

History Of Masonic Lodge 389 F&AM

A group of Master Masons residing in the Ironwood area in 1887 began to talk about forming a local lodge. They were members of lodges in Ontonagon, Negaunee, Ashland, lower Michigan, southern Wisconsin and other states

Kingpin for this effort was GEORGE BREWER, mining captain at the Aurora Mine. He had been Warden in the Negaunee lodge - in Masonry, wardens are the number 2 and 3 officers of the lodge.

Others involved included WILLIAM WHITESIDES, a member of the Ashland lodge who operated a photographic studio in Ironwood; J S BINGHAM, partner in Bingham's and Perrin's general store IN Ironwood, GEORGE C FOSTER, superintendent of the Montreal River Lumber Co; ROBERT McRAE of The Mcrae Dray Line; DOCTOR JOHN R MOORE; SYLVESTER J LYNDE, conductor On the ML&W Rail Line; WILLIAM N KNIGHT, mining captain at the Norrie Mine; GEORGE H WHELDEN, partner in Whelden and Cline, furniture dealers; And these whose occupation are not known; JOSEPH J CREMENS and SIMON GORMAN.

Organizing a lodge involved talking with Ontonagon Lodge, which was the Oldest lodge in this area, and the lodges at Rockland and Houghton, the Three closest Michigan lodges. Those lodges concurred, and a request was sent to the Grand Master of Michigan Masons, RUFUS C HATHAWAY.

Grand Master Hathway visited Ironwood to determine the qualifications of those desiring to start a lodge and to see if the area could support one. He was favorably impressed and granted dispensation to organize the lodge on August 17, 1887, appointing George Brewer as Worshipful Master, William Whitesides as Senior Warden, and Joseph Cremens as Junior Warden.

Record keepers in those days were no better than those of today, so we don't know for sure where the lodge met while under dispensation. One speculation is that it was in one of the buildings on the east end of Ayer Street, perhaps adjacent to the Marvin Marks law offices of today (1997). This area was saved in the disastrous fire of 1887, which nearly wiped out Ironwood.

The first meeting of the Ironwood lodge was held August 18, 1887. In the ensuing four and a half months the lodge initiated 12 men, passed 5 to the Fellowcraft degree, and raised 5 to the Master Mason degree.

This work favorably impressed the Grand Lodge. On January 25, 1888, that body, meeting in East Saginaw, issued a charter for the Ironwood Lodge. One story of the timing is that the Grand Lodge officers made a swing through the area and issued numbers in the order of their itinerary - so Iron Mountain became Lodge 388, Ironwood 389, and Bessemer 390.

On February 9, 1888, the newly chartered lodge held its first meeting in its new quarters on the second floor of a new brick building erected by Dr. J A McLeod at the southeast corner of the Suffolk and Aurora Streets intersection. Older residence will remember that as the site of the Woolworth Store; later Coast to Coast and now rebuilt as the main First of America bank.

At that meeting the members elected their officers for the ensuing year, choosing the same officers appointed by the Grand Master: George Brewer as Master, William Whitesides as Senior Warden, and Josph J Cremens as Junior Warden.

On February 15, 1888, members of the Grand Lodge visited Ironwood to dedicate the new lodge and install its officers. This event drew Masons from the entire area, many of whom took an active part in the activities. These were the charter members:

E L Bailey	W H Knight
J W Bingham	S J Lynde
George Brewer	Robert McRae

Joseph J Cremens	J R Moore
G H Durkee	Fred M Prescott
George C Foster	George Whelden
Simon Gorman	William Whitesides
A E Hoxie	W L Winslow

The lodge prospered from the start. As the area was attracting new residence for many years, men turned to fraternal groups for help in getting settled and to meet people with similar views.

On July 7, 1896, the lodge assisted Past Master W R Phillips, of Menominee, in laying the cornerstone of the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration.

On November 29, 1901, the lodge moved across the street to the Nelson Block (currently occupied by Elle Stevens Jewelry). The move required a new dedication, which was conducted by Deputy Grand Master W B Mcgee of Crystal Falls.

On October 17, 1905, the lodge took part in the laying of the cornerstone of the First Presbyterian Church, an event that brought Grand Master John Rowson to the area. He was assisted by Masons from the local and surrounding areas.

The lots on which the temple now stands were purchased by the lodge in 1911. The members wanted to erected a building, but World War I interfered and plans were tabled. The recession following the war didn't help the project at all.

In the spring of 1921 the members of the Masonic Lodge and their Brethren in Gogebic Commandery 46, Knights Templar, decided the time had come to do something. Each organization selected five men to serve on a Temple association:

LODGE	COMMANDERY
Charles M Humphrey (vice President)	John Gribble
Edwin A Manthey	Ed Neidhold
Oscar E Olson (Secretary)	Magnus Oldson
Henry Rowe (Treasurer)	G H Rupp
B W Shove (President)	W F Truettner

The association was organized with capital stock of 1,000 shares at a value of \$50 each, or \$50,000 for the project. They retained Albert Nelson as Architect and the General Construction Company to erect a Building 80 by 100 feet, made with a steel skeleton, cut stone front, brick and tile sidewalls, and concrete floors and roof. Obviously they had their eyes on the future, as this decision would permit adding floors to the building if that become desirable or necessary. Equally obviously, these plans carried a higher price tag than the amount raised.

Ground was broken in August of 1921, A picture of the group present for the occasion is on the wall in our lounge, taken by Oscar Olson. If you look closely, you will see he is standing on both ends of the line - quite a feat until you learn he had one of the special cameras of the day that could be set to move on a horizontal plane, He set the timing mechanism; moved to the end of the line; and when the camera moved past him there, he ran around behind the camera and got on the other end of the line

Things didn't go smoothly. The Schneider Building to the east and the Steppa Building to the west were old frame structures on post foundations. Hard rock was encountered in the excavating for the basement, and it became necessary to shore up

both of those buildings to keep them from falling into the hole. Blasting of the rock had to be carried out with extreme care.

The cornerstone was laid on November 12, 1921 - 275 Masons were present for the occasion, including three officers of the Grand Lodge: Grand Master Robert F Anderson, Junior Grand Warden Benjamin Henderson (acting as Deputy Grand Master), and Grand Secretary Lou B Winsor (acting as Senior Grand Warden).

Placed in the cornerstone were:

Bylaws of the lodge and Aurora Chapter 48, Order of the Eastern Star.

A list of the charter members of the lodge

Rosters of officers and members of the lodge, Eastern Star, and Commandery.

A list of Past Commanders of the Commandery.

Photographs of George Brewer, first Worshipful Master, and Mrs. Brewer, first Worthy Matron of the Star.

Copies of the Ironwood Times and Ironwood Daily Globe

A Star membership badge

A square, a level, and a plumb.

The building was planned to house the lodge and appendant bodies on the second third floors, and to provide rental space for commercial businesses on the ground floor. The eastern part of the ground floor was designed for the J C Penny Company, and the western portion for Mrs Frank E Reed and Son as a restaurant. Except for the restaurant Portion, the building was ready for occupancy by July 1, 1922.

The temple was dedicated on June 29, 1923, with Grand Master Charles W Durand, Grand Chaplain William H Gallagher, and Grand Marshal F Homer Newton making the trip. They were assisted by other Masons from the area.

The address following the ceremony was delivered by Past Grand Master Louis H Fead. At the banquet that evening to celebrate the occasion, the Honorable G A Lemeroux of Ashland, Past Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Wisconsin, gave the address.

Meetings of the various Masonic groups were held on the second floor. The third floor, initially housed a card room in one of the large rooms at the front, and a billiards/pool room in the other. The former has since been partitioned into offices, which were used by the Forestry Department for many years. The back part of the third floor was one large room used by the Knights Templar for their marching drill. It, too has been partitioned into smaller rooms over the years and currently is the location of a pool and billiards table.

During World War II, civil defense officials recognized the strength of the building and declared it one of the safe areas that were designated in the community. At that time we had an active DeMolay chapter, and the Masons and Stars sponsored many events for the youth, including graduation night dances.

The temple served as a social center for members and friends for many years. Until recently there were two rows of seats on both sides of the lodge room; similar seats are in the balcony now. There were occasions when all that seating was required. The dining room was filled to capacity on many occasions, with tables end to end for almost the entire room, and in three of four rows.

By the end of World War II, four organizations met in the temple: The Masons, Star, Commandery and DeMolay.

Shortly after the war a Bethel of Job's Daughters was started. Time took its toll, as well as changes in priorities and attitudes. First the DeMolay chapter was closed; then Job's Daughters; the Knights Templar were merged with Iron Mountain; and the Eastern Star turned in its charter and inactive Member joined neighboring chapters. Currently only the lodge meets in the temple.

On the ground floor, the Reed restaurant ceased operations and the penny store was expanded to include the entire first floor and basement. In 1962, the Penny store moved to the northeast corner of Lowell and Aurora Streets, and Sears moved into the temple building.. In turn, Sears moved out, to be replaced by Wolverine Discount for a short time.

In 1958 the Hurley Lodge and Star met in this temple for several months until they could find suitable quarters.

This made for a very active temple.

In 1960, members of the Masonic groups financed the purchased of 120 new flags, one for each school classroom in the Ironwood school system. Masons have been strong supporters of efficient public schools since the start of our republic.

In 1981, when there were no businesses on the ground floor, city planners wanted to do big things for downtown Ironwood. Plans were devised to create a mini-mall of the building, which would have included an atrium for the ground floor to the roof, and have various shops and stores on the floors around it. One of our big problems was that the steel plans for the building were lost, and major modifications of that nature would be difficult without them.

Fate stepped in when Bentley Furniture Store, located in the former McKeivitt-Kershner-Patrick Building on Suffolk Street, burned. They needed a lot of space in a hurry; ours was the best facility available. Subsequently, because of the steady decline in membership, we sold the building to the Bentleys, reserving the top two floors for our use.

None of us today, naturally, has been active in the lodge from its inception; and few have much personal recollection of the early years of the temple. As with any dedicated group, we had a number of individuals who took personal pride in the building and kept an eye on things. One that readily comes to mind is Oscar Olson, mentioned earlier - he was a man who kept tabs on a lot of things in town, and all our residence are indebted to him, not just the Masons.

The Operation of the temple association was a family affair of, first, Charles M Humphrey, and then his son, Charles M Humphrey, Jr. Both of those gentlemen steered the group through some difficult times.

Others - and this cannot be a complete list - who gave of their time and talents were John Lofberg, Sigurd Holemo, Earl Roen, Wn George Phillips, Frank Trethewey, Chester Waters, John Best, Leonard Pete Larson, Bill Skinnard, Harry Allen, Al Stevens.

Those who worked to keep the organization going included Pearl Abraham, Tom and Bette Mitchell, Ken and Carol Olson, Robert Pollari, Stanley and Opal Kowalski, Swen Ekstrom, Robert Kleimola, "Sarge" Harold Butcher, Beatrice Holemo, Ray Snow, John and Betty Wernham, John Chadderdon, Clarence Holt.

Members of our Masonic family have also contributed to other community groups - city commission (at least 7 mayors), planning commission, school board, church boards, chamber of commerce, and service clubs.