

# WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

## The Masonic Commitment To Character

Many years ago, the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer wrote these magnificent words:

*"It is not enough merely to exist . . . Every man has to seek in his own way to make his own self more noble and to realize his own true worth."*

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.

In a day when it seems that few people really care about rising to the highest and best in life, it is good to know that there is a group where a man can really improve himself.

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.

Masons 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 oathbound 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 almost five million Masons in the world, with the United States claiming about three million of the total membership.

## 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

Yes, Masons are members of a fraternity that has its secrets, but the many character-building activities of Freemasonry indicate that it is far from a secret organization. Masons are active in their dedication to improve 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.

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

READ THIS PETITION BEFORE YOU SIGN IT.

## PETITION FOR DEGREES



**FEEES FOR DEGREES \$160.00**  
 \$75.00 to accompany the petition  
 \$45.00 for E. A. Degree  
 \$20.00 for F. C. Degree  
 \$20.00 for M. M. Degree

Received.....  
 Elected.....  
 Rejected.....

To the Worshipful Master, Wardens and Brethren of

*Henry L. Palmer Lodge, No. 301*

**Free and Accepted Masons**  
 4315 N. 92nd Street, Milwaukee, Wis. 53222

*I, the undersigned* respectfully state, that, unbiased by friends, and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, I freely and voluntarily offer myself as a candidate for the mysteries of Masonry; that I am prompted to solicit this privilege by a favorable opinion conceived of the institution, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish of being serviceable to my fellow creatures, and should this petition be granted, I will cheerfully conform to all the ancient established usages and customs of the Fraternity.

I was born in..... Date..... Age.....  
City State Month, day and year

I reside in.....  
City State

My legal residence for the past five years has been.....  
(Residential requirements: Legal residence in Wisconsin, one year in Milwaukee County.)

My residence address is..... Zone..... Phone No.....

My occupation is.....

I am at present employed by.....

My business address is..... Zone..... Phone No.....

I have presented my petition to another Masonic Lodge.....  
 I have not.....

(If you have presented your petition to another Masonic lodge, give full details)

Dated..... A. D. 19.....

(Sign full name here)

We are personally acquainted with the above named petitioner, and from our confidence in his integrity do cheerfully recommend him as a proper candidate for the mysteries of Masonry.

Name Address  
 Name Address

(This petition must be signed by two members of Henry L. Palmer Lodge)

Referred to the following Committee:—  
 Name Address Report

## RECOMMENDATION OF COMMITTEE

The undersigned Committee, to whom was referred the above petition, after due consideration, report the same back to the Lodge and recommend that the prayer of the petitioner be \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE

**DEGREES CONFERRED**

E.A. \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 Examined \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 F.C. \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 Examined \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 M.M. \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 Examined \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

Objection Filed \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 Rejected \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_  
 Elected \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

Bro. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bro. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bro. \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE

Received and  
 Referred \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

Of \_\_\_\_\_

PETITION

# Freemasonry in Wisconsin

**B**Y PETITIONING for membership in a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons at this time, you will be associating with a Wisconsin fraternal order that was organized in 1843 and in operation several years before our State was admitted to 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 fraternity in Wisconsin, but in the world.

The history of Masonry in Wisconsin begins with Menomonie Lodge in the Green Bay area, which at that time was the territory of Michigan. Although this lodge never became part of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin, it is part of the Masonic history of our State. Seven members of the military and three civilians, all Master Masons, met on December 27, 1823, to form a lodge. A petition was sent to New York and on September 2, 1824, the first regular meeting was opened at Fort Howard. A charter was granted dated December 3, 1824, as Menomonie Lodge No. 374 on the rolls of the Grand Lodge of New York. Records of the Lodge were kept until 1827, and some time during 1830 the lodge ceased to exist.

According to Lodge records, a dispensation was granted, dated October 17, 1838, from the Grand Lodge of Missouri to a group of Masons to form a lodge in the Mineral Point area. A charter was granted on October 31, 1841, but the lodge was not fully organized until February 15, 1843, when it was consecrated as Mineral Point Lodge No. 49.

Melody Lodge of Platteville received its dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Missouri on January 10, 1843. The charter, dated October 31, 1843, was granted to Melody Lodge No. 65. In the coming months 35 masons signed the by-laws.

On June 12, 1843, a petition was sent to Illinois to form a lodge in Milwaukee. On July 5, 1843, the lodge held its first meeting and was constituted under dispensation. A charter was granted dated October 3, 1843, with the designation as Milwaukee Lodge No. 22 (now Kilbourn Lodge). The lodge records show there were 23 charter members.

At a meeting of Milwaukee Lodge No. 22, as a result of a communication received from Melody Lodge at Platteville concerning establishing a Grand Lodge in the Territory of Wisconsin, a committee was appointed to correspond with Melody and Mineral Point Lodges. A Masonic Convention with seven members representing the three lodges was held on December 18, 1843, in Madison. During the course of the meetings a constitution was drafted and adopted and the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Wisconsin came into being on Monday, December 18, 1843. M. W. Benjamin T. Kavanaugh was elected the First Grand Master.

The first called Communication of the Grand Lodge was held in the city of Madison on January 17, 1844, for the purpose of granting charters to the subordinate lodges within the Territory. The three present lodges were now numbered according to the date of their dispensation or charter. Thus Mineral Point No. 49 was numbered No. 1. Melody Lodge No. 45 of Platteville became Melody Lodge No. 2 and Milwaukee Lodge No. 22 became No. 3. During the first year of the Grand Lodge, three new lodges were organized under dispensation: Warren Lodge No. 4, Potosi: Madison Lodge No. 5 and Olive Branch No. 6. New Diggings.