

Improvement of Odd Fellows Hall in Gold Hill Being Considered

By MARY KELL
Mail Tribune Correspondent
GOLD HILL—A remodeling project to improve the Independent Order of Odd Fellows building at the corner of Fourth and Fifth st. in Gold Hill is under consideration by members of the lodge and Amethyst Rebekah lodge.

The oldest active organizations in Gold Hill. Both lodges have held meetings continuously since the building was built in 1898. Today's members have a deep feeling for the building, which has played an important role in more ways than one during the span of 65 years it has served the community.

Instituted in 1895
IOOF lodge 129 was instituted April 17, 1895, the same year that the city of Gold Hill became an incorporated town. It was instituted by W. L. Yawter, district deputy grandmaster, after a petition had been submitted by several residents and businessmen. J. W. Marksberry, J. W. Masterson, W. H. Beidler, D. S. Young, and B. T. Adkins who asked that a lodge to be known as IOOF 129 be instituted in Gold Hill.

First elective officers were Masterson, noble grand; Marksberry, vice grand; Young, secretary; and Beidler, treasurer.

Prior to the time the hall was built in 1898, the Odd Fellows held meetings on the upper floor of the Blue Front building where the Gold Hill Community Methodist church is now located, according to William A. Carter, a retired Portland attorney. He is an early member of the IOOF lodge here, and is the only living charter member of Amethyst Rebekah lodge 97.

Elected Grand Master
Carter was elected grand master of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in May, 1906, while he was a resident of Gold Hill. In fact he was one of the leading citizens and businessmen at the time, according to early day records.

Hope Rebekah lodge 14, Ashland, instituted Amethyst Rebekah lodge 97 Feb. 14, 1898, the same year the front section of the IOOF hall was built. Forty-five members were initiated on that date, including several Odd Fellows who took an active part in the membership of Amethyst Rebekah lodge.

First elective officers of the Gold Hill Rebekah lodge were Eliza J. Beidler, noble grand; Martha Cardwell, vicegrand; May Pendleton and Hattie Sismore, secretaries; and Mary R. Crider, treasurer.

The Stickel Brothers, prominent contractors, made hand-molded bricks used in the construction of the IOOF building. The upper and lower floors of the front section facing Fourth ave. was built in 1898 by the Stickels, who also contracted building of the rear section facing the alley between Fourth and Fifth aves. in the early 1900s.

Sign Over Entrance
The IOOF sign over the entrance at the flight of stairs was made by Charles Kell, a resident of Gold Hill since 1907. Light from this fixture has helped to guide those climbing the stairs since the early 1900s.

Mrs. Gwen Stickel Davis, who was five years old when the first section of the building was built, explained the method used by her father, Walter H. Stickel, and his brothers to make the bricks. She said a brick clay was mixed in pits by horse power. Hunter Stickel fed the pits, Walter H. Stickel put the mixed clay into molds for six or



WATTS REMODELING—Showing its age after 65 years this Independent Order of Odd Fellows building at the corner of Fourth and Fifth st. stands waiting for a remodeling job that is under consideration by the members of IOOF and Amethyst Rebekah lodges in Gold Hill. In 1898 there was a great deal of activity at this corner. The inscription at top of building front has IOOF 1898. Present membership total of the two Gold Hill lodges are Amethyst Rebekah lodge members 75, and Odd Fellows lodge members 33.

nine bricks by hand, and George Val Stickel and helpers carried molds to sand blocks for drying.

An early day resident, Earl Pankey, said men who worked on the hall received about \$1.50 wages for an eight or nine hour day. Bricks cost about \$15 per thousand.

Original Lodge Room
The original lodge room, the banquet room and kitchen were in the upper section, overlooking Fourth ave. In later years, the entire upper floor was converted to a large lodge room with which this generation is familiar, according to Mrs. Davis. The banquet, kitchen, restrooms and ladies lounge were then located in the rear section of the structure.

Mrs. Davis joined Amethyst Rebekah lodge in 1912. She now resides in Medford, as does her aunt, Mrs. Maude Stickel, wife of George Val Stickel. She joined the Gold Hill Rebekah lodge in 1900. In later years she was transferred to Medford Rebekah lodge.

In February, 1967, Maude Stickel, district deputy president, was accompanied by the degree staff of Amethyst Rebekah lodge to Central Point, where they were assisted by a degree team from the Medford lodge in the institution of M. L. Are Granted Permission

Because of the present condition of the building, Rebekahs were granted permission to meet in different homes since December, 1962. Even though the building was damp and cold, because of the leaking roof and water soaked plaster, Odd Fellows continued to meet in the hall throughout the winter and spring months.

Efforts to do something about improving the building were started in January this year when members of Amethyst Rebekah lodge offered to help the Odd Fellows by raising money so the building could be saved. As a result, a building fund committee was named, and the first fund raiser, a food sale, was given Jan. 26, 1963. All proceeds were earmarked building improvement fund.

The committee consists of the two noble grands, Martin Johnson and Mrs. Albert Gascon, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Walker, Mrs. Paul Molloy, H. D. Force and Mrs. Cassie Johnson.

Building Improvement Fund
When meetings of the lodges were resumed this month, it was reported that the building improvement fund had reached the \$2,000 mark. During the recess months, members continued to give benefit dances each Saturday night, and Odd Fellows met at the hall to work in preparation for remodeling.

The \$2,000 has been raised mainly by benefit dances given at the American Legion hall in Central Point. Plans are to continue the dances each Saturday. Other events that benefited the fund were a talent show, dinners, food sales, box social, and rummage sale. Cash donations have been given by individuals, many of whom were not members of either group, and other Odd Fellows and Rebekah lodges throughout the state.

H. D. Force has urged members not to become discouraged, because it will take considerable time before the job is done. Praised by Committee
Raymond Thompson has been praised by committee members for the many hours he has donated to the building project since it got underway in January. Thompson anticipates the biggest expense of the program will be the interior because of new wiring, plumbing, and similar jobs.

Pitt Rebekah lodge 167. Forty-one candidates were initiated. G. V. Stickel, who was at the time grand marshal, assisted.

Building Appears Forelorn
Today, with windows broken and boarded up, the once famous building appears forelorn, but in 1898 and many years thereafter much activity centered much. A general merchandise store was located in the left lower section of the IOOF building and on the right lower section various businesses were established over a period of years until it was obtained for use by the Boy Scouts several years ago. This section has been purchased from the Crater Lake Area of the Boy Scout Council.

The entire building is now owned by the Odd Fellows lodge 129, a step brought about through the efforts of A. A. Walker with purchasing money from the building improvement fund.

During its span of 65 years, many changes have taken place, and the building now is badly in need of repair. Although Rebekahs and Odd Fellows made an effort to keep the interior painted and repairs made during the period both lodges have met there, heavy wind and rain storms in recent years have caused extensive damage to the interior and roof of the structure.

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Preliminary plans to remodel the building were made recently, but removal of the upper story was delayed because of the expense and approach of winter. A temporary roof was installed to protect furniture.



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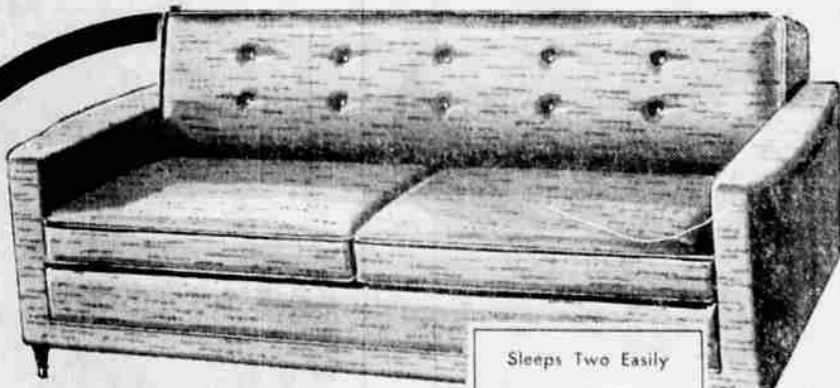
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equipment and other material on the upper floor. Present plans call for relocation of the lounge, banquet room, kitchen, and rest rooms on the first floor of the building. Thompson said as funds are available the exterior of the building will be modernized, but no date has been set for completion of the project since it will depend on funds available.

Hand-made furniture in the lodge room will be moved to the first floor level when remodeling is completed.

A well-known cabinet maker, Earl Adams, made the furniture 35 to 40 years ago, using Australian red gum wood. Symbols on the backs of chairs and the noble grand's station indicates different orders.

Many Odd Fellows and Rebekahs are active in civic, community service, and other organizations in Gold Hill in addition to lodge and church work. Social branches of the Rebekahs here are the Past Noble Grands club and Amethyst Rebekah Friendship club.

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