

The History of Millersville Lodge # 126

Indianapolis, IN

The group of Masons who would soon become Millersville Lodge No. 126, F. & A.M., first convened March 6, 1852 in the home of William J. Millard, Jr., in Millersville on what is now the bustling northeast side of Indianapolis.

In the mid-1800s, Millersville was a rural area populated with tradesmen and farmers clustered around the water and assorted mills of Fall Creek. It was a time when Freemasonry was growing everywhere in Indiana and the men of Millersville wanted a Lodge close to home.

Operating under a dispensation granted March 3, 1852 by A.C. Downey, Most Worshipful Grand Master of Indiana, the first meeting took place in Millard's living room. A Lodge of Master Masons was opened, officers were elected, the by-laws were written, and the story of Millersville Lodge began.

The village of Millersville, situated north and west of Fall Creek seven miles north-northeast of Indianapolis, showed up on maps but was never formally laid out. Located in an area designated as Washington Township in 1822, the defining Millersville landmark was a gristmill owned by William Winpenny, not far from the current location of Millersville Lodge at Fall Creek Boulevard and Emerson Avenue.

To this day, 150 years later, no one at Millersville Lodge has been able to learn conclusively whether "Millersville" was named for Winpenny's and other mills in the area, or as a variation possibly on "Millardsville". It is known that William J. Millard Sr., the father of the Lodge's first Worshipful Master, was named the village postmaster in 1844. Prior to 1838, the area was known as Brubaker's Mill.

In 1852 the city of Indianapolis was populated by approximately 8,000 people. Millard Fillmore was president of the United States. The Singer sewing machine was invented, and a Rock Island train was the first to cross the Mississippi River. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was published, and Napoleon the Third became emperor of France.

Millersville was rural but more than just an outpost. It was a midpoint and way station among horse and wagon trails linking Indianapolis, Waverly, Pendleton and Allisonville. Tolls for the old Pendleton Toll Road, currently East 56th Street, were collected in Millersville. The cost for a horse and rider was three cents.

Millard was elected first Worshipful Master of the Lodge, a position he would hold for 11 of the Lodge's first 13 years. At that first meeting Hiram Haverstick proposed a code of by-laws which were adopted. Petitions were presented from William Winpenny, James W. Brown and John L. Brown.

The next Millersville gathering was a stated meeting April 4 on the third floor of Winpenny's mill, where the Lodge would meet until October of 1853. It is Winpenny's mill that is depicted on Millersville Lodge's official logo.

At that second meeting both Browns received their Entered Apprentice degrees. At the following meeting April 17, Winpenny received his Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason degrees, and the Browns received their Fellowcraft and Master Mason degrees.

Continuing Lodge activities under dispensation, Joseph Coppersmith received his Entered Apprentice degree on May 1, 1852.

It was at a stated meeting on May 25, 1852 that Millersville Lodge received its charter as Indiana F. & A.M. Lodge #126 and elected its first official line of officers. That original charter still hangs on the East Wall of the current Millersville Lodge Room.

First Millersville Officers

Under Dispensation Elected March 6, 1852		First Chartered Line Elected May 25, 1852
William F. Millard, Jr.	Worshipful Master	William F. Millard, Jr.
J.F. Lemon	Senior Warden	J.F. Lemon
Jacob Spahr	Junior Warden	John L. Brown
William Bacon	Treasurer	Jacob Spahr
Hiram Haverstick	Secretary	William Winpenny
William R. DeFord	Senior Deacon	Hiram Haverstick
J. Nesbit	Junior Deacon	William J. Millard Sr.
William J. Millard, Sr.	Steward and Tyler	James W. Brown

Although it is not described in Millersville Lodge early records, research accomplished for the lodge's centennial in 1952 established that William Winpenny financed and was responsible for building the Millersville Lodge Hall that was dedicated October 26, 1853.

The Hall was located on the west side of Millersville Road about halfway between Fall Creek and 56th Street, roughly a half mile south of the Lodge's current location. The site is still visible behind a bank, and the house next door still stands.

Winpenny evidently paid for Lodge Room furnishings and half the cost of the two-story building. It is assumed the Millersville Methodist Episcopal Church paid for the other half. The church met on the first floor from 1853 until 1877. The Lodge Room was on the second floor, and the Lodge paid rent to Winpenny in the earliest years.

At the Lodge Hall's dedication, Jacob Spahr provided the dinner. There were visitors from Marion, Center (near Kokomo), Oaklandon and Noblesville. The Grand Lodge met at Millersville on that day and marched in procession to the new Hall where "appropriate ceremonies were conducted and an oration delivered by Brother Thomas H. Lynch" according to the centennial history.

Early minutes of Millersville Lodge include an entry in the September 1854 Stated Meeting charging one of the Brothers with disturbing the peace on September 6 on the occasion of the visit of Stephan A. Douglass to Indianapolis.

On August 12, 1855 a contingent from Millersville Lodge traveled to Lanesville, Ind. (southern Indiana between Corydon and New Albany) to bury deceased Brother Samuel Jenkins. This was the first death of a Lodge member and the first funeral conducted by the Lodge.

According to the Stated Meeting minutes of March 15, 1856, Winpenny proposed selling the Lodge building to the Lodge. It was recorded in the April 26 minutes that the Lodge would purchase Winpenny's and J.F. Lemon's share in the building for \$350. The last recorded rent paid to Winpenny was June 30, 1856.

Brother Winpenny died February 3, 1861 and his funeral showed he was held in high esteem by the Fraternity. On February 6, the Lodge formed a procession conveyed the body to Indianapolis where it was met at the city limits by Brethren from Centre Lodge. Solemn music led the procession, which marched through the city to Crown Hill cemetery where he was buried according to Masonic forms. The procession then marched back to Millersville.

One year later in 1862 the Lodge made settlement with the heirs of William Winpenny and acquired title to the Lodge property through a friendly suit in Common Pleas Court.

Very little reference is made to the Civil War. The first reference in Lodge minutes is on January 31, 1863. Notice was made that Brother James Beard was killed in the bloody battle at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Brothers Thomas A. Fisher, James Thomas Hunter and Lewis Y. Newhouse also served in the Union Army.

On March 28, 1863, the Lodge gave permission to the Millersville Ladies Aid Society to hold their weekly meetings in the Lodge Room. On June 3, 1865, a resolution was adopted remitting the dues of all members serving in the Union Army.

In March 1866 the Lodge discontinued the use of candles and installed coal oil (kerosene) lamps in the Lodge Room. The following bill of accounting provides a mental picture of the atmosphere as those lamps shed flickering light on a rural 18th century Lodge of Masons.

1 chandelier - 3 lights	\$13.00
9 reflecting side lamps @ \$1.25	11.25
1 lamp for the Secretary's table	1.00
1 two-gallon oil can	1.00
3½ gallons coal oil @ 80¢	2.80
1 pair trimmers	.75
1 wooden-handled brush	.10
1 broom	.50
Lamp wicking	.25
Canvas	<u>12.00</u>
	\$42.65

In 1877 Millersville Lodge bought the bottom floor of the Lodge building from the Methodist Church. The Hall remained in use until 1924.

Millersville celebrated its 50th Anniversary on May 24, 1902 by raising to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason Harry E. Negley and John S. Miller – linear descendants of John O. Negley, who was raised May 21, 1853 at Millersville. John Negley's father, Peter Negley, was the original landowner of the area north of Millersville Road, which includes the land of both the original and current Lodge buildings.

In its first half-century, only 13 men served as Worshipful Master. Robert Johnson served 13 years (1875, 1880-86, 1889-1893), Samuel Cory 12 (1859, 1860, 1865-1873, 1878) and William J. Millard, Jr., 11 (1852-1858, 1861-1864). Other Masters included Millard's brother Benson (1882), the previously mentioned John O. Negley, and William H. Roberts at the time of the Golden Anniversary in 1902.

Cory, who squelched a bid to move the Lodge to Lawrence in the late 1800s, was one of the founders of the Lawrence school system.

A bright jewel in the history of Millersville Lodge opened in 1904 with the chartering of Millersville Chapter 300 of the Order of the Eastern Star, thus involving women – many of them wives of Millersville Lodge Brothers – in activities at the Lodge Hall.

By 1920 the Millersville area, although still rural, had developed into a prosperous economic area and was home to, among other things, the highly successful Roberts Dairy. The dairy was owned by Millersville PM William H. Roberts. He served four terms (1901, 1902, 1909 and 1911), all four of his sons were Worshipful Masters of the Lodge (Guy 1910, 1921; Ralph 1914, 1923, Ben 1929 and W. Henry, 1924, 1925), and his grandson Walter was Worshipful Master in 1938.

It is no wonder that Millersville for many years was known as “The Milkman's Lodge.” In the early 1920s Millersville's Brethren determined a new stone and brick structure should be erected in place of the old clapboard Hall.

WM Edgar Van Zant appointed a committee on November 20, 1920, to devise ways to finance The Millersville Masonic Temple. On March 19, 1921, the committee recommended that pledges be taken for the erection of a new hall. WM Guy L. Roberts appointed as Building Fund Trustees James M. Morris, John D. Steinmeier, Paul S. Dunn, William H. Roberts, and J. Edward Colwell. A month later, WM Roberts was added to the Building Fund Trustees.

It was time to bid the old Hall goodbye. On November 3, 1924, the Lodge met at Mystic Circle Lodge No. 685 at Lawrence because the Trustees had declared the Millersville Hall unsafe. It was then determined to start the new building in the spring of 1925. After 73 years, the building erected by Brother William Winpenny had to be abandoned. The building and land was sold for \$2,000.

One month later on December 5, 1924, Mrs. Cora B. Roberts, the widow of 4-time WM William H. Roberts donated to Millersville Lodge #126 the tract upon which the temple was built. In a heartfelt letter bequeathing the property to the Lodge, Mr. Roberts cited her husband's love of Masonry and her own desire to see Millersville Lodge continue to grow.

It was also a gift within the family, as William and Cora's son W. Henry Roberts was Worshipful Master of Millersville at the time. Twenty years later, "W. Henry" was the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Indiana, the only Millersville Brother to ever serve in that capacity.

As plans for the new Temple were formed, Washington Township School No. 2 stood on the land at that time and the Millersville #126 charter was moved into the schoolhouse during construction. Millersville Masonic Temple was completed less than one year later.

On March 21, 1925 two of the elder Master Masons, Brothers John Wesley Negley and William H. Wheeler, turned the first spade of dirt marking construction of the new temple. Most Worshipful Grand Master Lee Dinwiddie assisted in laying the cornerstone on May 25, 1925, the Lodge's 73rd birthday.

In the cornerstone was placed a copy of the bylaws of the Lodge, a copy of the By-Laws of Millersville Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, a picture of the previous temple building, a copy of the *Indiana Freemason*, copies of the *Indianapolis News* and the *Indianapolis Star* and a brief history of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Millersville Order of the Eastern Star.

The Temple was finished by year's end and dedicated on December 3, 1925 amid great pomp and ceremony. Grand Lodge was opened in due form. Brother Ed Jackson, Governor of the State of Indiana, gave the dedicatory address. And during the ceremonies, the electric lighting system failed, throwing the building into darkness for nearly two hours. As the centennial history recalled the incident, "Lighted candles and lanterns relieved the embarrassment and probably added to the spirit of joy for the occasion."

The initial cost of the temple was \$59,874.70. The ladies of the Eastern Star operated a restaurant at the State Fairgrounds and used the proceeds to buy furniture for the Lodge, costing nearly \$10,000. The Lodge made a special point in the centennial history of noting the Eastern Star's generosity, saying, "It is written here so that readers, years hence, may know and remember our debt of gratitude to the ladies of Millersville."

As Millersville Lodge approached the celebration of its first 100 years, the Lodge purchased its first organ for the Lodge Room in 1948. That instrument and the Masons who played it provided music for the beautiful ceremonies of Masonry until the end of the century, when a new organ was purchased in 2000.

Millersville celebrated its centennial on May 10, 1952 with an afternoon re-dedication of the Lodge with the officers from the Grand Lodge of Indiana present. That evening there was a banquet downtown at the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

These Past 50 Years

In the years following World War II Masonry reached probably the most popular era of the Fraternity's history. Millersville Lodge membership was at an all time high and Lodge activities provided the very social centerpiece for members of the Fraternity.

Various parties, dances and social gatherings occurred at the Lodge every month. In just 25 years since the construction of the new building, the wooden floor in the basement was worn out. The entire basement floor was removed, new plumbing was installed under the kitchen floor, and refloored with gray terrazzo and red tile that are there today.

Given the high level of use, it is no wonder the building needed refurbishing. Millersville raised 563 Master Masons in the 1940s, 638 in the 1950s, and 505 in the 1960s and 395 in the 1970s.

WM Arthur H. "Bud" Roberts, was raised in 1951, was Worshipful Master in 1959, and remains an active member of Millersville in 2002. His father, Arthur M. Roberts, was Master at Millersville in 1943. It is interesting to note that while the elder Roberts worked for Roberts Dairy, these two Roberts are not related to the Roberts family that actually owned the dairy. But eight different men named Roberts—six from one family and two from another – have been Masters at Millersville.

Bud Roberts still assists in preparing and serving dinner at the Lodge every Tuesday night. Having dinner at the Lodge was a practice that started in the early 1950s because Brothers had difficulty going home from their jobs, eating, and then returning to the Lodge in time for the enormous amounts of Craftwork that needed to be done.

Dinners are prepared in the Lodge kitchen by Lodge Brothers, and the cost of the meals comes out of Lodge dues. The officers are in charge of cleanup.

Millersville Brothers continually come up with ways to get together beyond the Craftwork in the Lodge Room. WB Tom Williams (1968) started a Millersville tradition in 1964, organizing a bus trip to a baseball game in Cincinnati that eventually including wives. It was an annual event until 1994, when a major league players' strike ended that season and this annual outing.

In 1968 Millersville began a Fish Fry that was part social, part fundraiser and part interaction with the public. It is a regular part of the Lodge calendar in September until this day.

Another popular Millersville outreach in the neighborhood is our Lodge Breakfast on the first Saturday of the month except for July and August when the Lodge is dark. WM John Pierce (1981), who had worked in his parents' restaurant in Kentucky during college, single handedly started cooking breakfast for the other officers at the Lodge in 1981. Then it grew to include other Brothers. It has become a regular part of the duties of all Lodge officers, led by the Worshipful Master, to prepare and serve the breakfast. Eventually word got around the

Millersville neighborhood that it was good food and a good deal, with an unofficial “donation” asked of just \$4 per person.

One bit of excitement in the Lodge occurred on an evening in 1984, shortly after the Indianapolis Colts NFL team had moved to Indianapolis from Baltimore and taken up residence in the empty Fall Creek Elementary School that stood just west of the Lodge. It seems the Colts had called for cheerleader tryouts on a Tuesday night and several of the young female candidates came into the Lodge thinking it was Colts headquarters. The stunned Brothers cheerfully directed the girls next door to their proper destination.

Masonry contracted a bit through the American culture through the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Millersville maintained its high standards of work in the Craft and is renowned as one of the best ritual Lodges in Indiana. In 2000 the Grand Lodge of Indiana established a one-day class to raise 1,000 Master Masons in one day at the Scottish Rite Cathedral. The Grand Lodge asked Millersville to serve as the lead Blue Lodge as all three degrees were presented on the same day. Millersville also served as the lead Blue Lodge in a similar Grand Lodge mass-raising in 2002.

Many modern improvements have been made to the Lodge in the past 50 years. Amenities such as a modern kitchen, central air conditioning and heating, an elevator servicing all three floors of the Lodge, a covered entrance to the kitchen stairwell and a paved parking lot have been added and installed. There is also a modern, lighted sign on the front lawn announcing Lodge activities.

In 2001 Millersville had the rare honor of awarding a 75-year pin, that going to Dr. Frank Albertson in May shortly after his 97th birthday. Albertson was a limestone cutter, went to college, became a doctor, became a field surgeon in World War II and was raised a Master Mason in Trafalgar, Indiana in 1926. He became a member of Millersville after he retired, and he will be remembered very fondly by the Lodge.

In honor of the Sesquicentennial, we received dispensation from the Grand Lodge to have our original 1852 charter removed from the Lodge and restored. WM Michael Kinder and Tyler Mark Griffin drove the charter to Cincinnati, where a professional document restorer refurbished and reframed the historic document which is in handwritten calligraphy on an animal hide. When the frame was removed from the charter, a newspaper scrap from 1860 was found in the mounting. The charter was resealed in acid-free Plexiglas so it will last another 150 years. It now hangs in the Lodge Room in a new wooden frame crafted by PM Bruce Jones (1996).

Other Sesquicentennial activities have included lighting the Temple cornerstone, redoing the Lodge landscaping, and a half-dozen outings to other Lodges around Indiana.

Millersville Lodge continues to meet every Tuesday night except for July and August. Stated Meetings are the first Tuesday, and degree work is conducted most other Tuesdays, always accompanied by a good dinner prepared by Millersville Brothers.

Lodge activities include the monthly breakfast, a card party on the second Saturday night each month, the Valentine's Sweetheart Dance, the annual Fish Fry, a Fourth of July Parade with Sister Lodge Mystic Circle, a baseball outing to Victory Field and the Annual Feast of the Holy Sts. John, also with Mystic Circle.

In 2002, Millersville hosted its first Indianapolis ROTC Sojourners Breakfast in February, the 32nd such local breakfast honoring George Washington Day and outstanding high school ROTC candidates. Sojourners is the Masonic organization created for those in the American military who are away from their home Lodges.

Current annual dues for Millersville Lodge No. 126 are \$73.45. A healthy endowment fund secures the Lodge's financial well being as Millersville heads for its Bi-Centennial Celebration.

What will they be saying in 2052?

Millersville Road

The main thoroughfare of this area in the 19th century is virtually forgotten today. But it still exists, is in good repair and marked as a regular city street just off the beaten paths of Emerson Avenue, 46th Street, Keystone Avenue and the state fairgrounds. You can follow a historical journey, starting at the 4100 block of North Keystone, which isn't 41st Street. The sign says, Millersville Road and it wanders east and north to within about a quarter mile south of the current Millersville Temple.

Fall Creek Cemetery

This small cemetery is behind a church on Millersville Road about a half-mile east of Keystone Avenue. Reading the headstones in this small, quiet place is like reading the historical roster of Millersville Lodge. William J. Millard Sr., father of our first Worshipful Master? He's buried there, next to his wife and their other son, Benson W. Millard, Millersville Master in 1882. Johnson, Ellis, Negley, Steinmeier and many other names from Millersville's first century of Brotherhood are resting together in that place.