studio used the room during the 1960s.

### 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 grave
- D. A cemetery

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E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure

F. A commemorative property

G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Criteria Considerations (explanation):** 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1893-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

Original building completed in 1893

Severe damage by fire 1903

Reconstruction completed 1905

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Pratt and Koeppe

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The historic Masonic Temple in Bay City, Michigan, meets national register criterion A for reflecting the size and importance of the Masonic fraternity in Bay City during the late nineteenth and early and mid-twentieth centuries. The temple meets criterion C in that, at the time of its construction in 1893, it was, with the possible exception of the Detroit temple, likely the most opulent and grand Masonic temple building in Michigan. The temple, designed by noteworthy local architects Pratt & Koepp (Leverett Pratt & Walter Koepp), illustrates the intersection of Bay City's booming lumber era of the late 1800s and the rise in Masonic interests nationally. The participation of several prominent city residents as the Masonic Temple's charter members, like the first mayor of Bay City and sawmill owner Nathan Bradley, highlights its position as a fixture in the early community. Although the original temple experienced a fire not long after its construction and was rebuilt in somewhat simplified form, its Moorish architecture and vibrant-hued Upper Peninsula Rock River brownstone continues to make it a dominant building on the landscape of the city. It remains a premiere example of Masonic buildings in Michigan. The temple served as a location for not only Masonic events, but local cultural interests as well. Due to the Masonic Temple's place as a unique architectural landmark in Bay City, its association with the community's cultural and social history, and as a reminder of the population and construction boom prompted by the lumber era, the historic Masonic Temple in Bay City meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Freemasonry is believed to have begun during the Middle Ages with the stonemasons' guilds. The Ancient and Accepted Order of Freemasons originated in the early eighteenth century in London and spread from England to the American colonies. Early members included President George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, among other Founding Fathers. The Masons embraced the Enlightenment ideals of democracy, free will, and public education. The Freemasons gradually expanded across the United States, but faced heightened Anti-Masonic fervor during the 1820s. Membership was on the rise again before the Civil War, and the organization experienced a great increase in membership during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recognizing a lack of government welfare programs, the Masons filled the need for a "social safety net" by building nursing homes, orphanages, and the like (History of Freemasonry; Oxford, 475).

During the late nineteenth century Bay City's population continued to increase due to the wood products and other industries, and fishing and agriculture. The city was one of the leading lumber producers in the state during a period when Michigan was the nation's leading lumber producer. Michigan's lumber industry peaked by 1888 when Michigan produced more than 4.2 billion board feet of lumber, and the booming industry quadrupled Bay City's population during the

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1860s (Dunbar, 350 and Rosentreter, 151). Some local lumbermen sought to use their wealth to benefit the community through philanthropic endeavors consistent with Masonic interests, such as the funding of the Sage Library. Masonic history began in Bay City in 1860 when leading citizens, including lumbermen William R. McCormick, William A. Bryce, Nathan B. Bradley, James J. McCormick, John F. Cottrell, Clark Mouthrop, Jacob H. Little, and Henry M. Bradley, petitioned the Grand Master of the State for permission to organize a lodge in the village of Bay City (American Tyler IV, 6).

Many of the charter members of the Bay City Freemasons were significant members of the community as well. The McCormick brothers were mill owners and operators in the area. William also served as a lumber and salt inspector for Michigan and has the distinction of being the superintendent of the first salt well in Bay County, leading toward a booming salt industry in that region. James was part owner of the town's opera house and served on the first city council of Bay City before becoming mayor in 1869. Nathan Bradley, a mill and salt mine operator as well, served as the first mayor of Bay City, a Michigan senator, and a United States congressman. His brother Henry likewise served Bay City as one of the first village aldermen and as the organizer and chief engineer of the first fire department (History of Free Masonry/Page & Co., 83).

This group of Freemasons operated loosely until April 1861, when the Grand Lodge of Michigan granted the group an official charter under the name Bay City Lodge No. 129. Initial meetings of local Masons took place on the second floor of the Fraser and Jennison Store at the corner of Water and Center Streets, a location now occupied by the Delta College Planetarium. In June 1861 the lodge moved to Birney Hall, a two-story building on the west side of Water Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets, where it remained until 1864 when it moved across the street to the First National Bank of Bay City's building. In 1866 the lodge was again moved into the Averill Block on Center Avenue before being relocated to a four-story building built by James McCormick on the east side of Water Street just north of the end of Center Avenue in 1868. Finally in 1878 rooms more suited to the growing lodge were provided in the Eddy Block on Center Avenue, where the lodge remained until the Freemasons could construct a new building of their own. Throughout this growth period, Lodge 129 saw three successful offshoots form in the area as well, Portsmouth Lodge No. 190, Wenona Lodge No. 256, and Joppa Lodge No. 315. As a result, in 1890 the Bay City Lodge purchased land for its own building (Gansser, 328).

The design and construction of the Masonic Temple of Bay City resulted from collaboration among several local lodges including Bay City Lodge No. 129 and Joppa Lodge No. 315. A Masonic Temple Association formed by members of the lodges purchased land at the corner of Sixth Street and Madison Avenue in early 1890. It then selected the local architectural firm Pratt & Koeppé to design the new Masonic Temple.

Pratt & Koeppé

Leverett A. Pratt and Walter Koeppé were among Bay City's most prominent and prolific architects. Pratt began working as a master carpenter in Bay City in 1869 and then worked as an architect (Moore, 818). In 1880 he and Koeppé formed the Pratt & Koeppé firm (Industries, 67).



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Pratt & Koeppe specialized in religious and educational buildings, designing all but one public school that existed in Bay City in 1889 (Ibid). They designed such notable Bay City structures as City Hall, First Presbyterian Church, St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, and St. Paul Lutheran Church that remain key historic and architectural landmarks in the city today. They also designed churches and schools throughout the northern Lower Peninsula: the Baptist church in Midland; Catholic churches in Alpena, Gladwin, and Essexville; and three schools in Midland. In addition, they designed warehouses in Columbiaville and Bay City (Ibid). Pratt was an affiliate of the Blue Lodge, Chapter, Commandery, and Consistory of the Masonic Order and past commander of the Bay City Knights Templars (Moore, 818).

Construction

Construction of the Masonic Temple at the corner of North Madison Avenue and Sixth Street, just a block from the Center Avenue corridor, began in October 1890. In further illustration of the rapidity with which Bay City was growing, the Masonic Temple would become just one of several major new buildings built during this era. A day after the Freemasons laid the cornerstone to their temple, Presbyterians laid the cornerstone for their new church at the corner of Center Avenue and Jackson Street, just one block away. This Pratt & Koeppe building exemplifies Richardsonian Romanesque and displays two towers at its main entrance, one rising to 91 feet and the other rising 132 feet. Dubbed "one of the Finest Church Buildings in the State and a Great Credit to the City" by the *Bay City Times-Press*, the First Presbyterian Church of Bay City reached completion in the same year as the Masonic Temple, 1893 (A Handsome Edifice).

The temple's cornerstone was set on June 24, 1891. The occasion included a parade, a speech by past grand master Hugh McCurdy, and a luncheon. According to one first-hand account of the event:

The day was bright and cheering, only a little warm. The street display was the most noted of any ever yet seen on the streets of Bay City. St. Bernard No. 16, of Saginaw, came down with about 100 swords, Bay City no. 26, turned out about the same number, and Genesee Valley No. 15, of Flint, gave a good account of itself with 40 swords. Alpena was expected but failed to show up. Saginaw, Caro, Grayling, and Blanchard Chapters, with their banners and bright collars and aprons added very much to the display. These, with about 500 Master Masons, all marching to the step of inspiring music of three bands, made a Masonic turn out that is rarely seen in any city of Michigan, outside of the city of Detroit (S.L.A. American Tyler, 6).

McCurdy's speech highlighted the significance of the temple's placement in Bay City, a booming city, noting:

No place more suitable could have been selected in this state to erect a Masonic temple than the classic city by the Bay with its 32,000 sturdy population, which has sprung into existence as if by magic. . . here trade and commerce, prosperity and wealth are surpassed only by the munificence of education and moral culture (Square and Level).

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A copy of the plan for the temple, a history of Masonry in Bay City, nine U.S. coins, a \$10 Confederate States of America bill, and other objects representing Masonry and Bay City history were placed within the cornerstone (Ibid).

Less than two years later, on February 27, 1893, the Freemasons dedicated the Bay City Masonic Temple with an estimated 800 persons in attendance (Dedicated the Temple). *The Michigan Masonic Yearbook* described the temple as "one of the handsomest in the whole country and a decided ornament to Bay City" (*Representative Citizens*, 328). The *Bay City Times-Press* hailed the event as "the greatest night in Bay City Masonic history" and called the building "the finest Masonic home in the state" (Dedicated the Temple). Pratt & Koeppel designed the building in the Moorish style and its primary facades were faced in Rock River brownstone quarried in Michigan's Upper Peninsula near Marquette and capped by copper cornices and a clay tile, mansard roof. A large copper-clad onion dome crowned the roof over the main entrance on Madison Avenue. Two additional smaller copper-clad domes flanked the main dome. A stone tower extending 114 feet above grade surmounted the Sixth Street entrance to the building. A wood-framed minaret with a copper-clad onion dome roof sat atop the tower. A large, spherical dome capped the southeast corner of the building facing Sixth Street. With this profile, the Masonic Temple stood as one of the most impressive and recognizable buildings in the young city (Wigen, et al, 2).

The Masons did not restrict use of the temple to Masonic business. They allowed it be used by the community and become a pillar of life in the city. The Blue Lodge Room housed an elaborate stage and an intricate rope-and-pulley backdrop system. The temple quickly became an integral part of Bay City cultural life, even for those not involved in freemasonry.

On May 19, 1903, just ten years after its dedication, an electrical fire ravaged the Masonic Temple. One eyewitness to the start of the blaze noted after searching for the source of smoke:

Finally . . . found a trace of the fire in a partition between two doors southwest of the lodge room and called one of the firemen who put it out with chemicals. The smoke soon became so thick that I had to get out, but the firemen stayed in sometime longer. On account of the prevalent opinion that the fire was only trivial, no one had a thought of carrying out the furniture until the building rapidly filled with smoke. . . . My opinion is that the lightning must have run in on the wires and caused the fire, which smoldered [*sic*] some time before giving evidence of its presence in the building (Temple Gone).

The *Bay City Times-Press* reported:

Bay City's pride, the Masonic temple, was completely destroyed by fire last night at 6 o'clock. The flames remained between the floors and inner and outer walls until they had gained surprising headway and then burst forth in all their fury, completely baffling the firemen, who worked with might and main to keep them under control (Ibid).

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Left undiscovered until late afternoon, the fire devastated the interior of the building, but left the exterior walls standing. The fire also destroyed almost all furnishings, uniforms and regalia belonging to members. The *Times-Press* again reported:

When it was seen by members of the Masonic order that there was no hope of saving their fraternal home many of them rushed inside and proceeded to carry out some of the furniture on the first floor, the articles being piled in a heap on the west side of Madison avenue. Those belonging to the Knights Templar endeavored to save their uniforms but only a few succeeded in doing so (Ibid).

Immediate estimates on the damage to the Masonic Temple and furnishings were around \$80,000, with only \$40,000 in insurance coverage, and a remaining \$14,000 debt to the Masonic Temple Association. Despite this situation, members of the various lodges involved in the construction of the original temple voted to reconstruct the building immediately, though with slightly less grandeur (The Masonic Temple 1903).

#### Reconstruction

While architectural drawings for reconstruction of the temple are missing, examination of drawings for the original building in comparison with the existing building suggests several changes in the reconstruction. For example, in line with a more cost-effective approach, the Freemasons abandoned the elaborate minaret that adorned the masonry tower above the Sixth Street entrance (Wigen, et al.). The July 1905 issue of the Masonic publication the *American Tyler* reported the work on the new building had begun immediately and that the new temple was "superior in every way to the old structure" (*American Tyler* IXX, 549). The magazine hailed the temple as "near fireproof as modern ingenuity can accomplish . . . well lighted and ventilated and furnished with every modern convenience for the conferring of degrees and for the comfort of those desiring to see the work" (Ibid.). According to the *American Tyler*, Bay City Masons intended to replace the dome and minaret over the tower "exactly as they were in the old building" (Ibid.).

John Rowson, the Grand Master of the Free and Accepted Masons of Michigan, rededicated the building on November 23, 1905. Newspapers noted that the Bay City lodge had sent formal invitations to lodges in other communities and that they expected a large number of people from outside Bay City at the rededication (Temple is Dedicated).

#### Architectural Significance

The Bay City Masonic Temple was and remains a unique example of Moorish-inspired design in a Masonic temple in Michigan, and its exotic Moorish design was, as far as we have been able to determine, without precedent among Masonic temple buildings in the country at the time the building was initially constructed in 1891-93. Contemporary newspaper accounts make clear that the interior also exhibited Moorish design; although the building burned in 1903 with the loss of the entire interior and of the Moorish domes and towers, the building was rebuilt by 1905 within

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the original Moorish-design front walls, and this exotic exterior finish remains entirely intact today.

The first Masonic temple to exhibit Moorish design was likely the immense Philadelphia Masonic Temple. Designed by Philadelphia architect and Mason James H. Windrim and built in 1867-73, the massive structure has a towered Norman exterior with walls of Cape Ann syenite and Quincy and Fox Island granite (Huss, 217-25). The interior contains lodge halls and other rooms each of different style, including Corinthian, Ionic, Egyptian, Norman, Gothic, and Renaissance. One of the lodge halls, Oriental Hall, is Moorish in style, designed with "Coloring and ornamentation ... copied from various parts of the Palace of the Alhambra at Granada..." (Masonic Temple). In its housing lodge rooms in a select collection of styles that included Moorish, the Philadelphia temple, by far the largest and costliest temple of its day in America, served as a model for the largest Masonic temple structures built thereafter well into the twentieth century, including Detroit's own Masonic Temple completed in 1926.

The early twentieth century saw the construction of a number of Masonic buildings of exotic design such as the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Indianapolis dedicated in 1929 (Moore, 86) and Shrine "Mosques" built for member organizations, or temples, of the Masonic Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine or Shriners. The Shriners organization, with their appropriation of Islamic and eastern Mediterranean symbols, names, and motifs, began in the Northeast in the early 1870s and expanded rapidly beginning in the 1880s (Moore, 94). Moore states that Philadelphia's Lu Lu Temple Mosque, built in 1904, was the first building specifically built for exclusive Shriner use (95-96). Starting with the Lu Lu Temple Mosque, a number of the organization's mosques were built in Moorish style. Moore illustrates as examples Kismet Temple Mosque (1910), Brooklyn, NY; Al Malaikah Temple Mosque (1925-26), Los Angeles; and Yaarab Temple Mosque, (completed 1929), Atlanta, GA (Moore, 101, 107-08). But these well-known Scottish Rite and Shrine Mosque buildings all date well after the 1891-93 construction of the Bay City temple (Moore).

### **Subsequent History**

By the 1920s, the rise in Masonic membership threatened to prove the structure inadequate in size. To compensate for this surge in Masonic membership, Masons constructed a Scottish Rite Cathedral to the east and north of the Masonic Temple. The cathedral, known as the Consistory, was completed in 1926 with a dedication ceremony held on May third of that year. The new building boasted a twelve-hundred-seat dining hall filled with mahogany tables, mosaic-tiled washrooms, hand-carved antique furnishings, and solid oak woodwork. The cost for the new building came in at five hundred thousand dollars and the building's completion was met with fanfare from the entire city. The *Bay City Times-Tribune* dedicated an entire section to the consecration and dedication ceremonies and filled its pages with congratulatory advertisements from local businesses. A common wall joins the two buildings with a second floor door providing limited access between the two buildings (Special Edition).

It was during this same boom in Masonic membership that the incomparable Detroit Masonic Temple was constructed for forty-seven fraternal orders and as a civic center for the city of



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Detroit (NRHP Nomination). According to the National Register of Historic Places nomination, the Detroit temple, with its one thousand rooms, is in fact "four distinct structures that are unified by a single exterior architectural treatment." Most notable is the Ritual Building, a fourteen-story tower with eight major lodge rooms that each have suites of service rooms including parlors, cloak rooms, and robing rooms. Completed in 1926, the Neo-Gothic temple replaced a seven-story structure at Lafayette and First Streets that was built in 1893 but quickly outgrown. The earlier Detroit temple may have rivaled the Bay City temple in opulence at the time; however, it no longer exists. The Bay City Masonic Temple remains the grandest Michigan temple of its era.

The prosperity and robust membership in Bay City that accompanied the early twentieth century was not to last. Though Bay City, like neighboring Saginaw, had flourished in the lumber era, supporting additional economic ventures into shipbuilding, carriage development (later the automobile), and electricity (produced from pine resin), the Great Depression took its toll on manufacturing in Mid-Michigan. Whereas Saginaw lumber leaders like Arthur Hill lived locally and shifted the focus to the burgeoning automobile industry once the lumber industry died, Bay City's leaders were absent and simply moved on once the lumber era ended, leaving the city in limbo (Dunbar, 350). With tough economic times, the charitable donations and work that had been the hallmark of the Freemasons suffered, resulting in a decline in membership. Nationally, membership numbers fell during the Great Depression, rose again during the post-World War II period, but began a steady decline after 1959 (Masonic Membership Statistics). This membership decline within the Masonic lodges over the past several decades has resulted in insufficient funds to operate and maintain the grandiose Masonic temples of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the historic Masonic Temple in Bay City.

In 2004 the Bay City Freemasons determined that they had two options for the building: demolish it or find a party interested in purchasing the building with the intent of historic rehabilitation. The lodges had seemingly resigned themselves to the demolition of the temple with the Masons accepting bids for the undertaking. However, the Bay Arts Council stepped forward in an attempt to save the structure, and the two parties arranged an agreement in early 2005. The Bay Arts Council agreed to purchase the building on a land contract and began fundraising activities in order to secure the structure and make necessary repairs and improvements to facilitate public access.

The Bay Arts Council assessed community needs for arts programming and plans to establish a Community School for the Arts in the temple that will address those needs. In the interim, the temple has hosted various community events and activities. In addition to hosting myriad concerts, receptions, meetings, and tours it has served as a venue for two of the Bay Arts Council's most notable events: the Hell's Half Mile Film and Music Festival and the annual Haunted Temple event, once again demonstrating the temple's rightful place as a cultural center in Bay City worthy of preservation.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register (Contributing structure in the Center Avenue  
Historic District)  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**  
Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_



BAY CITY MASONIC TEMPLE  
Name of Property

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(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 43.596912 | Longitude: 83.884186 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:           |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:           |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:           |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 7 and 8, Block 64, Plat of Lower Saginaw, as per plat thereof recorded in Liber 1, Page 4, of Bay County Records.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the property associated with and occupied by the former Bay City Masonic Temple.

BAY CITY MASONIC TEMPLE  
Name of Property

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: D. Keith Birchler, Secretary, and Laura Rose Ashlee (Michigan SHPO)  
organization: Friends of the Historic Masonic Temple of Bay City  
street & number: 900 Center Avenue  
city or town: Bay City state: MI zip code: 48708  
e-mail keith@glblg.com  
telephone: 989-892-0591  
date: December 2015

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Masonic Temple, Bay City

City or Vicinity: Bay City

County: Bay

State: Michigan

Photographer and Date Photographed:

**BAY CITY MASONIC TEMPLE**  
 Name of Property

**BAY COUNTY, MI**  
 County and State

<u>Number</u>	<u>Photographer</u>	<u>Date</u>
0001	Eric Jylha	12/18/2015
0002	Eric Jylha	12/18/2015
0003	Eric Jylha	08/22/2011
0004	Laura Ashlee	07/30/2015
0005	Laura Ashlee	07/30/2015
0006	Laura Ashlee	07/30/2015
0007	Eric Jylha	12/18/2015
0008	Eric Jylha	12/18/2015
0009	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0010	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0011	Laura Ashlee	07/30/2015
0012	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0013	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0014	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0015	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0016	Laura Ashlee	07/30/2015
0017	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0018	John Meyer	06/09/2010
0019	Artist's rendering	c. 1893-1903
0020	Postcard view	c. 1905

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20 Exterior street view of Temple facing Northeast  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0001
- 2 of 20 Exterior street view of Temple facing Northwest  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0002
- 3 of 20 Exterior of Temple viewed from Wirt Public Library, facing East  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0003
- 4 of 20 Exterior view of Temple facing Southeast  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0004
- 5 of 20 Exterior street view of Temple facing Northwest  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0005
- 6 of 20 Exterior architectural detail – west wall above first story windows  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0006

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- 7 of 20 Exterior architectural detail – above South entrance  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0007
- 8 of 20 Exterior architectural detail – South wall column  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0008
- 9 of 20 Interior stage view – Blue Room  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0009
- 10 of 20 Interior Blue Room balcony and stained glass windows  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0010
- 11 of 20 Interior Anteroom (Formal Lobby) facing South  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0011
- 12 of 20 Interior Red Room stage facing East  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0012
- 13 of 20 Interior Purple Room facing East  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0013
- 14 of 20 Interior front entry door facing West (Madison Street)  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0014
- 15 of 20 Interior Billiard Room facing North  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0015
- 16 of 20 Interior detail – Billiard Room – Knights Templar window on West wall  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0016
- 17 of 20 Interior office fireplace  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0017
- 18 of 20 Interior lower level dining hall facing West  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0018
- 19 of 20 Artist's rendering of original Bay City City Masonic Temple, built 1893/burned  
1903  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0019
- 20 of 20 Postcard view of reconstructed temple c. 1905  
MI\_Bay County\_Bay City Masonic Temple\_0020

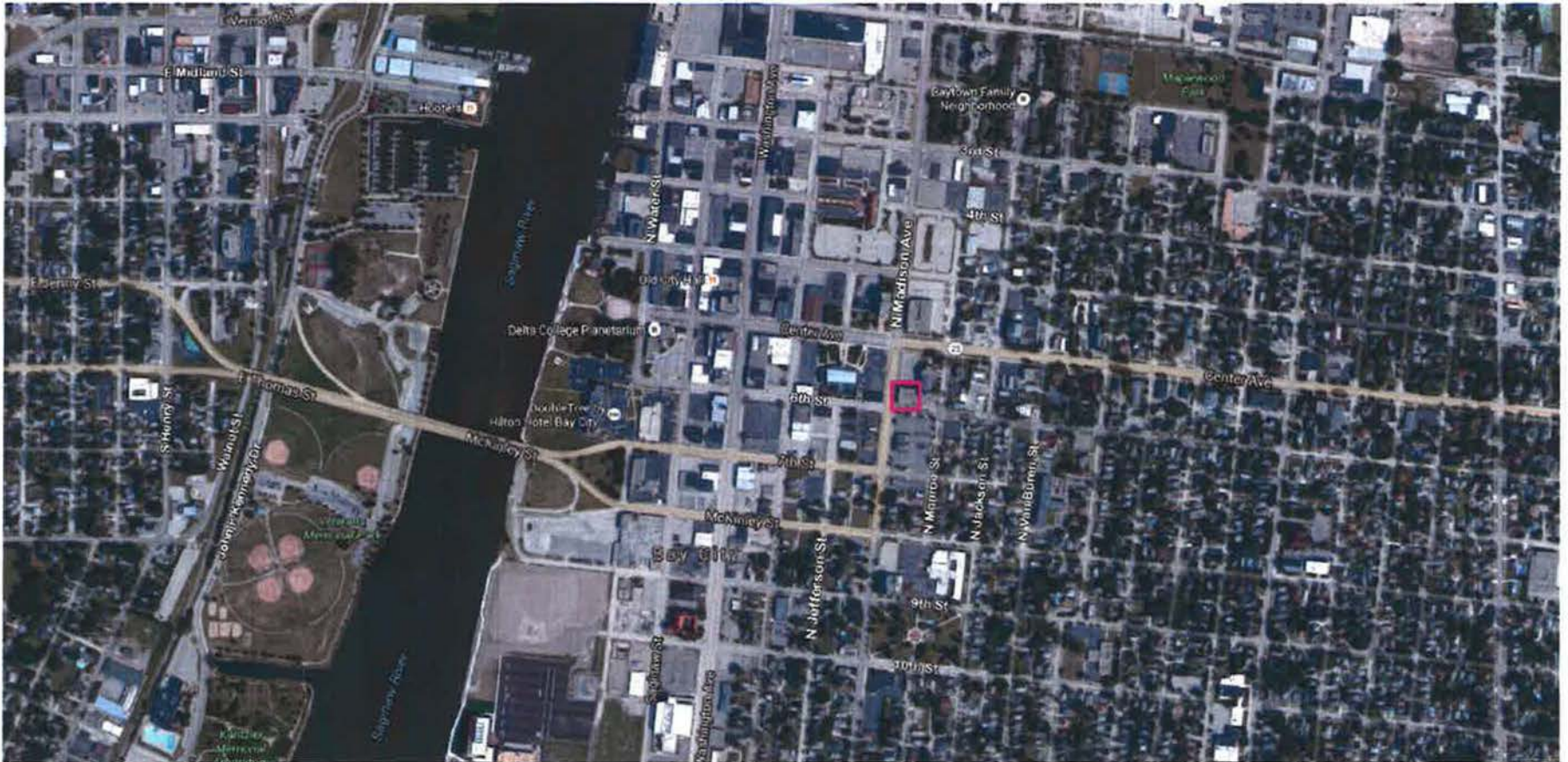


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Name of Property

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**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



**Bay City Masonic Temple**

700 North Madison Avenue, Bay City, Bay County, Michigan

Lat./Long.: 43.596945, -83.884310

one inch = 500 feet







FRONT LANE  
MUST  
TURN RIGHT







2 HR  
PARKING  
8:00 AM  
TO 6:00 PM

Alice and Jack Wirt  
Public Library  
Bay County Library System



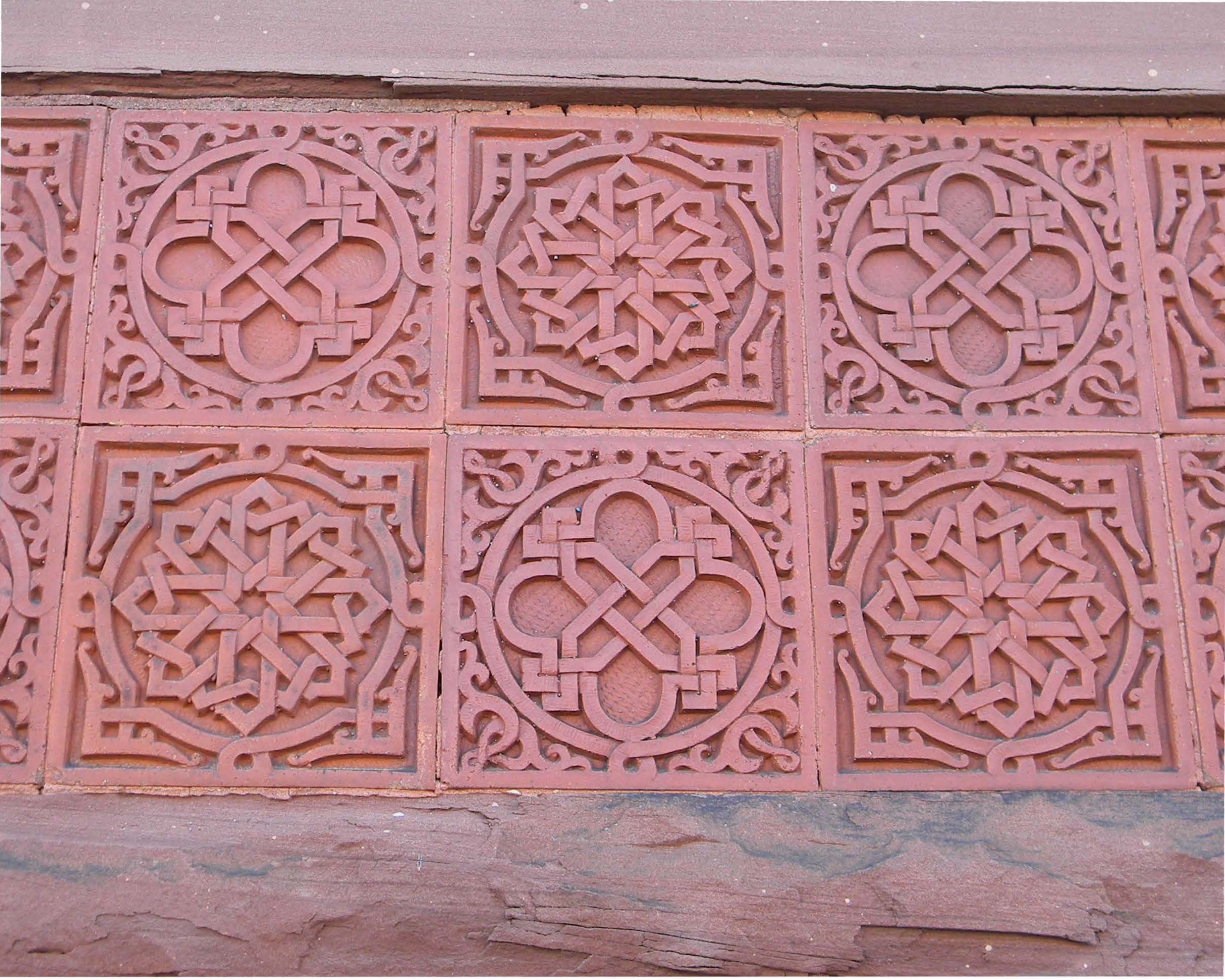
















HARMONIC CLUB

















EXIT



























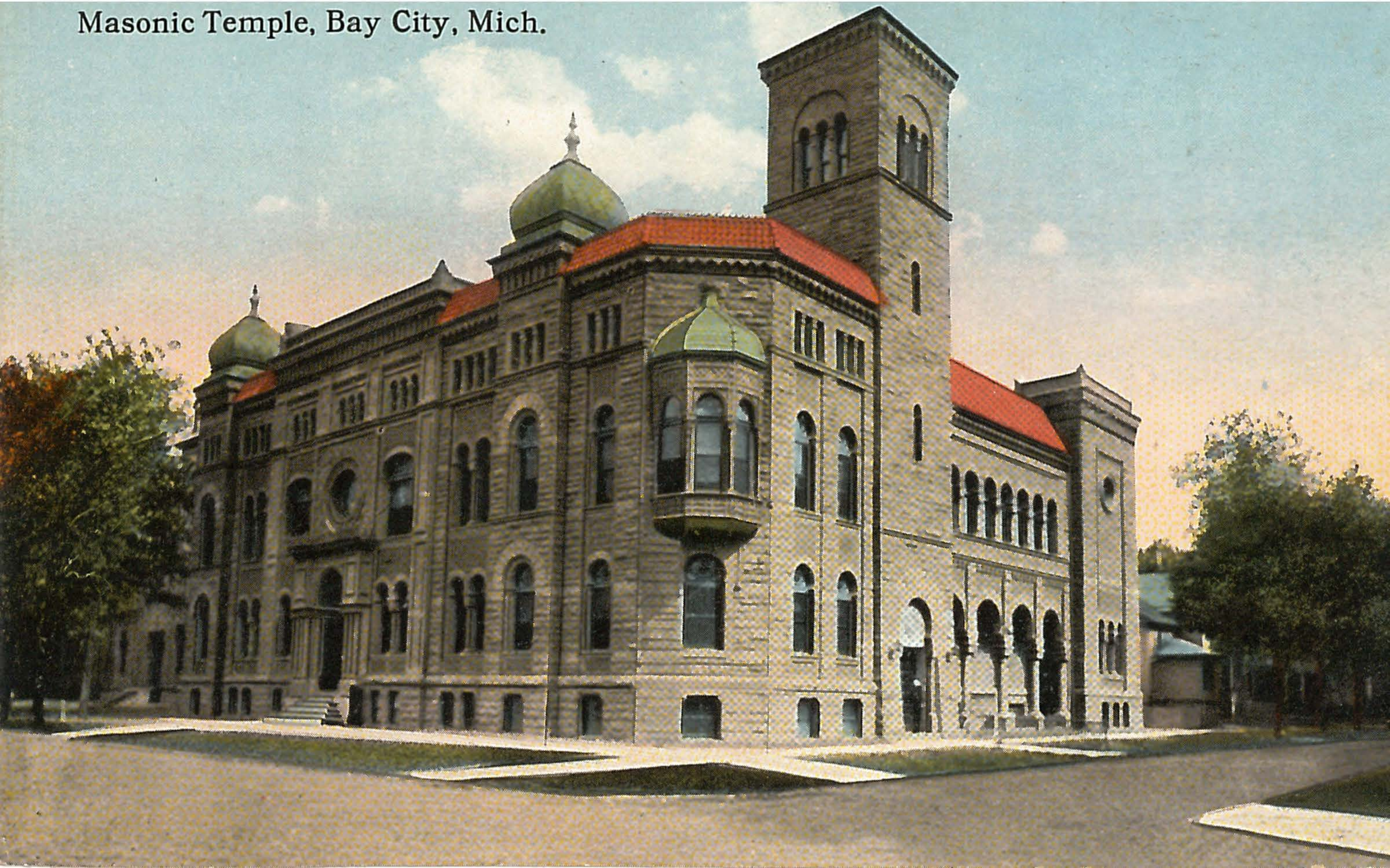








Masonic Temple, Bay City, Mich.





&a20CUNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
&a30CNATIONAL PARK SERVICE

&a22CNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
&a29CEVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Bay City Masonic Temple  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Bay

DATE RECEIVED: 3/18/16 &pW DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/15/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/30/16 &pW DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000216

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 5.3.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

&a4L

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

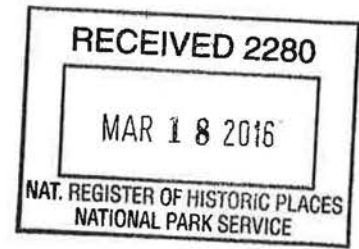




RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

KEVIN ELSENHEIMER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



March 7, 2016

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed is a national register nomination form for the Bay City Masonic Temple in Bay County, Michigan. This property is being submitted for listing in the national register. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to our forwarding this nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator, at 517/335-2719 or [christensenr@michigan.gov](mailto:christensenr@michigan.gov).

Sincerely yours,

Martha MacFarlane-Faes  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

