

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE IN IDAHO (19))

✓ SITE NAME: St. Alphonsus' Hospital Nurses' Home and Heating Plant/Laundry
SITE NUMBER: 101

✓ LOCATION: ~~North Fourth Street~~ ⁴⁴³ between Washington and State ~~streets~~, Boise, Ada County ~~(001), Idaho~~

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

State of Idaho, Office of the Governor, State Capitol, Second Floor,
West Wing, Boise, ID 83702 and
Idaho State Commission for the Blind, 341 Washington Street,
Boise, ID 83702

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Boise South, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the St. Alphonsus' Hospital Nurses' Home and Heating Plant/Laundry and the property on which they stand, lots 1, 7, and 8, block 105, Boise City Original Townsite. Legal description on file at the Ada County Courthouse, Boise, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/5,65,10/48,29,420

DATE OR PERIOD: 1920-1936

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: good unaltered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The St. Alphonsus' Hospital Nurses' Home and Heating Plant/Laundry are the remaining structures of a Catholic service complex which includes St. Alphonsus' Hospital in the next block west and St. Teresa's Academy in the next block south. The red brick nurses' home on the corner of Fourth and Washington streets is presently occupied by the Idaho State Commission for the Blind. The heating plant and laundry, a matching one-story structure with an imposing stack on the northeast corner of Fourth and State streets, is also under state ownership and serves as shop space.

Building A, Nurses' Home, 341 Washington Street.

This structure is four stories tall on a tall stone basement, built to an 88 feet, 8 inches-by-106 feet, 2 inches, minimally U-shaped plan. A light well penetrates the building from the east, and the building is only two stories high at the southeast corner, but from the two street elevations a solid four-story profile is presented. The main entrance opens on an outset one-story porch, elevated over an entrance to the basement and approached by

double lateral parapet-walled steps which curve forward to face Washington Street near the bottoms of the double flight. The parapet walls are of coursed rock-faced stone, as are those of the basement, in which full-length sash windows are set just above grade. Supports for the flat wooden roof of the porch are rather slender square brick columns on low brick walls, with plain capitals and a plain frieze board.

The windows on the body of the building are double-hung sash, paired in the corner bays and, on the front elevation, on the second bay from the left. The windows and pairs of windows are finished with narrow outset sills and wide, flush-set, flat-arched lintels of smooth stone. A continuous sill running below the fourth-story windows separates it from the other floors. A denticulated iron cornice runs above the fourth-story windows, which, unlike those below, have segmented upper sections. The smooth-coped parapet above is slightly elevated over the corner bays, though still flat. These slightly extended surfaces are embellished with lateral rectangles of end-set brick with cast-stone corner squares. These patterns are expanded on the south rear elevation, where the fourth-story wall is largely unfenestrated.

The fourth floor of the building was not completed until 1936. A small project for a sunporch design appears in the firm's records for 1937, and for an elevator shaft in 1941.

Building B, Heating Plant and Laundry, northeast corner of Fourth and State streets.

The one-story brick building to the rear of the nurses' home was built in 1921 to service the three major institutional buildings which surrounded it. It is four broad bays wide on State Street and nine bays deep along Fourth Street, with a tall, battered, smooth-sided and corbel-topped brick smokestack at the northeast corner. The surface treatment and detail closely match those of the nurses' home. The surface is red brick over a tall concrete foundation wall, which rises to the level of the bases of the windows and culminates in a continuous sill under them. The tall multi-light shop windows are capped with flat arched lintels, as is the double entry door facing State Street near the southwest corner of the building. There is a double corbel table of slightly outset brick below a parapet with smooth coping, elevated corner sections, and decorative masonry rectangles matching those elements of the main building. Except for the screening of the deep transom and part of the upper panes on the left member of the pair of wooden doors facing State Street, the structure is unaltered on the exterior.

SIGNIFICANCE:

St. Althonsus' nurses home is architecturally significant as an imposing departure--likely dictated by the site--from the western colonial style to which the institutional commissions of the firm had generally adhered during the 1910s. It is also an example of the stylization of classically derived forms seen developing in some commercial buildings of the period (sites 93 and 98). Together with its associated power plant, it is also historically significant as the substantial and well-preserved remnant of one of the most important institutional complexes of the Catholic Church in Idaho.

The tall, four-story form of the building, as opposed to the long, two-story western colonial institutional buildings of the 1910s and early 1920s (sites 93, 94, 102, and 104), may have been dictated in part by the site: a pair of corner lots on a city block offered less opportunity for the lateral extension of the horizontally oriented western colonial buildings. The building went up instead of out, although the top floor was not completed until the 1930s. The decorative treatment of this blocky form has at least one element in common with the western colonial buildings; the square-columned porch with its double parapeted stairs is reminiscent of those at Gooding (site 93). But equally noticeable are the stylized classical elements: the sleek square-arched lintels repeating themselves on the windows of the street-facing elevations, and the symmetrical geometric patterning in brick and concrete on the upper parapet walls of both the home and the power plant.

The power plant has its own aesthetic and architectural significance, as a visually striking example of small-scale industrial architecture. Its main form, detailed to match the nurses' home, shows, as does the Beaver River Power Station (site 76) an intent to beautify functional forms. At the same time, the spartan treatment of the beautiful, smoothly battered form of the smokestack shows a direct pleasure in those forms not seen before in the Group, which could conceivably reflect more modern ideas about form and function.

The nurses' home and power plant have retained virtually complete external integrity in the course of transfer to state ownership and are possessed of independent architectural significance. This significance is increased by an awareness of their original function as parts of a Catholic institutional complex designed, as were the Nampa Catholic buildings, to serve both educational and medical services, and here to house nursing nuns as well. (See also in this connection St. John's Cathedral Block, site 37). St. Teresa's Academy was founded in the next block south in 1889; St. Althonsus' Hospital in the next block west in 1894. Tourtellotte and Company and Tourtellotte and Hummel designed ambitious additions to the existing plants of these institutions in 1902 and 1912, respectively. A heating plan plan which survives with the drawings for the power plant/laundry shows the little plant servicing teh hospital, school, and nurses' home by way of five- and six-inch steam mains radiating from it in three directions.

Building permits for the nurses' home, issued in August and November of 1920, shows Charles a. Clark handling a \$10,805 foundation contract and R. H. Posser a \$150,000 contract for the superstructure. As no separate permit is recorded for the plant, it may hae been included in these contracts. Work on the nurses' home continued over a number of years. The major project of finishing the fourth story was completed in 1936; a sunporch project is recorded in 1937, and an elevator shaft installation in 1941. C. N. Walkins had the \$9,655 general cotract for the fourth story, Jess Heller the \$1,047 contract for the sunporch, and G. M. Reese the \$2,320 contract for the shaft.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Boise, Idaho. Boise City Building Permits. August 25 and November 18, 1920.

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. Certificate and collection book references, 1936, 1937, 1941. Frederick Hummel retrospective file. Tracings and drawings signed Tourtellotte and Hummel, site 227E.