

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 26 1976
DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1976

**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

Slavonian
Slavonian Hall

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

2306 North 30th Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tacoma

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6th - Floyd V. Hicks

STATE

Washington

VICINITY OF

CODE
53

COUNTY

Pierce

CODE
053

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

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Slavonian-American Benevolent Society

STREET & NUMBER

620 North Starr

CITY, TOWN

Tacoma

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County-City Building

STREET & NUMBER

930 Tacoma Avenue, South

CITY, TOWN

Tacoma

STATE

Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Slavonian Hall is a sturdy, two-storied frame structure designed at the turn of the century to serve as a meeting house and social hall for Tacoma's newly-arrived Slavonian community. The building is situated on a bluff which rises to the south and west, high above Commencement Bay. Although the hall is located in the residential neighborhood of Old Town, several adjoining properties include such modern intrusions as a power station, a commercial structure of concrete blocks, and a recent low-rise apartment building.

Slavonian Hall rests on a poured concrete foundation. Its original clapboard siding has been covered over with composition shingles. A 1910 photograph of the hall indicates that its ground floor originally included three commercial shop spaces, and its 30th Street elevation featured glazed store fronts with corresponding recessed entrances. On the exterior, the shop fronts have since been obscured with an anonymous coating of aggregate-stucco, leaving only the central entryway intact. The roof of the hall is a shallow gable, disguised on the 30th Street facade by a stepped, ornamented false front, and on the east and west elevations by a simple parapet approximately one foot in height.

Modest ornamental detailing adds interest to the 30th Street elevation at second-story level. One-over-one light, double-hung sash are grouped in a unit of three, flanked by units of two. These groupings are tied together by dentilled wooden cornices and, in the case of the central unit, by a flattened pediment. Above the windows, "SLAVONIAN HALL" in bold wooden lettering is punctuated by a wooden eagle perched within a metallic ring. Other details of note include a full entablature of wood with a projecting moulded cornice and dentil course, turned wooden finials at the outermost corners of the parapet, and a pair of wooden flagpoles which rise high above the parapet's central section. The 1910 photograph indicates that additional elements of decoration such as brackets and pendants, have been removed.

Fenestration to the sides and rear of the hall consists chiefly of double units of one-over-one light sash, and of single, four-light sash. Window surrounds are of the simple plank variety.

Although the interior of the Slavonian Hall has been visually altered, a number of recognizably original elements have been retained. The ground-floor plan is divided longitudinally by a central hall and staircase. An adjoining room to the east once served as a theatre. Massive wooden pilasters of the proscenium arch remain in place, but the stage itself has been dismantled. The theatre now functions as a dining hall and semi-partitioned kitchen. A ground-floor room to the west of the central hall serves as additional meeting and rental space. Original rear partitions of the three ground-floor shops have been removed, and the shop fronts themselves have been encased on the interior with stock panelling. Similarly, original wall surfaces and ceilings are not presently visible, as they have been obscured with a variety of modern facings.

The second-story interior encompasses a spacious dance hall, club room, cloak room, and restrooms. The staircase and upper balustrade are still intact. Dark-stained tongue-in-groove wainscoting lines the second-floor circulation areas. The ceiling of the dance hall is distinguished by false beams arranged in a coffered pattern on a plastered surface. Original wooden benches, which once surrounded the dance floor for the comfort of chaperoning matrons, remain within the building. All flooring on the interior of the hall appears to be original.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" 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 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Slavonian Hall, the meeting house and social hall of Tacoma's Slavonian-American Benevolent Society, was constructed in the opening years of the 20th Century. Slavonians newly-immigrated to the city of Tacoma settled in the neighborhood of Old Town, because of its proximity to the water and potential for fishing. The Benevolent Society, and others similar to it, were organized to meet the social and financial needs of new citizens in an alien land. Although financial benefits have been eliminated from the society's present-day program, the organization still provides social activity for the Slavonian community. Today, while the ethnic identity of the Tacoma Slavonians remains well-defined, fishing still serves as their dominant industry, and the Slavonian-American Benevolent Society constitutes one of the oldest continuing ethnic organizations in Tacoma. Slavonian Hall itself plays a significant role in maintaining many aspects of this community's cultural heritage.

The immigration to the United States of the Tacoma Slavonian community began towards the end of the 19th Century, when the present-day country of Yugoslavia was still part of the Austria-Hungary Empire. Most who came prior to 1919 had lived in the western or southern part of present-day Yugoslavia, and the ethnic diversity of the various provinces of origin necessitated the invention of a word to describe these peoples when they immigrated and settled together in the United States. The names of some of the provinces were Slavonija, Slavenija, Hrvatska (Croatia) and Dalmacija. The word Dalmacija was not appropriate for it also referred to Greeks and Serbians, much as Slav, or Slavic, also included Russians and all the other Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. Therefore a new name, Slavonian, was created to define the group as a whole. Ethnologically, "Slavonian" has no meaning.

The political situation in Austria-Hungary, and the emerging struggle for a national identity based on race, affected the organization of the benevolent societies in Tacoma. Prior to World War I, an immigrant was identified as Austrian or Slavonian. The Austrian Benevolent Society was formed in the late 1880's, and a split in this society, in March of 1900, resulted in the organization of the Slavonian-American Benevolent Society. The latter was incorporated April 10, 1901 and eventually established branches in Gig Harbor and Bellingham, Washington. The distinction between those identified as Austrians and those identified as Slavonians continued until World War I marked the end of the Austrian Empire. The Tacoma community had a unique way of acknowledging allegiance with the Empire or with national-ethnic independence. If a young immigrant was sent to "Sera Kate's" boarding house, he was Slavonian. If, on the other hand, he was sent to "Sera Perina's" Boarding house, he was Austrian.

The Slavonian Hall in Old Town, Tacoma, Washington was built in 1901-1902 through the financial assistance of Andrew Beritich, with construction labor donated by the membership. The activities of the Society were social and financial. Health benefits and dependency assistance were provided for all members in need. Prior to World War I, the Slavonian-American Benevolent Society was one of the most active of many such organizations in the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"History and Tidbits of the Slavonian-American Benevolent Society", Mary Love and Helen Kawick, Tacoma, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	54,0	3,4,0	5,2	3,5	5,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Caroline Gallacci, Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2820 North Carr, Florence K. Lentz Tacoma, Washington 98403

ORGANIZATION Washington State Parks Commission

DATE April 16, 1976

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE (206) 753-4116

CITY OR TOWN Olympia

STATE Washington 98504

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

Autta M. Skolnik

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/18/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST: *[Signature]*
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 11/9/96

DATE 11/2/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET

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city. Its own band and drill team competed with those of other benevolent societies in the city. On the first floor of the hall was a theater in which Slavonic language plays were performed. Later, the theater facility was rented to the Tacoma Little Theater. The stage, however, was dismantled in the 1940's.

Within the Society, it was customary to care for the individual lodge member until death. When an individual died, all members were expected to attend the funeral. An all night wake preceded the funeral, and during funeral ceremonies the membership, led by the band, marched in front of the horse-drawn hearse. This custom continued until 1915.

The Three Kings Dance (Tri Kralja Bal), held in January was (and still is) the greatest social occasion for the lodge. Slav families came from Gig Harbor, Seattle, Bellingham, Everett and Portland to participate in the festivities. While the men would congregate in the Club Room to discuss the previous fishing season, the women would form the "Censor Board." Sitting on the benches which lined the walls of the dance floor, they would keep an eye on who danced with whom, and how many times. In this way budding romances were predicted. The Three Kings Dance demonstrated the importance of music to the lodge. Dancing especially to the accordion, and spontaneous singing, are an integral part of the Slavonian culture.

In 1912, ladies of the lodge formed their own club, the Hrvatsko Amerikansko Dobrotvorno Drustvo. In 1917, the group was incorporated and renamed the Ladies Croatian American Benefit Society. Its purpose was the assistance of widows and persons dependent upon deceased members. In 1962 the men and women's clubs were merged.

The Slav-American Juniors were formed in 1936, with Anthony Vlahovich instrumental in the organization. This social and fun club lasted until World War II, when all lodge activities were limited to essentials. In the late 1940's members of the lodge were once again contacted for the purpose of resuming activities curtailed by the war. At this time, alterations to the building were begun with the intention of creating a memorial to past members and their contributions to the Slavonian community.