



Freemasonry in Iowa

Many people are proud of their heritage. By petitioning for membership in an Iowa Masonic lodge, you will be associating with an Iowa fraternal order that was organized in 1844, several years before our state was admitted into the Union. Freemasonry, however, dates its formal beginnings to the 17th Century. Thus, you will become, upon acceptance, a member of not only the oldest (and most prestigious) fraternity in Iowa, but also in the entire world. You will become a member of an organization whose Iowa roots extend back to our first territorial governor and whose heritage includes many of Iowa's finest citizens.

There were many Masons among the vanguard of pioneers that came to the Territory in the early 1840's. They came in wagons and on boats, settled along the Mississippi, and staked their claims. Some of them were farmers, but there were also merchants, teachers, businessmen, miners, lawyers, and politicians, all of them anxious and excited about the opportunities that awaited them in the "heartland" -- Iowa -- "the beautiful land" as the Indians called it.

By the time the "Iowa Territory" was two years old, the settlers discovered they had a fraternal kinship. According to the records, the first Masonic meeting in the Iowa Territory was held on the evening of November 6, 1840, in the Burlington carpenter shop of Brother Evan Evans. As a result of that meeting, a dispensation was granted on November 20, 1840, by the Grand Lodge of Missouri to form a Masonic lodge at Burlington.


Several months later (on February 4, 1841) similar action was taken resulting in the formation of Iowa Lodge No. 2 at Bloomington (later to become Muscatine).

Dubuque Lodge No. 3 was officially formed by the pioneer Masons in Dubuque on October 10, 1842.

On December 9, 1842, nine Masons met in Iowa City to organize the last of the four lodges which would form the Grand Lodge of Iowa, A.F. & A.M.

A delegation was appointed to attend the next session of the Grand Lodge of Missouri with a petition to form the Grand Lodge of Iowa. The request was granted on January 2, 1844, and, just one week later, delegates from those first four lodges met in a room over Sanxer's Iron Store in Iowa City and organized the Grand Lodge of Iowa, A.F. & A.M.

The first four lodges were officially designated as Des Moines Lodge No. 1 (with 25 members), Iowa Lodge No. 2 (with 20 members), Dubuque Lodge No. 3 (with 28 members), and Iowa City Lodge No. 4 (with 28 members). Total membership of the Grand Lodge of Iowa was 101 members. The present membership of the Grand Lodge of Iowa consists of approximately 27,000 Masons in about 300 lodges across the state.



WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

The Masonic Commitment to Character

Many years ago one of Iowa's most prominent Masons and theologians, Joseph Fort Newton wrote these magnificent words:

"Gentle, gracious, and wise. Its mission is to form mankind into a great redemptive brotherhood. A league of noble and free men enlisted in the radiant enterprise of working out, in time, the love and will of the eternal."

Those words capture the meaning of Freemasonry. As the world's oldest and largest Fraternity, our goal is to build a man's most valuable possession -- his character.

We believe that the strength of the family, the church, the community and our country rests with men of strong conviction, firm ethical and moral values, and a devotion to our democratic system of government. As Masons, we help each other intensify our devotion to these enduring values.

A Masonic lodge is a place where a man can really improve himself, and spend time with a group of fine men endeavoring to do the same.

In lodge meetings, there is no talk of politics, no discussion of religious issues, even though every Mason must affirm a belief -- according to his own understanding -- in deity, and devotion to his country.

Masons are concerned with developing their minds and enlarging their scope of knowledge. In a word, Masons are dedicated to becoming better men.

Men of every walk of life belong to Masonic lodges. They are proud of their centuries of tradition, their belief in brotherhood, country, and the many Masonic acts of charity and compassion.

The Founding of Freemasonry

The origins of Masonry reach back to Medieval times when the great cathedrals of Europe were built. The stonemasons who created these awe-inspiring Gothic structures formed craft guilds to protect the secrets of their trade and to pass on their knowledge to worthy apprentices.

In 17th century England, these guilds began accepting honorary members, men of learning and position. These new members were not working stonemasons or even associated with the building trades.

As "accepted Masons," they eventually grew into a separate organization called Freemasonry, a moral and ethical society that taught the 18th century ideals of equality and the importance of education in freeing mankind from prejudice, superstition and social injustice.

Masonry Today

Masons continue to use the simple tools of the ancient stonemasons -- the square and compasses, the trowel, plumb and level -- as symbols to teach their ideals. A Mason is oath-bound to build his life and character with the same care and precision that stonemasons used to construct the cathedrals and temples centuries ago.

Today, there are about three million Masons in the world, with the United States claiming about 1.6 million of the total membership. A survey that was conducted by the Masonic Service Association puts the charitable aspect of Freemasonry into perspective. That survey shows that American Masonic philanthropy is approximately \$2.0 million per day.

Masonic Concern for Others

Freemasonry has an outstanding record for helping others. Along with scholarships and loan funds to assist young people in furthering their education, Masons support many community-based charitable projects. Retirement homes and hospitals for the elderly provide care for those who no longer can care for themselves.

The Improvement of Life

Masons are active in their dedication to improve quality of life. Always ready to undertake a difficult task in a quiet, dignified way, today's Masons go about the job of extending the hand of brotherhood to their communities.

For the man who is looking for a deeper meaning in life and who wants to be a part of a Fraternity committed to his growth and improvement, Masonry is filled with marvelous opportunities and limitless possibilities.

Principal Tenets

The three principal tenets of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

PETITION FOR THE DEGREES OF SYMBOLIC MASONRY

(Please type or print)

To the officers and members of _____ Lodge No. _____
Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons, at _____, Iowa.

- 1. I, _____, respectfully petition your lodge for the
Masonic Degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason.
2. I have resided in Iowa continuously since _____
3. Residence address: _____
Business address: _____
Mail all lodge correspondence to my: Residence _____ Business _____
Telephone: Residence _____ Business _____ E-mail _____
4. U.S. Citizen? _____ If not, of what nation? _____
5. Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____
6. Do you profess faith in a Supreme Being? _____
7. Have you previously applied for membership in a Masonic lodge? _____ If yes, please answer question 8.
8. I applied for membership in _____ Lodge located at
_____ (City), _____ (State) on _____ (Month, Year) and was rejected.
9. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? _____ If so, when and on what charge? _____
10. Current occupation and employer: _____
11. Wife's name: _____ Names and ages of minor children and dependents: _____
12. Recognizing the fact that Freemasonry is not an insurance or benefit organization, please indicate any physical disabili-
ties you have: _____
13. References (need not be members of the Masonic Fraternity)
Name/Address: _____
Name/Address: _____
Name/Address: _____
14. Fee enclose: \$ _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

The undersigned members of the above-named lodge recommend the applicant as a proper candidate for the mysteries of Masonry.

Name/Address: _____
Name/Address: _____

INSTRUCTIONS OF INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

(By the Masonic Code of Iowa -- 2000, Chap. 25, Sec. 3, Laws for Subordinate Lodges, this report cannot be placed
on record, and accordingly it must be detached and destroyed immediately after ballot is taken on the petition.)

- 1. Be thorough. The best interests of the Masonic Fraternity demand it.
2. All applicable questions must be answered by the petitioner.
3. Determine the petitioner's eligibility as to age, residence, and physical
qualifications.
4. Satisfy yourself that the petitioner is qualified, mentally and morally, to
become a Mason.
5. By specific inquiry determine the petitioner's character standing.
6. Will the petitioner's membership in other organizations limit his Ma-
sonic activities?

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

We certify that we have carefully investigated the qualifications of the peti-
tioner and recommend

Signatures of Committee:

Election _____
No Election _____
Election _____
No Election _____
Election _____
No Election _____

No. _____

-- Petition of --

For the Degrees of Masonry

Filed _____, 20 ____

Fee enclosed \$ _____

Committee Appointed

_____, 20 ____

and _____

Under Chap. 25, Sec. 3, Laws for Subordinate Lodges, of the Code the report of the Committee must not be made a matter of record, and should not be entered on either the petition or the minutes. The minutes should show that report was made, but not its nature.