

## Odds-on Favorite

The revitalization of Tucson includes a splendid renovated façade for the former Odd Fellows Hall.

If you've had the opportunity to drive down South Sixth Avenue recently, you may have noticed one of our town's historic renovation projects: the former Odd Fellows Hall, located just south of Broadway. More recognizable as the current home to some of Tucson's culinary and artistic destinations, including Barrio Food & Drink, Etherton Gallery, Timothy Fuller Photography and Barbara Grygutis Sculpture Studio, the building represents another pearl in the necklace of revitalization projects that are bringing life back to downtown.

This two-story structure was constructed in 1914 for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, or I.O.O.F., whose Tucson lodge, founded in 1881, was the town's first fraternal organization. Always a point of curiosity, the Odd Fellows' name is derived from

its founding in 18th century England as a fraternal organization for laborers who were engaged in various or odd trades, in contrast to the larger trades who had their own fraternal organizations, such as the Freemasons.

To design the hall, the Odd Fellows hired the architectural firm run by Henry Jaastad, one of two architects practicing in Tucson at that time. Jaastad, who was born in Norway and moved to Tucson in 1902, was trained as a cabinetmaker, worked as journeyman carpenter, completed a correspondence course in architecture and began practicing in 1907. He is better known for his active political and public life as a city councilman beginning in 1924, and as the mayor from 1933 to 1947.

According to I.O.O.F. records, it was Ely Blount who represented Jaastad's firm at their meetings, and it can be assumed that he was also

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BY R. BROOKS JEFFERY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM SPITZ



responsible for the building's design. Blount, who practiced as an independent architect before joining Jaastad's firm, had already designed another Tucson landmark, the 1910 Temple Emanu-El, Arizona's first Jewish house of worship. Although the architectural drawings of that time only credited the principal architect of the firm, we know that Jaastad's previous work had a particular design signature that represented his lack of academic architectural training. Once other designers joined Jaastad's office — Blount in 1912 and Arizona's first woman architect, Annie Rockfellow, in 1916 — there is a sharp contrast in the design skill, expressing the hand of a formally trained architect.

The Odd Fellows purchased two lots on South Sixth Avenue on which Blount designed two separate but complementary buildings. In addition to a second-floor hall space for meetings and other social events, the design created more than 10,000 square feet of leasable space on the ground floor, accommodating a variety of tenants throughout the building's history, including a machine shop and an auto dealership. The second floor of the south building, which housed the I.O.O.F. Lodge, had two large principal spaces: a banquet hall and a separate lodge room in the rear.

Although many tenants came and went in the ground floor spaces, the I.O.O.F. building remained one of Tucson's entertainment centers with the upstairs halls used as the venue for Saturday night dances. By 1972, with membership dwindling and downtown Tucson no longer the center of social entertainment, the Odd Fellows sold the building and moved to another facility. The new owners continued to rent both floors to a variety of tenants, and during this time, the brick façade and all its detailing was stuccoed and painted over, the ornamental pediment was removed, storefront windows were partially filled in and the only remnant of its past were the letters "IOOF" attached to the upper pediment. To add insult to injury, the one-story north building was demolished by the City of Tucson due to its reported structural instability, and its space, like many in Tucson's downtown, was converted into a parking lot. ▶

**OPPOSITE PAGE** The former Odd Fellows Hall, constructed in 1914, received a facelift a while ago.

**THIS PAGE (FROM TOP)** Inside the "Odd Hall" are the Etherton Gallery, Barrio Food & Drink and Timothy Fuller Photography.







Barbara Grygutis Sculpture Studio is the fourth occupant of the "Odd Hall."

In 1975, The Invisible Theatre (IT), moved into the building's second floor. Thirteen years later, Timothy Fuller — one of the founders of the IT, who had now opened his own photography business — together with sculptor Barbara Grygutis, pooled their money to buy the building, with Grygutis taking over the rear of the ground floor's expansive interior space. "We call it the Odd Hall," says Fuller. Terry Etherton, who began renting space in the same year, renovated the former lodge room on the second floor into one of Tucson's premier fine art galleries and opened the building for public events for the first time in decades. Soon afterward, the B&B Restaurant opened on the ground floor facing the street, to be followed by Barrio Food & Drink in 1997.

The year 2000 marked the next chapter of this building's history, when Fuller and Grygutis received a \$70,000 Back to Basics grant from the City of Tucson to restore the façade to its original beauty. Under the architectural direction of Bil Taylor Design & Build, the brick façade was sandblasted, removing the layers of paint and stucco that had covered up the building's original detail.

During the building's makeover, architect Rob Paulus was hired to enlarge Barrio Food & Drink and the interior was redesigned by Janey Parks.

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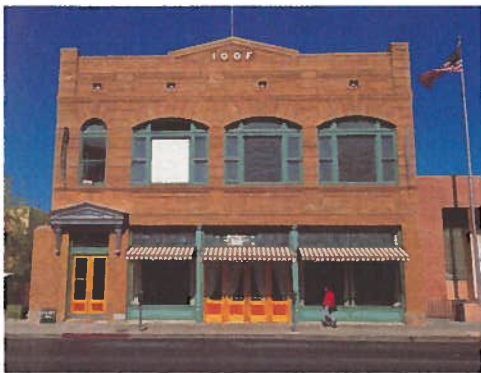
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The I.O.O.F. building is a symbol of the commitment to community shared by generations of Tucsonans. This structure also is an example of the kind of "mixed-use," early 20th-century commercial architecture that can be found throughout Tucson's historic core. **TL**

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**LEFT** The Renaissance Revival style of the façade is expressed in the extensive brick detailing, which imitates stone voussoirs above the shallow arches of the second-story windows.

**ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT** Terry Etherton, Etherton Gallery; Joe Casertano, Barrio Food & Drink; Tim Fuller, Tim Fuller Photography; and Barbara Grygutis, Barbara Grygutis Sculpture Studio.

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