



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Focus on: Champaign's Masonic Temple

Freemasonry is one of the oldest secular fraternal societies in the world. In order to qualify for admission and membership to this order, one must believe in a Supreme Being. A man of any race or religion that satisfies this requirement and is of good distinction can join.

Freemasonry is neither a religion nor a substitute for it. Men that join are expected to continue to follow their faith. Three principles guide the Masonic order. First is brotherly love, that every mason will tolerate and respect the opinions of others. Next is relief; charity is a large part of all Masonic orders. Masons are to care for their community both by generous giving and through volunteer efforts. The third principle that guides Masonic orders is truth. All masons strive for this, requiring high moral standards and attempting to achieve them through-out their lives.

Masonic orders demand that its members respect the laws of their country. Membership principles do not conflict with members' duties as citizens. In reality, they should make members stronger by pushing them to execute their personal as well as public responsibilities in a more thorough manner. The use of the Masonic society to promote professional, religious, or personal interests is forbidden. Politics and religion are expressly forbidden from being discussed at meetings.

Freemasonry had spread from England to the United States by the mid-1700s. After an Antimasonic movement in the early 1800s, the movement saw extreme growth in membership. By the 1900s it was estimated that 30-40% of all men in the United States belonged to one of the 70,000 lodges. This was mainly a middle class Protestant movement since only the best paid manual laborers could afford the dues and Catholics were threatened with excommunication if they joined. By 1914, the country's 57 largest orders had



Jefferson Building, 202-204 West Hill Street, was built between 1912-1914 for \$90,264. It served as the Masonic Temple until 1970; it now houses offices. 1984 photograph by PACA.

a membership of over 15 million men, with some participating in more than one order. By the mid-1920s, the pinnacle of the Masonic movement, estimates say that about one-half of the country's male population belonged to one of the 800 Masonic orders.

The Great Depression had a huge impact on the Masonic movement. Members were unable to pay dues, hundreds of orders ceased to exist, and many lodges went bankrupt. The decline continued after World War II with only a few exceptions, leaving the movement only a shadow of its former self.

Masonry has attracted many influential people from United States history, including fourteen U.S. presidents: Washington, Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, Garfield, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, and Ford. Many governors and senators have also belonged to the Masons.

History of Western Star Lodge No. 240 Ancient Free and Accepted Masons

A petition for a Masonic Lodge located in West Urbana, later named Champaign, was filed on March 27, 1857. In April of the same year the petition was approved, granting West Urbana its local Masonic Order. On May 11, 1857, the first meeting was held at Whitney Hall, thus becoming the first home of the local Masons. This building was located on the southwest corner of Main and Market streets.

Western Star Lodge No. 240 A.F. & A.M. was granted its charter on October 7, 1857. This charter was granted to Alfred M. Whitney, John Dallenbach, A.P. Hensley, M.L. Dunlap, W.B. Fowler, H.C. Whitney, and N.C. Beasley. These were most likely the same men that submitted the original petition as the custom of the time was to not add new names to the charter. Alfred M. Whitney became the first Master of the lodge and meetings were held in his building until 1865.

Meetings for this lodge are held on the second and fourth Mondays of each

month. This practice has been in effect since 1867. In 1868, fire entirely destroyed Whitney Hall and the rest of the block. This fire caused the loss of all early records.

The lodge took its first steps toward creating a magnificent temple on September 27, 1909. A committee, appointed to investigate a site for the creation of such a temple, consisted of H.W. Berks, J.N. Beers, C.H. Baddeley, B.F. Harris, J.W. Davidson, H. Roberts, Isaac Kuhn, J.J. Dallenbach, and D.P. McIntyre. On April 25, 1910, the lodge purchased the Kuhn corner, 202-204 West Hill Street. This site was chosen due to its proximity to the business district and was located near what was believed to be the center of the local population.

The Western Star Lodge No. 240 A.F. & A.M., Champaign Chapter No. 50 Royal Arch Masons, and Champaign Commandery No. 68, Knights Templar, each took a third interest in the building and agreed to share the building equally. This followed normal Masonic practice. Rather than adapt existing structures, lodges built their own temples. In urban areas, lodges and other Masonic bodies combined their efforts into one large building. These buildings stood as symbols to the "wealth and permanency of Masonry." The Champaign lodge follows this course.

On January 22, 1912, the general contract for the Masonic Temple was given to A.W. Stoolman, a member of the lodge. Ground was broken on April 23 by the oldest member of the lodge, Dr. H.C. Howard, and the cornerstone was laid by Grand Master D.D. Darrah, on September 4 of the same year.

The total outlay for the building was \$115,841.15: \$15,800 for the site and approximately \$100,000 for the building, including furniture. The Temple was dedicated on January 8, 1914 by Grand Master Henry T. Burnap and the first meeting was held immediately following the ceremony.

Due to the Great Depression, membership dropped rapidly between 1932 and 1938. Many members were unable to pay their dues and only 32 new members were raised during this period. The most prosperous year for the lodge was 1946-7 when 23 regular meetings were held, 58 special meetings, and 192 mason degrees were handed out.

The Masonic Temple was later sold by the lodge to the Thomas Jefferson Life Insurance Company. This sale was completed on February 28, 1966. On November 28, 1967, a committee recommended to the lodge that five acres on Windsor Road between South Neil Street and

South Prospect Avenue, 14 Bel Aire Court, be purchased for the site of a new Temple.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held May 3, 1972 and the cornerstone was laid September 3 of the same year. The building was completed and the first meeting in the new Temple was held on April 17, 1974. It is shared by Champaign Chapter No. 50, Royal Arch Masons; Vesper Chapter 128, Order of Eastern Star; Champaign Commandery No. 68, Knights Templar; Mizpah Shrine No. 11, White Shrine of Jerusalem; and Champaign Assembly No. 21, Order of the Rainbow for Girls. Again, different Masonic bodies sharing one Temple is standard practice and the growth in number of bodies shows how much Freemasonry has grown in the area.

Lodge locations:

Whitney Building, 44 Main Street (1857-1865)
Gardners Building, 5 Main Street (1866-1869)
Mather Block, 65-67 Market Street (1869-1871)
Bailey Block, 47-49 Neil Street (1872-1898)
Masonic Block, 20-22 Main Street (1899-1913)
Masonic Temple, 202-04 W. Hill Street (1914-1970)
IOOF Hall, 109 1/2 North Neil Street (1970-1974)
Masonic Temple, 14 Bel Aire Court (1974-present)

Description of Building

The Masonic Temple in Champaign was constructed between 1912 and 1913. A.W. Stoolman was hired as the general contractor with Nelson S. Spencer and Harry R. Temple doing the architectural work. The exterior of the building was designed by Charles Blakely Spencer.

The Masonic Temple is 79 feet by 109 feet, and is an excellent example of the Beaux-Arts style which was popular between 1890 and 1910. The front of the building faces south and it is here that the main entrance is located. The building is made of American running bond brick and consists of three stories on a raised ashlar stone basement.

The first floor of the Temple is made of rusticated stone which forms the base for the building. This is a common element of the Beaux-Arts style. The entrance is centered with stairs leading to a double door entry with spiral column terra cotta molding. A stone frontispiece with bracketed pediment and three freestanding

shields also are present on the first floor, another common find in this style of building. Cast iron lamps with globes provide exterior lighting from this level.

The second and third floors are made of Carthage, Missouri stone with giant order Doric fluted half-columns. End bays with brick pilasters stand on each side of set back corbelled blind windows. These windows have decorative terra cotta panels on the upper levels. Terra cotta keystones and decorative brick spandrel panels are also used on the upper levels.

Further decoration of the upper level is achieved with a fully detailed stone entablature with guttae, triglyphs, metopes, and mutule blocks. A brick parapet with a four section terra cotta blind balustrade with terra cotta rail is present on the upper level. A central cartouche adorned by the Mason's insignia is present at the roof line.

The east and west sides are detailed very similarly to the front. The rear of the building is not decorated and only a brick fire stair addition is present. The building displays excellent integrity with the windows being the only change. All of the windows were replaced with modern fixed anodized aluminum-frame tinted glass.

Originally, interior heat was provided by steam from the City power plant and electricity provided the lighting. A hierarchy of interior spaces was often used in these buildings, with the largest being the most important and, in the case of the Masonic Temple, that was the ballroom. This was the meeting room for the Masons. Also, all the corridor floors, wainscoatings, and stair treads are made of marble terrazzo.

The contractor for the Masonic Temple was A.W. Stoolman. He was responsible for at least 36 other buildings in the Champaign-Urbana area. Many of these were associated with the University of Illinois, including the Steam Laboratory, fourteen fraternity houses, the University YMCA building, and Smith Memorial Music Building. Other non-University buildings in the Champaign area include the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, the University Baptist Church, and the McKinley Memorial Presbyterian Church.

The Temple's architects, Spencer and Temple, also were responsible for many buildings in the Champaign area. Some of these buildings are very similar in style to the Masonic Temple, including the Lincoln Building, the Inman Hotel, and the Champaign High School building, currently Edison Junior High School.

Harry Roberts Temple graduated in 1900 from the University of Illinois' ar-

chitecture program. Nelson Strong Spencer also graduated from the University of Illinois, only earlier, in 1882. He taught in the Department of Architecture from 1880 to 1883. He later became Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds from 1898 to 1902. Spencer and Temple worked together for six years, between 1908 and 1914.

The Masonic Temple is an important part of Champaign's history. The Masonic movement has been present in the city since 1857 and continues to exist today. The Temple is also an excellent example of the Beaux-Arts style, with its use of terra cotta and giant columns. This building is a significant piece of history and architecture and should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This article was taken from a class assignment for UP320: Planning for Preservation and was written by Matthew J. Cushing, a senior in the Department of Urban & Regional Planning and a member of the UI football team.

Fall Tour Planned

PACA is in the midst of organizing this year's fall walking tour. *Inside Urbana* will take place Sunday, October 19, from 1-5 pm and will highlight the interiors of a number of historic downtown buildings. The Princess Theatre, Busey's Hall, and the Media Cafe have been lined up and PACA is working to open other intriguing interior spaces. As always, volunteers are needed to staff the spaces so call 328-7222 to help and receive a free tour ticket!

17th Annual Illinois Preservation Conference

Coping with Success: Illinois Preservation Comes of Age is the theme for the annual Illinois Preservation Conference to be held in Galesburg, September 18-21. This year's theme recognizes the role historic preservation plays in revitalizing neighborhoods and downtowns, attracting tourists, maintaining links with the past, protecting architecture and prehistoric sites, and enhancing the quality of life in our towns. The conference celebrates legislative victories, innovative programs, and the achievements of individuals and organizations critical to the success of the preservation movement. Conference tracks include:

- **Preservation Nuts and Bolts**
New Economic Incentives for Landmark Owners
After the Survey, What to do Next
What Happens When a Historic District Gets Too Successful?
Out of the Ordinary Tours
- **Main Street**
Partnership Development
Main Street Design Issues
- **Rural/Emerging Issues**
Historic Highways and Scenic Byways: Paths to Heritage Tourism
New Life for Old Barns
- **Preservation Commissions**
Mock Commission meeting
Strategic Planning for Preservation Commissions

For registration information contact PACA or LPCI at 312/922-1742.

Property Tax Freeze Amendment

House Bill 982, signed into law by Governor Edgar on July 14, will permit the owner-occupants of two to six unit residential buildings the same property tax freeze benefits now available to single family historic house owner occupants. The bill will provide a property tax assessment freeze of eight years to properties that undergo substantial rehabilitation. Assessments then gradually increase for four years to the new assessed value. Owner occupied, multi-family residences with up to six units that are either locally designated landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for these tax benefits. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency approves the rehabilitation projects.

The success of the Property Tax Freeze Program for historic single family houses in Illinois has been extraordinary in offering an incentive to owner occupants who substantially rehabilitate their homes. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has approved 709 projects since the original bill's inception in 1984. Property owners have invested approximately \$100 million in renovating homes all over Illinois, enhancing their value and stabilizing surrounding neighborhoods.

The Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois Legislative Committee worked very hard the past six months to get HB 982 introduced into the Illinois legislature and passed by the Governor. In addition, it was the work of local advocates, including many from Champaign-Urbana, who wrote, faxed and called legislators urging them to pass the bill and describing the

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

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benefits of this legislation in their community. The bill becomes effective January 1, 1998 and will be referred to as Public Act 90-114.

For complete information on the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program, contact the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency at 217/785-4512.

This article was taken from LPCI Member's Preservation Brief #47.

Fall Conferences

A number of historic, preservation or conservation related conferences are being held this fall in addition to the annual statewide preservation conference.

The third annual Illinois Association of Museums (IAM) fall conference will be held October 17-19 at the Holiday Inn in Collinsville. The theme is *Bytes, Bells, and Buttons: Museums in Partnership with Technology*. Contact IAM at 217/524-7080.

September 19-20 is the date of the first Illinois Trails & Greenways Conference at Jumers Chateau in Bloomington. Conference tracks are aimed at first time projects, on-the-ground projects, tourism relationships, and linear natural resources. Contact Illinois Rails-to Trails at 217/789-4782.

People and Places: Living in Cultural Landscapes is the theme for the 51st National Preservation Conference. Sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the conference will be held October 14-19 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Contact the National Trust for more information, 800/944-6847.

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Kudos to:

Nancy Delcomyn for mending the PACA street banners so they could be hung again this year in downtown Urbana.

New & Renewing Members

Mary Lee Sargent & Ann Isenberg
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Bob Hurst
Patrick Roberge & Ellen Deason

Save the Date!

**Inside Urbana
Fall Walking Tour
Sunday, October 19
1-5 PM**

Volunteers Needed

Remember to check your mailing label for your membership renewal date. The date shown indicates when you last renewed; membership runs for one year from that date.

PACA Newsletter

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