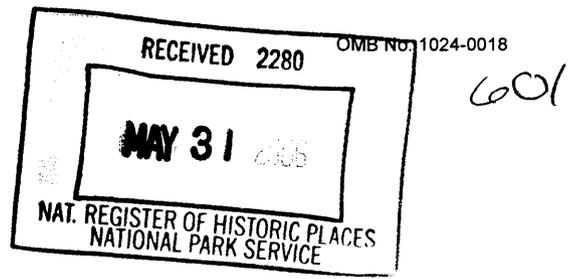


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74, IOOF  
other names/site number New Richland Odd Fellows Hall

2. Location

street & number 119 South Broadway Avenue  not for publication N/A  
city or town New Richland  vicinity  
state Minnesota code MN county Waseca code 161 zip code 56072

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.)

Britta L. Bloomeberg 5/23/06  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Britta L. Bloomeberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
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 certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 7-12-06

Strangers Refuge Lodge  
Name of Property

Waseca County, MN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social/meeting hall

Recreation and Culture/auditorium, music facility, theater

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: Iron (façade)

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 a 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)

Social History

Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance**

1902-1956

**Significant Dates**

1902

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Paine, Henry A.

(architect and builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

New Richland Historical Society

Strangers Refuge Lodge  
Name of Property

Waseca County, MN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property less than one acre**

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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	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	<u>David C. Anderson</u>		
organization	_____	date	_____
street and number	<u>169 Lundy Bridge Drive</u>	telephone	<u>563/382-3079</u>
city or town	<u>Waukon</u>	state	<u>IA</u> zip code <u>52172</u>

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name	_____		
street & number	_____	telephone	_____
city or town	_____	state	_____ zip code _____

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

Waseca County, MN

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Section 7 Page 1

**Description**

The New Richland Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74, (IOOF Hall) is in New Richland, a city of 1,174 inhabitants in New Richland Township of Waseca County in south central Minnesota.

It occupies a 26 by 180 foot parcel in the city's downtown. The hall takes up the entire width of the lot, is 94 feet long, and includes two stories over a full basement. The facility was designed and built in 1902 by Henry A. Paine, an architect/builder based in Albert Lea who had by that time furnished the city with a city hall, high school and several commercial buildings (Shannon).

The façade is a relatively simple ensemble of forms and materials including narrow yellow pressed face brick, rock-faced Kasota stone (a dolomitic limestone), cast iron and pressed metal. A number of Neo-Classical elements are featured in a symmetrical composition including decorative pilasters, brackets, a cornice, parapet and pediment.

At street level a large window bay is flanked by two doors; one leads into the first floor and the other to the second floor. Both are original (wood) with glass inserts and brass hardware. The window space is divided into six small units above one large horizontal opening below an iron (or steel) beam engaged into the building's corner pillars and also supported by two cast iron intermediate columns. The bases of these columns identify the manufacturer as the Enterprise Iron Works of Albert Lea, Minnesota. Historic photos indicate that the window space originally contained two large plate glass lights. At present the six openings contain glass but the large horizontal opening is filled in with plywood. At the very bottom at sidewalk level there are two narrow three-light basement windows.

The second story is defined by a narrow limestone ledge and three recessed window bays headed with limestone lintels. In the attic zone a shallow segmental arch panel is placed above each window and flanked by two pressed metal medallions that include the letters *IOOF* in the outer bays and a metal panel with the Odd Fellows logo of three interlocking bands in the center bay. This is given additional emphasis by a group of five brick brackets just below a pressed metal cornice running the full width of the façade and beyond, turning the corner and terminating about one foot along each side. A brick, stone and pressed metal parapet rises above a low pitch flat roof and is carried in steps along each long side. The parapet above the center bay includes two pressed metal scroll brackets and, until recently, there was a pressed metal triangular pediment with *1902* in the center. This was stolen and historic photos indicate that originally there was a flagpole mounted on a small cupola above the missing pediment.

The rear of the building is undecorated and contains no notable features, although the 4/4 double hung windows appear to be original. The projecting course of brick on the long sides corresponds to the height of the interior ceiling.

The first floor interior has been divided and re-divided into various configurations to suit the different occupants over the years, with traces on the tile-clad wood floor of where walls once stood. Most recently (until 1988) this was the Abraham's Grocery, and in 1956 the grocer purchased the vacant lot to the south from the Odd Fellows and put up a single story building next to the lodge. It is not an addition, but a door was put into the wall of the lodge leading into the new building.

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Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

Waseca County, MN

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Section 7 Page 2

A long flight of stairs leads from the street to the second floor where the original floor plan and much of the original southern yellow pine woodwork and flooring remains in place. The original 4/4 double hung windows are in place on both front and rear but they are covered over on the upper half in the front. The second floor includes a 26 by 47 foot hall (rear) a 25 foot square reception room (front) separated from the rear by a zone that includes toilets, a kitchen, "robing chambers," closets and storage space. The larger rear space was presumably used for lodge ritual performances but for other gatherings as well including theatrical and musical performances where variable lighting would be useful. This and its use during Odd Fellow rituals would explain the presence of a rheostat (a device to vary electric current) on a wall at the front of the hall.

The original lath and plaster wall and ceiling surfaces are in place throughout under fiberboard sheathing (1940s vintage) and 12 by 24 inch acoustic tile.

This property exhibits a reasonable degree of historic integrity on the exterior and second floor interior which however, is in poor condition due to water damage from a leaking roof and vandalism.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

Waseca County, MN

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Section 8 Page 1

**Significance**

The New Richland Odd Fellows Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Entertainment/Recreation. It is locally significant in the period 1902-1956. This property also relates to the Minnesota Statewide Context, Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940. Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74, Independent Order of Odd Fellows was an important social/fraternal organization in the city when the hall was constructed in 1902. It was notable for its size and also the multiple functions it was intended to serve, not only the specific needs of the IOOF lodge but also as a convenient and flexible venue for other fraternal, social, and religious groups plus large gatherings for musical and theatrical performances, dance parties, motion picture shows, and school functions. From the year of its construction through World War I the entire ground floor was used and referred to as the New Richland Opera House. In 1918 a variety store moved into the front part of the first floor, and in 1924 a general store was opened on the first floor that in 1956 expanded into a building next door. The second floor of the hall continued to serve a variety of local groups until the Odd Fellows Lodge was dissolved in 1979.

**General Context**

Located in the New Richland Township in the southeast corner of Waseca County, the Village of New Richland was platted in 1877 on land obtained from the Winona and St. Peter Land Company, the real estate division of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad. Platting the village coincided with the arrival of the St. Louis and Minneapolis Railroad for which a depot was erected, also in 1877. The railroad provided New Richland with connections not only to Minneapolis and St. Louis but also to Duluth, Des Moines and Chicago.

Euro-American settlement in New Richland Township began in the 1850s, initially by Norwegian immigrants and others who bought up the land for farming after the Treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux were negotiated with the Dakota Indians in 1851. New Richland grew rapidly and within a year it had most all the commercial facilities and enterprises in place that any frontier town needed for growth and prosperity. Primary of course was the railroad, and since most of the population in the area was engaged in farming, with wheat the primary cash crop, the first major industrial facility to be constructed was the steam-powered Model Roller Mill, erected in 1879 at a cost of \$40,000 (History of Steele and Waseca Counties, 1887, 646-657). In today's dollars this would be about \$740,000 and it was the project of two entrepreneurs from Pennsylvania, Messers. H.H. Corson and E.E. Dunwoodie. It had the capacity to produce 300 barrels of flour a day.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Federal Census (1880) listed 304 persons living in New Richland Village and 746 in the Township. Strangers Refuge Lodge was organized in 1880, preceeding any church or other fraternal society. In the village the first churches were the Congregational (1882) and the Norwegian Lutheran (1883). The only other social/fraternal group mentioned in the 1887 county history is the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), organizaed in 1882.

That the Odd Fellows lodge was the first social/fraternal group organized in New Richland fits a pattern found elsewhere in Minnesota. The popularity of this organization in the state is reflected in the large numbers of extant IOOF halls (54 are included in the State Historic Preservation Office/History Architecture Inventory). According

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

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Section 8 Page 2

to the IOOF Sovereign Grand Lodge, there were 26 active lodges in Minnesota in 2004 ([www.endeo.com/ioof](http://www.endeo.com/ioof)), down from 237 in 1899.

Research on the distribution of IOOF chapters in the United States and Canada shows that between 1911 and 1931 more lodges were located in hamlets (population of 500 or less) than elsewhere in terms of the proportion of membership in any given population (Emery, 45). General speaking, between about 1850 and 1920 the IOOF organization accompanied the Euro-American frontier (Emery, 19) and its membership included white Anglo Protestant men who were the frontier entrepreneurs, but also skilled craftsmen and farmers. Wealthy men were less common in Odd Fellow lodges than in other fraternal orders, e.g. the Masons (Emery, 46). None of New Richland's "Prominent Citizens" is among the lodge's charter members (1887 History, 637-656).

**Origins and Character of the International Order of Odd Fellows**

The beginnings of this fraternal order can be traced to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in England and it was brought to North America by English immigrants in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The official history of the order in the United States begins in Baltimore in 1819 with the establishment of Washington Lodge Number 1. In Minnesota the first lodge was organized in Stillwater in 1849.

The origin of the name "Odd Fellows," however, is less clear than either its institutional history or its goals and principles. In attempting a synthesis of the several plausible but undocumented stories or origin, while also perhaps accounting for the persistence of the name in spite of its oddness and the derision it aroused on occasion throughout its history (Smith and Roberts), this was a fraternity for men who did not fit in with any existing traditional group based on ethnicity, religion, or occupation. Its origins in England have been seen as a response to the weakening of craft guilds subsequent to industrialization and as an organization of the new working class, also a result of industrialization. Or perhaps it can be seen as a group of tradesmen for whom guild had evolved in pre-industrial times. In any case the period of its origin was one of rapidly changing social conditions in England and in the United States after the Civil War. The profoundly social nature of the Odd Fellows order is abundantly clear and it had a well-defined beneficial aspect which was not typical of all the many fraternal orders that once existed in the United States.

The term "associationism" has been used by one scholar characterizing the fraternal movement in America which took off following the Civil War and reached its peak by the end of World War II (Kaufman). It is important to distinguish the fraternal and/or beneficial groups from commercial ones (e.g., Chambers of Commerce), professional organizations (e.g. bar associations), political parties, veteran's and other citizen's groups, and elite social/cultural bodies, all of which were part of the associationist "boom." What they had in common was the goal of self (or group) segregation as a means of establishing and securing an identity and presence in highly fluid social contexts such as new urban industrial centers and the 19<sup>th</sup> century American frontier.

American fraternal orders at this time were either beneficial or non-beneficial, beneficial meaning that association was for more than social ends and included health, life, death and survivor's benefits. Such services were not available from public sources except locally for indigent persons until the Great Depression.

Private insurance as we know it today did exist in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, but mutual insurance cooperatives and fraternal beneficial societies provided the bulk of these services or benefits to the people who got them at all. The

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Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

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growth of the private insurance industry was a factor in the general decline of these organizations that began after World War II. The provision of monetary and other support to the sick and injured as well as death benefits and aid to widows and orphans was an important goal or reason for being a member of the Odd Fellows order and it was manifest not only in deeds and cash but also in the order's ideology, expressed in symbolic and ritual form.

Members of the order, sometimes known as "three linkers," had to subscribe to a written Code of Laws that embodied principles, guidelines and ethical values that were expressed in symbols and enacted in ritual performance. The primary symbol and logo of the fraternity is a three link chain with the letters F, L, and T, standing for Friendship, Love and Truth.

The three links symbolize the chain that binds members together and illustrates (sic) that a fraternity is strongest when joined together. The "F" in the first link represented "Friendship" the strongest bond of fraternity that teaches goodwill and harmony. The "L" represents "Love" the basis for all life's ambitions, service to others and family. The "T" represents "Truth," the standard by which we value people and the foundation of our society. (California Odd Fellow & Rebekah. Volume 45, Number 2, 1996).

The order's values are further laid out in the Odd Fellows Valediction:

I am an Odd Fellow;  
I believe in the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of man.  
I believe in Friendship, Love and Truth as basic guides to the ultimate destiny of all mankind.  
I believe my home, my church or temple, my lodge, and my community deserve my best work, my modest pride, my earnest faith, and my deepest loyalty, as I perform my duty 'to visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan' and as I work with others to build a better world, because, in spirit and in truth, I am and must always be, grateful to my Creator, faithful to my country and fraternal to my fellow-man;  
I am an Odd Fellow! ([www.endeo.org/ioof](http://www.endeo.org/ioof))

These values and goals are also expressed in the initiation and degree ceremonies members participated in. These are quasi-theatrical elaborations of the three leading precepts based on the metaphor of life as a journey, in the course of which the individual encounters situations and people that offer the traveler opportunities for personal growth and enlightenment.

The order also attempted to back up this code by providing real-life benefits to members. Some of these were mandatory for all lodges while others were discretionary, according to the means and wishes of the individual lodges (Emery, Chapter 3). These included monetary payments to members and their families for the costs of hospitalization and medical services as well as funeral and burial expenses. Weekly cash payments went to members' survivors to compensate for the loss of a breadwinner, whether temporary or permanent. This support was provided locally and to regional institutions for orphans and the elderly such as the Minnesota Odd Fellows Home (1899-) in Northfield, now known as the Three Links Care Center. New Richland IOOF records document contributions to this and other, similar institutions. The lodge's annual financial statements indicate that the money for these benefits came from hall rent plus dues and special assessments levied on members as needed.

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Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

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Section 8 Page 4

There were also non-monetary associational benefits that went beyond socializing and fellowship and these included "Watching With Sick Brothers" of which records were kept by the New Richland lodge, namely of who sat with whom and when. As the Grand Sire put it in 1923:

Money is often the least of a brother's needs. We must give of ourselves and to do this we must come into personal contact with the distress to be relieved (Emery, 48)

While certain benefits were stipulated in the Code of Laws, the cost was borne by the local lodges. An annual fee was sent to the national lodge based on the number of members ("per capita tax") but no funds were sent to the local lodges.

**Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74, IOOF**

As noted above, the New Richland lodge was organized in 1880 with 18 charter members. It is not known why the name Strangers Refuge was chosen, although the numbering of Odd Fellows lodges represents the chronological order of their organization by state. Little is known about the first Odd Fellows building except that it was built in 1878 and also located downtown on Broadway (Lot 3 Block 5). It was of wood frame construction, presumably one story and valued at \$1375 in 1898 (Semi-annual Report to Grand Lodge IOOF of Minnesota, Copy in local file). The lodge sold this building for \$1785 more than a year before their new building was finished and rented space elsewhere during the interim. Two vacant lots, of which one was to be occupied by the new building, were purchased in 1898 for \$700.

Surviving records indicate that in addition to monthly dues (not specified), each degree administered cost the member \$5. Beyond this members were assessed additional amounts as the need dictated in order to cover benefits paid out. In this regard the lodges resembled local fire and disaster insurance cooperatives. As an example of their financial affairs, in the first half of 1903 when the new building was fully operational, the lodge took in \$82 in dues and degrees and \$121 in rent. Amounts paid out included \$54 in sick benefits and a \$5 donation to an IOOF retirement home in Florida, with the rest of the disbursements for building costs and architect's fees.

On November 27, 1902 The North Star (New Richland) reported that while the new Odd Fellows hall had been completed and "is without doubt the finest single building in the village and a credit to the town..." it needed to be furnished and the plan was to rent out the first floor for a store or use it as a hall and opera house. The first ball had already been held there and it was reported that the large dimensions (90 by 26 feet) and "smooth hard floor... make(s) it the best place in town for dances." (The North Star, 11-13-1902).

The success of the Odd Fellows order and growing prosperity of the village are shown by the \$7700 (about \$167,000 in today's dollars) investment in a new building and two lots. In a Business Directory published in the first issue of The North Star (1886) it was pointed out that:

The IOOF has secured quite a hold upon our village and is rapidly increasing in favor. The order has a very interesting lodge here of which the members are justly proud. (Reprinted in The New Richland Star, 6-23-1977)

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Continuation Sheet**

Strangers Refuge Lodge

Name of property

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Based on the growth in membership from 18 in 1880 to 75 in 1925 and the manifold social and entertainment functions it was to serve, the new lodge building was an important asset for the community. New Richland had been growing rapidly in population since 1880, from 304 that year to 420 in 1890 to 750 in 1900. This was much faster growth than in New Richland Township where it went from 746 in 1880 to 869 in 1900 according to Federal census reports.

**The Odd Fellows Hall as Community Social and Entertainment Center**

Within a year of its dedication in October 1903 the Odd Fellows building was also known as the Odd Fellows Opera House, the New Richland opera house, or simply as the opera house in the local press. Thus the first floor was the "opera house" until 1918 when at least part of it was occupied by the Peterson Brothers Variety Store, and then in 1924 the first floor was rented to Attalla Abraham, an immigrant from Lebanon, for a general store. The Abraham family ran a business there until 1986. In 1956 they purchased the lot next door and expanded the business into a single story building.

The period from 1903 to 1918 was the heyday of the opera house and a remarkable variety of entertainment and fundraising activities was held there. The North Star is a rich source for details on all of this and the events ranged from dances sponsored by individuals and groups (including the Odd Fellows and Rebekah lodges) to high school graduation exercises and other school activities and theatrical performances. Typical of these would be a show by "Jolly Joe's Lady Minstrels" with the proceeds going to the public library, or a staging of "Ghosts" by Henrik Ibsen on January 24, 1905. Ticket prices were 35 and 50 cents for this event. Some of these performances were mounted by local talent while others were traveling shows. Another typical event, one that included music, theater and dance was the play "Under the Laurels" with music provided by the New Richland Orchestra (5-12-1904). Earlier that year the Odd Fellows and Rebekah had sponsored a "grand ball" on Easter Monday evening with supper being served upstairs and music by the local orchestra. Admission was \$.75.

Perhaps the last major event held in the opera house was a Red Cross benefit dance held on February 8, 1918. In a front page story in The North Star (2-15-1918), the event was declared a "financial success" having raised \$153. It was noted that this event was consistent with the purpose of the Odd Fellow and Rebekah lodges, namely "to extend a helping hand to the needy and suffering" and that "the mission of the Red Cross is practically the same." (ibid.).

After the first floor was rented to the Abrahams, the second floor became the location for whatever social and entertainment functions that were held in the building. These were not so much for entertainment than for meetings of social and fraternal groups and interest groups (e.g., the Commercial Club) in a pattern that had begun when the hall was opened in 1902.

A large number of the regular patrons were other lodges, and these included Degree of Honor, a society for women that met in the hall from 1902 into the 1950s. Others were the Modern Woodmen (1905-1919), the Sons of Norway (1920s), Sons of Herman (1903-1908) and the Equitable Fraternal Union (1920s into the 1940s) for meetings and dances. The Masonic Order rented space in 1933 and 1935 as did the American Legion from 1920 into the 1940s for monthly meetings. Local churches also rented space, the Missouri Synod Church (1930-1933) and the Evangelist Church (1934-1935). Beginning in the 1930s a number of service clubs and the Waseca County Farm Bureau rented space as did the Knitting Mills Union and the United Garment Workers of America,

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in 1948. Between 1941 and 1943 the McKinney School of Music rented the "dining room" (i.e. the front room which is smaller than the meeting room in the back of the building) for a monthly rent of \$6.00. Most of these activities continued into the modern era.

Strangers Refuge Lodge was dissolved in 1979 and the City of New Richland now owns the building. Plans are to restore the property and make it available to the local public library.

**Conclusion**

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows had lodges in many small towns in Minnesota from the days of early settlement well into the post-World War II period, and its manifold importance in the daily lives of citizens is shown in the history of Strangers Refuge Lodge Number 74. It was not until the Great Depression that the Federal government took on a significant level of responsibility for the well-being of the unemployed, disabled, sick and elderly citizens that is regarded as an entitlement today. Nor was it thought that local or State government should be responsible for the social and entertainment needs of the people they served. Until the 1920s not even public schools routinely included an auditorium or even sports facilities. Even though in 1900 a high school was built in New Richland for \$15,000, the Odd Fellows hall was rented for large school gatherings including commencement exercises. Only with the Federal Relief programs of the 1930s did community centers become common in cities and towns the size of New Richland. The success of the Odd Fellows organization in New Richland and the important services rendered are clearly manifest in the nominated property.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Lot 5, Block 6, Original Townsite of the City of New Richland

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the lodge.