

# A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST 100 YEARS OF PROVIDENCE LODGE No. 711, A.F. & A.M.

## JEFFERSON PARK MASONIC TEMPLE



**5418 WEST GALE ST., CHICAGO, ILL. 60630**

This is a Historical record of one of the first Masonic Lodge at the Township of Jefferson, Cook County, Ill., now a part of Chicago, dating back to October 28, 1868.

*By Edward E. Gaunt*

### **“LET THERE BE LIGHT”**

October 28, 1868

The first rays of Masonic Light appeared in the Township of Jefferson, Illinois, when Wiley M. Egan Lodge No. 593, A.F. and A.M. was constituted on October 28, 1868 with...

David B. Fonda as W.M.; Lyman O. Budlong as S.W.; George Dunlap as J.W.; E. R. Beam as Treas.; J. H. Clybourne as Sec.; M. L. Penny as S.D.; H. Eames as J.D.

The following account was reported in the November 15, 1868 issue of the “Masonic Trowel”, published in Springfield, Ill.

“It was a nice time, and the Quartet from Oriental Lodge No. 33, discoursed sweet music. W. Bro. Egan, for whom the lodge is named, officiated as Grand Marshal. The lodge room was filled with ladies and citizens of the vicinity, and the Ceremonies made a good impression. Supper followed, of course, to which all did ample justice. Those who were at the constitution of Wiley M. Egan Lodge will always remember it as a pleasant time. It will be an important date in the future history of Jefferson, which will soon be a part of the “Empire City of the West.”

In 1868, Brother J. K. Barry followed Bro. D. B. Fonda as Wiley M. Egan Lodge's 2nd Master, with a membership of 20 Master Masons at the time. Meetings were held on the first & third Saturdays of the month. Membership climbed to 34 in 1869, 44 in 1870, and to 48 in 1871, when Bro. Wm. P. Gray was Master.

It is interesting to note that Bro. Gray was vitally interested in the welfare of the community as well. Research has unearthed that he sat in the township meeting of 1850, & was the man that seconded a motion to name the new township “Jefferson”. In 1872 the Township consisted of 82 residents. It was at this time they voted to change the township to a village form of government.

Also in 1872 right after the Great Chicago Fire, misfortune befelled this young and struggling lodge. Here repeated as outlined on page 87, of the 1872 Ill. Grand Lodge proceedings are the details...

“WHEREAS, At the time the charter of Wiley M. Egan Lodge No. 593, was arrested, all the furniture, paraphernalia and property of said Lodge was placed in the custody of W. Bro. William P. Gray, for safe keeping, & WHEREAS... A Charter has been granted by this Grand Lodge to a large number of the brethren who formerly belonged to said Wiley M. Egan Lodge, by the name of PROVIDENCE Lodge No. 711, therefore, RESOLVED” That said paraphernalia, furniture, and

That said paraphernalia, furniture, and property be given to said PROVIDENCE Lodge No. 711, and that W. Bro. William P. Gray be authorized to deliver the same to said PROVIDENCE Lodge, without delay.”

During the year of 1872, a group of approximately a dozen Master Masons, with an abundance of fortitude and implicit confidence in the principles of Masonry & the future of the fraternity, undertook the formation of a new lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons in then the small village of Jefferson, Illinois. Since that time many petitioners have received their first light in Masonry, many Entered Apprentices have been passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, and many Fellowcrafts have been raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason in the Lodge which developed from that important undertaking. Marvelous progress was made by those pioneers and by the generations which followed them and we now have a lodge of which we of Providence have every right to be proud.

Unfortunately for us, and for Masonry, as time marched on, those pioneers have been called to take their places in the Celestial Lodge above, and a greater number of their successors have joined them at the right hand of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, who, I know, has been

pleased to pronounce each of them, just and upright Masons. We mourn the passing of those stalwart pioneers, but we rejoice in their great achievements in the interest of Masonry, and of Providence Lodge, in particular and we take pride in the fact that we have been selected to do our part in an effort to further the work so nobly begun by them. While the original pioneers and many of their successors are gone, their works are still a matter of record in the lodge, and in tribute to them, we at the end of one hundred years, pause to reflect upon the history of Providence Lodge since its formation.

Bros. Lyman A. Budlong, Andrew Dunning and S. H. Burhans were generally looked upon as the leaders of the small group of Master Masons who in the year of 1872, entered upon their great undertaking. When they believed they were fitly prepared for recognition by the Grand Lodge they applied to Bro. James A. Hawley, Most Worshipful Grand Master, for authority to meet as a lodge under dispensation early in 1873. The Dispensation was granted on February 10, 1873, and Providence Lodge No. 711 was instituted as a lodge under dispensation on February 21, 1873. The following were the original officers of the lodge under dispensation –

Lyman A. Budlong as Master; Andrew Dunning as Senior Warden; S. H. Burhans as Junior Warden; William P. Gray as Treasurer; W. A. Eldridge as Secretary; S. M. Davis as Senior Deacon; George Dymond as Junior Deacon; and Frank D. Wulff as Tyler.

Providence Lodge functioned under dispensation until the Most Worshipful Grand Master, recognizing the fact that a lodge had been created which could stand on its own with credit to itself and honor to the fraternity, caused a Charter to be issued to Providence Lodge No. 711, A.F. & A.M. on October 8, 1873, over the signature of...

James A. Hawley, Grand Master; Geo. E. Lounsbury, Deputy Grand Master; Joseph Robbins, Senior Grand Warden; W. J. A. D. Lancy, Junior Grand Warden; and Orlin H. Miner, Grand Secretary;

and the Seal of the M.W. Grand Lodge. The Charter was issued to the following brethren...

Lyman A. Budlong as Worshipful Master, Andrew Dunning as Senior Warden, S. H. Burhaus as Junior Warden, H. C. Bradley, Leonard Ingalls, Wm. P. Gray, H. H. Johnson Thomas Freestone, N. A. Kindberg, Frank D. Wulff, W. A. Eldridge, George L. Gray, Linus R. Lines, P. S. Peterson, J. W. Tope, F. H. Garfield, Albert W. Harding, John Walsh, T. M. Bradley, Richard Y. Spikings, Theodore Schultz, Jos. A. Budlong, Joseph Toats, John F. Gray, P. P. Powell, John C. Skelly, N. P. Loberg, William Long, George A. Dymond, and S. M. Davis.

The name of this lodge, "Providence" came to being, as the story has been handed down, is that when Lyman A. Budlong received notice from the Grand Lodge that a charter would be granted for a new lodge, he remarked, "This is an act of Providence that this charter has been granted," and suggested the new lodge be named Providence which was agreeable to all charter members.

The first Master Mason raised in Providence Lodge U.D. was George L. Gray, who petitioned on March 1, 1873, was elected March 29, 1873, initiated as an Entered Apprentice Mason March 29, 1873, and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on May 31, 1873.

The first meeting of Providence Lodge U.D. which is now a matter of record, was held at the lodge hall over Goodman's Blacksmith Shop at 4826 Milwaukee Ave., in Jefferson, Illinois on October 16, 1873.

The second meeting was held in the same hall on November 5, 1873, at which meeting the charter was read, the lodge constituted as Providence Lodge No. 711 A.F. & A.M. under authority of the Charter, and the following officers installed as the first officers of the lodge under the charter...

Lyman A. Budlong as Master; Andrew Dunning as Senior Warden; S. H. Burhans as Junior Warden; William P. Gray as Treasurer; J. C. Skelly as Secretary; Rev. H. H. Johnson as Chaplain; J. W. Tope as Senior Deacon; J. D. Walsh as Junior Deacon; Linus R. Lines as Senior Steward; Theodore Schultz as Junior Steward; and Frank D. Wulff as Tyler.

The first Master Mason raised in Providence Lodge under charter was Bro. Charles Peters, who petitioned on April 12, 1873, was elected on May 17, 1873, initiated as an Entered Apprentice Mason on June 21, 1873, passed to the Degree of Fellowcraft on August 26, 1873, and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on December 4, 1873.

It is interesting to observe at this point in the lodge's history that during these early years a candidate after taking his examination on the catechism of each degree was required to submit to a new ballot by the lodge before he could be advanced to the succeeding degree. In other words each candidate had to be balloted upon by the lodge three times with a clear result, otherwise he could not become a Master Mason.

The lodge held its meetings over Goodman's Blacksmith Shop from 1873 until January 1, 1899, at a rental of \$150.00 per year, plus janitor, heat and light, which resulted in an aggregate cost of about \$200 per year. The hall was heated by 2 stoves, placed in corners of the room with the result that the members were either baked to a crisp brown or frozen depending upon how close they were able to get to the corners.

Early in the year of 1896, the lodge having grown to a membership of 67, the brethren began a discussion on the question of building a lodge hall of their own. The lodge was then the owner of a 50 foot lot located at 4902 Milwaukee Avenue. The Worshipful Master, Bro. Lazurne D. Lowell, appointed Bros. Dan Cameron, Wm. Chidley, R. E. Peet, Ralph Izard, and Wm. McRae, as a committee on building, with instructions to study the question and make a report on their conclusions. There appeared to be a definite difference of opinion among the committee members with the results that Bros. Izard and McRae made a minority report in favor of constructing a two story brick building on the lot, the building to contain two stores on the first floor and a lodge hall on the second, at a total cost of not to exceed \$5,000.00 (of which \$3,000 was to be raised through a first mortgage on the improved property and \$2,000 through the sale

of bonds to the members of the lodge.) The remaining three members of the committee, constituting a majority, reported a finding against the minority report on the ground that the venture was too speculative and hazardous at that time. The Majority report prevailed upon, a vote of the lodge and the question of building was dispensed with for the time being.

On January 1, 1899, the meeting place was changed to Johnson's Hall at the southwest corner of Milwaukee Ave. and Lawrence Ave. under a rental arrangement of \$60.00 per year for Stated Meetings and \$2.50 for each Special Meeting, which was far more favorable than the previous lease. Meetings were conducted in Johnson's Hall until November 16, 1901, when a resolution was adopted to move to Butler's Club House at the Northwest corner of Giddings St. & Long Ave., effective November 30, 1901, at a rental of \$100.00 per year. During the year of 1906 the rapid growth of the Jefferson Park Community made it to the advantage of Bro. Hubert W. Butler to remodel the club-house into an apartment building, with the result that the lodge was required to return to Johnson's Hall temporarily from August, 1906 to December 31, 1906.

When it became apparent early in 1906 that the lodge would be obliged to move from Butler's Club House the brethren again took under consideration the question of building a lodge hall for their own use. To expedite the handling of the problem the members of the lodge formed the Jefferson Masonic Association in May of 1906, and elected Wor. Bro. John H. Dymond, who was then Master of the Lodge, as the first President of the Association. Bro. William D. Price, Senior Warden of the Lodge, was elected Secretary of the Association and Bro. Henry Thies, Junior Warden, was elected Vice President of the Association. The members of the first Board of Trustees of the Association, in addition to the officers, were Bro. Herman H. Esdohr, Paul Dinse, Paul L. Gerlicher, and William M. McRae.

Through the medium of the Association, plans were drawn for the construction of a lodge hall on the vacant lot owned by the lodge on Milwaukee Ave., and under the date of June 21, 1906, a set of the proposed plans was sent to each member of the lodge, then totaling about 140, together with an outline of the method proposed to be employed in carrying out the undertaking.

Early in 1911, the Board of Trustees of the Association, then consisting of Wor. Bro. Charles W. Peters, Bros. John Grosnier, George Pabst, Wor. Bro. Wm. D. Price, Bros. William Dietcher, Lafayette Hopkins, and Fred H. Esdohr, realizing that they were entering upon the final year of their then lease with Mr. Thompson and that the lodge had by that time outgrown the Thompson Hall with a membership of more than 200, again approached the question of building with renewed vigor. In the summer of 1911 those efforts began to bear fruit and in July, 1911, Wor. Bro. Lafayette Hopkins acquired an option for the purchase of the vacant lot 50' x 150', which now comprises our present site, for the sum of \$625.00. Jefferson Masonic Assoc. immediately acquired the option from Wor. Bro. Hopkins and a resolution was then passed by the Board of Trustees to build a Masonic Temple on the new lot at a cost not to exceed \$12,000.00. Wor. Bro. Wm. D. Price, because of his wide experience in the construction field and his full understanding of Masonry, was appointed to prepare the plans for the building, Bros. Fred H. Esdohr, George Pabst, and John Froenier were appointed to serve on a Building Committee and to confer with Wor. Bro. Price.

After considerable effort on the part of the Board of Trustees of the Association it finally became evident that Providence Lodge was not quite ready to undertake the risk of tying up all of its resources and credit in the construction of a lodge hall. Accordingly further efforts were made to find a suitable meeting place to use until the ambition of the lodge members to own their own home could be realized.

Mr. Peter F. Thompson, who was the owner of a small feed store located at what is now 4815 Milwaukee Avenue, proposed to erect a two story brick building on his property and to equip the second floor for use as a lodge hall if a suitable arrangement could be made for the rental of that space to Providence Lodge. After considerable negotiation the Board of Trustees of the Association executed a five year lease with Mr. Thompson effective January 1, 1907, at a monthly rental of \$136.00, including steam heat, with a renewal option for an additional five years at the same rental.

As the plans and specification. prepared by Wor. Bro. Price were presented to the several contractors, the best bid was that of Bro. Geo. M. Hayes, who agreed to complete the work at a cost of \$15,555.00, which was more than anticipated, but nevertheless, the best bid obtainable, and the contract was let to him on that basis. The extra for heating and lighting ultimately increased the cost to \$17,755.00.

The next few months presented what was perhaps the most trying period in the lodge's history. The problem of financing the building was a serious one. However, through the untiring efforts of the members of the Board of Trustees of the Jefferson Masonic Association, then consisting of Wor. Bro. John Grosnier, Wm. McRae, Henry Dinse, and Charles W. Peters and Bros. Geo. Pabst, Cady K. Wright and Fred H. Esdohr, assisted by Wor. Bro. W. D. Price, the temple was financed and completed.

Wor. Bro. Wm. M. McRae served as superintendent of construction and the lodge was assured that the plans and specifications as prepared by Wor. Bro. Price were complied with to the letter.

The cornerstone of the temple was laid on September 13, 1912, during a Grand Lodge Occasional Meeting, presided over by Bro. Delmar D. Darrah, Most Wor. Grand Master. The first meeting of Providence Lodge in its new quarters was held on January 4, 1913. The first Master Mason to be raised in the new temple was Bro. Albert A. Brown who received the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on January 16, 1913. The building was dedicated as a Masonic Temple on Jan. 31, 1913. The Ceremonies were again conducted by Bro. Delmar D. Darrah, Most Wor. Grand Master. At that ceremony Wor. Bro. Wm. D. Price paid tribute to Rt. Wor. Bros. Archibald Birse, Albert Roullier, M. Bates Iott and James John who had rendered valuable services in the early development of the lodge.

With the completion of the temple the growth of Providence Lodge was rapid. Between 1912 and 1929 the membership of the lodge was increased from 262 to 796, during which time rapid strides were taken in clearing the building of encumbrance.

Thus the members of Providence Lodge now own this beautiful building, this monument to the efforts of our pioneers. What a fortunate position we have been placed in as a result of their efforts.

### **UNITED WE STAND**

As Providence Lodge stands today, it is a composite of five Lodges... That is four Lodges, namely, North Center, Beacon Light, Kenmore, and Sincerity, who have merged in with Providence Lodge.

Using the word “merged” seems like a harsh expression as this composite is an outstanding example of unusual Brotherly Love and team work. You will find men from all five Lodges working side by side “for the good of this Lodge”.

The following is a brief history of the four Lodges now joined in fellowship with Providence Lodge.

### **NORTH CENTER LODGE No. 1150**

Brother Richard C. Davenport, M. W. Grand Master, instituted North Center Lodge No. 1150, on October 14, 1926.

Bro. John L. Wagner was the first Master of North Center Lodge, assisted with Bro. Charles F. Mattick, as Senior Warden and Bro. Fred P. Weber, as Junior Warden.

North Center Lodge consisted of 97 charter members plus the Master, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden, a total of 100.

On November 14, 1959, North Center Lodge No. 1150 A.F. & A.M. merged with Providence Lodge, No. 711 A.F. & A.M.

### **KENMORE LODGE No. 947**

Brother Albert B. Ashley, M. W. Grand Master issued the Dispensation on June 5, 1911 to Kenmore Lodge, U.D., meeting at 6405 North Clark St. of Chicago.

Within a month, Kenmore Lodge, No. 947 A.F. & A.M. was instituted on July 3, 1911, by Brother E. W. Peterson, D.D.G.M. of the 7th district.

Frank Spensley was the first Master of Kenmore Lodge in 1911, with Bro. Albert Theodore Maul as Secretary.

Kenmore Lodge consisted of 37 Chartered members who signed the petition.

On November 18, 1966, Kenmore Lodge No. 947 A.F. & A.M., merged with Providence Lodge No. 711 A.F. & A.M.

#### **BEACON LIGHT LODGE No. 784**

Bro. Alexander T. Darrah, M. W. Grand Master, granted Dispensation on November 22, 1886, to Beacon Light Lodge, U.D., located in Norwood Park, Ill., a Town on the Madison Division of the C. & N.W.R.R.

Bro. Charles J. DeBerard was the first Master of Beacon Light Lodge, assisted with Bro. Lorin C. Collins, Jr., as Sr. Warden, Bro. Earl H. Reed as Jr. Warden, and Bro. O. W. Flanders as Secretary.

Beacon Light Lodge, No. 784 was constituted on November 19, 1888, by Bro. John C. Smith, M. W. Grand Master.

Beacon Light Lodge consisted of 9 charter members and nine Raised in its first year. On Sept. 23, 1968, Beacon Light Lodge, No. 784 A.F. & A.M., merged with Providence Lodge No. 711 A.F. & A.M.

#### **SINCERITY LODGE No. 982**

Bro. Henry T. Burnap, M.W. Grand Master, issued Dispensation to Sincerity Lodge, U.D. (Original name was Canopy Lodge) on May 21, 1915, and the Charter was issued Oct. 13, 1915.

Of the original 300 members, 296 signed the petition for the Charter. The first W. M. was Bro. Samuel Edward Huenerfauth, assisted by Bro. Edward Bernhard Zehn, as Senior Warden, Bro. Roy White McClintock, as Junior Warden, and Bro. William F. Lipps as Secretary.

As the story is told by Bro. Otto Orth, P. M. and Bro. Harry Pearson, P. M., both charter members, Sincerity's early meetings were held in the Constellation Masonic Temple, 3900 North Robey (now Damen) St., Chicago, when it was under construction. In fact the early pioneers used nail barrels for chairs. The Cornerstone of Constellation Temple was laid August 8, 1914, and Dedicated May 29, 1915, only eight days after Sincerity Lodge received its Charter.

On December 16, 1968, Sincerity Lodge No. 982 A.F. & A.M., merged with Providence Lodge No. 711 A.F. & A.M.

#### **AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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