

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received **SEP 26 1986**

date entered **156 / 8 1987**

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

1. Name

historic Masonic Temple

and/or common National Museum of Women in the Arts

2. Location

street & number 801 13th Street, N.W.

NA not for publication

city, town Washington

NA vicinity of

state D.C.

code 11

county NA

code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name National Museum of Women in the Arts

street & number 4590 MacArthur Blvd., N.W.

city, town Washington, D.C.

NA vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 6th and D Streets, N.W.

city, town Washington, D.C.

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites
 title Don't Tear It Down Downtown Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
May 1984 (D.C. Inventory)
 date 1979-1980 (DTID Survey) federal state county local

depository for survey records D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 614 H Street, N.W. (D.C. Inventory)
D.C. Preservation League, 930 F Street, N.W. (DTID Survey)

city, town Washington, D.C.

state

JAN 8 1987

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Masonic Temple is a six story structure situated on a wedge-shaped lot. The building is irregular in plan. The narrow primary facade (50 ft. 8 in.) faces west onto 13th Street; the north and south elevations, facing New York Avenue (132 ft. 6 in.) and H Street (144 ft. 3 in.) respectively, are fully detailed but subordinate to the primary facade. The two unaligned planes of the east wall are detailed as party walls. (A new addition is presently being constructed at the location of the east wall.) The building displays tripartite vertical organization into base, shaft, and crown. The lower part of the design, which is two stories in height, consists of a base of heavily rusticated limestone above a plinth and torus molding. The three story shaft is detailed in brick to resemble rustication and surmounted by a full terra cotta entablature. The one story crown is also rusticated and detailed in brick and terra cotta.

The narrow 13th Street facade is the most three-dimensional and recalls a temple in its form. A large arched opening topped by a massive keystone is situated in the center of the base. There are two Doric columns in antis above this opening. The columns screen a giant Doric architrave that frames windows lighting the third and fourth stories. The fully detailed Greek Doric entablature, which extends around the building, features Masonic symbols within the metopes. The crown, which also extends around the building, is divided into two parts: a continuation of the lower wall plane and a setback above. A modillion cornice with antefixae surmounts the building. The New York Avenue and H Street elevations are virtually identical. The six bay two-story base is divided into two parts. The lower portion consists of a torus molding above a plinth. Various openings punctuate this lower section. The rusticated limestone forming the upper portion of the base forms voussoirs over six arched window openings. A simple entablature with a denticulated frieze surmounts the base. The shaft of the 13th Street and H Street facades is treated as a **piano nobile**. This section is composed of a six bay fenestration pattern recessed between giant Doric pilasters that extend for the full three stories. There is a balustrade at the base of each bay and a Doric screen at the top. At either end of these facades the brick rustication acts as a frame for this element. The lower part of the crown repeats the six bay organization of the shaft.

The Masonic Temple retains the integrity of its exterior form. The interior has been altered three times. In 1948 the interior was modernized. In 1958 the first floor auditorium, which had long been used for motion pictures, was remodelled. Presently the Masonic Temple is being rehabilitated for the National Museum of Women in the Arts. As part of this rehabilitation the exterior of the building is being restored and the undetailed east wall has been demolished and a new addition is being built to the east of the building. The interior of the museum will incorporate most of the significant spaces and fabric of the interior of the Masonic Temple. (The foregoing information was compiled from the architectural description contained in the D.C. Landmark Application and the Transcript of Proceedings. This information was updated to reflect present conditions.)

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/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1903-1908 **Builder/Architect** Wood, Donn, and Deming

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Masonic Temple, designed by Wood, Donn and Deming in 1903-1907, was for over 80 years the headquarters of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, the local confederation of Masonic lodges that counted many important national figures among its members. The building represents the culmination of a series of fine buildings constructed for the Grand Lodge and is one of the most architecturally significant works of Wood, Donn and Deming. Through their cornerstone ceremonies, Masons and Masonic ritual made an important contribution to the building of the nation's capital. The Masonic Temple, which occupies a unique trapezoidal site near the midpoint of the important New York Avenue axis between the White House and Mount Vernon Square, is a distinctive example of a building that successfully relates the development of the downtown commercial grid to the baroque axial dynamics of the L'Enfant plan. The Masonic Temple meets National Register Criterion A because it is associated with a benevolent fraternal order that has played an important role in Washington life from the city's earliest days. The building also meets Criterion C because its bold design embodies Masonic symbolism and belief and because the building's exemplary architecture is exceptionally well suited to its impressive site.

The Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of the District of Columbia is comprised of constituent Masonic lodges. These Masonic lodges have all descended from the tradition of Freemasonry. The history of the organization of Freemasonry is long and complex. A concise historical definition of Freemasonry, if somewhat indicative of its mystery, has been: "a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." (Walker, *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, p. 503.) Being nonpolitical and nonsectarian, its goals have been no less than to "promote the welfare and dignity of mankind through constructive brotherhood." (*Ibid.*, p. 503.) Freemasonry or Free and Accepted Masons is,

an oath-bound fraternal order of men, originally deriving from the medieval fraternity of operative stonemasons. Generally conceded primacy among fraternal orders, it is disseminated over the civilized world. It has no central authority, being divided into more than 100 grand jurisdictions, each autonomous, in addition to which there are a number of large and widespread concordant organizations or so-called higher degrees. The main stem, variously referred to as Craft, York, Symbolic or Blue Masonry, consists of three degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason); it is directly descended from the fraternity and lodges of operative stonemasons and cathedral builders of the Middle Ages, which gradually over some 200

(See Continuation Sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .2557 acres (11,140 sq. ft.)

Quadrangle name Washington, D.C. West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

118	3214	01010
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

N1A		
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

N1A		
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D

N1A		
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E

N1A		
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F

N1A		
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G

N1A		
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H

N1A		
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Verbal boundary description and justification

801 13th Street, N.W. is located on record lot 32, Square 287, Washington, D.C.

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

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Betty Bird (compiler)

organization NA

date August 1986

street & number 2025 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 801

telephone 202-463-2033

city or town Washington, D.C. 20006

state NA

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Carol B. Thompson

Carol B. Thompson

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/24/86 / date of receiving letter

For NPS use only

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

Patricia Andrews

date 2/18/87

Keeper of the National Register

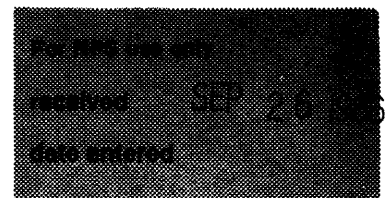
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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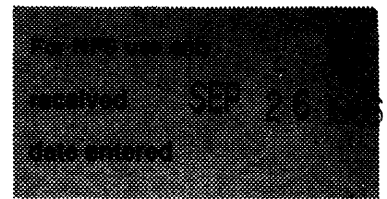
years lost their operative character and became entirely speculative. Freemasonry is cosmopolitan and though selective in membership, somewhat democratic, bearing upon its rolls the names of noblemen, statesmen, scholars, and others of high rank, along with a much larger number of the middle class. It admits men of every nationality, religion, creed, and political persuasion; the qualifications for membership are few, such as belief in a Supreme Being, good moral character, a fair degree of intelligence, and absence of injury or defect in body which would prevent the candidate from performing his duties as a Mason. By long-continuing custom, the society refrains from solicitation of candidates; all who enter must do so of their own free will and accord. The essential teachings of the craft are few and simple, illustrated by the symbolism of such working tools as the plumb, square, level, and compasses, though extensive embellishments and refinements have been adopted in higher degrees and are often emphasized in Masonic literature; as a result the doctrine has become in places highly spiritual, though the fraternity rejects all suggestion that it is a religion or rivals any religious sect. (Coil, *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 18, p. 386.)

The origin of Freemasonry in the United States coincided with its spread throughout the world, said to have been "the most rapid and extensive migration of any society, philosophy, or creed in history; and that, too, without any missionary zeal or proselytizing." (*Ibid.*, p. 387.) The first lodge met in America in the early 18th century and included prominent citizens among its members. Boston claims the first authorized lodge in America, dating to 1733; approximately 100 additional lodges were organized in the next 40 years. The importance of Freemasonry as a social organization is without doubt. Thirteen U.S. presidents have been Masons; in 1959, six out of 11 cabinet members, five out of 9 Supreme Court justices, 54 out of 96 senators, 189 out of 430 representatives, and 29 out of 49 governors were Masons. (*Ibid.*, p. 388.)

The history of Freemasonry in the District of Columbia is particularly significant. In 1783 a new lodge was begun in Alexandria, Virginia, chartered from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. George Washington was its charter master. In 1789 the second Washington area lodge was chartered. Lodge No. 9 of Georgetown, Maryland, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Maryland, claimed Charles F. Fierer, the editor of Georgetown's first newspaper, as its first master. Four years later the nine master masons constructing the U.S. Capitol petitioned Lodge No. 9. The Grand Lodge of Maryland then chartered Federal Lodge No. 15 with White House architect James Hoban as charter master. In 1811 five out of the six lodges within the District of Columbia joined to form the

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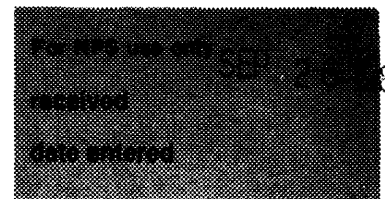
Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, composed of Federal Lodge No. 1 (Maryland charter 1793), Brooke Lodge No. 2 (Virginia 1796), Columbia Lodge No. 3 (Maryland 1802); Naval Lodge No. 4 (Maryland 1805), and Potomac Lodge No. 5 (Maryland 1806). The Grand Lodge was then empowered to grant new lodges in the District of Columbia, which it did with regularity.

Freemasonry in the District of Columbia is invariably associated with the history of Washington building. An important function of Freemasonry has been the laying of cornerstones. The origin of cornerstone ceremonies, like that of Freemasonry itself, is rooted in medieval custom. "The practice of laying the foundation stone of buildings, with peculiar ceremonies, was a solemn authentication of the work by the head of the Craft who stood between the proprietor or lord of the work, and the instruments of its construction and was appealed to in all differences or disputes between the contracting parties in a friendly arrangement." (Hunt, *Some Thoughts on Masonic Symbolism*, p. 349.) The medieval practice probably evolved from the ancient belief that the "Mother Earth" spirit must be appeased when ground was broken for construction or the structure would not stand. Gradually the cornerstone ceremony became symbolic rather than practical as the operative lodges evolved. The spiritual, symbolic interpretation of applying the plumb, square and level to a cornerstone and pronouncing it well formed, true, and trusty, is also part of the secret Masonic ritual, being analogous to a Mason's character and duty. Freemasonry participation in Washington cornerstone ceremonies dates to the actual physical establishment of the District of Columbia itself. On April 15, 1791, the Alexandria Lodge set the first of the boundary stones forming the District. Masonic cornerstone ceremonies have taken place for most of the important structures in the city, including the White House (1792), the Capitol (1793), St. John's Church (1815), the Smithsonian Institution (1847), and the Washington Monument (1848).

The growth of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia is closely associated with its meeting places. Before the formation of the Grand Lodge in 1811, Federal Lodge No. 15 had combined with Columbia No. 35 (Maryland 1802) in 1804 to erect the Union Lodge Building on 11th Street below Pennsylvania Avenue on the present site of the Old Post Office. This plain, two story brick building also served as the headquarters of the Board of Aldermen, the Common Council and the Washington Library. The previous home of Federal Lodge No. 15 had been the Peacocks hotel, designed and built by James Hoban in 1795. In 1826 the cornerstone was laid for the Central Masonic Hall (Freemasons Hall or New Masonic Hall) at 4-1/2 and D Streets, N.W., which became the home of the Grand Lodge and its increasing number of subordinate lodges until 1843. After 1843

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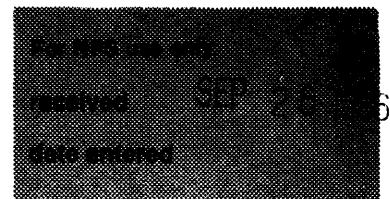
the Grand Lodge met in various locations until funds were available to construct a new Masonic Temple, a distinguished Renaissance revival building which still stands at 9th and F Streets, N.W.

By 1891 the Grand Lodge again felt the need for more spacious quarters and appointed a committee of five members to "take into consideration the question of the purchase of a site for the purpose of erecting a Masonic Temple in this city, by the Grand Lodge, in the event of the sale of the present Temple." (Harris, *Sesqui-Centennial History of the Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons, District of Columbia*, p. 72.) In 1898 Congress incorporated the Masonic Temple Association of the District of Columbia to raise funds. In April of that year President William McKinley opened the first of three Masonic fundraising fairs, the proceeds from which enabled the Association to purchase the property (Square 287, Lot 32) at 13th and H Streets and New York Avenue in 1899. With the subscribed sale of stock and with the proceeds of a second fair in 1902, the lot was paid for (\$115,000) and plans proceeded for a "Temple to be constructed on broad and liberal lines, embodying every feature of a modern up-to-date Masonic building." (Ibid., p. 75.) The 1902 Proceedings of the Grand Lodge further stated that the "exterior design and finish will be of elegant and imposing architectural character, and when completed the building will be a handsome addition to the many public and private edifices that already adorn the city of Washington, and will properly serve as a home and headquarters for members of the Masonic fraternity of the world when visiting the National Capital." (Ibid.) A competition was held in 1902 and the firm of Wood, Donn and Deming was chosen to design the building. Edward A. Crane, former Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, acted as professional advisor for the competition. Thompson-Starrett Company of New York was awarded the contract for construction in 1907. President Theodore Roosevelt participated in the celebrated cornerstone ceremony on June 8, 1907; the building was dedicated one year later in September 1908.

The Masonic Temple is one of the finest designs of the local firm of Wood, Donn and Deming. This architectural partnership lasted from 1902 - 1912 and consisted of Waddy Butler Wood, Edward W. Donn, Jr. and William Deming. The firm's work included the Union Trust Building, the Bureau of Standards Building, the Norfolk Navy Hospital, the Norfolk Y.M.C.A., buildings for St. Patrick's Church, Providence Hospital, the Capital Traction Car Barn, and the Burke and Herbert Bank in Alexandria. Waddy B. Wood moved to Washington in 1892 after studying architecture and engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Wood opened his own practice before associating with Donn and Deming and continued an independent practice after he withdrew from the partnership. Wood's buildings include the Department of Interior Building, the Woodrow Wilson House, the Commercial National Bank, and the Southern Railway Building.

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Edward W. Donn, Jr., the son of a Washington architect, graduated from M.I.T. in 1891 and attended graduate school at Cornell until 1893. Donn worked as chief designer in the Supervising Architect of the Treasury's Office before joining Wood and Deming in 1903. Donn practiced with Deming from 1914-1922 and then on his own, pioneering restoration work on historic properties including Woodlawn, Kenmore, and the Mercer Apothecary Shop (Fredericksburg). Both Donn and Wood were Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. William Deming, who studied at George Washington University, specialized in engineering concerns.

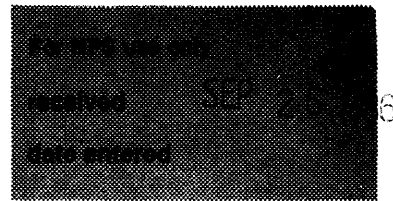
The Masonic Temple followed Wood, Donn and Deming's other major downtown commission, the Union Trust Building at 15th and H Streets, completed in 1907. The two most important design considerations for the Masonic Temple were the expression of Masonic symbolism and the building's highly visible, unusual site. The oddly shaped trapezoidal lot was created by L'Enfant's superimposition of major diagonal avenues on a rectangular grid of streets. The site thus faced New York Avenue, H Street, and 13th Street presenting the architects with the challenge of designing a building with three street facades. The prominent site had been one of the determining factors in its favor. "The commanding site [13th Street] permits of no future building being erected sufficiently near to do violence to the harmony of its surroundings or to mar its monumental effect and the wisdom and indefatigable labors of its promoters..." (Harper, *History of the Grand Lodge and of Freemasonry in the District of Columbia*, p. 164.)

The building was executed in the classical revival style. An article in *The Architectural Record* of 1906 discusses the architects' intentions: "In conformity with the great public buildings, it will be Classic in type; unmistakably a temple, but so modified that it will suit the changed conditions of our time and age." A promotional pamphlet further set forth that the exterior "was meant to convey to the mind the uses to which each part is put, the public part by large openings architecturally framed, and the secret by small openings and large, simple wall surfaces. The impression to be conveyed is that part of the building will be for public use, while a larger part will forever remain a closed book, with all its mystery, to the uninitiated." (*The Proposed Masonic Temple*, n.p.) The lower, relatively open portion of the building, housed a public auditorium. The middle section contained the Masonic lodge offices and functions; the crown of the building housed a private Masonic auditorium.

The selection of the classical revival style was particularly appropriate. Many of the design features may relate to Masonic iconography. Flanking columns or "pillars" are an important part of Masonic ceremony and symbolism. While their origin is obscure, two of the most prevalent references are those

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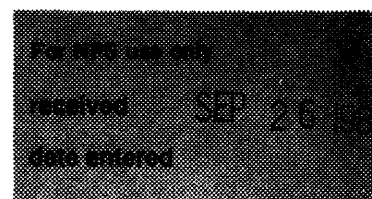
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of columns as great uplifting forces symbolizing the strength of God and columns as the symbol of birth and then entrance into each new and ennobling experience in life. The rustication of the facade refers to perfect ashlar as the Masonic symbol pertaining to craft practice. The plumb, square, and level were applied to a dressed stone whose exposed faces must be perpendicular and to the perpend ashlar stone whose function was to hold the other stones in the wall together. The symbolism now refers to the attributes of a Mason, a state of perfection, two upright faces square and true, and a binding of brotherhood. The most obvious Masonic symbols are found in the terra cotta frieze. Between the triglyphs of this Doric frieze are sculptured terra cotta metopes that refer to various Masonic symbols.

In 1902, the McMillan Commission released its proposals to bring the City Beautiful to Washington. This movement in urban design emphasized orderliness and civic grandeur. The architectural language of classicism gave an imposing, monumental quality to public buildings and served to knit the disparate structures of a city into a single urban fabric. While the McMillan Commission's recommendations focused on the Mall and nearby government buildings, the local business community of Washington was also influenced by their efforts to upgrade the quality of the nation's capital. There was an emphatic shift in the design of major commercial buildings from red brick or dark stone irregular forms picturesquely detailed to light-colored symmetrically arranged classical buildings. The Masonic Temple clearly participated in this trend. As the promotional pamphlet stated, "It was the view of those engaged in the worthy project of 'building the temple' that Washington being the capital of the nation, the Masonic Temple located here ought to be of great dignity and simplicity and entirely in keeping with the classic public buildings for which Washington is well known." (Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the District of Columbia, n.p.) {The information in this section was taken directly from the architectural history contained in the D.C. Landmark Application and the Transcript of Proceedings. Minor editorial changes were made to enhance clarity.}

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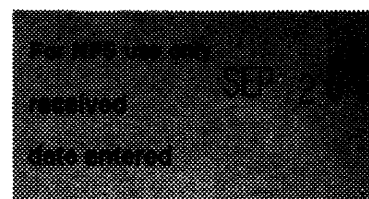
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