



ODD FELLOWS BLOCK

ADDRESS

643-651 Forest Avenue

ARCHITECT

F. H. Fassett & E. F. Fassett

DATES

1897

STYLE

Italianate

Built in 1897, the Odd Fellows Block was designed by Francis H. Fassett and his son Edward F. Fassett, well-known Portland architects of the time. Francis H. Fassett heavily influenced the architectural heritage of Portland through his use of the Victorian High Gothic, Queen Anne, and Italianate styles. Most famous for his grand residences, churches, and civic architecture, Fassett and his son designed this building for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in the Italianate style.

The Odd Fellows Block is a four story red brick flatiron structure that sits at the center of Woodfords Corner and remains readily visible as the anchor of the main intersection of Forest Avenue, Woodford Street, and Deering Avenue due to its overall scale and corner-oriented clock tower. The tower, with its Doric columns and cupola, rises well above the flat roof (Fig. 1). Below the cornice on the Forest Avenue frontage, light bricks form the letters "I. O. O. F. Block". Considered especially majestic when the building was completed in 1897 (Fig. 2), the citizens of a then-independent town of Deering wished for it to serve as their town hall; Portland annexed Deering by an Act of the legislature in 1899 and had two separate city councils for one transitional year, before fully absorbing Deering's government in 1900.

The flatiron form of the Odd Fellows Block is repeated in a traditional manner at the Chapman Building on the opposite side of Forest Avenue and interpreted in a modern fashion in the diagonally facing Modernist building across the main Woodford's Corner intersection. These structures serve as the architectural cornerstones of Woodford's and form a gateway for those approaching the City of Portland from the north.



Figure 1.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization with roots in 18th Century England. The charitable and service-based values held by the Odd Fellows may be visible in the variety of functions their building could accommodate. The 1926 Portland City Directory describes a multipurpose space that allowed for commercial tenants such as dentists and a tailor as well as gathering spaces for Masons and the Odd Fellows themselves in addition to an area for the Second Church of Christ (Scientist). By 1955, the uses seem to have been pared, with only one dentist on record, and halls only for the Masons and Odd Fellows. The Odd Fellows also owned the building at 645 Forest Avenue, adjacent to the rear of the main Block, which served as a bank and offices, and a social hall in downtown Portland at 21 Forest Avenue.

Figure 2.