

HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY IN SPRINGFIELD

The first lodge of Freemasons to be established west of the Alleghenies was American Union Lodge No. 1, located at Marietta, which was then in the Northwest Territory. It was formed in the year 1790, under a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Connecticut, thirteen years before Ohio statehood. This lodge was a military, or “traveling” lodge which came to the area with the Ohio Company.

Other lodges soon followed, and by 1808 there were six Lodges within the State of Ohio. On January 4, 1808, representatives from these lodges met at Chillicothe for the purpose of forming a Grand Lodge for Ohio, which was formally organized one year later, with Gen. Rufus Putnam, a member of American Union Lodge No. 1, being elected the first Grand Master.

One of the early lodges chartered by the new Grand Lodge of Ohio was Harmony Lodge No. 8, which held its meetings alternately at the villages of Dayton, Springfield and Urbana.

The earliest preserved records of the lodge are of a communication held in the court house in Dayton on September 1, 1809. This record indicated that there had been two meetings held previous to that date.

On the 18th of the same month, a communication was held in Springfield at the residence of Samuel Simonton. Bro. Simonton’s residence was the first frame house built in the town.

As this was a period prior to such conveniences as railroads, or even stage coaches, it was quite a labor for the Master of the lodge, who was a resident of Urbana, to travel from place to place to hold meetings. Consequently, at a communication held in Springfield on December 9, 1809, a resolution was adopted that Harmony Lodge be divided, and the charter was accordingly surrendered.

At the Grand Lodge session of January 5, 1810, a charter was granted to a lodge bearing the same name to meet alternately at Urbana and Springfield. This lodge met for the next five years as such, when the brethren again petitioned for separation. Their petition was granted and a lodge was established at each place. Harmony Lodge No. 8 remained in Urbana where it is still active to this day.

In January 1825, the Grand Lodge resolved that a dispensation be granted to “Brother Charles Anthony and his associates” to hold a lodge at Springfield under the name of Morning Star Lodge No. 27. A charter was granted at the Grand Session on January 10, 1826, but the number was changed to “80.” This lodge operated until 1829, when it, and many other lodges in Ohio, went into darkness due to the Morgan Affair.

Although the lodge had ceased, it was represented in Grand Lodge the following year and also in 1831. Brother Charles Anthony again represented the lodge in January 1832, when he was elected Grand Master of Ohio, serving until January 2, 1833.

For nearly nineteen years, there was no apparent Masonic activity in Springfield, but on November 8, 1847, a dispensation was granted to Clark Lodge, followed by a charter on September 22, 1848, and it was given the number of 101. Charles Anthony, a Past Master of Morning Star Lodge and Past Grand Master of Ohio was appointed as its first Master. The lodge was named after General George Rogers Clark, who led the forces who defeated the Indians during the Revolutionary War at the Battle of Piqua in 1782 west of Springfield.

The lodge met in the third floor of a building known as Trapper's Corner, which was located on the southwest corner of Main and Market (now Fountain Avenue) Streets. This hall was occupied until about October 1, 1851, when the lodge moved into the Union Hall block in conjunction with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The lodge met continuously at this site for the next thirty years.

In 1871, a new lodge was organized in the city by eighteen brethren, bearing the name of Anthony Lodge No. 455, it being named in honor of Past Grand Master Charles Anthony. Seventeen of these brethren were from lodges outside of Springfield, and one was from Clark Lodge. Its first master was George W. Burt. In 1910, the lodge was honored by having one of its members elected Grand Master of Masons in Ohio. Bro. Harry S. Kissell thus became the second man from Springfield to serve in this high office. Later, in 1927, another member of this lodge, Dr. Charles L. Minor, would rise through the ranks and attain this high office.

On November 22, 1881, the various Masonic bodies, having found that the present building was too small for their requirements, agreed to lease the fourth and fifth floors of the Johnson Building, which was being built on the south side of Main street and between Market and Center. Dedication ceremonies were held on May 24, 1883 by the Grand Lodge of Ohio.

In October 1892, the Grand Lodge of Ohio held a corner-stone laying ceremony just west of Springfield for the new Ohio Masonic Home, which was established by the brethren in the State for use by all Master Masons, their wives, widows and orphans. This Home was, for many years, completely funded by the Masons of Ohio.

The first Superintendent of the Home was Bro. John W. Parsons, a past master of Clark Lodge in Springfield.

One of the most enthusiastic supporters of this beautiful Home was Asa Bushnell who, at that time, was not a member of the Fraternity. He contributed much time and financial support to the project and helped to raise funds to see it to fruition. The building was dedicated on October 25, 1895. It has continued to grow throughout the years and has expanded its operations throughout the State and now covers a total of 3 campuses. The Home has, in the past several years, become certified for Medicare and Medicaid and is now open to a wider range of the general public.

On October 18, 1892, M.W.B. Levi C. Goodale, the Grand Master of Masons in Ohio, made Mr. Bushnell a Mason-at-sight, an honor which has been granted to very few. Mr. Bushnell became an honorary member of both Clark and Anthony Lodges.

On February 28, 1893, at a mass meeting of the brethren in this city, a proposition was accepted from Bro. Bushnell to move their quarters to the fifth floor of a building which he was erecting on the north side of East Main Street, between Fountain Avenue and Limestone Street. On November 1, 1894, the new hall was dedicated by the Grand Lodge of Ohio.

At a stated meeting of Clark Lodge on October 9, 1900, the Worshipful Master, Robert N. Lantz, requested that committees from the other Masonic bodies be appointed to meet with a like committee from Clark Lodge to consider the advisability of initiating plans for a new Temple. Consequently, in 1912, the present site, known as the "Vose" property, was purchased by the Board of Trustees at a cost of \$13,000.

On November 26, 1912, a conference was held in the Bushnell Building quarters to consider the advisability of having another lodge in Springfield. Invitations had been

sent to forty Past Masters and the present Master of Clark and Anthony Lodges, and in response thereto, thirty-six of them attended the meeting. After friendly discussion it was unanimously decided to organize a new lodge. At a subsequent meeting, formal action was taken and a committee appointed to make all necessary arrangements.

One hundred and seven Master Masons signed the request for a dispensation, of which eight were Past Masters. The dispensation was granted on March 6, 1913, and James S. Webb was installed as the first Worshipful Master. The charter was granted on October 23, 1913 and St. Andrew's Lodge No. 619 was constituted on October 30, 1913.

In the early part of 1921, Masonry again experienced growing pains, and a fourth lodge was established in the city. It was named for Past Grand Master Harry S. Kissell. This lodge opened under dispensation on April 27th with Mont C. Hambright being appointed as its first master. A charter was granted on October 21, 1921, assigning the number "674" to this lodge.

On October 29, 1924 the corner stone of the new Springfield Masonic Temple was laid under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. On January 26, 1927 the new 5-story Masonic Temple was dedicated by the Grand Lodge of Ohio, and it continues to serve the brethren of this city today. The architect who drew up the plans for the present building was Howard Dwight Smith, who designed Ohio Stadium in 1919-1920. The cost of the new Temple was \$750,000.

It was erected on the south side of West High Street on a lot, 124 feet front by 150 feet deep, owned by the Springfield Masonic Temple Company. Ninety-five feet of the frontage is occupied by the building, which is 136 feet deep and 85 feet high.

The temple is of steel skeleton construction, established on solid rock and made fireproof with concrete floors and tile partitions. The base is of granite. The front, of Bedford stone, returns on both sides to a distance of 34 feet, where the gray brick begins. An arrangement of high ceilings and mezzanines gives the temple the efficiency of a seven-story building. Two elevators serve all floors.

On the ground floor is the old Eastern Star Room, where Caldron, Grotto, DeMolay and Job's Daughters hold their meetings. The Temple Club is also located on the ground floor. This includes television and game area, a lunch counter and a 4-lane bowling alley.

The lobby and ballroom are located on the first floor. The style of architectural treatment is Pompeian in both areas. Also located off of the main lobby is the office of the Executive Director.

The second floor mezzanine contains the library, board of directors meeting room, dressing rooms and several lodge offices.

The third floor is divided into two lodge rooms and an Eastern Star room, each with ante-rooms. They are used by all four Symbolic Lodges, three York Rite bodies, Tall Cedars of Lebanon and two chapters of Eastern Star. The museum is also located on the third floor. The fourth floor is the Commandery locker room and a room used for makeup for degree work by the various bodies. The fifth floor auditorium is used by the Commandery, and for large Masonic gatherings, such as annual inspections. At the south end of the room is a fully-equipped stage.

At the Grand Communication held October 16, 1930, Clark Lodge was again honored to have one of their brethren, Harry G. Gram, elected to serve as Grand Master

for the year 1931. MWB Gram was the fourth person so honored from the Springfield lodges, and has been the last from this city to serve in this position to the present day.

All of these four lodges are still in operation today, and continue to serve the community in many ways.

Other Masonic-affiliated organizations that meet in the Temple include Springfield Chapter No. 48, Royal Arch Masons, chartered on October 21, 1852, Shawnee Chapter No. 237, Royal Arch Masons, chartered on May 26, 1952, Springfield Council Royal and Select Masons, chartered on October 22, 1852 and Palestine Commandery No. 33, Knights Templar, chartered August 28, 1878.

Various other organizations use the Temple facilities, including two chapters of the Order of Eastern Star, Home City No. 258 and Norris No. 426, Three Rivers Forest No. 174, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Bethel No. 10, Order of Job's Daughters and Frank W. Kiefer Chapter, Order of DeMolay.

Contents of the Corner-Stone of the present Masonic Temple

Holy Bible

1924 Masonic Directory

Copy of Dedication Program

Copy of the Daily News

Copy of the Morning Sun

Copy of corner stone issue of "Masonic News."

Plans and specifications of the building

First National Bank Note signed by Bro. Harlan G. West

Photographs of site showing progress of building

Photographs of completed building

Photographs of old buildings which previously occupied site

Copy of National Mason Monthly

Program of Clark Lodge 100th Anniversary

Program of Anthony Lodge 50th Anniversary

Brief history of St. Andrew's Lodge

Brief history of H. S. Kissell Lodge

Springfield bank clearings

Chapter penny

City guide

List of county and city officials

List of Grand Lodge Officers

List of Chamber of Commerce officers

Board of Masonic Temple Trustees

Masonic Temple Building Committee

1924 Masonic Home annual report

Photo of W. W. Bean, resident of OMH, aged 100 years

Grand Lodge address by Harry S. Kissell, 1911

Stock Certificate, 25 shares, Masonic Temple Stock, donated by Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Haeseler

Bibliography

Various Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio

“The National Mason Monthly, October, 1924”

“History of Clark Lodge No. 101, F. & A.M.”

“History of Anthony Lodge No. 455, F. & A.M.”

“History of St. Andrew’s Lodge No. 619, F. & A.M.”

“History of H. S. Kissell Lodge No. 674, F. & A.M.”

Clark County Genealogical Society – 5/08/04

Millennium Council #382, AMD – 01/31/07