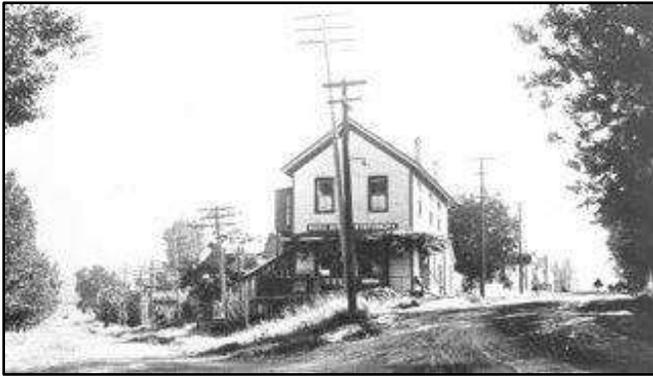


Templars Hall



Working on the new Walking Tour of Downtown Auburn with John Knox and Art Sommers was an eye-opening experience. We found some fascinating facts about the buildings in downtown that we all pass by on a regular basis. One of the more interesting buildings is at 812 Lincoln Way. Today you may be a patron of the Georgetown Clothing business or the Bliss Studio. But did you know that

the building was once home to the Independent Order of Good Templars?

The I.O.G.T. was not the first temperance or total abstinence society in American. There was the Washingtonian Movement formed in Maryland in 1840 and the Order of the Sons of Temperance established in New York City in 1842. The Order of Good Templars was formed in 1851 in Utica, New York.

Drinking alcohol has a long history in America. The Mayflower voyagers brought more beer than water to their settlement in the new world. In Colonial times drinking was wide spread and substantial. The consumption was estimated to be at least three times the current per capita rate. Beer was seen as a healthy substitute for water given the impurity of public drinking water of the time. While drinking was accepted in society, being a drunkard was seen as morally sinful and demonized. A combination of the coming of the industrialization of the economy in the first half of the nineteenth century combined with the revival of emotion-based religion, called the Second Great Awakening, created the demand for alcohol reform.

By 1861 Auburn boasted two temperance orders, the I.O.G.T. and the Sons of Temperance. The I.O.G.T. had 31 members; the officers at the time were R. C. Poland, Mrs. H. J. Crandall, H. Hazell, B. R. Wells, Mrs. Minnie French, and Mrs. A. E. Guiou.

One thing that set the I.O.G.T. apart from other temperance societies is that they not only accepted women as members but encouraged their participation in official positions.

In the History of Placer County, William Lardner writes, "The Order, being reformatory and social, without great cost or penalties, is very popular; the membership consists of ladies and gentlemen and is of much beneficial influence."

The Sons of Temperance had 25 members and a wooden meeting hall on the hill near the Court House. The I.O.G.T. met in the Sons building and various locations around town until 1883 when they hired Capt. Alden Radcliff to build their new hall on the

triangle piece of land at the intersection of High and Railroad (now Lincoln Way) Streets.

Over the years, the Templars Hall had several other tenants. In 1884 Mrs. Lombard lived upstairs and was looking for work sewing or house cleaning. In 1890, Mr. Pettingill had an ice cream parlor there. Also in 1890 the Library Association had a public library in the building. From about 1894 to 1900, W. J. Ball had a stationery, music and book store in the building. It seems that the Good Templars sold the building in 1897 to G. W. Daniels. It is not known when the order ceased to exist in Auburn.

In 1908 Mayor J. W. Morgan owned the building. He moved it to its present location at 812 Lincoln Way. He remodeled it and several groups including the Chamber of Commerce and The Tahoe Club rented rooms. It is likely that the high, ornate false façade was added at this time. Dave Gordon had his haberdashery business here from 1914 until the 1930's.

After the Templars Hall or Ball building as it was known later, was moved, the property on the triangle corner was sold to the Overland Bank, then to the City of Auburn and in 1922 to Thure Nelson who envisioned a flatiron type building on the site. He put in a service station thinking it would be temporary yet it stands today as the quaint site for Avantgarden, "gifts for your home inspired by nature."

For more interesting facts about the buildings in Downtown, stop by the new Visitors Center in the old Fire House building and pick up a copy of the new brochure.

--**April McDonald**, Auburn City Historian