

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUN 25 1979  
DATE ENTERED AUG 3 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Masonic Block

AND/OR COMMON

Dakota Business College, Watkins Block

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

11 South Eighth Street

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fargo

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Dakota

CODE

38

COUNTY

Cass

CODE

017

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- \_\_\_ PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- \_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

F. Leland Watkins, Jr., et. al.

STREET & NUMBER

384 Eighth Avenue South

CITY, TOWN

Fargo

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

North Dakota 58102

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Cass County

STREET & NUMBER

County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Fargo

STATE

North Dakota 58102

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Masonic Block was constructed in 1884 as the first Masonic Temple in Fargo, with prominent facade on South Eighth Street. In 1906 a major wing was constructed which fronts on Main Avenue. The three-story brick structure dominates and terminates a block of fine brick commercial buildings on South Eighth Street between Main Avenue and First Avenue South, near the heart of the Fargo business district.

The original east facade rises in three stories, with the second and third levels divided into three bays and the ground level divided by buttressed piers into six equal bays. The facade is distinguished by an ornate tin cornice that is supported by four corbeled piers in dark red brick, and further supported by a corbel line of arcaded arches on the outside bays of the third story. The frieze of the outside bays is adorned with alternating brackets and rosettes worked in the metal. The four-pier motif through the cornice and terminates in four footed and banded knob finials. The center bay rises an additional eight feet above the horizontal cornice in an eared gable supported by alternating corbel courses.

The bays of the upper two stories are symmetrical, with windows crowned in segmental arches and set on light-colored stone sills. The outside bays consist of two separate rectangular windows, while the center bays have double rectangular windows with wooden mullions. All third-story windows have fixed transoms in colored glass. Above the third story central bay rises a recessed Gothic arch, within which is imbedded the tin name plate. A date plate, also of tin, is applied to the wall face above the Gothic arch. The six ground floor bays consist of five large rectangular single-pane windows and a single door in the northernmost bay. Each of the six bays has a blind transom. A sign in metal letters is applied to the spandrel between the first and second story windows.

The original facade has been altered by the removal of a plumed finial atop the gable and removal of a metal sign that was attached at the spandrel between the second and third story windows. The original ground floor treatment was in wood and cast iron, and consisted of four window bays between two doors. Transoms of colored glass, similar to the present transoms over the third story windows, topped each ground-level bay. A tin frieze with rosettes crowned the ground story, and a single scalloped awning served the forty-foot front. These features were removed or altered to the present appearance in 1921.

The facade of the 1916 wing, fronting on Main Avenue, also rises three stories, and is constructed of red brick with white marble pilaster feet and capitals, string-lines, and ornamentation. The facade is most distinguished by the appearance of the four tall third-story windows that have radiating keystone arch heads. The third story is further ornamented with band and dentil corbeling, a low arched gable, and a nameplate within the gable. The second floor of the facade features a large square central window with opaque transom, separated from a narrow rectangular light on each side by buttressed pilasters with Ionic capitals. A festoon in white marble graces

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each end of the spandrel between the second and third floor windows. The ground floor consists of three recessed bays occupied in two large show windows and a door. The upper stories of this facade have apparently not been altered from original construction, but the ground floor bay treatment and awning have been changed to accomodate modern window and door treatments.

The lateral and rear walls of the L-shaped structure are constructed of common brick and are load-bearing walls. The slightly parapeted lateral walls of both wings step downward away from the facades. The arcaded corbel line of the original facade is continued in a corbel line along the lateral walls of the original structure. Non-facade fenestration in both wings is asymmetrical, and consists of tall segmentally arched bays. Six chimneys that rose along the lateral walls of the original building have been replaced with a single chimney at the rear of the original structure.

The interior of the original building remains much as it appeared following a remodeling in 1921. The ground floor is occupied in a single open classroom with marble officer cages, wainscoting, and low partition walls. The second floor is occupied in offices and small rooms that open off the central corridor. The corridor is treated in fir wainscoting and trim, and a partition of oak, granite, glass, and iron separates the north end of the corridor from office rooms. The third floor is occupied in a single room with sixteen-foot ceiling and has a small observation balcony on the south end. Both the first and third story ceilings are finished in ornate pressed metal. All floors on the upper two stories of both wings of the building are hardwood, in some cases covered with tile or linoleum.

The interior of the ground floor of the 1906 wing is occupied by the FM Flooring Company, and alterations have apparently been made to facilitate display and storage activities. The second story interior contains a long classroom with desks and other furniture used in the Dakota Business College. The third floor consists of small classrooms and other rooms now used for storage.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1884, 1906

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Charles N. Daniels, Architect  
Andrew McHench, Builder

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Masonic Block is one of the outstanding examples of early commercial architecture in Fargo. The original portion of the structure was designed by Architect Charles N. Daniels, and was one of a very few commercial structures to survive a devastating fire that swept the Fargo business district in 1893. The high Victorian features of the facade looked down on a business district of fine brick buildings that were constructed between 1893 and about 1910. The Masonic Block is located about midway between the two most prominent historic structures of Fargo, the Cass County Courthouse and Cass Gilbert's Northern Pacific Depot (National Register, 1975).

The Masonic Block was constructed in 1884 as a speculative venture by Andrew McHench, second actual settler of the Fargo townsite and first Superintendent of Schools. McHench apparently built the structure in part to house the Masonic Shiloh Lodge No. 8, and that group leased the third story from 1885 until 1889. The ground floor was occupied in two small shops or stores until 1921.

The building is best known, however, for its distinguished role in the history of education in Fargo and the region. In 1887 Fargo College, a liberal arts institution promoted by the General Association of Congregational Churches, was established in the Masonic Block. Fargo College occupied the upper floors of the building until 1890, when the first of several large buildings were completed on the school campus. Fargo College operated only until 1922, however, when it was forced to close for lack of funds.

In 1891 the Dakota Business College was established in the Masonic Block by F.L. Watkins, and the building remained occupied in this commercial training school until the institution closed in 1978. Watkins acquired the property in 1903 and added the wing to the north in 1906. The Dakota Business College was the most prestigious school of its kind in the history of North Dakota, producing graduates prominent in state and national politics, industry, commerce, government, and military affairs. Many of the furnishings and some equipment of the school remain intact within the building, especially in the 1906 wing. The building now serves as a bulwark against the probable destruction of several frame commercial structures of the 1885-1905 period that are located within the ell of the business college. Because of its location and architectural character, the Masonic Block and attached wing are a focal point for the older commercial buildings of the area.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Pond, H.S., Masonry in North Dakota 1804-1964, (Grafton: The Record Printers, 1964) pp. 61, 68.
- Ramsey, R.L., Fargo-Moorhead: A Guide to Historic Architecture, (Fargo: Plains Architectural Heritage Foundation/Fargo Moorhead Board of Realtors & Multiple Listing Service, 1975) p.34.

(Continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Fargo South (N.D.)

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES 330

A 1,4 6,6,8 3,3,0 5,1,9,2 3,3,0

B                        

C                        

D                        

E                        

F                        

G                        

H                        

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots "C", "D", "E" and "F" of Aldrich's Subdivision of Lots 1 and 2 of Block "8" of the Original Townsite plat of the City of Fargo, North Dakota.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kurt Schweigert, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of North Dakota

DATE

May 22, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Liberty Memorial Building

TELEPHONE

(701)224-2672

CITY OR TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota 58505

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL X

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

James E. Sherry

6/18/1979

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 2.3.79

ATTEST: William H. Graham

DATE 7.31.79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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Fargo-Moorhead Centennial Corporation, A Century Together, A History of Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota, (Fargo, 1975) p. 65.

Atlas of Cass County, North Dakota (Fargo, 1906) pp. 94, 128, 150.

"School's out at Dakota Business," The Fargo Forum, September 9, 1978, p.5.