

ALPHA HOME LODGE NO. 72
1848-2000
by
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Alpha Home Lodge No. 72
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Baker, LA

The history of Alpha Home Lodge No 72 originally started when Alpha Lodge No. 8 was instituted on March 21, 1848 by Louisiana Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons. Alpha Lodge met in the Old Masonic Temple at the corner of Perdido and Baronne Streets in New Orleans. The Lodge moved to 18 Common Street in April of 1848, and on January 17, 1849 received a charter from the Louisiana Grand Lodge. Alpha Lodge worked under this charter until March 4, 1850, when it received a charter from the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana and was given a new number 72. The Lodge moved again in January of 1851 to the corner of Camp and Natchez Streets. In November of 1852 Alpha Lodge moved back to its original meeting place at the corner of Baronne and Perdido Streets. Alpha Lodge worked at this location until September 1853, when it moved to the Grand Lodge Hall located at the corner of St. Charles and Perdido Streets.

Home Lodge No. 142 was instituted on July 18, 1855 by authority of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana and presented its charter on February 12, 1856 and assigned number 142. Home Lodge No. 142 met in the 4th District of New Orleans at the Washington Hall until it merged with Alpha Lodge No. 72 on December 13, 1859. Effective February 14, 1860 Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 was chartered with 46 members of Alpha Lodge No. 72 and 30 members of Home Lodge No. 142. M:W: J. Q. A. Fellows, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana, signed the charter.

The first Master of Alpha Home Lodge No. 72, W: James Cunningham Batchelor, M.D., was buried in the Alpha Home Tomb in the Masonic Cemetery at New Orleans on July 28, 1893. W. William H. Hutchings was Worshipful Master in 1863 and served as Master during the strife of the Civil War when he helped form a city fund to aid the suffering brethren. After the war ended, there was approximately \$5,000.00 left in the fund. The money was used to form the basis of the present Louisiana Relief Lodge No 1. The by-laws of Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 during this period, stipulated that the dues shall be six (6) dollars per annum, payable quarterly in advance at the first regular meetings in January, April, July, and October. The fees charged for E.A. Degree -\$25.00, F.C. Degree -\$ 15.00, M.M. Degree -\$ 10.00, and \$1.00 for affiliation. Regular communications of the Lodge were held on every Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM, from April to October 1st and at 6:30 PM from October 1st to April 1st.

Little history of the Lodge is known between 1859 and 1891. The records of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana Ancient York Masons, Alpha Lodge No. 8, Alpha Lodge No. 72, Home Lodge No. 142 and Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 were lost either by fire or other causes. We do know that on February 9, 1861 the Confederacy was proclaimed by the seceding states and Jefferson Davis was named President. The Civil War lasted from 1861 until April 9, 1865, the date of General Robert E. Lee's surrender. It was also during this time that Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865. The President died the following day. Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 discussed a merger with Louisiana Lodge No. 102 in 1878.

Louisiana Lodge with a vote of 14 negative and 5 positive votes defeated the merger. In 1878, Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 had 35 members, with a total value of \$2995.50 in cash and property. These records also indicate that Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 paid \$ 2300.00 for the Tomb in the Masonic Cemetery at New Orleans.

On April 1, 1891 Brother Albert Pike, an honorary member of Alpha Home Lodge died in Washington, D.C. At the time of his death, Brother Pike was the Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. The Lodge issued a resolution stating the great loss that Masonry would suffer with the departure of this great man.

In the records of 1897 we find that the Lodge, as usual, is lending a helping hand to the distressed. A resolution was passed authorising the payment of a bill to Touro Infirmary for 31 days of care for a brother at \$1.50 per day, total \$ 46.50, and again for 11 days for the same brother later in the year. This was a very bad year for the Lodge, with the yellow fever epidemic and unemployment running rampant among the membership. A special committee was formed to assist the brethren who were unemployed to obtain work.

Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 elected Joseph Sinai Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1911. Bro. Sinai later became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana. In 1923 M:W: Sinai was one of three Masons who was known as the father of the Grand Lodge building at 333 St. Charles Ave. in New Orleans. M:W: Sinai's bust remained in the lobby area until the building was sold and then moved to the Scottish Rite Temple in New Orleans in 2000. In 1918, he with others, organized a Symbolic Lodge to work in the Scottish Rite. The Grand Lodge chartered it on February 4, 1919, as Albert Pike Lodge No. 376.

From the period of 1922-1923 the Lodge was assessed the sum of \$ 60.00 per member for the new Masonic Temple. The assessment could be paid in a lump sum or pay \$ 75.00 over a five year period. The Lodge also donated \$ 2500.00 from its treasury for the new Masonic Temple Building Fund. During this same period, the membership was assessed \$ 1.00 per member for the purpose of establishing a Masonic Orphan Home in Louisiana. This assessment necessitated the raising of the Lodge dues to \$ 8.00 per year. A resolution in the Grand Lodge stated that the new Masonic Temple would be built in New Orleans provided the Lodges in the city of New Orleans would donate the sum of \$450,000.00. In 1924 Alpha Home Lodge borrowed the sum of \$ 9,000 to meet its share of the \$ 450,000.00 for the new Temple Building.

During the construction of the new Masonic Temple members met in temporary quarters, Room 3, 535 Iberville Street in New Orleans. Alpha Home Lodge held its first meeting in the new Masonic Temple on July 8, 1927. The meeting was held in the auditorium where a special program was presented. The meeting was attended by 132 members of Alpha Home and 50 visitors. Thirteen Past Masters of Alpha Home were present. The Governor, Brother O.H. Simpson, P.M. and the State Treasurer, Brother L.B. Baynard, attended this gala occasion. Alpha Home Lodge was assigned the Ionic Room in the new Masonic Temple to hold its meetings.

The Lodge suffered a decline in membership from non-payment of dues during the Great Depression. A committee called the "Delinquent Committee" was appointed, and made every effort to contact all delinquent members. The Lodge made every effort to avoid suspending its members for non-payment of dues. During these trying times, any and all that asked either

to be relieved entirely or to be granted an extension of time in which to meet their obligations was granted. In 1930 there were 105 members in arrears. Special arrangements were made with all except 39 members who did not respond to the request of the Lodge. Each of the 39 members was issued 30-day suspension notices, hoping for a response from each. The Lodge did not suspend a single member during this year for non-payment of dues. It was able to collect some, remit others and make arrangements to grant further time to others. At each annual meeting in December, the members of the Lodge renewed their pledges to attend Lodge more often. Although Alpha Home Lodge made every effort to keep its roster intact, the Grand Lodge reported that the state had lost more members in the last two years than had been raised in the last five year period of 1929 and 1930.

Alpha Home Lodge was blessed with gains in membership during WWII, and was in a much better financial position than in recent years. The minutes of the Lodge do not reflect a loss of any members during WWII. On July 7, 1943 a dispensation was received from the Grand Master granting the Lodge's request to open a "Lodge of Sorrow " and for it to remain open until closed by the Worshipful Master or as the Grand Lodge may order. This "Lodge of Sorrow" was instituted for the purpose of conducting funerals. After each funeral the Lodge was called to refreshment. During the early 1950's, Alpha Home Lodge continued to grow in membership resulting in an increase in the treasury. The Lodge continued to show its support for those requiring financial assistance. Several donations were made to lodges throughout the state who were suffering from destruction by tornadoes, floods and hurricanes.

While conferring the Entered Apprentice Degree on August 19, 1958, Worshipful Albert William Whitehead, dropped dead at the altar. Bro. Whitehead was serving as Worshipful Master of Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 during the year of 1958. After all efforts to revive him failed, two brothers informed his wife, and the coroner removed his body. The Senior Warden, Brother Edwin J. White, called the Lodge to labor after assuming the East. With great emotions, the degree was completed. Sadness prevailed.

The Centennial of Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 was celebrated in 1960. The charter is dated February 14, 1860. The celebration was delayed until October 22, 1960 to avoid several conflicts for the membership with various activities throughout the region. Worshipful William Howard (Hap) Garrison, Past Master (1930) was appointed the general chairman of the Centennial celebration. The officers of the Lodge, other dignitaries on the program, and all Past Masters were asked to wear tuxedos for the occasion. The celebration was held at the Scottish Rite Temple at 619 Carondelet Street in New Orleans. Masons and friends, many of whom travelled long distances, attended the celebration. Other branches of Masonry attended and helped, such as the Temple Guard of the New Orleans area, who escorted and seated all guests.

In the year 1965, when Worshipful Bowdre McDowell served as Master of Alpha Home Lodge, the most destructive hurricane in New Orleans history struck. Hurricane "Betsy" with winds of 160 MPH caused damage estimated at 1.2 billion dollars. The hurricane destroyed 27,000 homes, 17,500 people were either injured or ill, and 300,000 people had to be evacuated. Alpha Home Lodge contributed funds and helped all Masons and families throughout the area.

The Lodge suffered similar declines in membership, as had all of Masonry. Alpha Home Lodge is a proud Lodge with a lot of good history and more to be written in future years.

Alpha Home Lodge continued to meet in the Masonic Temple building at 333 St Charles Ave in New Orleans until the sale of the building in 1996. The Lodge moved its charter to 600 Daniel Street in the City of Kenner in 1998.

Over the years, Alpha Home Lodge No. 72 have had several of its members serving elected and appointed positions in all branches of Masonry. Several members have been elected to lead the Grand Lodge of Louisiana and several other appendant bodies of Free Masonry at State and International levels.

Alpha Home celebrated the 150th anniversary of the charter at its regular meeting in March 2000.

References:

1. Through the Years with Alpha Home
By William Howard Garrison, P.M. 1930
2. Historical Record (1848-1953)
By Chas. F. Counce, Sr. P.M. 1954
3. Centennial Celebration 1960
4. Personal Notes of E. H. Garrison P.M. Dated 07/08/1927
5. Lodge records of Alpha Home Lodge No 72