

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Kansas City Masonic Temple

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

903 Harrison Street

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#5 Hon. Richard Bolling

STATE

Missouri 64106

CODE

29

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

095

3 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☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER Fraternity Organization**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Kansas City Masonic Temple Company

STREET & NUMBER

903 Harrison Street

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City,

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri 64106

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.Office of Recorder of Deeds
Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City Annex

STREET & NUMBER

415 East 12th Street

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City,

STATE

Missouri 64106

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Kansas City

DATE

1979

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☒ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

CITY, TOWN

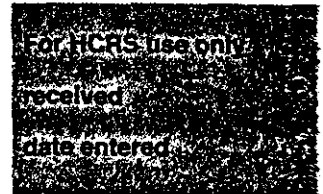
Kansas City

STATE
Missouri

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE



Continuation sheet

Item number 6

Page 1

2. Missouri State Historical Survey
1980 state
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City Missouri 65102

Item number 11

Page 1

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey
and State Contact Person June 26, 1980
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program 314/751-4096
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City Missouri 65102

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Kansas City Masonic Temple, 903 Harrison Street, Kansas City, Missouri, was constructed between March, 1909, and September, 1911, to provide accommodations for meetings of various Masonic lodges, chapters, and allied organizations. The building's primary facades emphasize the symmetrical refinement, linear composition, and reuse of classical forms which are characteristic of the Beaux-Arts and Classical Revival styles of the early twentieth century. The building also has notable opalescent art glass windows. The interior is liberally decorated, and both it and the exterior are intact, with their integrity undiminished. The building is located on the eastern edge of Kansas City's central business district.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions

Primarily rectangular in shape, the Masonic Temple measures eighty-two feet along its west facade, divided into five bays. It has a frontage of one hundred twelve feet on both the north and south. The ornamented north facade has seven principal bays, plus an additional bay in a set-back twelve foot extension. The building's outline is slightly irregular along the approximately seventy feet of its eastern face, where service entrance and facilities are located. It rises to a height of approximately sixty feet. Total interior footage is approximately 35,000 square feet.

Construction Materials and Colors

The Temple has a structural steel frame, with subfloors of reinforced concrete.¹ On the ornamented west and north facades of the building, ashlar of dressed Missouri limestone, light grey in color, face the ground floor, above which the building is veneered in glossy brick of matching color, laid in common bond. Glazed terra cotta and cut limestone, also light grey, are used for embellishments. On the secondary facades, south and east, red brick, also laid in common bond, faces the lower two-thirds of the building, with darker brick, of brownish hue, used at the attic story. Wood trim, around the windows and rear doors, is painted white or light grey. A few courses of the limestone rubble foundation are visible on the south and east. Concrete blocks are used for a shed which projects at the southeast corner.

Openings

Windows

All windows of the west and north facades are centered in their bays. The square window of the ground floor are filled with translucent glass bricks. The windows of the first floor are large, double hung sash, one-over-one light. The Masonic emblem, surrounded by a curvilinear abstract design, is featured in the opalescent art glass transoms. The second floor windows of the center bays are rectangular, traceried windows with triangular quarrels in geometric patterns. The second floor windows of the corner bays are narrow triple windows with single lights of opalescent glass in a geometric design. The window of the center bays of the attic floor are square, one-over-one light, of opalescent art glass in a geometric design. The attic floor corner bay windows are identical to those

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

of the second floor. All windows of the second and attic level have pivoted sashes which rotate horizontally.²

Six groups of triple windows fenestrate the ground floor, south facade. These two-over-two light exterior windows protect single light interior windows of opalescent art glass which present a panoramic view of a river valley, said to be the Jordan River at the beginning of the Christian era.³

Doors

The main entrance is centered in the west facade. The recessed door is double leaf, consisting of plate glass panels set in brown wood frames; the Masonic emblem is etched on the glass of the south leaf. There are flanking sidelights of glass and wood. Two similar doors, lacking sidelights, are located in the north facade. The east facade has two wood service doors.

Decorative Details

The following ornament the openings of the primary facades:

1. Above the ground floor windows, flat arches are articulated by their voussoirs, the outer of which have crosettes.
2. The doors, the windows of the first floor, and the windows of the central bays of the next floor have eared architraves containing projecting voussoirs, with a fluted console serving as the keystone.
3. In the center bays of the second floor, the windows' lintels and jambs consist of foliate torus moldings wrapped with cabling; dentil molds separate plain corbels beneath the lugsills.
4. A masonry balcony protects the main entrance in the west facade. Centered on the balcony's short stone balustrade is a cartouche bearing the Masonic emblem in relief; volutes and stylized acanthus surround the emblem.

Motifs characteristic of the Beaux-Arts vocabulary decorate the primary facades as follow

1. A belt course projects between the ground and first floors.
2. Fluted terra cotta pilasters, two stories high, accentuate the recessed central bays. Based on a masonry plinth course, the pilasters have projecting Ionic capitals above pomegranate reliefs. Vertical leaves appear in the flutes of the pilasters.
3. The pilastrades support a terra cotta entablature which runs across the facades. Its modillioned cornice is dotted with small lion head gargoyles. Below egg and

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

- dart and dentil moldings, a plain frieze is broken by simple medallions in low relief, set above each pilaster except the four central ones of the west facade; there a thin roll molding encloses the relief inscription, "Masonic Temple."
4. The attic story is broken by a scant wall cornice, ornamented with thin foliate and bead and reel moldings.
 5. A narrow terra cotta coping finishes the building.

Roof and Chimneys

The Temple building has a flat roof of several different planes; all are surfaced with built-up tar and gravel. A brick chimney rises above the roof at the southeast corner. A tall, freestanding brick smokestack sits atop an octagonal base, also at the southeast corner.

INTERIOR⁴

The basement story is a half floor below ground level. From the Ninth Street entrance, or the north, a short flight of stairs leads down to an elaborate foyer. Pilasters of black marble, with Corinthian capitals of gilt plaster, ring the area, beneath a coffered and domed ceiling. Tesserae of rust, gold, and blue form three large symbolic rondels on the mosaic floor. A banquet hall which can accommodate six hundred people at a single sitting fills the south part of the floor; when cleared, the hall becomes a ballroom. Cloak and rest rooms, a large kitchen with pantries, and a furnace room fill the perimeter of this floor on east and north.

Two large, decorated lodge rooms occupy the eastern two-thirds of the middle story of the building. Above the offices, committee and storage rooms, on the west of this floor, is a mezzanine containing a kitchen and small dining room.

The Ninth Street entrance at the northeast corner of the building opens to a staircase leading directly to the top floor auditorium, which fills slightly more than half of the floor. Two stairways from the auditorium floor lead to the balcony curved over the north end of this large hall. An elaborate proscenium arch connects the wings of the balcony and frames the stage area below. On the same level as the balcony, to the west of it, is the building's second mezzanine, called a drillroom; two stairways lead from it back to the auditorium level where there is a lodge room, on the northwest, in addition to committee rooms and storage areas.

ALTERATIONS

Only negligible alterations have been made to the building since its construction; the

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

dates of the alterations are unknown.

1. Translucent glass bricks fill the window apertures of the ground floor; originally there were double hung one-over-one sash windows in these openings.⁵
2. A shed of concrete blocks was constructed at the southeast corner.

SITE

Fronting directly on the twelve foot wide sidewalks along both Harrison and Ninth Streets, the Temple building covers all of its level eighty-four by one hundred forty-two foot lot, except for a fractional portion on the east. An asphalt parking lot is located immediately south of the building; it belongs to the Masonic Temple Company and was constructed in 1955. Just beyond a narrow park, located across Harrison Street, a section of the interstate highway system, looping around the central business district, lies considerably below the grade of the surrounding area, bridged by viaducts at Ninth and Tenth Streets. This interstate loop rather effectively isolates the Masonic Temple and its neighborhood from the central business district of which it was once a part. Apartment houses, service organizations, and light industry are in the Temple's vicinity. Nearby vacant lots indicate that a number of buildings in this area have been demolished in recent years.

PRESENT CONDITION AND STATUS

The Masonic Temple is structurally sound and in good repair. Its area became the focus of cooperative redevelopment efforts, beginning in the fall of 1979, by the Kansas City Corporation for Industrial Development and the owners of property in the vicinity, who plan to assemble sites attractive to light industry. Responding to current economic conditions, this revitalization effort hopes to capitalize on the area's proximity to the central business district and to the freeway system. There is no threat to the Masonic Temple in the redevelopment plans; rather, it is identified as an asset to the area in a "service industry corridor" on Ninth and Tenth Streets, along with facilities of the Salvation Army, the City Union Mission, Legal Aid offices, and several churches.⁶

FOOTNOTES

¹"Masonic Temple Is Model Building," Kansas City Post, 1 October 1911, p. 3; "At a Temple Opening, 1200," Kansas City Star, 1 October 1911, p. 4B.

²"Masons Have One of Most Complete Lodge Buildings in U.S.," Kansas City Post, 1 October 1911, p. 3.

³"Dedication To Be Solemn Ceremony," Kansas City Journal, 30 September 1911, p. 1.

(11/78)

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

- ⁴"Masonic Temple, Kansas City, Missouri," Western Architect 29 (June, 1920): Plate 12
- ⁵Ibid., Plate 11.
- ⁶"East Area Eyed for Industry," Kansas City Star, 4 March 1980, pp. 1, 10.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	X___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	X___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
X___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1909-11

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. C. Sunderland

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kansas City Masonic Temple is significant as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of building, the Masonic lodge, where various locally autonomous groups hold ceremonial meetings, gather for fellowship and revelry, and organize their charitable and benevolent activities. Completed in 1911, it is virtually unchanged in appearance since its construction. Its design and construction, in particular the decorative details of the exterior and the decor of the interior, make it a noteworthy example of its type.

The Masonic Temple also embodies distinctive characteristics of a period, the early twentieth century. Its architect, J. C. Sunderland of Kansas City, embellished the building's exterior with skillfully integrated motifs of Beaux-Arts and Classical Revival styles, both of which were then prominent themes in American architecture. The building thus illustrates the waxing architectural sophistication of Kansas City at that time and the mature concern being exhibited by Kansas Citians, outgrowing their nineteenth century frontier mentality, for their city's appearance and orderly development.

HISTORICAL DATA

The fraternal groups known as Masons or Freemasons developed in England early in the eighteenth century and soon spread around the world. Two Masonic lodges were organized, in 1848, in the area which became Kansas City.¹ By 1910, Kansas City had ten lodges, nine allied groups, and approximately five thousand people affiliated with these various organizations.² The downtown office building in which most of the groups held their meetings was destroyed by fire in 1909, providing the impetus for construction of a new building which would belong to and be used by Masonic bodies only.³ The Kansas City Masonic Temple Company, a Missouri corporation, was organized cooperatively by Masonic groups to finance and construct the Temple building which, together with its site, cost approximately \$150,000.⁴

James C. Sunderland, architect for the Masonic Temple, was a Mason.⁵ In 1901 and 1902 he drafted for Louis Curtiss, a major Kansas City architect during the early years of the twentieth century. In 1903 he formed a partnership with Samuel E. Edwards. Edwards and Sunderland dissolved their partnership in 1914, after which Sunderland practiced alone until 1921. He then entered a three-year partnership with Walter Besecke. After this he practiced alone for the remainder of his career. The majority of Sunderland's commissions during his later career, were office buildings and warehouses.⁶ The Masonic Temple, one of his most significant buildings, indicated that he was an accomplished workman, sensitive to the important thematic trends of the times. At the time of his death at age 70, in 1931, it was noted that he was the architect for some outstanding apartment buildings in the area of the Masonic Temple, which won him "continued commissions."⁷

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history, as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." The Kansas City Masonic Temple is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture," and "Society."

FOOTNOTES

¹Wes Cook, "Freemasonry's First 150 Years in Missouri," Kansas City Star Magazine, 26 September 1971, p. 24.

²Masonic Directory of Kansas City, Missouri (Kansas City: Kansas City Masonic Temple Co., 1910), pp. 81, 184-185.

³"Masonic Temple Is Model Building," Kansas City Post, 1 October 1911, p. 3.

⁴"To Dedicate Masonic Temple," Kansas City Times, 29 September 1911, p. 13.

⁵Masonic Directory of Kansas City, Missouri, pp. 18, 110, 172.

⁶"J. C. Sunderland Rites," Kansas City Star, 25 December 1934, p. 12; City Directory Kansas City, Missouri, 1900-1932.

⁷"Sunderland Rites," Kansas City Star, 25 December 1934, p. 12.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

City Directories, Kansas City, Missouri, 1900-1932.

Cook, Wes. "Freemasonry's First 150 Years in Missouri." Kansas City Star Magazine, 26 September 1971, p. 24.

"Dedication to be Solemn Ceremony." Kansas City Journal, 30 September 1911, p. 1.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME "Kansas City"

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 364220 4329180

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 16, 17, 18, and the North 8-1/3' of Lot 19, Block 8, PERRY PLACE ADDITION, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

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

1. Elaine Ryder

May 2, 1980

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Landmarks Commission of Kansas City

816-274-2555

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

City Hall, 414 E. 12th Street

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Kansas City,

Missouri 64106

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

TITLE Director, Department of Natural Resources and
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

KANSAS CITY MASONIC TEMPLE

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

"East Area Eyed for Industry." Kansas City Star, 4 March 1980, pp. 1, 10.

"J. C. Sunderland Rites." Kansas City Star, 25 December 1934, p. 12.

Masonic Directory of Kansas City, Missouri. Kansas City: Kansas City Masonic Temple Co.,
1910.

"Masonic Temple is Model Building." Kansas City Post, 1 October 1911.

"Masonic Temple, Kansas City, Missouri." Western Architect, June 1920, plates 11 and 12.

"Masons Have One of Most Complete Lodge Buildings in U.S." Kansas City Post, 1 October 19
p. 3.

"To Dedicate Masonic Temple." Kansas City Times, 29 September 1911, p. 13.



U.S.G.S. 7.5'
"Kansas City, Mo."
Scale: 1:24,000
Kansas City Masonic Temple

UTM REFERENCE:
15/364200/4329160

Quadrangle
(1970)



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Kansas City Masonic Temple**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Sherry Piland**

Date

Photographed: **Apr. 1980**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 4. W façade. View looking E.

2 of 4. W façade on left, S façade on right. View looking NE.

3 of 4. N façade. View looking SW.

4 of 4. E façade on left, portion of N façade on right. View looking SW.







