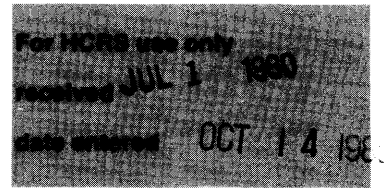


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Building - (Sharps Store)
and/or common Benton Pharmacy

2. Location

street & number 1418 Front Street _____ not for publication
city, town Fort Benton _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 2
state Montana code 30 county Chouteau code 015

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name James A. Willits
street & number 818 Main Street
city, town Fort Benton _____ vicinity of _____ state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chouteau County Court House
street & number 1308 Franklin Street
city, town Fort Benton _____ state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

State Inventory
title Historic District of Fort Benton has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1968 and 1972 _____ federal state _____ county local
depository for survey records Montana Historical Society
225 North Roberts
city, town Helena _____ state Montana

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 type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>March 30, 1980</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Masonic Building is a two-story commercial structure built of soft local brick located in the middle of the block between 14th and 15th Streets facing the levee on Front Street. The building is 30 ft. x 100 ft. long and 30 feet high.

At present the lower front has been altered to accommodate two large display windows, one on each side of the door; back of these windows are display areas which have angled windows joining the inset door on both sides, leaving an entry covered by the second story.

The second story is unaltered with cut granite lintels straight on the bottom and on top, over the four bays with double-sashed windows. The top facade is corbelled out with intricate designs plus raised corner pillars above the cornice. A corner stone in the upper left corner is dated 1882.

The wood cut front was made from architect's plans. After those plans were drawn, a second building was placed to the right of this one which has since been removed. That twin building had similar architecture; the two outside bays matched and the fifth bay in the wood cut was dropped, leaving this building now with an uneven look which is noted in present pictures.

The original first story had three even arched bays with two windows and a double door in them. The fourth bay on the outside left was narrower having a stone arched lintel for a door leading to a stairway to the lodge rooms on the second floor. The side walls are of plain even course brick with the two original buildings sharing a common wall between them. The left outside wall contains one window in the middle of the second story. The rear wall facing the alley has three bays on the second story and one on the first floor containing a door.

A small addition has been constructed to the rear, 12 feet long, the width of the original building, and only one-and-one-half stories tall. The brick is of a different type than the original.

The interior of the second floor still has the remains of plastered walls with dark red painted surfaces and a gold stenciled design along the top. The room is open with the exception of a small apartment built into the rear. The original ceiling was lathe and plaster, most of which is now removed. The first story has a drop ceiling but the original embossed tin ceiling is still in place above; the first story is one large room with plastered walls.

The building could easily be restored architecturally since only the first floor front has been altered.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 1882 **Builder/Architect** John H. Wilton, Architect; Frank Combs, Contractor

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in 1882, the Masonic Building for Benton Lodge #25 is significant for its historic associations with many of the lodge members who were predominant in Fort Benton's and Montana's history during the settlement and development of the area. Since the lower story was rented as a commercial business, it also was significant in the commercial era of the steamboat and wagon trains when Fort Benton was the transportation center of the Northwest. The building is also an example of the commercial brick architecture of the 1880's which was a significant part of Front Street and of commercial towns in the West during that period of 1870 - 1890.

The Masonic Lodge, which played a prominent role in the early-day towns of Montana during that period of settlement and development, was chartered in Fort Benton on September 16, 1880 but Masons had been predominant in Fort Benton's affairs since the mid-1860's. Early in 1882 the Helena "Herald" reported incorporation of the Masons in Fort Benton to erect a business building with their temple on the second floor similar to the ones in Helena and Virginia City. Cost of the building was \$16,000 to be raised by public subscription paid to the secretary H.P. Rolfe. Thirty feet of frontage in the middle of the block on Front Street was purchased for \$125.00 per front foot from the Rowe brothers. The building, to be built by John H. Wilton, was thirty feet by one hundred feet with a full eight-foot basement. The second floor was to be used as a temple, the lodge room 28' x 70' having three anterooms in front.

Frank Coombs was contracted for the masonry work, Joseph Jedlica for plastering; O. W. Kelley was chairman of the building committee for the Masons. Of the \$16,000 needed, only \$10,265 was raised; the remainder was borrowed from the Collins-Duer Company. With the rapid decrease in business in 1886-1887 the Masons could not make payment on the note; the Collins-Duer Company took the group to court for a judgement, forcing sale of the structure. The lower floor had been rented to W.H. Burgess for use as a grocery store; it, too, went broke at the same time. The Masons continued to rent the upper floor of the building until 1901 when they moved to a different location.

Through that period of years the lower floor had contained several commercial businesses until a more permanent one, the Sharp brothers store which was a clothing store, moved in. The two founders of this store were also the fathers of three sons who entered the Naval Academy. One was killed during World War II as commander of a submarine; the other two rose to flag rank, one Rear Admiral Louis Sharp and the other Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific in the 1960's during the Vietnam War. The upper floor remained vacant most of that time except in the 1950's when it was used as an apartment. The store remained a clothing business in the 1930's as Woodward's and later as Anthony's, until it was purchased and became the present Benton Pharmacy.

Through the years many of the prominent citizens of Fort Benton and of Montana were members of the Lodge, including F.C. Roosevelt, L.H. Rosencrans, W. H. Kanouse and J. S. Hill. All of those men were dominant in the affairs of Fort Benton along with

9. Major Bibliographical References

A History of Benton Lodge - James M. Hindle
"River Press" - 1882 - 1887
Helena "Herald" - 1882

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property less than 1/4 acre

Quadrangle name Fort Benton

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 22, Block 16, original townsite of Fort Benton
T 24N., R. 8E

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 John G. Lepley, Curator

organization Fort Benton Museum

date March 30, 1980

street & number 817 Main Street

telephone 622-3278

city or town Fort Benton

state Montana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Marcella Stapp

title Deputy State Historic Preser Officer

date 6-26-80

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Ben M. Brown
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Paul H. Brown

Marcella Stapp
Marcella Stapp

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

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



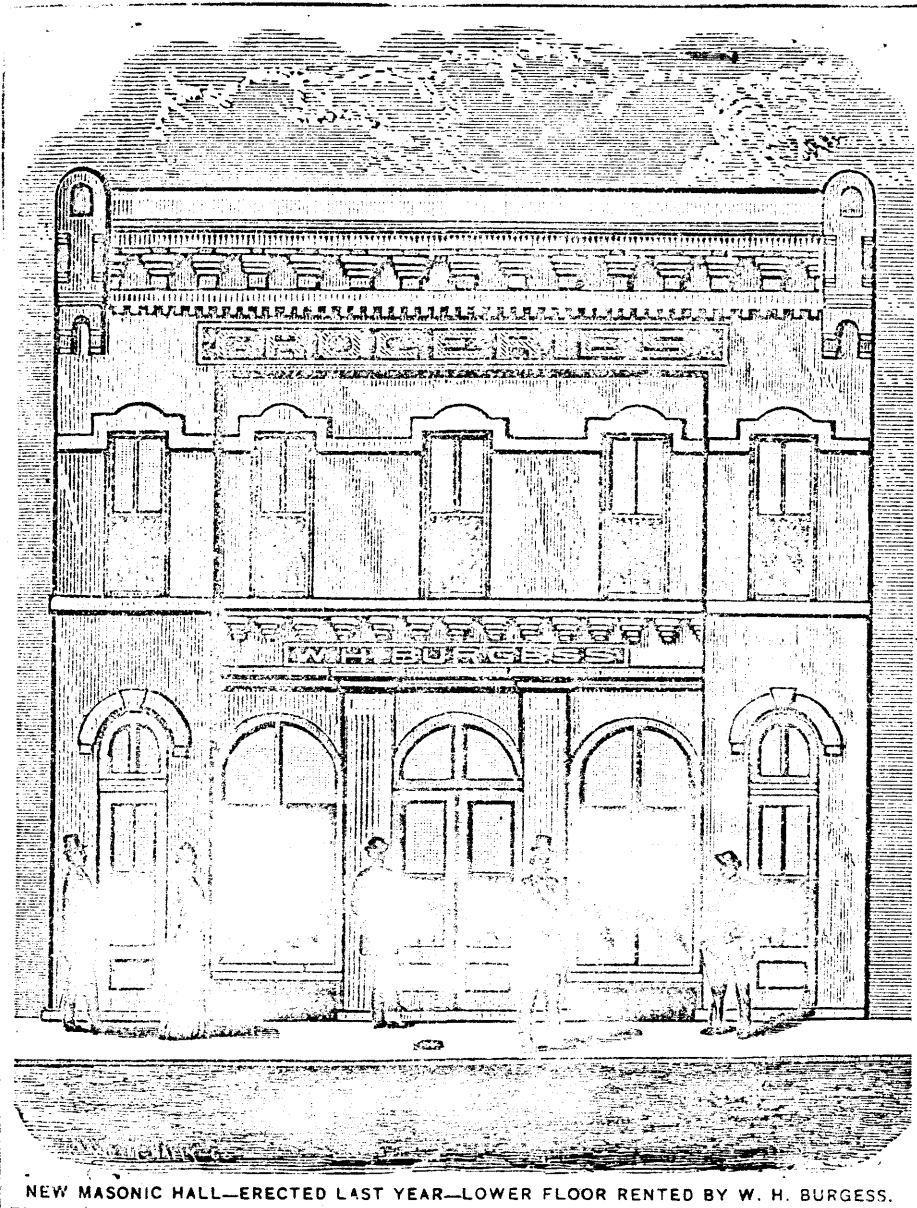
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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prominent merchant W.S. Wetzel and Sheriff Billy Rowe.

The first floor has served Fort Benton as a commercial establishment throughout the years in several capacities, with the Sharo families being the most prominent proprietors of the store from 1910 to 1932.



Wood Cut, 1884, River Press

FORT BENTON, MONTANA

