



The Masonic Temple

426 Jersey

Eclectic, with Renaissance Revival imagery

John Batschy and George Behrensmeyer, architects; 1910-1911

This is one of the grand monuments of Quincy. Its architects called on the Italian Renaissance to supply most of its exterior imagery, but also made no attempt to conceal its multiple stories and room divisions behind the traditional temple front. Instead, oversized consoles and drip moldings, a projecting cornice, and a balustraded portico are attached in Craftsman fashion, as a celebration of materials with functionalist overtones.

The building of the lodge was the outgrowth of many years effort to unite the score of Masonic bodies that had grown up in Quincy since Bodley Lodge No. 1 had ~~gotten~~ its Illinois ^{received} charter in 1840. An association of the Quincy Masons finally came about in 1907, and they naturally turned to one of their own, 32nd Degree Mason John Batschy, for architectural assistance. The exterior ornament is unmistakably of his invention. But though Batschy had proven his capabilities in the Musselman Building fifteen years earlier, he lacked training in modern construction engineering and was probably also ill-prepared to deal with the strange mix of historical scholarship and antihistorical design sensibility that were demanded of the modern architect. Bringing Quincy native George Behrensmeyer aboard was the perfect solution. In 1909 the two architects formed a brief partnership and on September 8 their plans for the building were accepted. Two years later, at the cost of \$84,000, the building was complete.

Behrensmeyer's interior scheme uses a simple version of the Mission style as a point of departure. For utilitarian spaces such as offices and stairways, that is all the style necessary. But for rooms created for assembly, ceremony, and recreation the Mission style becomes a foil for the potpourri of neo-Grec, Egyptian, and Babylo-Assyrian imagery that Masons had come to expect for their meeting places. The Ionic columns and pilasters that greet the entrant to the building were a perfect choice, for they mesh with both Mission Style and Masonic expectations.

Many interiors remain as they were originally constructed. Particularly fine are the billiard and card rooms on the second floor and the consistory and Scottish Rite assembly room on the fourth floor. The latter retains its superb collection of scenic drops, each of which was designed for use with the awarding of specific degrees of Masonic achievement. Many light fixtures are original as well, particularly on the upper floors. Furnishings are of special interest for capturing over a hundred years of local Masonic history. Outfitting so large a building all at one time was not possible without utilizing a variety of sources. The new furniture, for the most part of modified Mission design, is joined by pieces dating from earlier Masonic lodge quarters, pieces brought in from other Quincy locations, and bequests or gifts to the Masons.