

HISTORY OF CORNERSTONE LAYINGS

The Grand Lodge of Ancient
Free and Accepted Masons
of Nebraska

1963

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The Grand Lodge
Ancient Free and Accepted Mason
of Nebraska
1857-1963

A Preliminary Edition

George W. Rosenlof
The Grand Historian

FOREWORD

To preface this "History of Cornerstone Layings", I want to call to your attention the importance of Cornerstone ceremonies as a public service. The Masonic Fraternity has 'symbolically' laid Cornerstones from time immemorial for such structures as charitable objects, for the administration of justice and free government, for education and buildings for the worship of God. The Cornerstone ceremony should be an occasion of interest to the whole community and is a wonderful opportunity for our Fraternity to tell these communities of its good effects. Through the Cornerstone ceremony Masonry can explain to the world some of the basic principles of our Order and thereby promote a better understanding between those who are not members of our Fraternity and those who are members.

This preface would not be complete if I did not express the thanks and gratitude of this Grand Lodge to our Grand Historian, W. Brother George W. Rosenlof, for his devotion to our Fraternity, and for the excellent research he is performing and for making such a complete record of the history of our Grand Lodge of Nebraska.

We thank you W. Bro. Rosenlof, for another 'chapter' in our History.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,
Ernest O. Van Wey,
Grand Master

The Centennial Volume, "Masonry in Nebraska, 1857-1957," contains a brief statement relative to the "Forms and Ceremonies" of the Grand Lodge, Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Nebraska.¹ In the Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Communication, June 23-24, 1863, there was included the "Masonic Funderal Service as adopted by the Grand Lodge of Nebraska" and the approved "Installation Ceremony" of the Grand Lodge of Nebraska.² By direction of the Grand Lodge, on motion of the Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, O. H. Irish, it was ordered that the Committee on Printing cause to have the "Funderal Service of the Grand Lodge printed. . . in large type." The Most Worshipful Grand Master was also authorized to appoint a committee of three "to examine the installation service of the Grand Lodge, and report to the next Grand Lodge such additions and alterations as may appear to them best." The Brethren appointed were the Right Worshipful R. W. Furnas, Grand Orator, pro tem; Brother W. E. Harvey proxy for the Worshipful Master, and Senior Warden of Capital Lodge, No. 3, and the Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master O. H. Irish.³ The Proceedings of the Grand Lodge meeting in Omaha in 1867, included, in the appendix, the printing of the installation ceremony. No changes from that of 1863 were apparent.

¹Masonry in Nebraska, 1857-1957, pp. 49-51

²Proceedings of the Annual Communication of Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, F. & A. Masons of the Territory of Nebraska, 1863, Vol. 1, pp. 333-337, 339-344.

³Ibid., Proceedings of 1864, pp. 379, 380.

The "Programme of Ceremonies" to be observed at the laying of cornerstones of Public Buildings appeared for the first time in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Nebraska in 1867. On the occasion of the Twelfth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge meeting in Nebraska City, October 26th, 1869, Past Grand Master Daniel H. Wheeler presented a resolution requesting that a committee of three be appointed to examine into all the forms and ceremonies, including that of "The Laying of Cornerstones", and to report upon and recommend any changes that would be deemed appropriate. This committee was to act in conjunction with a similar "committee already appointed by the Grand Chapter for a like purpose." When their functions had been "collated and adopted by the Grand body to be printed, with a short digest of Masonic law, as a textbook of Nebraska Masonry, for the Craft."⁴ It would appear that little, if anything, came to pass as a result of this effort. It was eighteen years later that the Most Worshipful Grand Master, Charles K. Coutant stated in his formal address⁵ that the Grand Lodge of Nebraska, had not since 1868 published any "standard or authoritative forms and ceremonies" for the important occasions of burying the dead, laying of cornerstones, dedicating of halls or installation of officers. He emphasized that there was a real need for forms and ceremonies, appropriate to the different occasions.

⁴Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, Vol. II, p. 913, October, 1869.

⁵Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, Vol. 5, p. 3541, 1887.

These should, it was noted, contain all that "will add to their utility, beauty and impressiveness." Furthermore he stated that there were not any tools or implements or vessels for the consecrating elements nor any appropriate garb to be worn by the officers on such occasions. It was recommended by the Grand Master that authority be given to appoint an appropriate committee for the purpose of carrying out the suggestions as made. One year later this committee made a report recommending that a committee of Past Grand Masters (enlarged by three) give the matter further study and bring in a report in 1889. An effort was made to lay the whole matter on the table, but this was defeated. The report of this latter committee of Past Grand Masters -- Robert C. Jordan, George W. Lininger, Daniel H. Wheeler, John C. Mercer, (Chairman) and Charles K. Coutant, (Secretary) stated that the existing forms and ceremonies heretofore approved and adopted were "ample for the purpose intended" and that it was deemed "inexpedient to adopt or prescribe any further forms or ceremonies as the official action of this Grand Lodge". This report was made in June, 1890.

To have taken so much time in resolving the problems of forms and ceremonies as approved and adopted by the Grand Lodge should not be interpreted as meaning that there was no interest on the part of the Brethren in these matters. Quite the contrary was true. There was, indeed, a deep interest in having things done with "beauty, dignity and impressiveness". There was also the conviction that nothing should be done to set aside any of the "ancient landmarks" or deviate in any serious manner or to any

degree the basic considerations that had been uppermost in the minds of the Brethren of ancient times when first these forms and ceremonies were brought into being. The various symbolisms of Masonry, it was rigidly felt, must, by all means, be recognized and held to sacredly. Without this the ceremonies would assuredly lose all their meaning and, furthermore their significance would be of no consequence whatever. To this day let it be said to the credit of Masonry that no "violence has been done" and that Masons everywhere in our jurisdiction continued to have an interest in these ceremonials and drew real inspiration from them. It goes without saying that the public, when privileged to be present at these occasions of both mourning and celebration, were equally impressed by the sincerity, the dignity, the beauty, and the impressiveness with which they were carried out.

What has been said up to this point has been of a more or less general nature and has dealt with all of the several forms and ceremonies. During the first fifty years of the history of the Grand Lodge of Nebraska there is every indication that the officers and the constituent lodges found no reason to make any significant changes. Perfection in performance could be had and this without any serious change in language or content, and perfection in this regard was undoubtedly achieved by the Grand Lodge officers including particularly the Grand Master, the Grand Custodian and the Grand Marshall and their assistants, as well as by the officers and members of constituent lodges where the ceremonials took place.

Turning now to the ceremonial of "laying cornerstones" we find

October 25, 1882, and concluding with the laying of the cornerstone of the Cherry County Courthouse at Valentine on September 2, 1954.

In three counties of Nebraska there was a second courthouse built, the cornerstone of which was also laid by the Grand Lodge of Nebraska. These three were the county courthouse of Douglas County at Omaha, February 22, 1910; that of Dawes County at Chadron, May 9, 1936; and that of Furnas County at Beaver City, November 15, 1949. Interestingly enough, these three represent the first three counties in which the Grand Lodge had first laid the cornerstone of the County Courthouse.

Cornerstones of church edifices were laid in thirty-eight (38) instances. In thirty-six (36) of these, cornerstones were laid for buildings on public and private college campuses including the University of Nebraska and the four State Teachers Colleges.

In all other instances the requests were varied. They represented public libraries, City, State, and Federal buildings, auditoriums, opera houses, and hospitals as well as a museum, county home, American Legion Hall, Cemetary Chapel, Trans-Mississippi Building, Y.M.C.A., Inter-state Bridge, and one small factory.

The table referred to lists all cornerstones laid in order by years from 1869 to 1961. In only the years 1870 to 1875, 1877, 1878, 1880, 1881, 1885, 1909, 1937, 1943, 1945, 1947, and 1958 -- sixteen in all -- were there no cornerstone layings reported. To account completely for these "gaps" in the long record would be extremely difficult and to attempt it would be hazardous for this author. The data necessary would be almost, if not altogether, impossible to find without very extensive research from multitudinous

sources and that at considerable expense of time and money. We well might conjecture that varying economic situations, the variance in growth of population, and wars and rumors of war might very well have had considerable influence. Doubtless there might have been other and additional occasions when our constituent lodges could have more vigorously sought to interest their communities in arranging for such public ceremonials, for which the Grand Lodge officers were at all times ready to assist and at no expense to the community or the institution in the community.

Finally, this table includes the information as to who was the officiating Grand Master at each of these cornerstone layings. Unfortunately complete information as to all of the participants in these ceremonies was not recorded. In some of these cornerstone layings, the information was given in some detail. There were a few occasions when the identity of the orator was indicated. One of the most interesting orations, for example, recorded in the proceedings was that of the Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Robert W. Furnas, delivered at the time of the laying of the cornerstone of the Nebraska State Capital at Lincoln, July 15, 1884. More information about this oration relating to the symbolism of the laying of cornerstones appears at another point (See pages 24-25)

TABLE I

Cornerstones Laid

	<u>Building</u>		<u>Officiating Grand Master</u>
<u>1869</u>			
Sept. 23	University Hall, University of Nebraska	Lincoln	D. H. Wheeler
<u>1876</u>			
Oct. 21	Free Masons' Hall	Omaha	G. H. Thummel
<u>1879</u>			
May 22	Baptist Church	Alexandria	James A. Tulley
<u>1882</u>			
	Ashlar Lodge #33	Grand Island	Robert C. Jordan
May 25	Opera House	Plattsmouth	Geo. W. Lininger
June 3	Lone Tree Lodge #36	Central City	G. H. Thummel
Oct. 25	Douglas County Court House	Omaha	G. W. Lininger
<u>1883</u>			
May 1	Masonic Temple	Lincoln	E. F. Warren
<u>1884</u>			
July 15	Nebraska State Capitol	Lincoln	John J. Wemple
<u>1886</u>			
June 7	Hastings Lodge #50	Hastings	John J. Wemple
<u>1887</u>			
July 13	Hebron Lodge #43	Hebron	Milton J. Hull
Oct. 27	Missouri River Bridge	Nebraska City	E. F. Warren
Nov. 30	Dawes County Court House	Chadron	De Forest Rogers
Dec. 19	Public School Building	Chadron	A. W. Crites
<u>1888</u>			
Apr. 22	Grant Memorial Hall, University of Nebraska	Lincoln	Milton J. Hull
May 17	Furnas County Court House	Beaver City	Milton J. Hull
June 14	Holy Trinity Episcopal Church	Lincoln	Milton J. Hull
June 22	Methodist Episcopal Church	Bartley	John J. Wemple
July 23	State Asylum	Hastings	John J. Wemple
Aug. 23	Fremont Lodge #15	Fremont	Geo. B. France
Oct. 3	Methodist Church	Trenton	Geo. B. France
Nov. 1	Lancaster County Court House	Lincoln	Geo. B. France

<u>1889</u>			
Mar. 18	Episcopal Church	Beatrice	Geo. B. France
Mar. 25	Temple Craft, #82	St. Paul	Geo. B. France
Sept. 10	Dodge County Court House	Fremont	John J. Mercer
Sept. 26	Noble Sewing Machine Company	Weeping Water	John J. Mercer
Dec. 13	Washington County Court House	Blair	John J. Mercer
<u>1890</u>			
May 14	Temple -- Hooper Lodge #72	Hooper	John J. Mercer
July 4	Butler County Court House	David City	John J. Mercer
Sept. 4	Gage County Court House	Beatrice	Robert E. French
Oct. 7	Trinity Methodist Church	Geneva	Robert E. French
Nov. 24	Trinity Methodist Church	Callaway	Robert E. French
<u>1891</u>			
June 29	Cass County Court House	Plattsmouth	Brad D. Slaughter
July 7	Jefferson County Court House	Fairbury	Brad D. Slaughter
Aug. 9 (Sun)	First Presbyterian Church	South Omaha	Brad D. Slaughter
Aug. 25	State Industrial School for Girls	Geneva	Brad D. Slaughter
<u>1892</u>			
	First Baptist Church	Falls City	Samuel P. Davidson
Sept. 27	Public School Building	Ord	Samuel P. Davidson
	Public School Building	Omaha	Samuel P. Davidson
Sept. 27	Temple - Sumner Lodge #212	Sumner	Samuel P. Davidson
	Episcopal Church	Columbus	Samuel P. Davidson
<u>1893</u>			
July 6	Fillmore County Court House	Geneva	James P. A. Black
Aug. 12	Public Library	Omaha	James P. A. Black
<u>1894</u>			
July 4	High School Building	Schuyler	John A. Ehrhardt
<u>1895</u>			
July 12	Methodist Church	Hartington	Henry H. Wilson
Aug. 1	Temple - Indianola Lodge #123	Indianola	Henry H. Wilson

<u>1896</u>	Sept. 10	Boone County Court House	Albion	Charles J. Phelps
<u>1897</u>	Apr. 22	Trans-Mississippi & International Exposition Building	Omaha	Charles J. Phelps
<u>1898</u>	Aug. 27	Methodist Church	Broken Bow	Frank H. Young
<u>1899</u>	Aug. 3	Wayne County Court House	Wayne	William W. Keysor
	Aug. 10	Public High School	Loup City	William W. Keysor
	Sept. 8	Public High School	Tekamah	William W. Keysor
	Sept. 22	Public High School	Blair	William W. Keysor
<u>1900</u>	July 26	Public High School	North Platte	Albert W. Crites
	Nov. 10	Public High School	Omaha	William W. Keysor
<u>1901</u>	Sept. 11	Opera House	Columbus	Robert E. Evans
	Nov. 21	Thayer County Court House	Hebron	
<u>1902</u>	July 31	Hall County Court House	Grand Island	Nathaniel M. Ayers
<u>1903</u>	June 18	Federal Building	Norfolk	Frank E. Bullard
<u>1904</u>	Aug. 25	Methodist Church	McCook	Charles E. Burnham
	Sept. 2	Federal Building	Lincoln	Charles E. Burnham
	Sept. 13	Sheridan County Court House	Rushville	Robert E. French
	Oct. 14	Federal Building	Hastings	Manoah B. Reese
	Oct. 18	Kearney State Normal	Kearney	Charles E. Burnham
<u>1905</u>	Sept. 20	Seward County Court House	Seward	Melville R. Hopewell
	Oct. 10	Nebraska Masonic Home Addition	Plattsmouth	Melville R. Hopewell
	Oct. 29	Tenth Street M.E. Church	Omaha	Melville R. Hopewell
	Nov. 21	Congregational Church	Aurora	Charles J. Phelps

<u>1906</u>			
July 16	Kearney County Court House	Minden	Zuingle M. Baird
July 18	Beaver City High School	Beaver City	Zuingle M. Baird
Oct. 19	Wayne State Normal	Wayne	Zuingle M. Baird
Oct. 30	Masonic Temple #125	Genoa	Zuingle M. Baird
Nov. 11	Creighton High School	Creighton	Zuingle M. Baird
Dec. 18	Kearney Military High School	Kearney	Zuingle M. Baird
<u>1907</u>			
Nov. 22	Y.M.C.A. Building	Columbus	Ornan J. King
<u>1908</u>			
Apr. 30	Public School Building	Callaway	Ornan J. King
Nov. 7	Masonic Temple #135	McCook	William A. DeBord
Nov. 28 (Sun)	First Christian Church	South Omaha	William A. DeBord
<u>1910</u>			
Feb. 22	Douglas County Court House	Omaha	Michael Dowling
July 28	Peru Normal Administration Building	Peru	Henry Gibbons
Nov. 15	Chadron Normal School	Chadron	Albert W. Crites
<u>1911</u>			
July 4	Custer County Court House	Broken Bow	Henry Gibbons
Aug. 15	Methodist Church	Sterling	Samuel P. Davidson
Aug. 17	Chase County Court House	Imperial	Henry Gibbons
Sept. 22	Wayne State Normal	Wayne	Henry Gibbons
Oct. 17	Pawnee County Court House	Pawnee	James R. Cain
Dec. 28	Chapel - Forest Lawn Cemetary	Omaha	Henry Gibbons
<u>1912</u>			
May 22	Merrick County Court House	Central City	Henry Gibbons
June 7	City Hall	Blair	James R. Cain, Jr.
June 12	Osceola High School	Osceola	James R. Cain, Jr.
Oct. 2	Scottish Rite Temple	Omaha	James R. Cain, Jr.

1913

May 7	Western High School	Western	James R. Cain, Jr.
May 8	Masonic Temple #64	Wilber	James R. Cain, Jr.
June 5	Howard County Court House	St. Paul	George Allen Beacher
July 1	Dawson County Court House	Lexington	Alpha Morgan
July 8	High School Building	Tilden	Alpha Morgan
July 9	High School Building	Neligh	Alpha Morgan
July 18	Town Hall	Valentine	Walter W. Wells
Aug. 15	Public School	Johnstown	Walter W. Wells
Nov. 15	Methodist Church	Havelock	Alpha Morgan

1914

Apr. 10	Public School Building	Arnold	Alpha Morgan
June 23	Adm. Bldg. Wayne St. Normal	Wayne	Thomas M. Davis
July 30	Webster County Court House	Red Cloud	Thomas M. Davis
Aug. 5	Keya Paha County Court House	Springview	Thomas M. Davis
Aug. 12	Rural High School	Ansley	Thomas M. Davis
Aug. 19	Masonic Temple #218	Bloomfield	Thomas M. Davis
Sept. 2	Masonic Temple #251	Wausa	Thomas M. Davis
Oct. 17	Public School (Dundee)	Omaha	Thomas M. Davis

1915

Apr. 1	Public School Building	Craig	Thomas M. Davis
Apr. 27	Auditorium	Geneva	Thomas M. Davis
May 7	Masonic Temple #176	Ansley	Alpha Morgan
May 15	Deuel County Court House	Chappell	Thomas M. Davis
June 23	Public Library	Broken Bow	Samuel S. Whiting
July 5	Normal Training Building	Peru	Samuel S. Whiting
	Masonic Home for Girls	Fremont	Samuel S. Whiting
Sept. 22	Auditorium	Polk	Samuel S. Whiting
Sept. 27	Masonic Temple #258	Anselmo	Samuel S. Whiting
Oct. 13	Auditorium Kearney Normal	Kearney	Samuel S. Whiting

1916

June 26	Federal Building	Aurora	Andrew H. Viele
Aug. 8	Scottish Rite Cathedral	Lincoln	Andrew H. Viele
Aug. 29	Masonic Temple #130	Surprise	Andrew H. Viele
Sept. 1	Boys' Home	Fremont	Andrew H. Viele
Oct. 4	Masonic Temple	Omaha	Andrew H. Viele
Oct. 18	Public High School	Niobrara	Andrew H. Viele
Oct. 19	Wayne State Industrial Bldg.	Wayne	Andrew H. Viele
Nov. 14	Methodist Church	Tekamah	Andrew H. Viele
Nov. 17	Federal Building	Alliance	Andrew H. Viele
Dec. 12	Public Library	Blair	Andrew H. Viele

1917

Jan. 11	Public Library	Loup City	Andrew H. Viele
Feb. 27	Burt County Court House	Tekamah	Andrew H. Viele
May 11	High School	Cozad	Andrew H. Viele
May 16	Public Library	Orleans	Andrew H. Viele
July 11	Public School	Beemer	Frederic L. Temple

1918

May 7	Methodist Church	Sidney	Frederic L. Temple
Aug. 19	Clay County Court House	Clay Center	Ambrose Epperson

1919

May 12	Public High School	Dix	John J. Tooley
June 23	High School	Long Pine	John J. Tooley

1920

June 18	Nebr. State Normal School	Chadron	John J. Tooley
June 28	Methodist Church	Lodgepole	Joseph B. Fradenburg
Sept. 11	Brown County Hospital	Ainsworth	Joseph B. Fradenburg
Sept. 21	Welptin Mem. Congregational	Ogallala	Joseph B. Fradenburg
Oct. 12	Scottsbluff Co. Court House	Gering	Joseph B. Fradenburg
Nov. 30	Platte County Court House	Columbus	Lewis E. Smith

<u>1921</u>			
June 1	Dundy County Court House	Benkelman	Joseph B. Fradenburg
July 11	Presbyterian Church	Kearney	Lewis E. Smith
July 22	Colfax County Court House	Schuyler	Lewis E. Smith
Sept. 10	Masonic Temple #281 (Florence)	Omaha	Lewis E. Smith
Sept. 23	Central High School	Norfolk	Lewis E. Smith
Oct. 31	Girls Dormitory, Hastings College	Hastings	Lewis E. Smith
Nov. 15	High School	Valentine	Lewis E. Smith
Nov. 17	High School	Chadron	Lewis E. Smith
Nov. 30	Polk County Court House	Osceola	Edw. M. Wellman
<u>1922</u>			
Mar. 4	Garden County Court House	Oshkosh	Lewis E. Smith
Mar. 24	Public School	Hay Springs	Lewis E. Smith
Aug. 9	Public School	Callaway	Edw. M. Wellman
Sept. 28	Addition-Children's Home	Fremont	Charles A. Chappell
Sept. 29	Public School	Ainsworth	Lewis E. Smith
Oct. 13	Methodist Church	Harvard	Charles A. Chappell
Oct. 18	New Zion Presbyterian Church	Clarkson	Charles A. Chappell
Nov. 24	Public School	Prague	Charles A. Chappell
Dec. 4	Masonic Temple #70	Sterling	Charles A. Chappell
<u>1923</u>			
May 26	East Lincoln Lodge #210	Lincoln	Charles A. Chappell
July 20	Public School	Orchard	Charles A. Chappell
July 24	Barr Junior High School	Grand Island	Charles A. Chappell
Sept. 25	Public School	Morse Bluffs	Charles M. Shephard

<u>924</u>	June 3	Nebraska Masonic Home Infirmery		Charles A. Chappell
	June 11	Richardson County Court House	Falls City	Richard R. Dickson
	Aug. 20	Finch Memorial Library	Arnold	Richard R. Dickson
	Sept. 27	Public High School	Columbus	Richard R. Dickson
	Oct. 18	Community Church	Bellevue	Richard R. Dickson
	Nov. 8	Senior High School	Grand Island	Richard R. Dickson
	Nov. 10	Masonic Temple	Springfield	Richard R. Dickson
<u>925</u>	May 16	Public School	Bloomington	Richard R. Dickson
	May 18	Public School	Arnold	Richard R. Dickson
	May 19	Baptist Church	Hastings	Richard R. Dickson
	June 2	Congregational Church	Curtis	Richard R. Dickson
	July 18	Baptist Church	Alexandria	John Wright
	Aug. 12	Franklin County Court House	Franklin	John Wright
	Sept. 15	Agriculture Display Bldg.	Geneva	John Wright
	Oct. 2	Grade School	Minden	John Wright
<u>926</u>	Mar. 20	Normal Training School	Kearney	John Wright
	Apr. 22	Public School	Rising City	John Wright
	May 8	Masonic Lodge #290	Omaha	John Wright
	June 14	Model Training School	Chadron	Edwin D. Crites
<u>927</u>	May 28	Public School	Beaver Crossing	Edwin D. Crites
	June 3	Public School	Dorchester	Edwin D. Crites
	June 29	American Legion Hall	Decatur	Albert R. Davis
	July 5	Children's Home	Fremont	Albert R. Davis
	Sept. 2	Methodist Church	Hebron	Samuel S. Whiting
	Oct. 15	Dundee Presbyterian	Omaha	Albert R. Davis
	Oct. 17	High School	Bridgeport	Albert R. Davis

<u>1928</u>			
Mar. 2	Kimball County Court House	Kimball	Frank H. Woodland
May 29	Municipal Hospital	Chadron	Albert R. Davis
May 9	Masonic Temple #245	Hampton	Albert R. Davis
June 30	Bee Hive Lodge #184	South Omaha	Frank H. Woodland
Aug. 9	Public School	Melbeta	Edwin D. Crites
Oct. 5	Masonic Temple #103	Ord	Frank H. Woodland
Oct. 18	Masonic Temple #265	Scottsbluff	Frank H. Woodland
Sept. 14	Masonic Temple	Hastings	Frank H. Woodland
Nov. 28	Shrine Country Club	Lincoln	Orville A. Andrews
Dec. 14	Methodist Church	Ashland	Frank H. Woodland
<u>1929</u>			
May 9	Public School	Kilgore	Frank H. Woodland
May 10	Library Chadron Normal	Chadron	Frank H. Woodland
July 9	Public High School	Lyman	Ira C. Freet
July 30	Masonic Temple #195	Gordon	Ira C. Freet
Aug. 15	Masonic Temple #159	Ogallala	Ira C. Freet
Aug. 27	Neihardt Hall	Wayne	Ira C. Freet
Aug. 31	Ames Avenue Methodist	Omaha	Ira C. Freet
Sept. 20	Methodist Church	Beatrice	Ira C. Freet
Sept. 21	County Home (Douglas)	Omaha	Ira C. Freet
Sept. 30	Public School	Woodlake	Ira C. Freet
<u>1930</u>			
Mar. 24	Public High School	Crawford	Ira C. Freet
Apr. 18	Public High School	Crookston	Ira C. Freet
May 1	High School	North Platte	Ira C. Freet
May 23	Methodist Church	Friend	Ira C. Freet
June 9	Kearney State Normal College	Kearney	John R. Topster

1930 (Cont.)

Sept. 8	Masonic Temple #209	Elmwood	Orville A. Andrews
Dec. 10	High School	Sidney	Orville A. Andrews

1931

Apr. 20	Children's Home Veazer Memorial	Fremont	Orville A. Andrews
Sept. 21	High School	Tekamah	John R. Tapster
Sept. 25	Presbyterian Church	Sidney	Charles A. Chappell
Nov. 18	Masonic Temple #93	Beaver City	John R. Tapster

1932

Feb. 12	Pile Hall--State Teachers College	Wayne	John R. Tapster
Mar. 29	Congregational Church	McCook	John R. Tapster
May 4	State Teachers College	Chadron	Edwin B. Johnston
May 26	Masonic Temple #39	Papillion	John R. Tapster

1933

Aug. 10	Masonic Lodge #55	Norfolk	Archie M. Smith
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1934

May 15	Episcopal Parish Hall	Fremont	Archie M. Smith
Sept. 9	Public Library	Silver Creek	Virgil R. Johnson
Sept. 14	Masonic Temple (17th & L)	Lincoln	Virgil R. Johnson

1935

Aug. 20	Faling Memorial Masonic Temple #150	Cambridge	Chanc. A. Phillips
Sept. 12	Chappell Library & Art Memorial	Chappell	William C. Ramsey
Nov. 13	Public School	Lodgepole	William C. Ramsey

1936

Mar. 17	High School	McGrew	Chanc. A. Phillips
Apr. 18	Baker Rural High School	Stapleton	Chanc. A. Phillips
May 9	Dawes County Court House	Chadron	Chanc. A. Phillips
July 18	Public School	Bellevue	Chanc. A. Phillips

1938

Feb. 11	High School	Gering	William A. Robertson
Apr. 26	Men's Hall-State Normal	Chadron	William A. Robertson
Apr. 28	Men's Hall-State Normal	Wayne	William A. Robertson
June 29	Public School	Broken Bow	Walter Raecke
Aug. 31	Masonic Temple #59	Wahoo	Walter Raecke
Oct. 4	Masonic Temple #205	Chappell	Walter Raecke
Nov. 1	Public School	Burchard	Walter Raecke
Nov. 10	Men's Hall, Kearney	Kearney	Walter Raecke

1939

Apr. 6	Men's Hall, Peru	Peru	Walter Raecke
May 4	Museum	Franklin	Walter Raecke
May 29	Gosper County Court House	Elwood	Walter Raecke
May 30	City Hall	Grand Island	Walter Raecke
June 1	Activities Bldg-State Normal	Wayne	Walter Raecke

NOTE: Trowel used in each instance presented to Local Lodge.

June 23	High School	Rushville	Walter Raecke
Sept. 6	City Hall	Kearney	Wm. J. Breckenridge
Sept. 14	City Auditorium	Beatrice	Wm. J. Breckenridge

1940

May 2	Masonic Temple #104	Wymore	Wm. J. Breckenridge
May 27	Masonic Temple #169	Rushville	Wm. J. Breckenridge
Sept. 2	Masonic Temple #162	Brock	Earl J. Lee

Brock trowel presented to Trestle Bd. Lodge #162.

1941

May 20	Public School	Dodge	Earl J. Lee
May 29	Public School	Plattsmouth	Earl J. Lee

NOTE: Gavel and trowel handle made from bannister wood of old bldg.

42	Feb. 10	Masonic Hall #314	Lincoln	Edward F. Carter
44	Oct. 20	Home for Boys - Three Buildings	Omaha	Wm. C. Shaper
46	Sept. 1	Home for Boys - Two	Omaha	Benj. F. Eyre
48	Oct. 13	Masonic Lodge #310	Valley	Elmer Magee
	Nov. 19	Masonic Lodge Temple #225	Arnold	Cancelled - weather
49	May 12	Masonic Lodge #48	Fairmont	Elmer Magee
	Nov. 15	Furnas County Court House	Beaver City,	Ernest S. Schiefelbein
50	Sept. 9	Gymnasium Auditorium	Bartlett	John S. Hedelund
	Sept. 19	Men's Dormitory - Wayne State Teachers College	Wayne	John S. Hedelund
51	Mar. 12	Auditorium Gymnasium Lake Alice Consolidated	Scottsbluff	John S. Hedelund
	June 23	Masonic Temple #192	Valentine	Thomas J. Aron
	Sept. 17	Memorial Bldg. Chadron State Teachers College	Chadron	Thomas J. Aron
52	May 23	Masonic Temple #316	South Sioux City,	Thomas J. Aron
	Sept. 6	Public School	Gering	Edward M. Knight
	Oct. 21	Adm. Bldg. - Omaha School for Boys	Omaha	Edward M. Knight
53	May 29	Public Grade School	Broken Bow	Edward M. Knight
	Nov. 5	Masonic Temple #233	Butte	Fay Smith
	Nov. 28	Masonic Temple #308	Grant	Fay Smith

<u>1954</u>			
May 29	Omaha School for Boys	Omaha	Fay Smith
July 9	Vocational Arts - Kearney State T. C.	Kearney	Charles F. Adams
Sept. 2	Cherry County Court House	Valentine	Charles F. Adams
Sept. 3	Senior High School	Grand Island	Charles F. Adams
<u>1955</u>			
Apr. 12	Masonic Temple #31	Tekamah	Charles F. Adams
Apr. 28	Masonic Temple #217	Wauneta	Charles F. Adams
Sept. 17	Masonic Temple #177	Hay Springs	Herbert T. White
Sept. 23	Memorial Library	Wayne	Herbert T. White
Nov. 11	Masonic Temple #78	Albion	Herbert T. White
Nov. 26	Masonic Temple #15	Fremont	Herbert T. White
<u>1956</u>			
June 23	Residence Hall for Men	Chadron	Merle M. Hale
Aug. 18	Masonic Temple #297	Lincoln	Merle M. Hale
Sept. 22	Men's Residence Hall	Wayne	Merle M. Hale
Oct. 9	Elementary School	Loup City	Merle M. Hale
Nov. 1	Masonic Children's Home	Fremont	Merle M. Hale
<u>1957</u>			
May 24	Student Activities Bldg.	Kearney	Merle M. Hale
Aug. 23	County High School	Harrisburg	Roy I. Babbitt.
Aug. 31	Masonic Temple #36	Central City	Roy I. Babbitt
Sept. 20	Rice Memorial Bldg.	Wayne	Roy I. Babbitt
<u>1959</u>			
May 21	Masonic Temple #188	Cozad	John E. Beaver
June 30	Masonic Temple #200	Burwell	Joseph C. Tye
Aug. 1	Masonic Temple #325	Bellevue	Joseph C. Tye
Aug. 18	High School	Lodgepole	Joseph C. Tye
Nov. 24	Dormitory	Wayne	Joseph C. Tye

<u>1960</u>			
Apr. 25	Industrial Arts Bldg.	Peru	Joseph C. Tye
May 23	Cushing Auditorium	Kearney	Joseph C. Tye
July 1	Masonic Temple #320	Lincoln	Herbert H. Ronin
Oct. 16	Student Center Bldg.	Wayne	Herbert H. Ronin

Items of Interest

1857-1868

None of the proceedings of the annual communications of the Grand Lodge for the first eleven years show that there had been any requests for the laying of cornerstones.

1869-1879

The Deputy Grand Master, Harry P. Deuel, Acting Grand Master in place of the M.°W.°Grand Master, O. H. Irish, reported in his address to the Grand Lodge that on September 3rd, 1869, he received a request to be "present at, and assist in the ceremonies of laying the cornerstone of the public buildings to be erected there." Because it was impossible for him to be present on that occasion he requested R.°W.°Bro. D. H. Wheeler to act as his proxy on that occasion.

Past Grand Master, D. H. Wheeler in reporting on this event stated that on September 23rd he proceeded to Lincoln and with the able assistance of the Grand Lodge officers laid the cornerstone of the State University of Nebraska with Masonic ceremonies." The occasion was one long to be remembered with pride and pleasure by those in attendance at that time, and by the Fraternity at Lincoln, who did so much to make the occasion a success and a credit to the Fraternity." He filed with the Deputy Grand Master a full report of the events of that occasion.

This marks the first instance that the Grand Lodge of Nebraska was invited to participate in the laying of a cornerstone in accord with Masonic usage and in harmony with Masonic tradition.

Seven years later (1876) the Grand Lodge officiated in the

first laying of a cornerstone of a Masonic Temple -- that of Freemason's Hall in Omaha, October 21, 1876. The M. W. Grand Master, George H. Thummel, in his address at the time of the twentieth annual communication on June 19, 1877, stated that he was ably assisted by Grand Lodge officers and that the craft formed in grand procession with the Sir Knights of Mount Calvary Commandery, No. 1, as escort. The oration was delivered by Brother Ira N. Pardee. It was "an interesting and instructive oration." The Grand Master stated further that it was "an occasion long to be remembered, and for the craft in this city (Omaha) it was an event of peculiar pleasure, and we congratulate them on the completion of so suitable a building, and almost envy them in their enjoyment of it. Within these walls may their children's children celebrate with joy and gratitude the motives which prompted the construction of so pleasant and commodious a building." Incidentally the Grand Lodge met in this building for its annual communication in 1877.

The third cornerstone laid in this period of ten years was that of the Baptist Church in Alexandria, Nebraska on May 22, 1879. The Most Worshipful Grand Master, James A. Tulley, officiated. Alexandria Lodge U. D. was granted permission to appear in public procession.

1882-1883

During this period cornerstones were laid for Ashlar Lodge No. 33, of Grand Island, Lone Tree Lodge, No. 30, of Central City, and the Masonic Temple at Lincoln. The cornerstone of the Plattsmouth City Auditorium was laid with full Masonic ceremonies

as was also the Douglas County Court House at Omaha.

1884

The really significant cornerstone laid at this time by the Grand Lodge A. F. & A. M. of Nebraska was that of the State Capitol Building in Lincoln, July 15, 1884. The invitation for the laying of this cornerstone was extended on June 22, 1884 by the Honorable A. G. Kendall, Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings for Nebraska. The M. W. Grand Master, John J. Wemple, officiated.

"The Most Worshipful, the Grand Lodge of Nebraska, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, met in special communication in the new Masonic Temple, at Lincoln, Nebraska, at four o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, July 15, 1884."

It was recorded in the proceedings that a procession was formed consisting of the Brothers of Lincoln Lodge No. 19, Lancaster Lodge, No. 54, many sojourning Freemasons, other societies, and the citizens of Lincoln as well as the surrounding country. Mount Moriah Commandery, No. 4, Knights Templar, provided the general escort. At the site of Capitol Building there was a "vast concourse of citizens." Special music for the occasion was provided. The Grand Master stated the purpose for which this event had been planned. After prayer by the Grand Chaplain, Brother Joseph S. Wright, the Grand Treasurer deposited the casket in the cornerstone, consisting of some twenty five different items including various proceedings of Masonic bodies, newspapers, state and national constitutions, railroad time tables, and a set of United States Proof Coins of 1884. Amidst the "blare of trumpets and the acclamations of the multitude" the stone was lowered into place.

As is customary, the square, level, and plumb were applied to test the stone after which the Grand Master said:

"This cornerstone has been tested by the proper implements of Masonry. I find that the craftsmen have skillfully and faithfully performed their duty, and I do declare the stone to be well formed, true and trusty and correctly laid, according to the rules of our ancient craft.

"Thereafter, the elements of consecration - the corn, the wine and the oil - were then presented, the first as an element of plenty, the second as an emblem of joy and gladness, and the third as an emblem of peace."

At the conclusion of these rites the Grand Master, extending his hands above the stone, made this invocation:

"May the all-bounteous Author of Nature bless all the inhabitants of this beautiful city and state with an abundance of the necessaries, conveniences and comforts of life, assist in the erection of this building, preserve the workmen from accident, long preserve the whole structure from decay, and grant to us all a supply of the corn of nourishment, the wine of refreshment and the oil of joy."

The address was delivered by His Excellency, the Governor of the State of Nebraska and a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge, Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Nebraska, R. W. Furnas.

This address was essentially in two parts, the first relating to the ancient ceremony of the laying of cornerstones, its history and its symbolism. The second related to the growth and development of the State of Nebraska, socially, economically, educationally, and morally. The event was a splendid and memorable success.

1887-1890

Grand Master Charles K. Coutant in addressing the Thirtieth Annual Communication took note of the fact that there are "many occasions when it is highly desirable that the Fraternity should have suitable and proper forms and ceremonies." Mention was made of such ceremonies as installation of officers and burial of the

dead. Besides these the grand officers have been called upon to "lay cornerstones and dedicate halls." He believed that "this grand jurisdiction is without any standard and authoritative forms and ceremonies for these important occasions." None had been published since 1868, so it would seem. It was emphasized by the Grand Master that the Grand Lodge should see to it that the forms and ceremonies be made appropriate to the different occasions and that "they contain all that will add to their utility, beauty, and impressiveness . . . it is reasonable to expect that the grand officers, each year, will be called upon several times to lay the cornerstones of public buildings or dedicate new halls. On such occasions, the forms and ceremonies should be creditable to the Order, and they should utilize whatever will add to their beauty and impressiveness."

The Grand Lodge was reminded that it "has no tools and implements, or vessels for consecrating elements, for use on such occasions, and that the clothing for the grand officers - if it may be called clothing - is most thoroughly delapidated." It was recommended that a committee be named to prepare suitable forms and ceremonies and that they be authorized to purchase, at a reasonable sum, the items above mentioned as well as appropriate and proper clothing for use of the grand officers. (June, 1887)

Appointed to this committee were Brothers Manoah B. Reese (Lodge #59), Charles K. Coutant (Lodge #11), and Alfred G. Hastings (Lodge #19). One year later, this committee made its report, requesting approval of their proposals not only as to cornerstone layings but of the other forms and ceremonies as well. The Grand

Lodge authorized the enlargement of the committee to six members and the continued study of the proposals. The three added members were Brothers Slaughter (89), White (6), and Lininger (3). This committee was requested to report one year later (1889). No report was made.

In June of 1890 (Thirty-Third Annual Communication) advance copies of the "Ceremonials" were received and referred to the committee on Jurisprudence. This committee was to receive suggestions from the special committee as to any modifications and report back to the Grand Lodge before the closing of this communication. The final action taken at the concluding session was that the "Ceremonials" be referred to the Past Grand Masters residing in Omaha, they to report their findings or recommendations to the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Bradner D. Slaughter, for his approval. On the Grand Master's approval the Grand Secretary was empowered to have the same printed.

1892

Grand Master Samuel P. Davidson in his annual address to the Grand Lodge at its Thirty-sixth Annual Communication, assembled in Freemason's Hall, Omaha, June 14th, 1893, related a "marked and pleasing incident attending the laying of the cornerstone of the public school building at Omaha." As reported the notable fact was that "the oil used on that occasion in consecrating the stone laid, was pure olive oil made in Palestine, and presented to the Grand Master for that purpose by Past Grand Master George W. Lininger."

1893

On August 12, 1893, the Grand Master James P. A. Black laid the cornerstone of the Public Library of Omaha. In reporting to the Grand Lodge he paid his respects to Masonry in these words: "Masonry has ever marched hand in hand with educational and charitable institutions, and it was with the greatest pride we laid the foundation stone of this magnificent structure, so notably both charitable and educational, which, in its well-conducted organization, supplies its patrons with the choice literature embodied in a well-selected library of over 40,000 volumes."

1899

Once again Past Grand Master George W. Lininger demonstrated his deep and abiding love for Masonry and its good offices. The Grand Lodge had been invited to lay the cornerstone of the new high school building at Blair on September 22, 1899. Brother Lininger, then Grand Commander of Knights Templar in Nebraska, furnished for the consecration of the cornerstone, the wine and the oil which he had personally brought back from Jerusalem.

The Grand Master, William W. Keysor, officiated and in reporting to the Grand Lodge in June, 1900 took note of the fact that many people had witnessed the ceremonies of cornerstone layings. They had in many instances come many miles to be present and were greatly impressed by what they heard and saw. He felt that the cause of Freemasonry was materially advanced by the appropriateness of the ceremonies, the interest of the Order in public institutions, and the promulgation of Masonic principles in the addresses which were delivered.

The Grand Master had also taken occasion, in his address at this communication to remark that the Grand Masters had for many years been embarrassed in their work at constituting lodges and laying cornerstones by the want of suitable vessels for the corn, wine and oil. Happily this want was noticed by one who never misses an opportunity to manifest his love for our institution. P. G. M. George W. Lininger procured and presented to the Grand Lodge three beautiful Benares brass consecrating vessels. They were, it was announced first used at the laying of the cornerstone of the high school building to be erected at Blair, Nebraska.

1904

On October eighteenth, 1904 the Grand Lodge laid the cornerstone of the Kearney State Normal School, as it was then called. The weather was most inclement. In fact the stone was laid despite a heavy deluge of rain.

State officials were present. The schools in the city were closed for the day. Children, teachers and citizens of the community all joined in the celebration. It was in their eyes the consummation of Kearney's greatest ambitions.

Very recently this writer learned from the Secretary of Bob Morris Lodge, No. 46, that the cornerstone of this building (the first on the campus) was made of concrete just like the walls of the rest of the building and that the inscription read in part "F. and A. M." and not "A. F. & A. M." as it should have been.

1906

November 11, 1906 marks the date on which the Grand Lodge

officers were to have laid the cornerstone of the new school building at Creighton. The Jerusalem Commandery of Knights Templar, No. 24 of Bloomfield was present to serve as escort for the occasion.

In an unprecedented move by certain persons in the community, a request was made of the Grand Master that "for the sake of harmony in the community" the letters A. F. and A. M. be erased from the stone before the officers proceed with the laying of the cornerstone or that the stone be laid with the engraved side of the stone facing to the inside of the wall. The outer face of the cornerstone, it was suggested, could later be engraved but with the words "Grand Lodge of Masons" left off.

In reply to this request the Grand Master, .M.'.W.'.Zuingle M. Baird, informed these persons that the Grand Lodge had been invited by the proper officials of Creighton to "lay a cornerstone agreeable to the ancient ceremonies and customs of the Fraternity and since an objection had been raised by one of the authorities that had previously concurred in the invitation, the ceremonies as far as the Grand Lodge of Nebraska was concerned would not take place."

Grand Master Baird, in reporting this incident to the Grand Lodge assembled for its Fiftieth Annual Communication on June 4th 1907 at Omaha, reported that "the balance of the day was enjoyed by the visitors in looking over the beautiful city of Creighton. Later in the day the visitors, including Grand Lodge officers and Masonic brethren, sat down to a sumptuous dinner prepared by the

ladies. "The cornerstone which was to have been laid was brought to the lodge room, and in the presence of all was placed in the northeast corner."

1916

The laying of the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple being erected in Omaha was, without doubt, the largest and most successful Masonic gathering that had ever been held in the State of Nebraska. It was estimated that the attendance was larger than that of the Semi-centennial which was held in Omaha on September 23, 1907. We quote from the Grand Master's address (June, 1918):

"One of the interesting features of the ceremony was the gavel used. The history of this gavel is quite interesting. It was of great antiquity and came from an Egyptian tomb and presented to the Grand Lodge of Nebraska by M. W. George W. Lininger, P.G.M., who was present at the opening of the tomb when the gavel was found.

This gavel was no myth, as it shows evidence of having been in actual service and was undoubtedly used by some stone-cutter. Nature of the wood was hard to determine, but it was much heavier than any now in use of equal size."

Another pleasant feature of this ceremony was the fact that there were present three Brethren who had forty years earlier helped to lay the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple now being used. These three Brethren were George H. Thummel who had been Grand Master and had presided at the ceremonies held 40 years earlier, Brother Louis H. Kory of Omaha and Brother Eben K. Long of Plattsmouth.

1924

Beginning with the year 1924 and continuing through 1932 the records show that for this 8 year period there were no less than sixty (60) occasions when the Grand Lodge was called upon to

officiate at the laying of cornerstones. This was a period of much construction. The Grand Lodge officers were called upon to lay in this period almost one fifth of the cornerstones that had been laid in the entire first one hundred years of the history of Masonry in Nebraska. It is true that there was also much activity immediately preceding the tragic period of World War I and the United States entry into that conflict.

On June 3, 1924 the Grand Lodge was invited to lay the cornerstone of the new infirmary at the Masonic Home in Platts-mouth. Of this occasion much could be said. Let it suffice to here record some of the words that were spoken:

"A service more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle. . .this service carries us far back beyond the earliest dawning of recorded time, where, from the shadows of pre-historic ages, the archeologists of today are excavating the remains of cornerstones which were laid so long ago that the mind is staggered in the effort to count the years which have come and gone since primeval man gathered as we have today to consecrate the rearing of an altar to his gods."

In Holy Writ, the listeners were reminded, by the orator of what was recorded in the First Book of Kings, Chapter 16, verse 34, that in the rebuilding at Jericho in the days of Ahab "did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua, the son of Nun."

The Grand Master Robert R. Dickson referred to this ceremony of cornerstone laying in these words:

"It is a custom of our Fraternity that should be encouraged and accepted by a Grand Master to the exclusion of all other official duties--and should be attended by all officers.

"It is based upon some of the underlying and fundamental principles of Masonry. It reflects and portrays man's duty to home, country and God."

1927

The M.°W.° Grand Master Edwin D. Crites in his annual address in June 1927 speaking of the ceremony of cornerstone laying had this to say:

"I believe that no opportunity should be overlooked to conduct these ceremonies under proper conditions and restrictions. Our public appearances are not numerous--but when they do occur should be dignified and of such character not only to elicit the interest, but to command the respect of any person who may witness them. A well executed ceremony of laying a cornerstone invariably results in the quickening of the Masonic spirit and is a benefit to the Masonic organization of the community in which it is laid. Opportunities of this description are too often lost through the negligence of public authorities having the responsibility for the construction of the building, or the officers of the subordinate lodges in not concerning themselves with the arrangements until it is everlastingly too late to make them. . . Indeed many of the officers of the subordinate lodges do not seem to have the energy necessary to arrange for such a ceremony, notwithstanding the fact that the services of the Grand Master, the Grand Marshal, and the Deputy Custodians are at all times available."

Such statements or observations as the foregoing which had been made from time to time by Grand Masters are, indeed, indicative of the concern of Grand Lodge officers and have been most valuable in safeguarding the excellencies of the ceremony and keeping them in conformity as to their utility, beauty and impressiveness.

Some ten years later the Most Worshipful Grand Master William C. Ramsey (1936) emphasized again how important it was that the officers of the constituent lodges be alert to their own opportunity of making known to the local leaders and responsible

citizens the readiness and willingness of the Grand Lodge to accept invitations for the laying of cornerstones of public school buildings and other community structures as these are planned and brought under construction. Local Masonic Brethren must be alert and awake to these opportunities and clearly advise these local officials of the appropriateness of such ceremonies and their effect in cementing peace, good will and harmony in a community.

As Ernest V. Schiefelbein said in 1950, the laying of a cornerstone by the Masonic Fraternity "represents a venerable occasion to be appreciated by the community." When properly done, he felt that this short but dignified ceremony would not only reflect much credit upon the Fraternity but would also provide a real stimulus and fine inspiration for all the citizens.

1944

An unusual experience to which the Grand Lodge officers attention was called was the discovery that when the Bellevue authorities had given approval for the erection of an addition to the already existing school building of that community, the cornerstone of the original structure which was laid at a much earlier time had been concealed within the original structure. The Grand Master having been advised of this situation sent representatives to Bellevue to ascertain the facts. After a conference of these representatives with the Board of Education it was agreed that the Board of Education would secure a new face-stone to replace the one that was covered. This stone was to be identical in size and upon it there was to be engraved the same inscription. The new stone was to be placed in the

northeast corner of the new structure. The contents within the older stone were not disturbed. It was certified by the builders that to have removed the original cornerstone would have endangered the whole structure of the original and enlarged building.

1951

One of the most recent statements of the undoubted position of the Masonic Fraternity relative to its support of public education as a basic requirement in the insuring of our free government was that of the late Grand Master, John S. Hedelund, who, when addressing the Grand Lodge in 1951 said:

"With our firm belief in and support of the Public School System, I am happy to let this public ceremony /of laying cornerstones/ stand before the public as testimony of that fact and I am sure that the children who witnessed it will carry that memory in their adult years as a reminder that they must maintain this tradition of American freedom,"

Again, another of our Grand Masters, Thomas J. Aron, urged the year following that Masons should remember that the Grand Lodge "is happy to lay the cornerstones of buildings erected for the worship of God, for education or charitable objects or for the administration of justice and free government."

1963

One cannot doubt after a review of so significant a history of celebrations of the custom of "laying cornerstones" that the Masonic Fraternity in Nebraska has made a most significant contribution to the strengthening of the bonds of brotherhood. It has made a contribution to the cultural, educational and civic life of our commonwealth that will be felt for the years to come.

The precedents for this in America extend back for more than

two hundred years and even earlier in the British Isles. This practice was, in fact, inherited by speculative Freemasonry from medieval and for more ancient times. This custom we are assured has never been considered as being denominational or sectarian. Speculative Masons are, in fact, the custodians of a practice that in ancient times was the particular concern of what were then known as operative Masons or builders. Today as speculative Masons we are but the symbols of the "builders" of an earlier period in the long history of man and as such we are rightly to be considered as acting in the ancient spirit as these operative Masons were said to have "laid the foundation."

Of the ceremony itself we need only to remind ourselves that it was in America that there was formulated a "precise ritual" for this Masonic ceremony. Apparently there has never heretofore existed any established Masonic form or ritual for this ceremony other than that in America. As reported by Ray Baker Harris, Past Grand Master of Masons in the District of Columbia and Librarian of the Supreme Council 330, A. & A.S.R., Southern Jurisdiction, and the author of a book published by the Supreme Council and entitled "The Laying of Cornerstones" he relates the story of Freemasonry's part in preserving the practice of one of the "world's most ancient customs." It would appear that it is still the practice in England to "improvise a cornerstone ceremony considered appropriate to each particular occasion" and that the United Grand Lodge of England prescribes no "standard ritual for this ceremony."

The Grand Lodge, Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Nebraska has throughout its history sought, and that wisely, to

adhere strictly to the adopted ritual for this ceremony. It has not hesitated to keep it as utilitarian, beautiful and impressive as possible. Any changes have been solely in the interests of preserving and perfecting these qualities.

This document, presented at this time, is not in its final form. It is the intention of the Grand Lodge that in its final printed form there will be included pictures and other illustrations which will add considerably to the interestingness of this account.

It is expected also that some more detail will be added, such as an enlarged story of historical background and a more complete statement of the symbolism of the ceremony.