

Masonic Temple,
Idaho Lodge No. 1,
Ancient Free and Accepted Masons
Wall Street, 143' west of the
intersection of Wall and Montgomery Streets
Idaho City
Boise County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-5

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ID-5

MASONIC TEMPLE

IDAHO LODGE No. 1
ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

Location: Wall Street, 143 feet west of the intersection of Wall and Montgomery Streets, Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.

Latitude: 43° 49' 40" Longitude: 115° 50' 00".

Present Owner and Occupant: Idaho Lodge Number 1, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, Boise, Idaho.

Present Use: Masonic Memorial Temple.

Significance: The Masonic Temple is the oldest standing Masonic Temple in Idaho, and is the only building still standing in the United States in which a Grand Lodge was formed. The building is an example of simple wooden institutional architecture of the 19th century frontier mining towns in the northwest United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The construction of the Lodge was completed in October 1865. A newspaper article from The Idaho World, dated September 26, 1865, described its construction progress: "The Masonic Hall on Wall is nearly completed and is one of the finest in the Territory."
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Masonic Temple stands on Lot 4, Block B and on part of Lot 5, Block B in the townsite of Idaho City Plat of 1915. Reference to the title of these lots is in the deed books located at the Boise County Recorder and Auditor's Office, Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.

1915 Deed, September 21, 1915, recorded in Deed Record 41, p. 81. John H. Myer, Probate Judge, to Idaho Lodge No. 1, A.F. and A.M.
4. Builder, contractor: James Pinney, a fellow Mason, postmaster and local merchant, built the Lodge. He also served as a general contractor.

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5. Original plan and construction: None known. The original construction costs were \$4,000.
6. Alterations and additions: In 1928 a concrete foundation and a brick chimney, which was located at the southeast corner of the building, were constructed. From 1935 to 1944 substantial rehabilitation work was carried out in the building. The exterior walls were braced, the front porch was restored and given a new mosaic floor, the interior wooden columns were placed in the first floor social hall, the wallpaper in the lodge room was tacked on and repaired, and a bathroom was added at the west side of the building. In 1953, the brick chimney, first constructed in 1928, was replaced with concrete block.

A belltower, built to house a bell that was originally destined for the Methodist Church in Idaho City, once stood in the northwest corner of the building. It was toppled by a windstorm in 1958. The bell is now stored in the Lodge.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Idaho Lodge Number 1, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was chartered in 1863 in the mining town of Idaho City. The Masonic Temple was built two years later, and was dedicated on June 24, 1866. The Grand Lodge was formed in 1867. Many of Idaho City's most prominent citizens belonged to the Masonic Temple, among them James A. Pinney, Jonas Brown, S. Silsby and John Kenally. Because they were a cohesive social force, the Masons are said to have created an institutional link with the rest of the country.

In the 1920s the Lodge moved to Boise because of insufficient membership. Every June, before the summer solstice, the Lodge makes a pilgrimage to the Temple to commemorate the dedication of the Temple.

From 1865 to 1875, the Odd Fellows, members of the Pioneer Lodge No. 1, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, used to meet in the Temple. The Idaho World had its office here from April 1867 to June 1871.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

A photocopy of old photo shows the Temple with the belltower before 1958. Original photo at Idaho Historical Society, Boise, Idaho. Included in the HABS collection.

A photocopy of old photo shows the Masons in the Masonic Temple, early 20th century. Original photo at Idaho Historical Society, Boise, Idaho. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Brown, Charles, Jr. Correspondence, May 20, 1974.

Deed Books, Boise County Recorder and Auditor's Office,
Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.

Interview: Ed East. June 14, 1974. Boise.

Interview: John W. Wallace. June 5, 1974. Boise.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Adams, Francis. Idaho City, Queen of the Gold Camps.
Idaho City: Idaho World, 1953.

Elliott's History of Idaho. San Francisco: Elliott, 1884,
reprinted, Fairfield, 1971.

Idaho World. Newspaper articles, 1865-72. Idaho City, Idaho.

Kester, Frank J. Beginnings of Masonry in Idaho.
Address, September 14, 1953.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a typical example of the wooden institutional architecture of the frontier mining towns in the northwest United States.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair. The Masons plan an extensive restoration of the building, and intend to preserve the 19th century character of this authentic old hall.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Temple is approximately 32' wide, including a 6' wide addition and an enclosed stair on the west side, and is approximately 68' long including an 8' x 6' porch on the north end of the building. The front facade has three bays.
2. Foundation: The foundation, in good condition, is concrete which replaced the original stone.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are rough-sawn board and batten on the east, south and west walls. The surface has weathered naturally into a rich, warm black patina. The north facade of the building has the original clapboard siding and is painted white. All walls are insulated with the coarse, circular sawmill dust.
4. Structural system, framing: This building is a wooden frame structure with steel tie rods in the ceiling structure of the first and second floors.
5. Porches, exterior stairways: There are first and second floor enclosed porches with plain columns on the front elevation.

An enclosed stairway is attached to the exterior face of the west wall, and is the access to the second floor. The stair has board and batten siding and a shed roof. Another stairway of metal construction is attached to the east side of the building.

6. Chimney: There is a concrete block chimney on the southeast corner, which was built in 1953 to replace the brick chimney first built in 1928.

7. Openings:

- a. Doors: Both the first and second floor entrance doors are on the front facade (north side) of the building. The three double doors on the first floor each have two rows of five 14" x 20" lights. Below each door is a rectangular panel. The second floor door, located in the center of the porch, has three rows of four 10" x 16" lights, with a rectangular panel below. The rear door in the south side of the first floor has three rows of four 9" x 20" lights, with a rectangular panel. An eight-paned wooden door is on the east elevation in the second floor. A similar door on the west elevation in the first floor leads to the second floor enclosed stairway.
 - b. Windows: The south side and one of the three east side windows on the first floor are all fixed sash of three rows of six 10" x 12" lights. The remaining two east side windows and one west side window each have three rows of four 8" x 12" lights. The second floor double-hung windows have six-over-six sash lights.
8. Roof: A gable roof shelters the entire building, with shed roofs over the second floor porch, the exterior stair and the toilet room addition. All roofs are covered with corrugated, galvanized steel roofing.

C. Description of Interior;

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The main entrance opens directly into the social hall, and a secondary entrance is at the opposite end of the hall. The toilet room addition opens off the social hall. The stair on the exterior west face of the building opens directly off the social hall.
- b. Second floor: The main entrance opens into a vestibule and an antechamber room, both of which have separate passageways to the lodge room.

2. Flooring: Wide pine flooring is covered with plywood on the first floor. In the second floor, carpet covers most of the floor, and the original linen-backed linoleum covers the raised platforms at the sides in the lodge room.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor walls are tongue-and-groove boards. The ceiling and the second floor walls are papered over muslin on interior shiplap siding. The ceiling of the second floor lodge room consists of board and batten boards with hand-planed finishing edges.

4. Doors: The doors are simple panel doors.

5. Decorative features and trim: The trim is simple and there are hand-crafted wooden shutters on the windows in the second floor lodge room. The building has a simple, handsome interior with objects of historical and symbolic importance. Handmade benches, a carpet and one of the six captain's chairs made for the first six officers of the Lodge are some of the original furnishings still in use. Two fluted wooden columns, one capped by a globe of the world and the other by a globe representing the universe, stand at the north end of the lodge room in the second floor. Three paintings, Faith, the Good Samaritan and Hope are displayed on the wall. The paintings are the work of M.F. Brown, who painted them between 1869 and 1872. (The painter was the wife of Jonas Brown, who was one of the original Masons). Emblems and symbolic objects, consisting of pick, ladder, mallet, sword, scythe, hoop, square, shovel and anchor, line the lodge room walls.

6. Hardware: The locksets are surface mounted and many of the doors have porcelain knobs.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Wood burning stoves are still in use in this building, and the flues have been changed from the original locations through the roof and walls to the chimney.

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- b. Lighting: The building has incandescent lighting, and the original candle fixtures were converted to kerosene circa 1880.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces north and is located on the south side of Wall Street, 143' west of the intersection of Wall and Montgomery Streets.
2. Historic landscape design: There are no traces of any original landscaping. Several old and dying cottonwood trees had been removed from the site in 1953 as a precautionary measure to protect the building from a possible wind-downed limb or fallen trees.

Prepared by William B. McCroskey
Project Director
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Idaho City project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), in cooperation with the Idaho Bicentennial Commission in the summer of 1974. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by William B. McCroskey (University of Idaho), the project director; Alan Minskoff (University of Chicago), the project historian; Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati), the project foreman, and the student assistant architects, Rae F. Noritake (University of Idaho), Laurence Ferar (University of Oregon), and Mark T. Wellen (Texas Tech University). William Klein, a HABS staff architect in the Washington office, edited the drawings in 1975. The written architectural and historical data was edited in April 1980 by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington office. The documentary photographs were made by Duane Garrett in 1976.