

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE - IN IDAHO ~~IN IDAHO~~ TW)

SITE NAME: Salmon City Hall and Library SITE NUMBER: 137

LOCATION: 200 Main Street, Salmon, Lemhi County ~~(059), Idaho~~

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

City of SDalmon
202 Main Street
Salmon, ID 83467

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Salmon, 15 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Salmon City Hall and Library and the property on which it stands, lots 2 and 3, block 1, Salmon Townsite. Legal description on file at the Lemhi County Courthouse, Salmon, Idaho.

UTM(S): 12/2,72,750/50,06,325

DATE OR PERIOD: 1939

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: excellent unaltered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Salmon City Hall and Library is a one-story stone and concrete structure which stands on Main Street at the northwest end of the commercial row in Salmon. It was built under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration and is dated 1939 both by on-site plaque and by blueprint. Its architect was Frank Hummel of the firm Tourtellotte and Hummel.

The building is basically rectangular in plan but is actually composed of two distinct blocks, each with an entrance three feet up from the sidewalk. The section to the left contains the public library and has transomed double doors flanked by single plate glass windows. The right-hand section is indented several feet; entry at the left corner is through a single transomed door into a vestibule, city clerk's offices, and city council chambers. At the right corner is an entrance to the basement jail. Between the doors is a pair of plate glass windows.

Above entry level, the building is constructed of twelve-inch-thick blocks of native sandstone, of varying widths. The stone has been very smoothly dressed, but some evidence of the cutting process remains on the surface. Stone was also used for lintels, the slightly outset sills of the windows, and the coping at the roofline. Concrete was used for the steps and landings and concrete blocks support the entire nine-foot basement level, which also houses a heating plant and fuel room.

The ornamental qualities of the building reflect the pared-down mode of art deco stylization found in many examples of civic architecture in the 1930s. The simple thin stone pilasters with beveled tops applied to this otherwise static facade provide the rhythm necessary to emphasize the entrance and the readily visible corners. The only other overtly decorative element, also in keeping with this very linear deco form, is the geometric, tiered keystone at the cornice, which hangs conspicuously distant from the doors of the library. The city hall segment does not claim a similar ornament, and none was called for in the original drawings.

The building appears precisely as designed except for the probable reglazing of the windows.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Salmon City Hall and Library building has exceptional architectural significance as the best example of the art deco style, institutional or otherwise, in this small east-central Idaho town; and as perhaps the most elegant institutional application of that style by the firm, executed as it is with solid masonry walls of fine native sandstone. The building seems to have had the advantage of local skill with the local stone, giving this building a much more elegant aspect than is possessed by most of the federally assisted building projects carried out by the firm.

Salmon, in the mountains near the Montana border, is another out-of-the-way location which these architects' influence would have been unlikely to reach but for the centralization of design opportunities afforded by the federal programs of the 1930s. The restrained but clearly progressive qualities of the building were well-received in this remote town, to judge from reports in the local press. It was described as "a modern design"¹ and a "decidedly pleasing structure from an architectural standpoint."² The stone was quarried and the building constructed with WPA labor.

The contemporary qualities of this building may be constructively contrasted with the revivalist ones of an unfortunately altered city building designed for the Boise Valley town of Parma and built in 1941. That building has a more-or-less moderne body, finished with a low-pitched hipped roof and cupola. It was even called a town hall. At this point, after the death of Charles Hummel and during the absence of Frederick Hummel, the senior architect could only have been Frank Hummel, who was also the architect cited for the Salmon project. The eclectic flexibility, more than the modernity, of the firm seems to be what is reflected here.

1. (Salmon) Idaho Recorder Herald, November 16, 1938.
2. (Salmon) Idaho Recorder Herald, February 15, 1939.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

(Salmon) Idaho Recorder Herald, November 16, 1938; December 7, 1938; February 15, 1939; March 29, 1939.

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. Collection book reference 1939. Drawings signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.