

To boast of one's success in the spirit of vanity is to cheapen that success—for it is not success, but the spirit or of material values, a form of humble gratitude? Any form of boastfulness is foolish.

Birmingham Lodge's Celebration Notes One Hundred Years of Masonry in City

By ALICE E. MORGAN

Masonry in Birmingham will highlight its Centennial year with a banquet and dance at the Community House Apr. 17.

Just as Masonry is one of the oldest crafts and organizations in the world, so is it one of the oldest groups in Birmingham.

It began here in 1849 when William Brown and an interested group of local men petitioned the Grand Lodge of Michigan for a charter. Several Masons, then members of Pontiac Lodge No. 21, signed the petition and for that reason it was refused.

It was reasoned that, should the petition be granted, these men would be members of both lodges, a practice frowned upon in the early days. The affected members promised to drop out of the Pontiac group and a dispensation or provisional charter was granted.

ON THURSDAY evening, Apr. 25, 1860, Birmingham Lodge No. 44, under dispensation, held its first meeting in what was then the Jennings building, present site of Wilson's drug store at Maple and Woodward.

William Brown was elected master; Friend Belding, senior warden and Scriba Blakelee, junior warden. R. T. Merrill, Peter Doss, George W. Merrill and Ebenezer Raynal, M. D., were the members to attend that first meeting.

William McKellop was the first man to petition the new lodge for membership, followed on July 18, 1860 by Hugh McCurdy who is described as "probably the most illustrious one of Birmingham No. 44."

When the lodge was founded the annual dues were 25 cents, with a \$10 fee covering all initiation expenses.

The charter which lifted "No. 44" from the dispensation class into that of a regularly chartered lodge was granted on June 9, 1861.

SOON AFTER receiving its charter, lodge members apparently became convinced that their meeting place might collapse for they moved from over the Jennings tailor shop to the Hunt building.

Here, on the present site of the McBride hardware, they held forth until 1872, meeting in rooms over the general store. This building was later moved to Gray court, cut in half and today is two dwelling units.

It was in that year that Capt. Allen J. Bieglow, a member of the lodge, planned the construction of a new business block at the corner of Pierce and Maple.

Lodge members agreed to pay the cost, \$1,150, for the addition of a second floor for which they received a 99 year lease.

The lodge was called to order on Dec. 23, 1873 at 4 o'clock to dedicate its new meeting place, an event highlighted by the attendance of many state notables including Hugh McCurdy, Grand Master.

SOME OF the lodge's most active and successful years were spent in this location and many of its older members were raised



NEW LODGE'S NEW MEETING PLACE From old photo in Eccentric files



PRESENT HOME OF BIRMINGHAM MASON'S Property acquired by Lodge in 1918

there including Charles J. Shain, whose drug store now occupies the ground floor quarters.

A Masonic Temple association was formed in 1918 which resulted in the purchase of the present home at the corner of Forest and Woodward.

This property has, in past years, played a different role in the life of Birmingham than the one it now has.

It was built in 1878 by Frank Ford, Birmingham contractor. It was constructed with red brick made by Edwin Starr of Royal Oak and said by William Robinson of Birmingham, whose wages were \$1 per day. The 18 room house was not completed until 1879 when Mr. Ford and his family moved in.

They occupied the premises until 1893, when J. Bert Peabody and his family purchased the building which was their residence until 1912. After its sale then it passed through a number of hands until, acquired by Birmingham Lodge No. 44.

THROUGH THE years the lodge has played its part in the general affairs of the community. Many of its members have gone from their home community into others, affiliating themselves with other lodges. "No. 44" has, by the same token, received into its family many who were raised in other lodges.

Some from among its members have gone on to become widely known in Masonry and in their chosen fields of work.

The lodge itself reveals in its old records, interesting sidelights on the growth and advancement of the village and city. An item in 1857 showed a payment of \$9.41 for 24 pounds of candles but in 1865 progress entered the picture and the bill was for five oil lamps and the bill was for five oil lamps.

In 1859 the members passed a resolution "That ten dollars had money now on hand be destroyed forever and forever."

THEY REACHED forth helping hands, both to their own members and those of other lodges. In 1877 a bill of 76 cents was paid for "an indigent brother" while in 1888 they contributed \$10 to the relief fund raised at the time of the Galveston, Tex., flood.

Another interesting bit of information comes from the period spent in the Hunt building. The building was not, as modern ones are, soundproof. Customers in the first floor store could hear the ritualistic work.

The lodge hired James B. Hunt

to practice his snare drum in the store on meeting nights, drowning out the voices from above.

Mr. Hunt later became a member of the lodge, motivated perhaps by an inner longing to find out what his drumming had kept him from hearing as a young boy.

Members of the lodge became so proficient in their ritualistic work that they were invited to confer work in other lodges in their home state and in Ohio.

It is this background which gives the present Birmingham Masons the urge and drive to plan their centennial celebration which,

in addition to the banquet and dance, will be marked by special lodge events throughout the year.

Registration Open For Community House Class in Gardening

Gardening classes at the Community House will begin on Tuesday, Apr. 17. The classes will run for five weeks, from 8 to 10 p.m.

Mrs. William H. Burlingame again has charge of the group, and will give instruction in spring gardening, proper selection of seeds and bulbs and other technical information for the home gardener.

Registration for the course may be made in person at the Community House.

Plat Approved

City commissioners have approved the platting of the Grayfield terrace development. A \$40 fee will be required by the city to defray filing, and recording expenses.

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Five Troy Twp. Employees Quit After GOP Win

Municipal business in Troy township was slowed down last week after the resignation of five staff employees.

The resignations were submitted at the township board meeting, Wednesday April 4, with the explanation that the change in political affiliation of the township officials after the spring election was the reason.

ALL FIVE EMPLOYEES had been hired during the administration of former Democratic Supervisor Charles E. Ryan. A Republican supervisor, clerk and treasurer were elected at the April 2 election.

Those resigning were Clinton B. Mullins, township hall caretaker and defeated constable; Edward Cornish, building inspector; William Acton, assistant water department superintendent; William Welsh, township attorney; and Mary Warcheck, water department clerk.

Only employees staying on the job are William Renshaw, water department maintenance man and Elizabeth Miller, deputy clerk. Newly elected Supervisor Norman E. Barnard said he had no idea before last Wednesday's meeting that the group planned to resign.

THE TOWNSHIP BOARD accepted the resignations by a five to two vote. Voting against the acceptance were Barnard and Republican justice, George W. Ford. The old board was in session at Wednesday's meeting.

Barnard stated, "I had absolutely no intention of firing these people. I feel that they work for the people of the township, not the supervisor. Township government can't function properly if a staff quits every time there is a

change in political affiliation of the officials." The new supervisor said that the persons who resigned had become valuable employees, and he had urged them to stay.

Candidates Praise Eccentric's Service In Recent Election

Lance C. Minor, who last week was elected to the city commission for three years, and Harold G. Webster, unsuccessful candidate, commended the Eccentric on its questionnaires presented to all candidates seeking local office in the Apr. 2 election.

"Your own interest and ingenuity in promoting the best interests of all the people in our community are deserving of the highest commendation," Minor said. Webster's comment was, "You have prepared some very pertinent questions. The voters should appreciate this service in the interests of better government."

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