

Byron Public Library

1858

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1979

**DEDICATION
of
TEMPLE**

BYRON LODGE

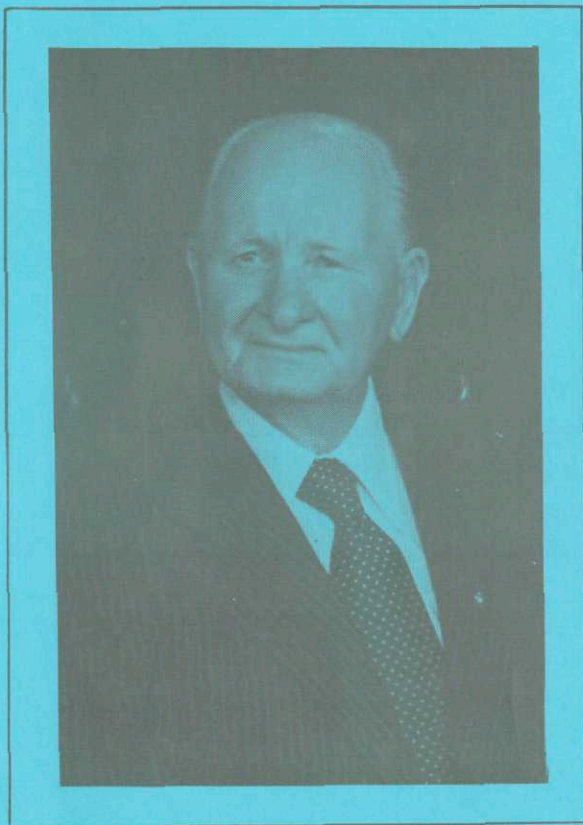
No. 274

A.F. & A.M.

BYRON, ILLINOIS



AUGUST 5, 1979



VANCE C. VAN TASSELL

*Most Worshipful Grand Master
A.F. & A.M. of the State of Illinois*

BYRON PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT

DEDICATION OF TEMPLE

A.F. & A.M. BYRON LODGE NO. 274

Byron, Illinois

2:00 P.M., D.S.T.

PROGRAM

OPENING.....Occasional Grand Lodge
GRAND ENTRY.....Vance Van Tassell, W.G.M.
of the State of Illinois
and Grand Lodge Officers
DEDICATION..... By The Grand Lodge
INTRODUCTIONS
ADDRESS.....Vance Van Tassell, W.G.M.
RECESSIONAL
CLOSING.....Occasional Grand Lodge

GENERAL COMMITTEE

Coordinator
Dalmer L. Sherman

Reception
William E. Eickman L. T. Beitel Charles Spatz

Refreshments
Maurice Gambrel Homer Snyder Morris Altenburg

Properties
Wayne Thomas and Lodge Officers

Parking
Martin Tomsic

Publicity
Charles Spatz

History
Dalmer L. Sherman

CHARTER OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

Charles F. Wertz	Worshipful Master
Charles F. Lewis	Senior Warden
E. Connor	Junior Warden
Anning O. Campbell	
Eleazer Lockwood	
J. Goodwill	
George Wertz	

OFFICERS 1979

Wayne Allen Thomas	Worshipful Master
Kurt Roland Olson	Senior Warden
Maurice J. Gambrel	Junior Warden
Morris Winfred Altenburg	Treasurer
Lester Thomas Beitel	Secretary
Marvin LeRoy Smith	Chaplain
Douglas Harry Love	Senior Deacon
Cuthbert Charles Becker	Junior Deacon
John William King	Senior Steward
Cecil Gilbert White	Junior Steward
William Francis Michaux, III	Marshal
Duane Ellsworth Geiger	Tyler
R.W.Bro. Charles Spatz	District Deputy Grand Master 3rd Northern District

Byron Lodge No. 274 A.F. & A.M. started its new building July 30, 1977 and had its first meeting there in June 1978. The structure is being financed in part by pledges from members and gifts from friends of the Lodge. Many donations of material and labor have made steady progress possible.

DONATIONS

Land	Bro. Herman Ashelford and his wife, Lu
Transfer of Deed	Bro. Blaine Auker
Plans	W.Bro. Manford McBride
Septic System	W.Bro. Earl Norup and Son
Footing Excavation	Chas. Wagner, Jr.
Concrete Walls (Labor)	Clark McClenthen
Flat Concrete Work (Labor)	Geo. Jones
Sand and Gravel	Byron Material
Sand For Fill	Bro. Herman Ashelford
Rock For Drive and Parking Lot	Macklin Bros. and Farmco, Inc.
All Excavating, Backfilling,; Finish Grading of Drive and Parking Lot, Hauling and Placing Road Rock	Bro. Emery Aurand and Bro. Butch Aurand Construction
Structural Steel	Bro. Maurice Gambrel
Steel Erection	Phalen Steel Erectors
Steel Panels, Windows and Doors and Insulation	Robert Hallen, Inc.
Plumbing Labor, Material at Cost	Bro. Burnell Bain
Drinking Fountain	NyDel Supplies
Discount on Concrete	Byron Ready Mix
Discount on Well Drilling	Jonas Martin
Labor on Electric Entrance	Byron Electric

OTHER GIFTS

Flag Pole	Mrs. Donald Wedig <i>In Memory of Her Husband</i>
Letters For Sign and Lighting	Lu Ashelford
Lighted "G" in the East	W.Bro. L. T. Beitel



PAST MASTERS OF BYRON LODGE NO. 274

*Chas. F. Wertz	1858-1859	A. J. Falk	1933
*J. S. Kosier	1860-1874	*S. B. Humm	1934
*J. W. Mack	1875	*William Frailey	1935
*J. S. Kosier	1876	*Carl Spalding	1936
*N. H. York	1877	*John U. Rieken	1937-1938
*J. C. Davis	1878	*Samuel Wrigley	1939-1942
*J. S. Kosier	1879-1880	E. J. Rieken	1943-1944
*E. W. Thompson	1881-1882	*C. A. Nighswonger	1945-1946
*W. A. Grove	1883-1886	Homer Snyder	1947
*C. A. Apgar	1887	*Marshall C. Evans	1948
*J. H. Helm	1888-1891	*John E. McAfee	1949
*C. A. Apgar	1892-1894	*Marshall C. Evans	1950
*J. S. Kosier	1895-1896	*H. Clark Lewis	1951
*J. H. Helm	1897-1899	Joseph C. Cruson	1952
*T. L. Hanger	1900	John Gronewold	1953-1954
*F. A. Melio	1901-1902	*C. A. McAfee	1955
*Lyman Dexter	1903	Martin Tomsic	1956
*A. H. Kosier	1904-1907	*Earl Barnhart	1957
*J. M. Heald	1908-1909	G. D. Kennedy	1958
*Ray Barrick	1910	*Russell Dennis	1959
*A. R. Mize	1911-1912	W. T. Fitzgerald	1960
*C. E. Hewitt	1913	Wilbur Whetsel	1961
*F. R. Kendall	1914-1916	Ralph Wright	1962
*G. F. Bunn	1917	Earl Norup	1963
*J. M. Heald	1918	*Geo. Knight	1964
*Ward Kendall	1919	S. J. Falk	1965
*L. J. Stukenburg	1920	Manford McBride	1966
*A. H. Hewitt	1921	Walter Scott	1967
*H. P. Stearns	1922	W. G. Jeffries	1968
*O. F. Bakener	1923	Wm. E. Eickman	1969
*G. W. Pettit	1924	Donald Arn	1970
*G. W. Sherman	1925	Donald Baughman	1971
*J. T. Yuill	1926-1927	Ronald E. Millard	1972
*L. J. Stukenberg	1928	Ronald Beem	1973-1974
*H. A. Saberhagen	1929	Rodger Oesterheld	1975
*E. B. Sherman	1930	Wm. F. Michaux, III	1976
*Raymond Hoffman	1931	Douglas Love	1977
*H. E. Bittner	1932	Duane Geiger	1978

* Denotes Deceased.

LIVING FIFTY-YEAR MEMBERS

Peter H. Brayton
Wilbur F. Dixon
Arlington J. Falk
Frank A. Pettit
Arthur E. Pierson
Gerald B. Ring

William J. Schobert
Dalmer L. Sherman
Sherman E. Wickwire
Clarence C. Yetter
Roy F. Kenyon
W. Allen Strang

THE HISTORY OF BYRON LODGE NO. 274

1858-1868

By 1858, Byron had become a fairly well settled village. Churches and a school had been established, homes built, places of business opened, and farm lands cleared and cultivated. Now the Masons, among the pioneers, had time to miss the Lodges they had left and to realize that, for them, the new settlement would not be complete until one had been formed here.

In the Spring of this year, seven Master Masons met and organized according to requirement, then petitioned the Grand Lodge for authority to meet under dispensation, pending the grant of a charter. These Charter Officers and Members are listed on a preceding page. The request was granted and Byron Lodge held its first meeting under dispensation on March 25, 1858.

The minutes of this meeting show that it was a busy one. By-Laws sent by the Grand Lodge were adopted. A committee was appointed to find a suitable meeting place, furniture and jewels. Five petitions were read and referred. Meetings under dispensation continued until Fall.

A proper hall, over the store of A. O. Campbell, was rented for thirty dollars a year. Fourteen petitions were acted upon during this time. Eleven new members were initiated, seven passed and six raised. Grand Lodge dues and Charter fee were paid on September 16th. The Charter was granted at the Grand Lodge Communication in October 1858.

Byron Lodge No. 274 was formally constituted October 21, 1858. Right Worthy Deputy Grand Master, E. H. Baker, was present to perform this ceremony and to install the following officers:

Charles Wertz, W.M.	J. P. Martin, Secretary
Charles F. Lewis, S.W.	Royal Putnam, S.D.
Nelson H. York, J.W.	J. P. Smith, J.D.
Anning O. Campbell, Treasurer	George Wertz, Tyler

Regular Communications were set for the Thursday on, or before, each full moon. The hour, early candlelight. Dues were \$1.00. The first regular election of officers was held December 16, 1858. All of the elective officers were retained. They were installed January 13, 1859, with the help of Samuel Davis Lodge and Brother D. C. McNeil, Past Grand Orator.

The minutes of the ensuing meetings indicate that there was much interest in Masonry in Byron. Many petitions were received, and many degrees conferred, often with the help of Rockford Lodge No. 102. Names which figured most prominently in the history of local affairs also appeared on the rapidly growing membership list of Byron Lodge.

The excellent records of these early meetings show a well organized Lodge, active in every phase of Masonic work. Much emphasis was put upon the high moral standards which Masonry expects of its members, and no lowering of these ideals was countenanced. During the first ten years, three brothers were brought to trial for conduct unbecoming to a Mason and were punished by either expulsion or indefinite suspension. The action in each case was made public. Such incidents occurred from time to time throughout these early years.

Charity had an important place in the early life of the Lodge. The minutes record many times when "aid was given to a traveling brother" or money sent to another Lodge upon request. Mention is made of a time when the Lodge furnished all things necessary for the burial of a brother and his small child, and helped the widow with a gift of money.

A proper interest was always felt in the civic affairs of the community. At the meeting of June 20, 1861, a motion was made and passed that the Lodge "form a procession and march in regular order, in a parade to celebrate the 88th year of American Independence." This rather unusual procedure is explained by the fact that the greatest Independence Day celebration ever held in Ogle County took place in Byron that year. About 10,000 people attended.

Patriotic fervor was at a high pitch just then for the War between the States had begun only months before. The climax of the day's entertainment was a sham battle between the Union, represented by a Company of Infantry from Byron, and the Rebels, a similar band from Leaf River. So realistic did the skirmishing become that the Rebels were swiftly captured and the citizen who was impersonating Jefferson Davis fled to the safety of a nearby cornfield.

Fifteen members of Byron Lodge served in the Army in the Civil War. The Tyler's sword was a war memento. From the very first meeting, Charter Tyler, Brother George Wertz, had loaned his sword to the Lodge. In appreciation of this service, Brother Wertz's dues were remitted each year. Upon his death, Brother Jeremiah Jordan gave the Lodge the sword "he had carried with honor in defense of the U.S. Government."

June 1860

Charter Worshipful Master, Brother Charles Wertz, retired from office and Brother John Kosier was elected to succeed him. Brother Kosier served in this office for 14 consecutive years.

July 1863

The Lodge gladly responded to a request from Oregon Masons to sponsor a petition for a new lodge there. The meeting place was changed to the North Room on the second floor of the Byron Academy, rent thirty dollars per year.

March 1864

A motion was passed to have the regular Communications on the same dates as they are held today. A few meetings later, 8:00 P.M. was set as the official hour.

August 11, 1864

Negotiations were begun to buy the "Byron Schoolhouse" for a Lodge Hall. This building, erected in 1836, was the town's first school. It had been abandoned several years before in favor of a larger place, a brick structure called the Byron Academy. The Lodge purchased the property described as, "Block 17 in the Village of Byron and all of the buildings thereon," on November 22, 1864. The deed was filed January 6, 1865.

It was necessary to build a second floor on the building thus acquired to fit it for Lodge use. The money for this was raised by subscription. Other improvements were made gradually, as the Lodge could spare the money needed. This remained the Masonic Temple for many years. It was formally dedicated at an open meeting December 23, 1869. Brother E. H. Baker, Deputy Grand Master, officiated.

It is interesting to note that the School District, having sold this building to the Masons, twice later rented the lower room for school use. The first time was in 1879 when the increased enrollment forced the removal of some classes to the Masonic Hall and others to an empty store, until the school building was enlarged. The rent was sixty dollars per year, payable quarterly. In 1905, the remodeled school burned and again classes met in the Masonic Hall. The Hall served a variety of purposes in the community. Other organizations met there regularly.

The lower room was a polling place on election days. Many socials were held in the Hall, or on the grounds. At one meeting, rates were set for the rental of the Hall as follows: "Rate for regular meetings shall be \$.50 in summer and \$1.00 in winter per session; for balls and shows the rate shall be \$2.50 in summer and \$3.00 in winter per exhibition."

December 28, 1865

The Masons offered 4 square rods of ground in the northwest corner of their property to the Byron Monument Association as a site for a Memorial to Byron Township men killed in the Civil War. The offer was declined, and the Monument placed at the intersection of Second and Chestnut Streets where it still stands.

April 1868

Byron Lodge participated in laying the corner stone of the new Methodist Church in Pecatonica. The placing of corner stones according to Masonic Rite was evidently a custom of the times.

A short time later, Byron Lodge was invited to take part in laying the corner stone of the Winnebago County Court House in Rockford. Twenty members attended this ceremony.

1868-1916

The records for the next several years show that the Lodge was busy with routine affairs. Constant effort was made to improve the Masonic Property and to add to furnishings and equipment. There was a steady increase in membership. All through the years, almost every meeting brought an appeal from another Lodge for Charity for one of its members. Byron Lodge always responded to these requests. On the social side were Masonic Festivals and an occasional family night.

November 25, 1871

A subscription was taken for the relief of victims of the Chicago Fire.

February 1, 1883

At this meeting, a committee was instructed to purchase two columns which still stand in the Lodge Room today. These are the brazen pillars used in the Second Degree Floor Lecture.

August and September 1884

A floor was laid in the lower room of the Hall at a cost of \$29.68. The building was painted -- three coats -- for \$85.00, and 575 feet of board sidewalk was laid.

May 1885

A committee appointed on fencing the grounds and setting out trees, reported that the work was finished. One hundred eight trees were planted, including a row of elms around the outer edge of the entire block.

January 20, 1878

A motion was made to "take steps toward having a Chapter of Order of the Eastern Star formed here." J. C. Woodburn, S. B. Shuart, and R. J. Woodcock were appointed to act on this project. They reported at the next Communication that a proper petition had been drawn up and sent to Grand Chapter, O.E.S.

May 1898

A committee was appointed to replace all dead elm trees in the border planting. The same brothers were asked to be a standing committee on the care of trees on the grounds.

October 17, 1901

The Masonic Voice-Review was given a vote of thanks for two engravings entitled, "Lafayette Opening the Lodge" and "Washington Closing the Lodge." A committee was named to have the engravings properly framed. They still hang in the Lodge Room.

1914

About this time, discussion began as to the advisability of selling the Masonic Block as residential property and building a new temple. The plan was finally agreed upon. The first lot, No. 11, was sold in the summer of 1914 to Mr. and Mrs. H. R. Humm, who started building their home in August, 1914. Lots 8, 9 and 10 were sold the following year. The last entry concerning the disposition of lots was on March 16, 1916. Only two were left. The Lodge bought the Spalding property, where the bank now stands, in 1914.

March 16, 1916

The last Communication was held in the Masonic Hall. Brother F. R. Kendall was W.M. Brother J. H. Kosier gave a short history of the Lodge. A motion was made to move to temporary quarters in the F. Brayton Building on March 22nd. There was a lively interest in building a new Temple. Plans were drawn and bids received. However, the war years intervened and the plans were deferred.

January 16, 1918

The Lodge voted to remit dues of all service personnel. Eighteen members were in the Armed Forces in the First World War.

January 15, 1920

A committee was appointed to find new quarters. The report at the next meeting was that the Second Floor of the Andrew Jackson Store Building was available. A committee was named to buy new Lodge furniture.

June 1920

The Lodge moved to the Jackson Building.

January 1923

The Lodge was notified that it was a beneficiary in the will of Mrs. Fransula Creagor, a daughter of one of the very early members. The membership in this year was 148.

1938

The last two lots on the former Masonic Block were sold. The lot known as the Spalding property was sold to the First National Bank, September 1951.

December 18, 1941

The Lodge remitted the dues of all service members. Fourteen members were in service in the Second World War and seven in the Korean Conflict.

July 20, 1950

Resolution was adopted to move to the Second Floor of Brother H. B. Walker's Building. The necessary remodeling was planned and the carpet selected for the Lodge Room.

October 1950

The Lodge was established in its new hall, with a twenty-five year lease, specifying a monthly rental rate of fifty dollars.

December 1966

The Lodge voted to send fruit to widows of members of 274 and to shut-in members. This became an annual custom.

1967

Byron Chapter No. 394, Order of the Eastern Star surrendered its charter and affiliated with Winnebago Chapter. When it ended its co-tenancy in Byron Lodge Hall the Chapter gave the Lodge all furnishings, dishes, silver, appliances and kitchen equipment belonging to the Star.

October 8, 1969

A dinner and reception was held in honor of Bro. Dalmer L. Sherman who received the 33^o in Scottish Rite Masonry in Boston on September 25th. The 33^o Masons in Northern Illinois and their wives were invited to join members of 274 and ladies for the occasion. Worshipful Brother William E. Eickman, Master of the Lodge, was the host. The dinner was in charge of W.Bros. Gordon D. Kennedy, John Gronewold and their wives. A folio containing a record of the event, pictures and autographs of those present was presented to Bro. Del and roses were given to his wife, Ardis.

July 16, 1970

The Lodge bought and installed two air conditioners.

February 1971

The First National Bank notified the Lodge that it had purchased the building which houses the Lodge rooms. The lease signed in 1950 will remain in effect until the termination date in 1975. Thereafter, the Lodge may rent the hall on a monthly basis at the same rate. Eventually the bank intends to raze the building to provide more parking space for its patrons.

March 5, 1974

The Lodge was assured that there would be no change for at least two years because of a lease held by the first floor tenants.

August 6, 1976

The Building Committee reported that Bro. Herman Ashelford had graciously offered to donate land if the Lodge decided to erect a new building. This information was obtained through the courtesy of Bro. Emery Aurand. Bro. Ashelford is a member of Creston Lodge.

April 7, 1977

The Lodge was notified that it must vacate the present meeting place in September because a demolition crew is scheduled to raze the building and prepare the ground for a parking space before winter.

The Building Committee reported that Bros. Herman Ashelford, Emery Aurand and Maurice Gambrel had selected lots one and two of Ashelford's Lakeview Subdivision as a building site. This is a triangular piece of land of approximately two acres located at the intersection of Route 2 and Ashelford Drive. It is a gift to the Lodge from Herman Ashelford and his wife, Lu.

At this time, Bro. Maurice Gambrel offered to donate the structural steel for a building 50 by 100 by 10 feet high.

Discussion followed on the subject of an interim meeting place and the moving and storing of goods.

Bro. Aurand reported that he, Bros. Ashelford and Gambrel had staked out the land and that Bro. Blaine Auker had offered to attend to the transfer of the deed, to check the zoning requirements and secure the building permit.

The standing Building Committee was enlarged by three members.

May 5, 1977

The Worshipful Master appointed a Finance Committee for the building project.

July 7, 1977

A resolution was introduced to meet at Meridian Sun Lodge Temple at Holcomb on a temporary basis. This was laid over until the August meeting to permit notification of members.

The Lodge gave formal approval to building a new Temple. A decision was made to use steel construction, and W.Bro. Martin Tomsic was appointed coordinator for the building project.

July 39, 1977

The ground breaking ceremony took place at 10:30 A.M. at the building site. Bro. Herman Ashelford and Lu participated in the rite, after which they presented the Worshipful Master with the deed to the land. The event, which was well attended, was covered by a local TV station.

August 4, 1977

Bro. Martin Tomsic reported that the building had been staked out and digging for the footing had begun.

The question of meeting at Holcomb was approved. The first meeting there will be in September.

August 20, 1977, was set as a date for moving out of the present meeting place. Bro. Maurice Gambrel offered a van for moving and the storage of Lodge furnishings, equipment and appliances. All items belonging to the Lodge, including millwork and plumbing fixtures are to be moved.

September 1, 1977

This was the first meeting in Holcomb. Since the work of finishing the building is to be done by Lodge members on a volunteer basis, Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings as work dates were accepted by those present. Priority is to be given to the finishing of the Lodge Room.

October 16, 1977

W.Bro. Martin Tomsic's report on the progress of the building showed that all concrete work has been done, the building is up, the roof is on, the insulation, gutters and spouting are in place, and the building is enclosed for the winter. The well has been dug, the septic system installed, and an application for electrical service has been made.

November 3, 1977

W.Bro. Tomsic reported that the brick for facing the West exterior wall had been delivered and the lawn had been graded.

Bro. Morris Altenburg proposed that Bro. Herman Ashelford, now a fifty-year member of Creston Lodge, be made an Honorary Member of Byron Lodge. This motion was adopted.

1978

Interior work went ahead steadily. Members worked alone, in pairs or with the group that came on designated work periods. Finishing the Lodge Room was the first objective. It was designed with the same dimensions as the old room so that carpeting and furnishings would fit. By the last week in May, construction here was finished, the lighting installed and the carpeting and furnishings in place. The Tyler's Room and Preparation Room were also ready for use.

June 1978

The first meeting was held in the new Temple. Meridian Sun Lodge had set no fee for the use of the Holcomb facility so the Lodge voted to send a check for the same rent paid to the bank in appreciation for fraternal cooperation.

July 6, 1978

Bro. Maurice Gambrel reported he had a corner stone for the building and a stained glass window with a Masonic design. He asked for suggestions as to placement.

October 5, 1978

Use of electric heat for the Lodge Room was approved.

Bro. Morris Altenburg announced that Mrs. Lu Ashelford wanted to buy plastic letters to place the name and number of the Lodge on the West brick wall facing the highway. Work continued on the inside finishing.

March 1, 1979

Zem Zem of Tebala Temple has offered to put on a breakfast in Byron for the benefit of the Building Fund. The finishing of the kitchen is now imperative.

May 3, 1979

The date for the dedication of the new Temple by the Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois had been set for August 5, 1979 at 2:00 P.M.

At this date all plumbing in the building was completed. Construction in the kitchen was finished, the cabinets, counters, and appliances installed and the Dining Room cleaned out so it could be used for the breakfast on May 13th.

May 13, 1979

About 700 people attended the Zem Zem Breakfast. The cooking was done outdoors. Seating in the Dining Room was supplemented by 10 additional tables and 100 chairs borrowed from the Stillman Valley Fire Department. The advance ticket sale amounted to \$2,083.50. Expenses were \$864.00. \$1,219.50 was the sum made for the Building Fund.

June 7, 1979

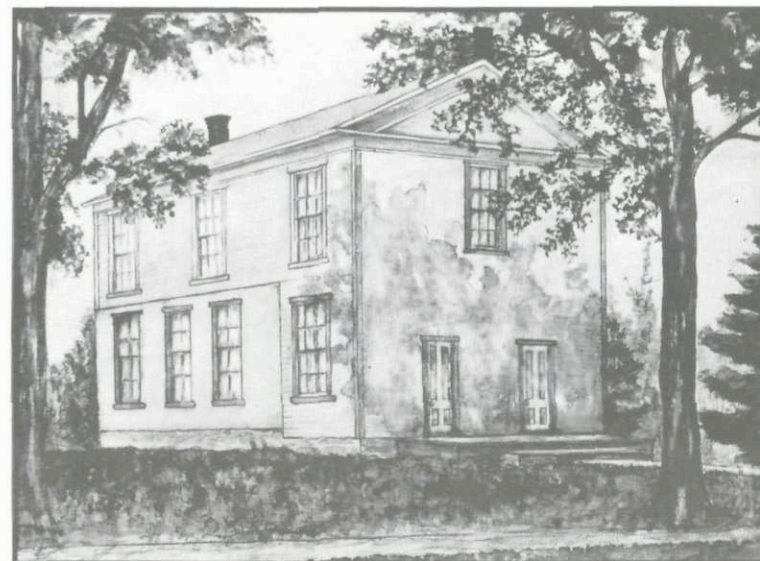
Fifty-year cards and pins were given to Bro. Roy F. Kenyon, W.Bro. Arlington J. Falk, and Bros. Clarence Yetter and W. Allen Strang. The publishing of the Lodge history for the Dedication Booklet was approved.

August 5, 1979

The Byron Masonic Temple was dedicated by the Grand Lodge of The State of Illinois.

With the dedication of this Temple, Byron Lodge begins a new era. For the first time in 65 years, the meeting place belongs to the Brotherhood. The membership is 142.

Although there is still work to be done, the Temple has been dedicated to Free Masonry, Virtue and Universal Benevolence. As they work to perfect the Temple, the members will recall that they must also work to perpetuate these principles which are the strength of Masons everywhere.



OLD MASONIC TEMPLE

BYRON

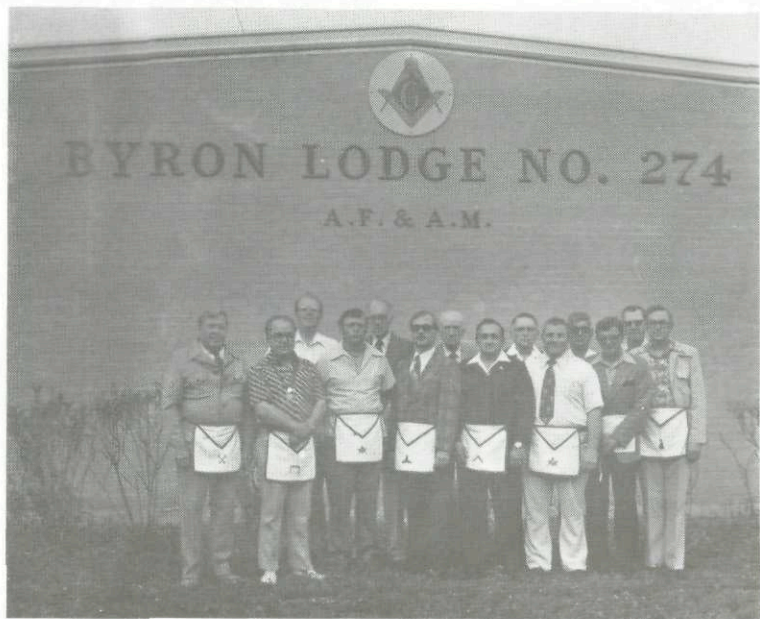
CHARTERED 1856

Chas. F. Wertz W.M.
Edmond Connor S.W.
J. D. Campbell J.W.

CHARTER OFFICERS

CHAS. F. WERTZ
 CHAS. F. LEWIS
 E. CONNOR
 EDMOND CONNOR
 A. D. CAMPBELL
 J. GODDARD
 ELEAZER LOCKWOOD

CHARTER MEMBERS



HERMAN ASHELFORD
AND LU