

The History of the Jefferson Park Masonic Temple & the JMA

The history of the Masonic Temple standing at—what is now—5418 W Gale Street in Jefferson Park, Chicago, truly begins in 1868, 44 years prior to its construction in—what was then—Jefferson Township, Illinois.

The first Masonic lodge in Jefferson Township formed in 1868 under the name Wiley M. Egan Lodge No. 593 A.F. & A.M.. Only 4 years later in 1872, the same year of the Great Chicago Fire, Wiley M. Egan Lodge folded and their charter was returned, but from this misfortune came a new lodge, Providence Lodge No. 711 A.F. & A.M.. Providence Lodge No. 711 received dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Illinois on 10 February 1873, subsequently being instituted as a lodge on 21 February.

Providence Lodge moved from building to building around Jefferson Township as it grew. In 1889, Jefferson Township was annexed to the City of Chicago and became—as it is still called today—the neighborhood of Jefferson Park.

In 1906, Providence Lodge was once again having to move. In the May of the same year the Jefferson Masonic Association was formed out of a group of Brothers from Providence Lodge with Worshipful Master Bro. John H. Dymond as the first President of the Association. The Association put together plans for building their own Temple in an empty lot owned by the Lodge on Milwaukee Ave., but the plans fell through at that time.

In 1911, the Association again advanced the idea for constructing a Temple for the lodge; this time, though, their plans started to come to fruition. Wor. Bro. Lafayette Hopkins was successful at purchasing an empty lot off Milwaukee Avenue (prior to Gale Street's designation) for \$625 (roughly \$15,000 in 2017 USD), and subsequently gave it over to the Association. The Association approved the motion to construct a Masonic Temple on this site with a maximum budget of \$12,000. Wor. Bro. William D. Price, who had construction experienced, was tasked with designing the building scheme and set to work with a Board-appointed Building Committee.

Another Brother, George M. Hayes, presented the Committee with the best bid for the construction at a sum of \$15,555. The Board agreed and proceeded with Bro. Hayes' bid as contractor. That quote, though, did not take into account the costs for heating or lighting, which led to the final total of \$17,755 (roughly \$428,000 in 2017 USD). This did not deter the plans, though, as the Brethren understood this to be an investment to endure through time and stand as a monument to Masonic ideals.

On 13 September 1912, during an Occasional Meeting of the Grand Lodge—presided over by MW GM Bro. Delmar D. Darragh—the cornerstone was laid. Providence Lodge’s first meeting was held on 4 January 1913, with the first Raising in the new Temple held on 18 January 1913 for Bro. Albert A. Brown. The building was formally dedicated on 31 January of the same year.

Over the next 16 years, Providence Lodge, with its ever-increasing membership, paid off the building cost, thereby gaining full ownership of the Temple.

In 2003, Providence Lodge No. 711 merged with King Oscar Lodge No. 855 A.F. & A.M.. King Oscar Lodge now maintains the Jefferson Masonic Association and the Temple and it is our hope that this historic building remains for years to come; always standing erect as a monument to the Masonic ideals of our Brothers before us.

Bibliography:

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Chicago, Illinois [map]. 1910. Scale not given. “Chicago 1910.” Good City Group | Chicago website. <http://www.goodcitygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/chicago-1910.png>.





