

The Masonic Temple

11-11th Ave. S.
1909



The Masonic order had established itself early in Cranbrook's history, and was ready in 1909 to erect an edifice suitable to the progress of the Lodge. The architectural firm of Sedgar and Pownall of Victoria designed the hall, and the contract was let to D.J. Johnson for \$10,000. The corner stone was laid in November of 1909, with the grand opening in June of 1910.

The newspapers of the day described the building as "Colonial with massive colonial pillars". The porch (or "portico" as it may be called) is the most prominent feature of the structure, and it is a valliant effort to copy a classical "temple" front - complete with columns, entablature, and triangular pediment. The lines of the entire building are simple and the effect quite massive, but the clapboard siding gives a good deal of light and shade detail to the large surfaces. At one time the side door was connected to the front portico by a level promenade, but this has since been renovated and a side stairway added because of snow, ice and water problems.

It is a fine example of large wooden frame construction, and is structurally sound even with its varied uses over the years. Large chambers both upstairs and downstairs on the main floor, plus various anterooms, make this particular building extremely useful and versatile. In 1973 it was given a new lease on life when the City purchased it and thus saved it from becoming a "parking-lot". The custodianship has been turned over to the Cranbrook Community Theatre Group who converted the upstairs into a "drama

studio workshop” complete with special lighting (and appropriately called the “Stage Door”). In the past the group has encouraged a community arts use of the rest of the building. A School of Ballet, Highland Dance, Figure-Skating floor classes, Painters Guild, etc., have at times inhabited the old structure.

The Archives, Museum & Landmark Foundation of Cranbrook also at one time established an office in the building, and the important “Vis-Arts” exhibition sponsored by ‘arts Council had a home here and drew on large numbers of people shopping and working in downtown area. It’s future looks bright as home to several groups on a permanent basis and is an excellent example of what a heritage building can be used for if given the chance. It should continue to grace the downtown area with its charm and character.

Given Heritage Designation February 1990