

# Masonic Temple

**501 N. Harbor Boulevard**

**1920**

**Spanish Colonial Revival**

**Status: Local Landmark;  
Listed on the National Register**



This building was the second Masonic Temple in Fullerton, taking the place of the much smaller facility at the northwest corner of Harbor Boulevard and Amerige Avenue. Rectangular in shape and three-story (though multi-leveled) in height, it was constructed of hollow clay tile on a poured concrete foundation. Its Spanish Colonial Revival style is not ornate but is rather clean-lined and eclectic. For example, parts of the building have a flat roof with Mission Style parapets at the north and south sides. At the same time the front portico, with its elevated entrance, has a Neo-Classical treatment.

The east façade is the primary elevation; it is symmetrical except for an extension at the south end. At the center is a pedimented portico that is supported by two columns with unadorned capitals, arrived at by a double set of stairs. Marble cornerstones are under each column, with the Masonic emblem and date of the building's construction etched in the north one.

There are other distinguishing architectural features: the uniform placement windows, the treatment of the upper balcony on the north side and the decorative roof rafters on all building elevations. The interior spaces, especially the main meeting room on the second level with its wood paneling and detailing, are equally important features. Frank Benchley, the son of Edward Benchley and a prominent local architect, designed the building.

The Masonic Temple was the first of the major buildings to be constructed in the prosperous decade following WWI. Construction lasted nearly a year, and the final cost totaled \$115,000 for the structure and its fixtures. The groups that were associated with the Masons grew in the years following the building's completion, and for a time Fullerton had more lodges and chapters than any other community in Orange County.

As a social institution, Masonic membership was predominantly made up of high-status individuals and entrepreneurs – almost always men – until the 1940s. The lodges were social groups that had ritualistic meetings, social events like dances and picnics, and game room activities. Other functions that attracted

members included moral guidance, support groups, and charitable care for orphaned children and the elderly. The Fullerton Masonic Temple had all of these functions.

The Masonic Temple was the center of social activities and charitable events in Fullerton, particularly during the years before the advent of television. Many of the city's prominent men belonged to this organization, with membership remaining well over 400 until its decline starting in the 1950s. In 1993, with membership dropping below 200 and no money available for needed improvements to the building, the Masons sold the property. The current owner completely rehabilitated the building in 1995 – and in the process restored its exterior – as part of a conversion for its use as a banquet hall and reception center. The building continues to be used in this fashion.



**Masonic Temple, 1927**