

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



980

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic McAlester Scottish Rite Temple

and/or common Masonic Temple

2. Location

2nd St. and Adams Ave.

street & number Second and Adams ___ not for publication

city, town McAlester ___ vicinity of congressional district 003

state Oklahoma code 40 county Pittsburg code 121

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Fraternal

4. Owner of Property

name McAlester Scottish Rite Bodies

street & number P. O. Box 609

city, town McAlester ___ vicinity of state OK

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Clerk

street & number Pittsburg County Courthouse

city, town McAlester state OK

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Oklahoma Historical Society, Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City state OK

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The McAlester Temple is an imposing buff brick and stone building covering half a city block just two blocks from the main business district. The mass of the structure is art-deco in character, angular and block-like. Its component parts borrow from various styles. The front facade is neo-classic. Steps lead to arched and recessed entries. A recessed two-story colonade is faced with six Ionic columns. Both side elevations have jutting Egyptian-revival pyramidal partial-facades. The rear of the building is simplified neo-classic similar to the front elevation. A frieze around the exterior of the upper part of the stage and auditorium is art-deco in attempt but Egyptian in actual design. A bulb-shaped light 5 1/2' in diameter is a local folk-art touch. It was made of copper and 150 red, blue and amber railroad switch light reflectors. (Picture in enclosed brochure). In 1904 the first Temple, a single storey board and batten, was built a short distance from the present site. In 1907 a red brick and light stone three storey neo-classic structure was built. In 1928 an architect was hired to draw up plans to transform the square 1907 building into the present 'million dollar temple.' Buff-stone replaced red brick, the building was greatly enlarged, and stylistic features were added to modernize the exterior in keeping with new architectural trends. By 1930 the exterior and most of the interior was complete.

The interior is vast and labyrinthian. The lobby is reminiscent of New York Theater lobbies of the 1920s and 30s. Its black fluted columns are gold veined and have gold painted lotus blossom capitals. Glass lines some walls while others are scored and painted to resemble old Egyptian monument interiors. The lobby was painted by a man for whom no records exist. Trompe-l'oeil style, he painted gold veining on columns and mottle-painted walls and painted elabora wall borders.

Tom Moses, of Sosman and Saudis Scenic Studio of Chicago, designed one-hundred ten 40' x 60' canvas hand painted drops plus approximately 50 stabile uprights. Crews of orientals helped Moses paint the scenery in McAlester, Chicago and Kansas City. (Complete files of correspondence with Moses are available. A xerox copy of his specifications for the scenery is enclosed with this form). These sets were the last ones Moses did. He died a short time after he completed them.

The 60' x 80' stage with an additional 40' x 80' apron is the largest west of the Mississippi and its lighting with 6' x 10' wall console is original, now irreplaceable, equipment installed in 1930. The 1000 seat auditorium has wall and lotus-capitaled pilasters entirely covered with Egyptian designs and figures. These were incised and painted by an oriental couple for the Smalley Paint Company of McAlester who held the contract for decorating the auditorium.

The Temple is one half block from the Busby Theater, which is already listed on the National Register. William Busby was instrumental in building both the first and second McAlester Temple. The Temple has a complete file of playbills and programs from the 1920s and 30s of traveling shows performed at the Busby Theater.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Fraternal
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1907, 1928 to present - **Builder/Architect** William T. Schmitt

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The McAlester Consistory is significant as an imposing structure in a small town setting, as a repository for irreplaceable examples of interior and stage designs, and as a symbol of the political and social roles played by the masons in many American communities.

The Masons have played a significant role in the development of the American political philosophy. They were particularly important during the early days of our nation, and on the developing frontier. In many small Oklahoma towns one of the earliest substantial buildings constructed was a Masonic temple. Although the Masons no longer play as central a role as they once did, the order continues to be a focal point for the social life of influential citizens in many American communities.

Of the three Scottish Rite Masonic Temples in Oklahoma, the McAlester Temple is the oldest. The original 1904 building was ample enough; however, in 1907 a large group of energetic and dedicated men promoted and built a large neo-classic brick and stone temple. In 1928, with a nation-wide membership of almost 8,000, a second campaign was launched to build a modern art-deco style building around the 1907 building. By 1930 the exterior and a majority of the elaborate interior was completed despite the economic stresses of the depression.

The flamboyant immigrant Dutch architect from Oklahoma City, William T. Schmitt, designed this building. Many of Schmitt's original drawings for the Temple are in Temple files. Schmitt's other designs include an early shopping complex in Oklahoma City and a post office in Ada, Oklahoma. The stage lighting console is wall-sized; has porcelain and brass breaker switch handles; red, green and yellow warning lights; and resembles those seen in old movies about even earlier Broadway productions. The one hundred ten back drops by Tom Moses are flown in a cavernous ceiling area above the stage. The 60' x 80' stage could have accommodated "Ben Hur" which instead was staged at the nearby Busby Theater. The stage sets, lighting equipment (and, incidentally, three steam-heat boilers) are in excellent condition and used on a regular basis. This theatrical equipment, now irreplaceable, and even though in a seemingly incongruous setting, is a fine example of American stage design and technology of a specific time period.

The black and gold lobby is indicative of the era when elegance was aspired to as part of the American dream regardless of geographical location and the auditorium is as theatrical as any production ever staged there. The building is a symbol of that part of the developing character of American life played by Masonic groups in Oklahoma and in the nation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Procter, Mabelle, Office Manager, McAlester Scottish Rite Temple, Interview, January 28, 1980
 Burks, John, McAlester Scottish Rite Temple, McAlester, Oklahoma, Interview, January 28, 1980
 Keitel, Clair, McAlester Scottish Rite Temple, McAlester, Oklahoma, Interview, February 6, 1980
 McAlester Consistory - Information booklet published by McAlester Consistory

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property about one acre

Quadrangle name McAlester, OK

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 7.5'

UMT References

A

1	5	2	4	7	4	1	0	3	8	6	9	1	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 300 Lots 1, 2, N 50' of 5 and lots 6, and 7, McAlester.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Ann Anders

Directed by Dr. Annetta L. Cheek

organization Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey

date February, 1980

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone (405) 624-5678

city or town Stillwater

state OK

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Glenn Jordan

title

date 9/23/80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Beth Groves
 Keeper of the National Register

date 11/22/80

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration