

**United States Department of 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 an 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 Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163  
other names/site number Neillsville Assembly of God Church

**2. Location**

street & number	316 Hewett Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Neillsville	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Clark	code 019
			zip code 54456

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] SHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
Date 8/18/07

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau



Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163  
Name of Property

County Clark  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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.)

Property is:

- 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.
- 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)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1928

**Significant Dates**

1928

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hancock, Edward J. (architect)  
Stewart, John (builder)

## Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Name of Property

County and State

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):**

- 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:**

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property less than one acre

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

1 15 690852 4936780  
 Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

 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	Patricia Lacey	date	3/10/04
organization		telephone	715-743-4799
street & number	W5055 US HWY 10	zip code	54456
city or town	Neillsville	state	WI

Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163  
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### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

<b>name/title</b>	Neillsville Assembly of God Church		<b>date</b>	
<b>organization</b>			<b>telephone</b>	715-743-3535
<b>street&amp;number</b>	316 Hewett Street		<b>zip code</b>	54456
<b>city or town</b>	Neillsville	<b>state</b>	WI	

**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 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 Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163  
Neillsville, Clark County, Wisconsin

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 was erected in 1928 to the designs of Eau Claire architect Edward J. Hancock<sup>1</sup> and reflects the popularity of Stripped Classicism during this period. The building is two stories tall and is set on a projected basement. The surface of the building is brick and is accented with limestone stringcourses. The bricks, with various shades of browns tinted slightly green, are set in American Bond. The roof is flat and is hidden by a limestone capped parapet. The building is set back from Hewett Street on the east, and from 4<sup>th</sup> Street on the north. It is located on a 128' by 132' corner lot within a residential area at the southern most edge of the Neillsville commercial district. The property is in excellent condition and has had little, if any, alteration since construction.

**DESCRIPTION**

The building is wood frame and load-bearing structural brick wall construction. The east facing, front elevation features a symmetrical façade, with a horizontal skyline. The façade is vertically articulated with a central pavilion that contains the main entrance. The building has a projected brick foundation whose lower half has been covered with concrete stucco. The projected basement is capped at the bottom of the first floor level by a slightly sloped limestone stringcourse. The building's façade gives the impression of a single story, while containing two stories on the interior. The first floor, as it appears on the front façade, actually continues to the middle of the second floor. Another slightly sloping limestone stringcourse appears at the top of this level. The second half of the second floor level is set back from the first floor and presents a suggested entablature as it continues to the parapet. The parapet is capped by a limestone coping that is slightly sloped. The limestone banding continues around all sides of the structure as well as continuing through the central frontispiece.

The central pavilion steps forward, and is the full height of the building. The pavilion contains a two story segmented arched entry with a molded archivolt. The arched area is divided vertically into three distinct parts by vertical limestone molding that extends from the first floor to the underside of the segmented arch. An equilateral pointed arched light appears in the single entry door. The entry door is flanked by eight light sidelights. Below the sidelights are stone panels that match the panel in the lower

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<sup>1</sup> Neillsville Republican and Press May 17, 1928

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portion of the entry door. Transom lights with intersecting lines are located over the entry door and the sidelights. The sidelights and transom lights have heavy limestone sills.

The second story area, within the segmented arch, has a full height rectangular window, which is divided into thirty- six lights. Arched, full height, narrow, ten light sidelight windows appear at each side of this window. A limestone spandrel separates the first and second floor levels. The central spandrel is articulated with a raised diamond shape. The area above the arch is recessed and edged with molding. A round medallion is centered above the second floor window, at the crown of the arch. A raised guilloche molding appears directly under the parapet. The parapet suggests castellation and is higher than the parapeted edge of the main building.

The central pavilion features wide, stepped flanking piers. The caps of these piers are at each side of the parapet, atop the arched entry. These caps continue the suggestion of castellation of the pavilion parapet. These piers are not the total width of the wall on either side of the arched entry. Thus, the remaining wall behind these piers themselves suggest another pier. Two metal electric lights are located on the front piers at either side of the entrance. The five- step entry stairway is flanked by brick stepped sidewalls that are capped with limestone sills. Two iron hand rails aid in ascension. The north and south wall of the pavilion, at the first floor level, contain one double hung window with the upper light divided with intersecting lines. The projected basement north and south wall of the pavilion have one double hung window, identical to the windows on the main projecting basement level.

On either side of the pavilion, is a fenestration band of five tall, narrow windows, separated by very minimal brick pilasters. Each window has a single light topped by a transom that has a pattern of intersecting lines. A brick soldier course lintel appears at the top of each window. A limestone sill runs the entire length of the window band. Smaller windows are found immediately below at the basement level. At the northeast corner of the front façade, above the first floor limestone stringcourse, is a corner stone that reads: "ERECTED A.D.1928"

The north elevation also has a somewhat lesser scale pavilion entrance created with large brick piers that flank the entry. The caps of these piers are connected with the limestone parapet, suggesting castellation. Beneath the parapet is a dentil relief patterned limestone band, which rests on the limestone stringcourse. The entry door has a single light and is topped with a transom divided with intersecting lines. Above the door is a single double hung window with the upper light divided with intersecting lines. (All of the windows of the building are of this pattern, unless otherwise noted.) A limestone spandrel separates the entry door and the window. Slender pilasters frame the entry door and the upper window. The projected basement and first floor window fenestration to the east of the entry

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is identical to the east facing main façade, only being in groups of three. The first floor fenestration to the west of the north entrance contains a group of three smaller, double hung windows. The basement level remains at half below grade to the east, but is completely exposed on the west side of the north entry. The west basement fenestration has a group of three double hung windows, greater in height than the east elevation. All windows on the north elevation have a brick soldier lintel and a limestone sill that extends the width of the window group. The limestone stringcourses at the bottom of the first floor level and at the mid-level of the second floor continue around this side of the building. Two metal electric lights are located on the piers at each side of the entry. The door is reached by a one step entry.

The south elevation basement level has an entry door, with transom, centered between two groups of three window bands. The windows are of the same type as on the other elevations and the limestone stringcourse that is present at the bottom of the first floor appears at the top of this grouping. The southeast corner of the basement remains below grade. The east first floor fenestration, of the south elevation, has a group of two windows identical to those on the front façade. The west side of the south basement elevation is completely exposed. At the west end of this elevation is the bowling alley extension. The extension is 14'5" in width and adds an additional 5' in length to the west elevation. This extension allows for the proper length of the bowling alleys. The extension has a flat roof. Two vents are present at the top of the first floor. The limestone stringcourses continue around this side of the building.

The west (rear) elevation exhibits the complete three stories. It is lacking the detail that is present on the other elevations. However, the limestone stringcourses continue on this elevation. The northwest corner has an entry door with a nine paned light. The transom that is over the door has one light. The walk-in basement level has five evenly spaced double hung windows whose upper sash is divided with intersecting lines. The first and second floor fenestration consists of four small, evenly spaced windows. These windows are modern replacements. The chimney is visible at the northwest corner. An opening in the parapet allows for water to run off the roof.

### **INTERIOR**

The interior of the Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 revolves around main central rooms on both the basement and first floor levels. These rooms are surrounded with connecting corridors, containing closets, bathrooms and small meeting rooms.



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The main stairwell is housed within the pavilion and accesses the basement and first floor levels. There is the unique placement of bathrooms to either side of the staircase, within the pavilion, both on the basement and first floor levels.

The north entrance stairwell accesses the first floor north corridor at the rear of the Lodge Room, and also accesses the basement. A stairwell located in the southwest corner of the first floor accesses the third floor balcony of the Lodge Room and third floor storage areas. A narrow stairwell is also present at the southeast corner of the Lodge Room that accesses the balcony.

The first floor revolves around the central main Lodge Room, which is 56' 6" long by 35' wide. Three sets of double doors, set within five-foot openings, enter the room, two on the south wall and one on the west wall. A 42" wide single panel door also enters the Lodge Room from the north, near the stage area. The room is two stories in height and has a balcony at the south end. The balcony is the full width of the Lodge Room and is situated over the south corridor of the first floor. Four 18" beams divide the Lodge Room ceiling into five areas. The undersides of the beams are coffered with decorative moldings and are 17" in depth. Large, scroll-like brackets support each beam. A massive ceiling cornice of compound moldings surrounds the Lodge Room and balcony ceilings. The east and west walls of the Lodge Room have 3' wide by 42" long hardwood platforms that rise four inches from the main floor area. These platforms provided for elevated seating and were the location for the Junior and Senior Steward and the Junior and Senior Warden. The north wall has a raised 6' by 15' stage accessed by two stairs. The stage is centered on an inset wall arch.

Two stairwells access the balcony. One is to the right of the southwest double door entry. A balustrade is placed at the edge of the balcony floor, where it meets the stairwell. The other stairwell exits the balcony at the southwest corner. This stairwell also provides access to the 7'6" wide storage area that runs the length of the west wall. The balcony is 14' 10" in width and has a hardwood floor. A 9' wood ledge caps the overlook wall. The air vents visible on the exterior south elevation appear in 35" by 24" vent columns on the rear south wall of the balcony.

On either side of the main east first floor entrance are Ladies and Gentlemen rooms, complete with bathrooms. The east facing first floor façade window bands allow for excellent lighting in these rooms. The corridor area under the balcony has two double door entrances to the Lodge Room. Several closets, that would have housed each of the various Masonic orders paraphernalia, are present on this corridor. The west corridor is 7'6" in width and is unobstructed. It has one double door entry to the Lodge Room. The north corridor holds the north entry stairwell and a 45" wide corridor that has a single 42" wide door entry to the Lodge Room.

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The 30' by 57' dining room, within the basement level although off center to the south, is surrounded on three sides by corridors, interlocking rooms, as well as two bowling alleys. An exterior entry door is situated at the northwest corner of the rear west elevation. This door enters an area that houses two Brunswick bowling alleys. The alleys have a 15' approach. The lane itself extends 60' south along the length of the west elevation, plus the length of the small south elevation bowling alley extension. The gutters, alleys, and ball return are of wood construction. The end of the ball return, between the alley approaches, is finished with a newel post, topped with an ashtray. The pins are manually set from an access door that enters the alleys from the dining room. Four 48" by 42" observation windows overlook the bowling alleys from the dining room and billiard room. The dining room can be entered from an exterior door on the south elevation, as well as the billiard room, kitchen and main entry corridor. Groups of three windows are present on each side of the south elevation exterior entry door and allow for excellent light to enter the dining room. The dining room has four ceiling beams, which rest on 26" pilasters. A door from the bowling alley area enters a 13'10' wide 22' long room north of the dining room, which was the billiard room. This room has one closet and an exiting stairwell.

The billiard room opens through a five-foot double door into a 13' wide by 23' long card room that is situated at the north end of the east-connecting corridor. A 13' wide by 23' long kitchen is situated at the south end of the east-connecting corridor. The south wall of the kitchen contains the original built in cupboards, with work counter and slide in cutting boards. The cupboards extend from the floor to the ceiling and maintain their original hardware. The corridor passes from the card room to the kitchen area, through the stairwell area, which is contained within the pavilion. Bathrooms are present at each side of the stairwell, within the central pavilion.

The second floor consists of the balcony and storage areas that surround the second level of the Lodge Room on the south, west and north elevations. A 16'6" wide by 23" long room is located, within the pavilion, at the second floor level of the east elevation. The room dimensions continue back to the second floor wall of the Lodge Room. The room is accessed by a narrow stairwell located to the immediate right of the main stairway on the first floor level. Doorways located at the rear of this room enter storage areas that are present to the right and left of the pavilion. These storage areas continue the length of the main building on both the north and south, second floor elevations. The room is suffused with light from the windows within the arch of the pavilion. The Jobs Daughters utilized this area.

The door and window surrounds are 4" wide and flat. A 3 1/2" inch flat chair rail is present 3'4" from the floor and appears throughout the structure including the stairwells. The doors are single panel and

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appear in double doors, standard 36" doors and larger 42" doors. The wood is stained a dark color. The walls and ceilings are cream-colored plaster throughout. The door and window hardware is brass.

**ALTERATIONS**

The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 remains virtually unchanged on the building's exterior. The rear elevation second and third floor rectangular windows have had sliding side-by-side windows placed within the original openings. The interior of the Temple is completely intact, including the interior finishes. The exterior has been sprayed with a muted gray wash that is barely discernable. These very minor alterations do not compromise the excellent integrity of this structure.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: SUMMARY**

The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 is architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C. Built in 1928, it is a fine example of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Movement in architecture known as "Stripped Classicism." The style is credited to architects Paul Philippe Cret and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.<sup>2</sup> This emerging movement was a variation of classicism, which was devoid of ornamentation. Classical decorative elements are hinted at but are not fully expressed.<sup>3</sup> These hinted elements allude to precedents in Classical architecture. The Neillsville Masonic Temple's architecture has a strong horizontal emphasis to the street. Large piers flank the main centered arched entry pavilion, which anchors the symmetry of the façade. Bands of windows, five in each, flank the entry at both the first floor and basement levels. Stringcourses appear at the bottom and top of the main first floor and help develop a relationship between the horizontal and vertical lines of the building. The building retains excellent integrity.

**HISTORY OF NEILLSVILLE**

Neillsville was first settled in June of 1845 when James and Henry O'Neill cut the first road into Clark County, arriving from Black River Falls. They built a sawmill on O'Neill Creek, which empties into the Black River.<sup>4</sup> The Black River runs north to south, dividing the county into two nearly equal parts. It also became the waterway for transporting the logs to the mills of Onalaska and La Crosse. Lumbering attracted many early settlers, who came from many different ethnic backgrounds.

By 1850 James O'Neill cleared about 50 acres of land. He appropriated four acres for the village and directed Neillsville to be platted in April of 1855 by the surveyor, Allen Boardman. Neillsville was replatted in 1921 by C. Stockwell.<sup>5</sup> The construction of substantial brick commercial buildings began in 1872 with the Hewett and Woods building, located at 5<sup>th</sup> and Hewett streets. Commercial building would continue for the next sixty years. The main business section is situated on Hewett Street, named after James Hewett, one of Neillsville's pioneer settlers. The commercial district on Hewett Street

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<sup>2</sup> Pencil Points Vol. 19 February 1938 pp99-106  
[utexas.edu/tours/mainbuilding/people/cret.html](http://utexas.edu/tours/mainbuilding/people/cret.html)

Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, pg 186.

<sup>3</sup> [rchme.gov.uk/thesauras/styles/s/135577.htm](http://rchme.gov.uk/thesauras/styles/s/135577.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Cooper, H.C, Jr. & Company, History of Clark County, Chicago: 1918, p. 37

<sup>5</sup> Western Historical Company, History of Northern Wisconsin, Chicago 1881, p231

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extends from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Separation from the government of the county made it necessary for the incorporation of the City of Neillsville on March 28, 1882.<sup>6</sup>

Everyone thought the lumber would last forever. When, at the turn of the century, it did not, Neillsville invested in such businesses as the condensery, canning factory, and furniture factory. In 1914, Neillsville was a community prospering on enterprise, with over 118 businesses located throughout the many downtown brick buildings.<sup>7</sup> The Chicago, St. Paul, Minnesota and Omaha Railroad had three passenger trains, each way, stopping in Neillsville every day.<sup>8</sup> Electricity became available to downtown merchants in 1882 from a private electric plant. The Neillsville Electric and Water Supply Company was formed to create power and water and a building was constructed for the purpose. In the fall of 1906 the City of Neillsville acquired the plant. In 1912 a contract was created with the Minnesota Light and Power Company and the local plant was abandoned.<sup>9</sup>

In 1904 Neillsville appropriated \$3,000 to macadamize its streets. A full time city secretary was in hire in 1914, whose job it was to stimulate the development of the community.<sup>10</sup>

The Neillsville Library Association was formed in 1879 with the library being located in the office of the True Republican newspaper. In 1897 the citizens of Neillsville voted to establish a library and reading room in the High School where it remained until 1914 when the Carnegie Library was erected<sup>11</sup>

In 1928, Postmaster A.C. Martin established door-to-door mail delivery within Neillsville.<sup>12</sup> The Neillsville Milk Products Plant (condensery) expanded with the installation of a larger boiler and a 73 foot smoke stack.<sup>13</sup> Oak Street and First Street were extended to create areas for residential growth.<sup>14</sup> The city was installing curb and gutter throughout Neillsville as well as trying to deal with downtown

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<sup>6</sup> Cooper, H.C., Jr. & Company History of Clark County, Chicago: 1918, pg631.

<sup>7</sup> Clark County "The Heart of Wisconsin", Printed by Clark County, 1914.

<sup>8</sup> Cooper, H.C., Jr. & Company History of Clark County, Chicago: 1918, p627.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p631

<sup>10</sup> Clark County "The Heart of Wisconsin", Printed by Clark County, 1914.

<sup>11</sup> Cooper, H.C., Jr. & Company History of Clark County, Chicago: 1918, pg632.

<sup>12</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, May 10, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, October 25, 1928.

<sup>14</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, December 21, 1926.

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parking concerns.<sup>15</sup> Concrete paving began on U.S. Highway 10 and U.S. Highway 73 (Hewett Street as it passes through town, north to south)<sup>16</sup>

Red Owl Foods and A & P Foods were now located within the business district. The Tragsdorf Theater offered the newest film experience. Several car dealerships existed including R. H. Welsh Chevrollet, Dodge Brothers Inc., and Hoesly Motor Co. and the gasoline stations to fuel them.<sup>17</sup> Six churches, of various denominations, offered houses of worship to the diverse population of 3,000 people. In 1928, as Neillsville was continuing to prosper, the members of the Masonic Lodge gained confidence that this would be a good time to pursue their building project.

#### HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry is the largest and most widely established fraternal organization in the world. The mason's guilds were originally restricted to stonemasons. During the Reformation in England they began to admit as members men of wealth or social status. The guilds became societies devoted to general ideas such as fraternity, equality, and peace and their meetings became social rather than business occasions. Four or more guild groups constituted a lodge. The Masonic ideals of religious tolerance and basic equality of all people were in keeping with the growing spirit of liberalism during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The earliest lodge in the United States was the First Lodge of Boston, established in 1733. By the time of the American Revolution, about 150 lodges existed in colonial America. Today, American Freemasons make up three-fourths of the world's membership of six million people.<sup>18</sup>

#### HISTORY OF MASONRY IN NEILLSVILLE

On August 3, 1866, a petition was issued for dispensation to establish Neillsville Lodge No. 163 (Blue Lodge). A charter for the Neillsville Lodge was issued on June 11, 1867. The Masons began to hold meetings within various homes in Neillsville, with the first one being held on July 25, 1867. Several of Neillsville's pioneers were participants. B.J. French was the first Master of the Lodge. G.W. King,

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<sup>15</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press June 2, 1927, July 21, 1927.

<sup>16</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, May 17, 1928.

<sup>17</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, Advertisements from September 1927 to December 1927.

<sup>18</sup> Microsoft Encarta 1993-1999 "Freemasonry" pg1

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E.H. Bacon, James Furlong, G.W. King, E.H. McIntosh, P.J. Thompson, and A. L. Manley were charter members of the Lodge.<sup>19</sup>

As interest continued to grow for masonry in Neillsville, various Masonic orders petitioned for organization. The Royal Arch Masons received their charter February 21, 1892. The Charter for Carmi Chapter No. 30, Order of the Eastern Star was granted February 20, 1895. The Neillsville Commandery No. 36 dispensation was granted December 19, 1910 upon the petition of 29 Masons. These groups continued to meet various locations including homes and the second floor of the Neillsville Post Office. In 1891 the Masonic Lodge entered into co-ownership of the Hewett and Woods building located at 5<sup>th</sup> and Hewett. W.J. Marsh was operating a mercantile in the lower portion of the building. The upper level of the structure, in the opinion of W. J. Marsh, was valued at 1/3 with the lower store portion valued at 2/3. The Masonic Lodge purchased the upper level by securing a loan for \$1,000 and using \$333.33 from their treasury. This partnership continued until the completion of their new temple in 1928. When the Masonic Temple was completed, W. J. Marsh purchased the Masonic Lodge's 1/3 of the Hewett and Woods building.<sup>20</sup>

The Neillsville Masons purchased the Ida Ring property located at the southwest corner of Hewett and Fourth streets in December of 1917<sup>21</sup>. In May of 1928, the Masons felt they were in a financial position to undertake the project of constructing a new temple on the former Ring property. At the meeting of Neillsville Lodge No. 163 on December 6, 1928, a resolution was enacted to secure funds in the amount of \$20,000 for the building project and to sell the Lodge's interests in the W.J Marsh building.<sup>22</sup> John Carter removed the Ring residence during June of 1928. A portion of the home was relocated to First Street, between Grand Avenue and Hewett Street. Mr. Carter provided the excavating for the new Masonic Temple in payment for being given the Ring building.<sup>23</sup>

Architect Edward J. Hancock (1889-1930), of Eau Claire Wisconsin, was commissioned to create the architectural plans for the Masonic Temple.<sup>24</sup> Hancock was born in England and immigrated to the United States as a boy, locating with relatives in Fargo, North Dakota. He was trained in the architectural firm owned by his uncles, George and Walter Hancock. Upon finishing his training he joined the architectural firm of Reilly, Dawson, Hancock and Reilly, working from August 1911 to

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<sup>19</sup> Masonry in Neillsville 1867 - 1967 Centennial writings for Lodges 100 year celebration

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press December 1917

<sup>22</sup> Neillsville Lodge No. 163 meeting minutes December 6, 1928

<sup>23</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press June 14, 1928

<sup>24</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press May 17, 1928

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July 1915 in Regina, Moosejaw, and Saskatchewan. Hancock arrived in Eau Claire, Wisconsin in July 1915, joining Carl Volkman's firm. This partnership was dissolved in November of 1916. Hancock briefly lived in Seattle, Washington, but soon returned to Eau Claire. Hancock practiced on his own in Eau Claire until his death.<sup>25</sup> Edward J. Hancock was the architect for three Eau Claire buildings that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the 1925 Eau Claire High School at 314 Doty Street, 1900 Second Ward School at 1105 Main Street, and the 1925 Temple of Free Masonry at 616 Graham Avenue.<sup>26</sup>

Edward J Hancock's plans for the Masonic Temple were adopted in May of 1928 and construction began in June. The plans called for a two-story brick building with dimensions of 59 X 82 feet. The brick was to be tinted green with light colored stone trim. The main entrance would face Hewett Street. The "Lodge Room" would be located on the main floor of the proposed building. The bids that were received for the construction of the building totaled \$36,500.00. Mr. John Stewart of Durand would construct the building. P. M Warlum, of Neillsville, would complete the heating, lighting and plumbing.<sup>27</sup> The basement would have polished concrete floors and the halls and floors in the upper rooms will be terrazzo except for the Main Lodge Room, which would be carpeted. The Lodge Room would seat one hundred people comfortably. Upon completion, the Neillsville Masonic Temple provided a place for recreation such as bowling, billiards, and a place for socialization in the Ladies' and Gentlemen's Lounging Rooms, and card playing in the card rooms. During special events, meals were prepared in the kitchen and served in the dining room that also offered room for dancing.<sup>28</sup>

On Tuesday afternoon January 1, 1929 the Neillsville Temple Lodge No. 163 was formally dedicated. Judge Frank Johnson, of Black River Falls, conducted the dedication ceremonies. State Senator W. L. Smith, president of the building committee, opened the ceremony by presenting the deed of the new temple to the Blue Lodge. Following the dedication, a banquet ensued, attended by three hundred people. The various Masonic orders of Neillsville now settled into their new home.<sup>29</sup> Bethel No. 40 International Order of Job's Daughters was chartered on October 25, 1947.

With changing demographics and entertainment interests, the lodge membership began to dwindle. As a result, it became increasingly difficult to care for the property and to meet utility costs. In 1995 the

<sup>25</sup> Barland, The River Flows On: A Record of Eau Claire 1910-1960, pg 425.

Eau Claire Leader July 3, 1930, pg 2.

<sup>26</sup> National Register of Historic Places

<sup>27</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, May 17, 1928.

<sup>28</sup> Wisconsin Leader, January 1929.

<sup>29</sup> Neillsville Republican & Press, January 3, 1929.



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building was sold to Bud Stratton for \$18,000.<sup>30</sup> In December of 1996 the Neillsville Assembly of God Church purchased the Masonic Temple building, utilizing it for Youth Sunday School and other activities.

The Neillsville Assembly of God Church was founded in 1949 and held evening services in the Congregational Church. In 1960 the church was holding evening services in the basement of the Neillsville Bank. In 1961, the church purchased the former Unitarian Church at 5<sup>th</sup> and Clay. The church maintained this historic structure until the purchase of the Masonic Temple building in 1996. In May of 1999, all church services were moved to the former Masonic Temple building.<sup>31</sup> The sale of the former Unitarian Church enabled the Assembly of God Church to put a new roof on the Temple building and to add insulation to the third floor attic/storage spaces. The Assembly of God Church continues to own and maintain this building. The church elders and Pastor Douglas Bjerke were instrumental in the pursuit of this National Register Nomination.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 is architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C. It is an excellent and intact local example of the architectural movement known as Stripped Classicism. The Temple represents the work of architect Edward J. Hancock, who designed other National Register recognized structures.

Up until the market crashed in late 1929, America was experiencing one of the biggest building booms in history.<sup>32</sup> The 1925 Paris Exposition created great interest in "modernism" and architects awoke to the possibilities of independent and creative design. According to Talbot F. Hamlin: "Archaeological architecture was dead. Yet classicism, in its larger sense, was not dead. People still loved noble materials, noble proportions, serenity, quietness, and the sense of permanence. The people demanded, especially in public buildings, monumentality."<sup>33</sup>

French born architect, Paul Philippe Cret<sup>34</sup> and American born architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue,<sup>35</sup> inspired the Stripped Classicism movement in architecture. The use of this style created a

<sup>30</sup> Masonic Temple records

<sup>31</sup> 2002 Assemble of God booklet used at the Church building dedication

<sup>32</sup> A History of Architecture, Spiro Kostof, New Oxford University Press 1985

<sup>33</sup> Pencil Points Vol. 19 Feb. 1938 "A Contemporary American Style" pg99-106

<sup>34</sup> [utexas.edu/tours/mainbuilding/people/cret.html](http://utexas.edu/tours/mainbuilding/people/cret.html)  
[philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/22472](http://philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22472)

<sup>35</sup> [sandiegohistory.org/bio/goodhue/goodhue.htm](http://sandiegohistory.org/bio/goodhue/goodhue.htm)

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bridge between Beaux-Arts historicism and modernism. Stripped Classicism hints at classical elements as buildings are stripped of clutter. Architects Cret and Goodhue created classical compositions that maintained a simplification of decorative elements.

Paul Philippe Cret wrote: "The architect must have no fear of simplicity; he must have the daring to sacrifice the facile commonplace of stereotyped "trimming"; he must be ready to forget even the beautiful forms that stock his mental arsenal; he must have the courage to eliminate-and eliminate."<sup>36</sup> Stripped classicism as expressed in Cret's war memorial "Monument to the Dead of Pennsylvania" Varemmes-en-Argonne, France and "The Frankford War Memorial" in Philadelphia, PA and Goodhue's "National Academy of Science" in Washington D.C., was popularized during the Depression years by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA spread this form of architecture from the large metropolitan cities to the rural small towns in a style that became known as "government modern."<sup>37</sup>

Talbot F. Hamlin wrote that this style "is generally classic in ideal, avoids the use of order and is usually free from historic precedent." He continues that Stripped Classicism maintains "low horizontal patterns, with a higher entrance, often featured by wide flanking piers." Many characteristics seen in Stripped Classicism are a horizontal skyline, symmetrical façade, central entrance that may extend higher than the main building, lack of classical detailing, bands of windows, spandrels, and a flat roof. The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 incorporates many of the above listed features.<sup>38</sup>

Goodhue, not wanting to use columns, simply inserted bands of windows into the wall using the most minimal of pilasters between them.<sup>39</sup> This element is reflected in the former Masonic Temple's bands of five windows that appear on each side of the central pavilion on both the first floor and the projected basement. The only decoration appearing on the fenestration are the divided transoms of the narrow first floor windows and in the upper lights of the double hung windows of the basement. The wall above the limestone stringcourse, which tops the mid-way point of the second floor, suggests a diminutive frieze. The entire east facing front façade offers a sense of dignity and permanence through the classical composition of its façade and the minimal application of decorative features.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Philippe Cret Architect and Teacher, Theo B. White, Associated University Press, 1973.

<sup>37</sup> A Field Guide to American Architecture, Carole Refkind, New American Library, 1980, pg218.

<sup>38</sup> Pencil Points, Vol. 19, Feb. 1938 "A Contemporary American Style" pg 99-106.

<sup>39</sup> The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret, Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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**CONCLUSION**

The Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163, designed by Edward J. Hancock, completely fulfilled the social and organizational needs of Neillsville's Masons. Members could spend an evening bowling, shooting billiards or playing cards. The large dining room and kitchen enabled groups to have meetings and parties. The Lodge Room provided an area for Masonic ceremonies. Edward J. Hancock's design transcends not only the years, but also the building's changing use. The building is now the home of the Assembly of God Church. The interior design that served the Mason's requirements now serves the many needs of the church without making changes to the structure. The bowling alleys are still in use. The Church hosts dinners and meetings in the dining room. The billiard room, card room and Ladies' and Gentlemen's rooms now hold Sunday school classes and a nursery. The Lodge Room has become a sanctuary. A cross rests within the recessed arch above the stage.

The former Masonic Temple is a good, local example of the stripped down academic styles popular in the 1920s and 1930s. The movement of paring down classical architecture is often referred to as "Stripped Classicism." The formal composition with minimal surface decoration of the movement is expressed in the Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge building. This continued use of this building is a testament to its design and designer and reflects the construction of significant buildings in Neillsville.

**Criteria Consideration A**

While the Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163 is being used as a church, it was not built for that purpose and the significance of the resources is architecture.

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Wisconsin Leader, January 1929.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Blakeslees Addition Lots 1 & 2 (total property 128' deep by 132" wide). Bordered by Hewett Street on the east and 4<sup>th</sup> Street on the north.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property consists of the entire lot that has been historically associated with the property.

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Photo 1 of 16  
1928 Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163  
Photo by Pat Lacey  
January 2004  
Negative on file at the Wisconsin Historical Society  
View looking northwest

The information for the following photos is the same as the above, except as noted

Photo 2 of 16  
View looking southwest.

Photo 3 of 16  
View looking southwest (close up of entry pavilion)

Photo 4 of 16  
View looking west (close up of castellation)

Photo 5 of 16  
View looking southeast

Photo 6 of 16  
View looking south (close up of castellation)

Photo 7 of 16  
View looking southwest (window band)

Photo 8 of 16  
View looking northwest (showing bowling alley extension)

Photo 9 of 16  
View looking southeast (rear)

Photo 10 of 16  
View looking southeast (dining room)

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Photo 11 of 16  
View looking southeast (bowling alleys)

Photo 12 of 16  
View looking southeast (bowling alleys)

Photo 13 of 16  
View looking northwest (Lodge Room beams and cornice)

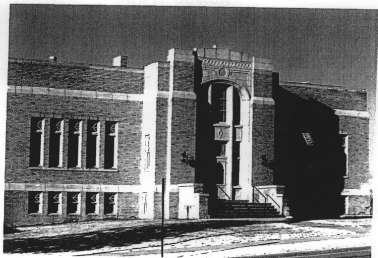
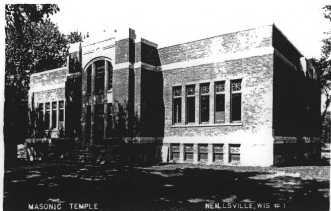
Photo 14 of 16  
View looking south (balcony of Lodge Room)

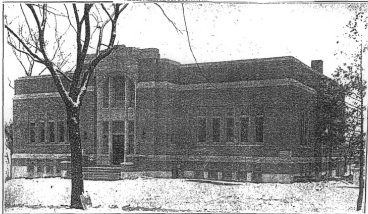
Photo 15 of 16  
View looking west (Lodge Room doors)

Photo 16 of 16  
View looking east (balcony balustrade)



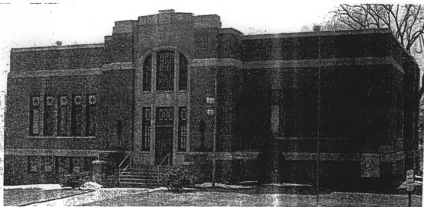
NEILLSVILLE MASONIC TEMPLE LODGE NO. 163  
NEILLSVILLE, CLARK COUNTY, WI





THE NEW MASONIC TEMPLE  
Which will be Dedicated Jan. 1st

Republican and Press December 28, 1928



MASONRY IN NEILLSVILLE observes its 115th birthday in the charter centennial year of the city. The new, permanent home of Masonic bodies here was built in 1928, and formal dedication ceremonies were held January 1, 1929. The first

Master of the Blue Lodge was Benjamin F. French. Five Masonic bodies are served by the building: the Blue Lodge, Chapter, Commandery, Order of Eastern Star and Job's Daughters.

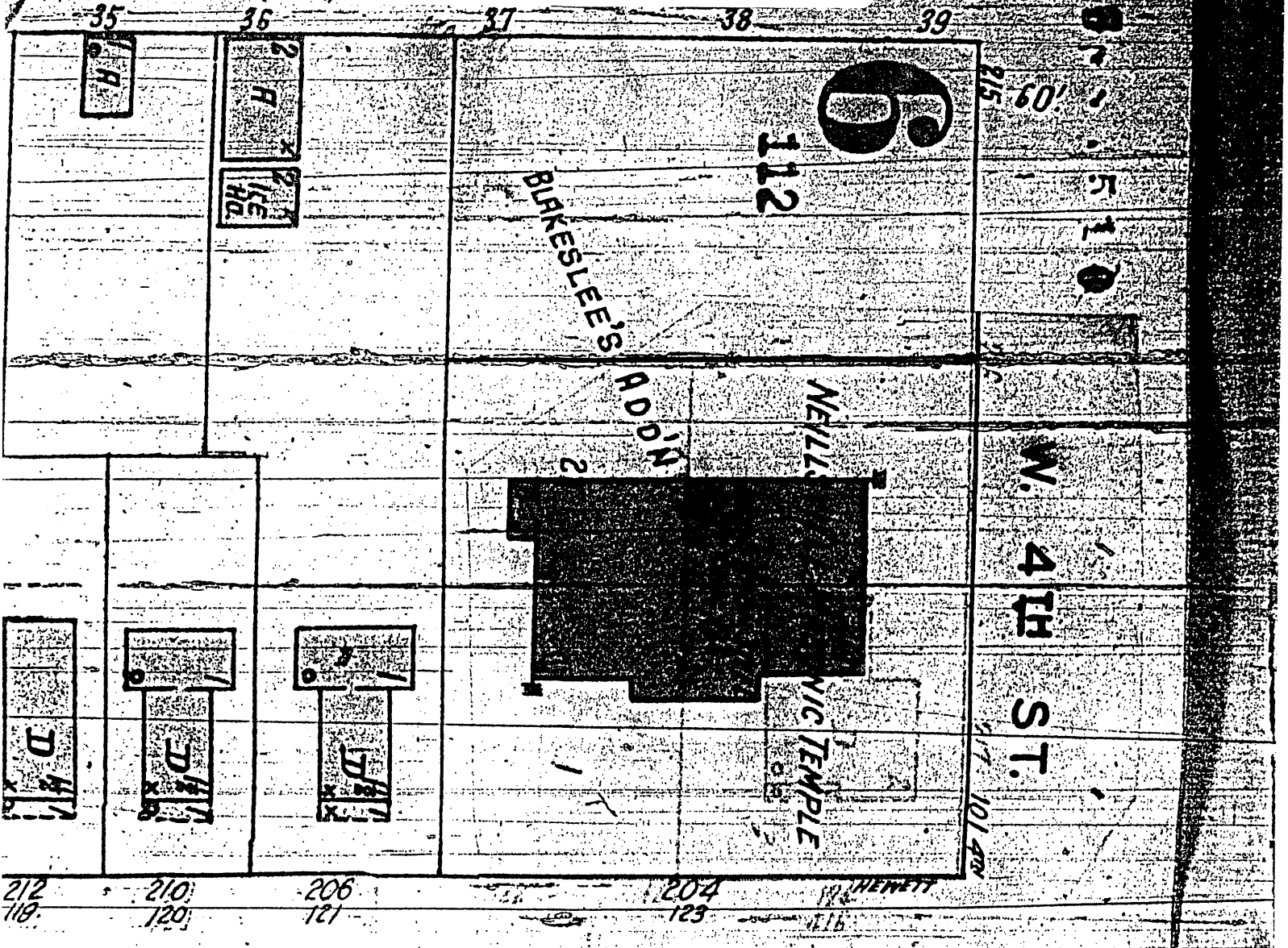
Keepsake Centennial Edition Clark County Press July 1, 1982

1928 Neillsville Masonic Temple Lodge No. 163

NEILLSVILLE MASONIC TEMPLE LODGE NO. 163  
NEILLSVILLE, CLARK CO. WI

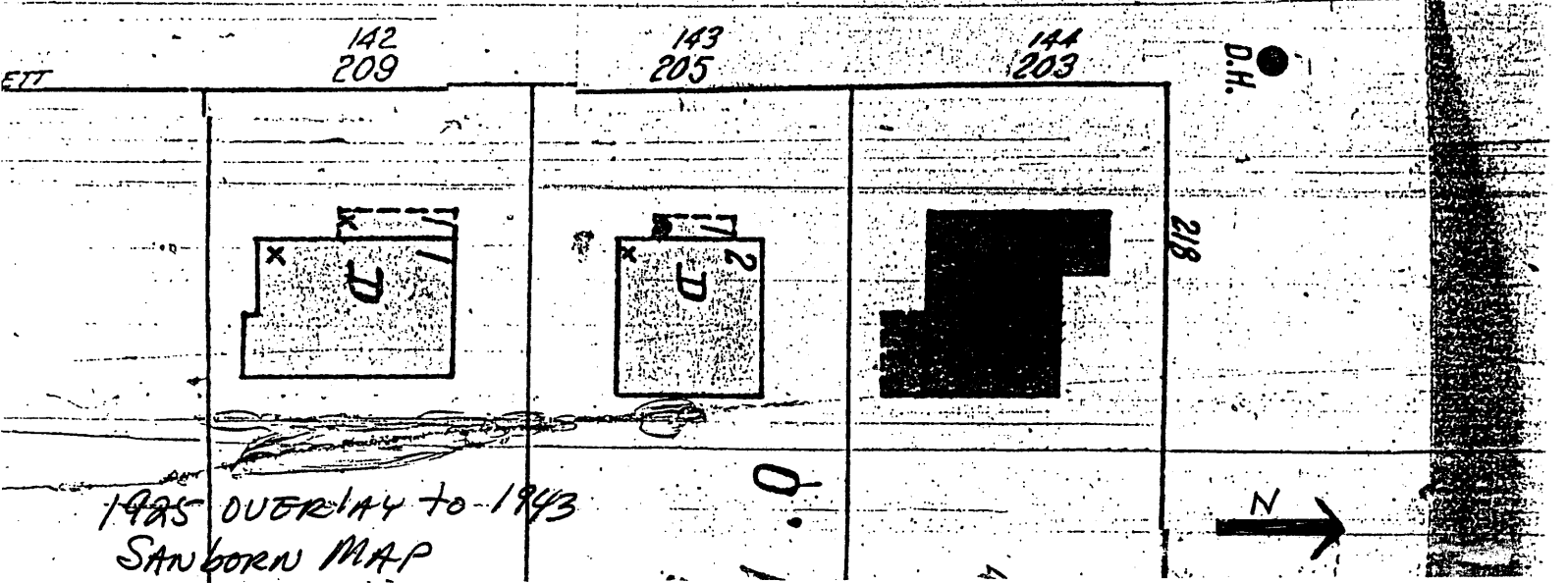
316 HEWE  
Neillsville,

WOOD  
LODGE



HEWETT

6" W. PIPE



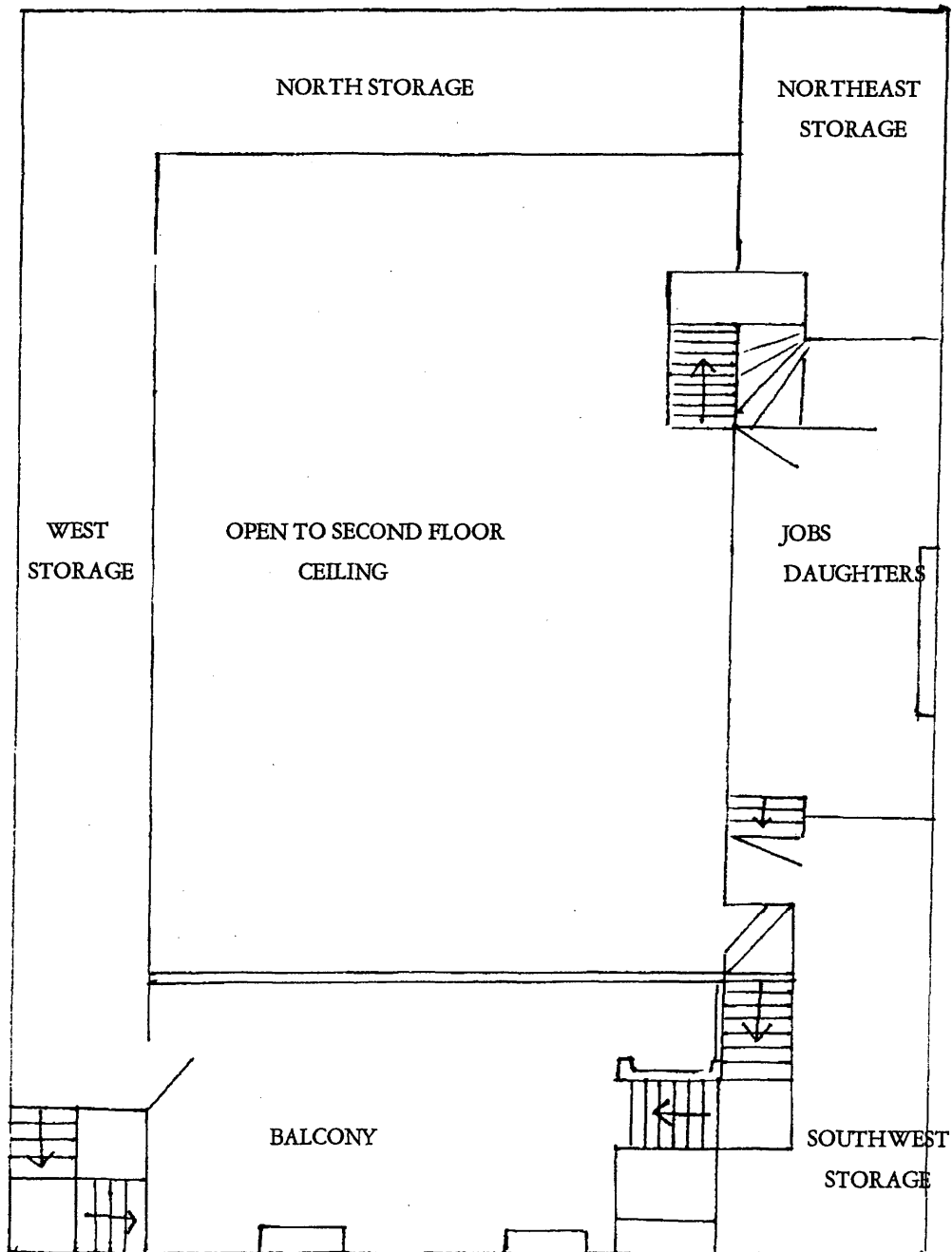
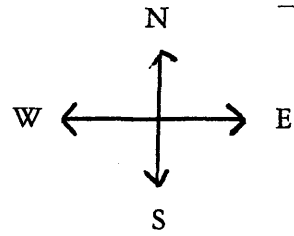
1925 OVERLAY TO 1943  
SANBORN MAP

1928 NEILLSVILLE MASONIC TEMPLE LODGE NO. 163

NEILLSVILLE, CLARK COUNTY, WISCONSIN

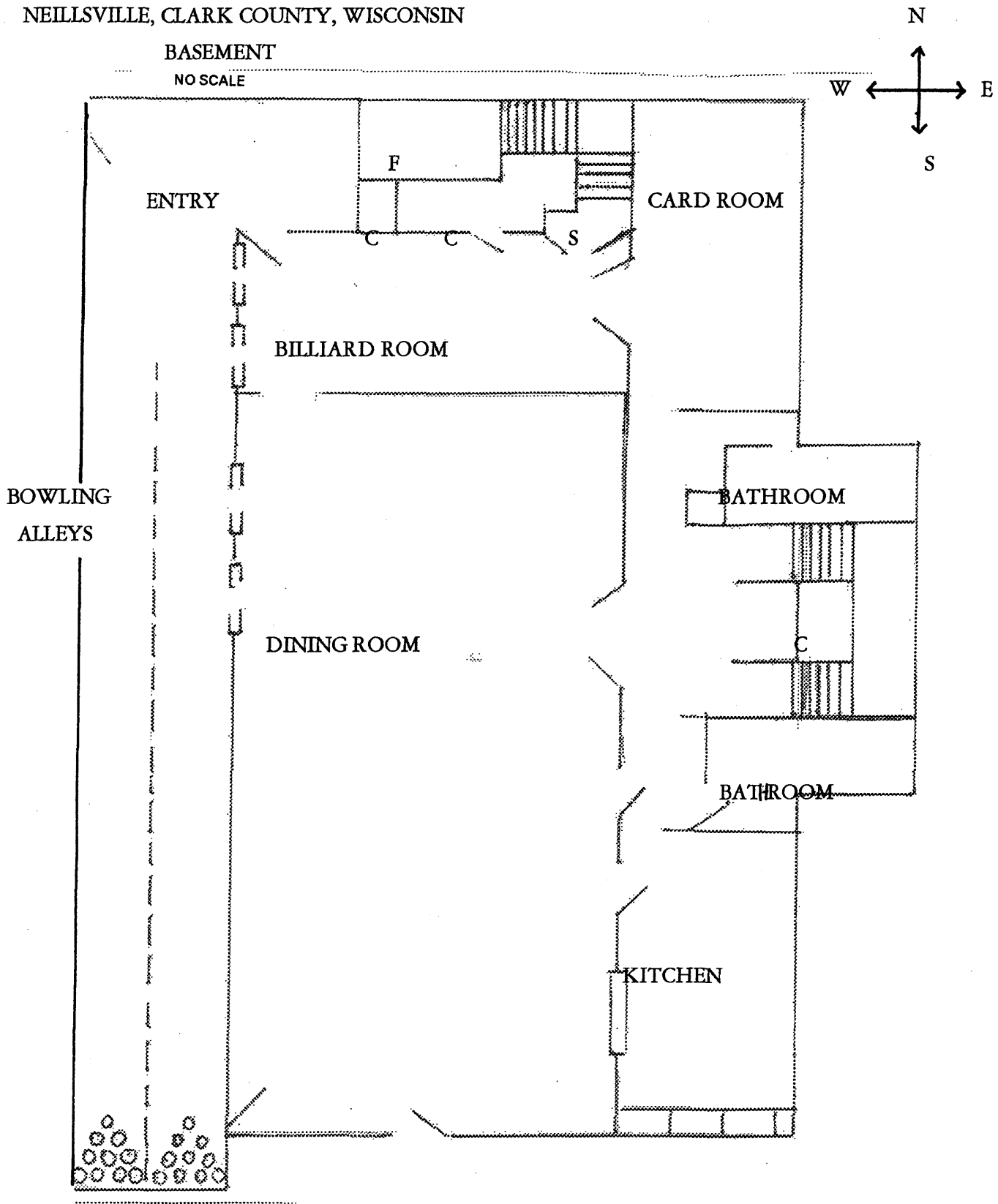
SECOND FLOOR

NO SCALE



1928 NEILLSVILLE MASONIC TEMPLE LODGE NO. 163

NEILLSVILLE, CLARK COUNTY, WISCONSIN



1928 NEILLSVILLE MASONIC TEMPLE LODGE NO. 163

NEILLSVILLE, CLARK COUNTY, WISCONSIN

FIRST FLOOR

NO SCALE

