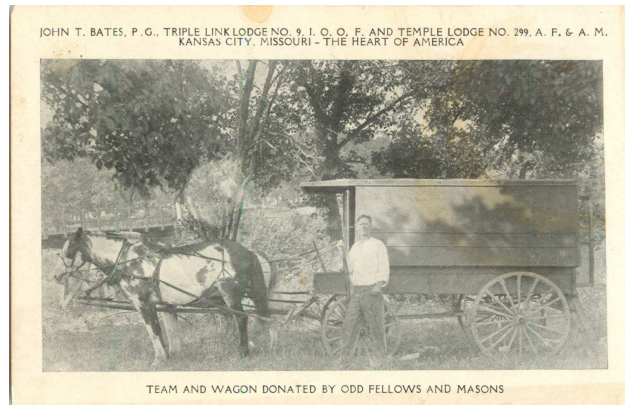


MASONIC EMPLOYMENT BUREAUS SHOULD BE REVIVED
by Frater James A. Marples, VII^o ,
Life Member, Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.



Masonic Wagon

Back in the 1930's and even earlier, many Masonic Grand Lodges and even individual local Lodges created and operated "Masonic Employment Bureaus" as a clearinghouse to assist unemployed and underemployed Brethren find jobs to support themselves and families and contribute to the relief of poor indigent members. This concept was not exclusive to Freemasonry, since most (if not all) of the fraternal organizations from the 1800's onward were, to varying degrees: Mutual-aid Associations. This included the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) Lodges as well as other Societies, in the years prior to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other governmental safety-nets.

As evidence of this long-standing custom of fraternal benevolence: I offer an 'exhibit' of a photographic image of Brother John Thomas Bates....and the caption reads: "John T. Bates Team and Wagon, donated by Masons and Odd Fellows."

Clearly it was made circa the year 1919. It says he was a member of Temple Gate Masonic Lodge #299 in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as a Past Grand (past presiding officer) of Triple Link I.O.O.F. Lodge #9. I consulted the Masonic Grand Lodge of Missouri and was told that Bro. John T Bates became a Mason in the year 1918. Initiated an Entered Apprentice Mason on June 1, 1918; Passed to the Degree of a Fellow Craft on June 7, 1918, and Raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason on June 15 1918. It should be noted his rapid progression of Degree-advancement. It should also be noted that this was BEFORE THE ARMISTICE of 11 November 1918 which ended the First World War. Therefore, Bro. bates was probably given a wartime military-waiver for such rapid advancement.

Speculation was that Bro. John T. Bates was a war veteran (likely from World War I) and he was given the Team of Horses and Wagon, so he could earn a livelihood and provide sustenance for himself; after WWI ended. He must have lived a fairly full life, since he is recorded to have died on 27 December 1943.

The Masonic Fraternity has made it clear that it was not designed as a first start for anyone seeking financial or pecuniary aid (as their primary motive for application into our gentle Fraternity). Our Fraternity has always guarded the Tyler's door of the Lodge to prevent anyone from joining for selfish or unworthy motives. By the same token, there is a CLEAR DISTINCTION which separates



existing worthy members from a candidate who trolls for benefits. **In truly rare exceptions, Freemasonry does extend the temporary hand of CHARITY to existing members-in-good-standing and / or their families, who are again deemed "worthy" and deserving of such aid.**

The Masonic Scholar, Albert G. Mackey, M.D., quoted the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians 13: 1-2, when he lauded the great principles of Charity. Bro. Mackey said: "Such was the language of this eminent Apostle of the Christian Church, and such is the sentiment that constitutes the cementing bond of Freemasonry. The Apostle, in comparing it with Faith and Hope, calls it the greatest of the three, and hence in Freemasonry is made the topmost round of its mystic ladder".

Mackey, and Edward M.L. Ehlers who was Past Grand Secretary of the Masonic Grand Lodge of New York State, often recited the following:

"My Brother: With this right hand, I welcome you to the friendship of this Lodge and to the ranks of our ancient and honorable Fraternity whose Cornerstone is Charity. Charity is the brightest jewel in the Masonic crown. Charity is the Corinthian pillar whose entablature adds strength, beauty and grace to the Masonic fabric. We arraign no man's political opinions; nor, do we interfere with his religious creed."

Those eminent Brethren further describe Masonic Charity (or fraternal charity) as more comprehensive than "the narrow limits of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, binding up the wounds of the afflicted, but that broader noble charity that regards all men as Brothers." They conclude by saying that if a single Mason (or group of Masons) helps their fellow man by wiping away the tears of the grieving, or giving food or drink to the hungry, or those in thirst, or by lifting the heavy burden of poverty, then you will have done exactly as Almighty God commanded.

Freemasonry has always sought men who were "worthy and well-qualified" to seek membership. Our Fraternity takes good men and makes them "better men" - not in the context of superimposing religious values; but rather, instilling wholesome values of morality and assisting other people (Masons as well as non-Masons) when time, circumstances, and the situation at-hand is right.

Most Masons (and most members of various other fraternal Societies) are decent, hard-working people. However, in a bad economy....anyone can get laid-off their job; have a temporary health-issue; or have a company they work-for go bankrupt. People with good judgments and dedicated work-ethics are not immune from "difficult financial times". That is why Masonic Employment Bureaus were so important in the past: They were a clearinghouse where "tried and true members" got the help, aid, and assistance in finding Jobs and being able to provide for themselves and family. They were NOT a permanent refuge for hand-outs; but provided a means whereby a Brotherly network of members who knew of job-openings could facilitate information and or tangible "relief" to a Brother in distress. I distinctly recall reading about the heroic endeavors of Brother Henry Wallenstein, 33°, and a Past Illustrious Master of Wichita Council #12 of Royal and Select Masters, who was in charge of "The Wichita Masonic Employment Bureau" back in the 1930's. He would even advertise lists of qualified Brethren and their particular 'skill or trade' within the pages of "The New Age Magazine" (precursor to today's modern "Scottish Rite Journal"). Bro. Wallenstein was Jewish, but as noted, he was prominent in portions of both the York Rite and Scottish Rite, including being Executive Secretary in the latter local Body. Nearly all Masons are generally willing to give a worthy Brother a helping hand, in order to get back on his feet again.



Masonic Old Age Homes as well as Homes and Schools for Masonic Widows and Masonic Orphans have been in existence since the 1800's and many continue to thrive today. The Odd Fellows established similar "Odd Fellows Homes" such as the one at York, Nebraska (since closed and demolished) and various similar counterparts in other U.S. States.

Since the "New Deal Era" of social safety-nets propounded by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (himself a Mason and an Odd Fellow member) fraternal charitable relief switched toward specific "causes" for narrower ways of giving via means of what I call 'Signature Philanthropy'. Sometimes there is 'overlap' of two fraternal groups trying to buoy themselves on the same charitable anchor as their "preferred cause". For example the Shriners have the Shriners Hospitals for Children (originally called the Shrine Hospitals for Crippled and burned Children). These hospitals were modeled after the Scottish Rite Crippled Children's Hospitals in Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas, Texas.

Royal Arch Masonry and Cryptic Masonry each have their "Signature Philanthropies". An illustrative example of overlap spans at least three (3) different fraternal/civic groups: The Knights Templar have their Eye Foundation. The I.O.O.F. Odd Fellows have an "Eye Bank" of corneas readied for transplant and / or monies allocated for research, treatment, or surgery into eye diseases and treatments.

Lastly, the Lion's Club is well recognized for its efforts in restoring Eyesight and for recycling used eyeglasses. I applaud all three of these groups. I have become a member of all three groups. Yet, the overlap of several groups soliciting money and manpower for the same 'disease' or ailment concerns me because of "duplication of efforts." It's great to have a Charitable Outlet. However, having a Business Administration background, I am ever mindful of several different entities all competing (for lack of a better word) in efforts of serving the same "clientele" (the recipients of such Aid). In a perfect-world, layers of redundant charitable-bureaucracy could be eliminated, and a streamlined-efficiency would avoid delays, wasted energy, and pooling of efforts to achieve the greatest outcome for the particular dollars invested. Even "Non-profit groups" want to "get the most bang for their charitable buck."

I am not suggesting a sudden abandoning of all our fraternal or civic charitable giving. However, I am supporting a re-evaluation of "Needs", "Priorities", "Benefits", and "Long-term Outcomes". I think the days of Telethons; so-called "Paper Sales" to simply 'educate the Public' on narrow diseases and the fraternal/civic groups sponsoring such assistance ...may be changing drastically in their "Mission Statements" over the next few years.

The "Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon Association" is probably quite worthy and laudable. However, it was conceived in the 1950s and began airing on television in the year 1966- (to the present). There's the rub. I have encountered many people who have donated countless dollars toward the MDA, the Heart Association, Cancer Research....you name it. They all are beginning to ask, "Is there any end in sight, or has this become just a new bureaucracy?" Is a fundraiser that has no end in-sight, a fundraising cash-cow for tradition's sake? Or, can it get its focus back on "near-term, tangible results"???

That was the big difference between charitable giving by the Masons and Odd Fellows and other fraternal/civic groups in the 1800's and until the mid 1900's. There was a fairly "fixed-duration" to the charity, and it was tied to a specific "time-oriented goal." A man such as Bro. John T. Bates was donated Horses and a Wagon, so he could pull himself up by his bootstraps and through that Fraternal investment in the horses and wagon (seed money) earn a living. Similarly, with



fraternal "Old Age Homes," a human's lifespan might be variable, but even if someone lived to age 102 years: it was still mathematically calculable, with Actuarial Life Tables.

If "Masonic Employment Bureaus" were restored today, they should be scrupulous, diligent, and transparent. About 20 years ago, scandals erupted in Great Britain and elsewhere accusing British policemen and government officers in other European nations of favoring Masons for advancement or promotion. I must say that I denounce such practices of trading or parlaying one's membership affiliations for unfair advantage.

Promoting a man, who has a Job, simply based on WHO HE KNOWS is wrong. Such "good ole boy" networks are an abomination, and any group that engages in that short-cut practice (whether it be a fraternal group, or otherwise) must be condemned and denounced. It replaces 'merit' with 'favoritism' / 'cronyism'.

What I advocate is a fraternal Clearinghouse, which helps match qualified people with available job-openings and/or describes a member's qualifications so that "if someone has a legitimate need for such services," the prospective employer and employee can have knowledge that each other exist. It would offer worthy individuals WITHOUT A JOB a chance to get back on their feet. I don't believe in giving somebody "a leg-up on the competition." However, I do believe in recommending a worthy individual for a Job that he (or she) (such as a widow/sister/daughter of a Mason) is capable of doing. Currently, various U.S. States have "Workforce Commissions" and even "Departments of Labor" that were designed for this linkage liaison; however, too many people have fallen-through-the-cracks, because these governmental entities "pick and choose" as to who is 'Officially counted'. A person who has been chronically unemployed may get locked into despair and become so discouraged that they quit looking for work. The government may choose to not include them as part of unemployment percentage-rates. Their need still exists. Their talents still exist. My plan, in stark contrast, would enable THE NEEDY PARTY to put themselves on a list.

The Odd Fellows Lodges were somewhat more broader-in-scope as they were more lenient, since they had a declared objective of often paying-out "death benefits" to the families of deceased members...as did other fraternal orders. Even within Masonry, the Shriners developed similar aid. From the 1940's onward, my late father, Noble John William "Bill" Marples, Sr. (1910-1997) was a member of The Midian Shrine Widows and Orphans Fund, created by the Midian Shrine Center of Wichita, Kansas. Unfortunately, the Fund was dissolved and I remember my dad saying he received only a fraction that was to have been paid to his widow (my mother). Despite the Fund being disbanded, my dad firmly believed in the worthy concept -- if it had been managed correctly.

My father was a member of both the Masonic Lodge and the Odd Fellows Lodge. He had endured economic "Great Depression" of the "Dirty '30s". Both my father and my mother knew first-hand what "hard times" were like during the Dust Bowl days. During the 1930's, he observed dozens of men faithfully march up steps to a second-floor I.O.O.F. Lodge Hall in his hometown of Agra, Kansas, (in Phillips County, Kansas). Back then, the Odd Fellows had no prohibitions nor inhabitations or restrictions regarding solicitation of members. At one time, nationally, the Odd Fellows Lodges had more members than the Masons. Sadly, now, the I.O.O.F. Lodge is almost extinct in many localities. My Dad was invited to join the Odd Fellows by a member at Agra, Kansas; when my Dad turned age 21...in the year 1931. That good family-friend also let it slip that he'd pay my Dad's initiation into the Masons at Phillipsburg, Kansas, as well. However, my Dad declined the offer --- he



was unsure if he'd be able to pay his yearly dues...since times were so hard, economically, for such a protracted period.

Years and years later, my Dad said he regretted not accepting the older gentleman's offer. My Dad admitted that he didn't know that Lodges had provisions to "remit dues" of members faced with hardship. And, my Dad liked being an independent man. Yet, he said, looking-back at it: he wished he had accepted the offer. My Dad was forced to move away from a drought-stricken wheat farm to take a job at Stearman Aircraft, which eventually became the BOEING-Wichita Airplane factory. He was at Boeing all during World War II. By 1944, my Dad felt he was in a better financial climate, so he petitioned Sunflower Lodge #86 A.F. & A.M. in Wichita. By then, they had hundreds of men joining Masonry. Degree-teams literally worked in "shifts" conferring degrees. It wasn't until 1945 when my Dad finally received the Degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry and he quickly rose to become a Knight Templar in the York Rite in that same year of 1945. My Dad died in 1997 at age 87. He had the distinction of being a 52 year Mason. However, he verbally voiced regret that if he had joined the various fraternal orders in 1931, he would have been a 66 year Mason. My Dad enjoyed fraternalism so much, that he wished he had acquired that additional 14 years of Lodge memberships. He said he knew, in hindsight, that he should have "accepted the helping hand". My Dad was a man of integrity, and a man of pride and commitment. However, in his later years: My Dad tried to instill in me to not be blinded by selfish pride that serves no purpose.

That is at the crux of Masonic and Odd Fellowship charitable endeavors: they were meant to be "Brothers helping Brothers" in times of need. I am still proud of our various charities in nearly every branch of Masonry. The best-known is probably the Shriners Hospitals for Children. It is good that fraternal organizations "give something back to the community." Even now, in the year 2013, to their credit, The Sovereign Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows reminds its members that "YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU." Their group was called Odd Fellows because it seemed so 'odd' for people to go out-of-their-way to give to those in need without vain hope of recognition. Similarly, with us as Masons (and especially as Masonic Rosicrucians), we are ever mindful that "Knowledge is Power." Perhaps not 'power' in the aggressive sense of the word. But, "enabling power"--- that, if harnessed for good and worthy purposes can elevate "the least among us" to fulfill their own potential.

At one time, the catchphrase of "Brotherly love, Relief, and Truth" were the watchwords of most fraternal Societies. The public sadly has the connotation of "secret-societies". We can dispel that unfair label by giving our members leads, tips, information to help them land a self-sustaining Job to support themselves. A helpful bit of information may not cost us a dime; yet it might open doors for someone else who is unaware of Opportunities.

As helping assist our members (as a Clearinghouse of knowledge of current opportunities), we could make great use of volunteer knowledge that wouldn't cost us a penny. We can keep our eyes open and our ears alert. We can use technology and Social Media. We can keep our help, aid and assistance in this realm of a Clearinghouse: short, sweet, and to-the-point. There is an old saying: "If you give a man a fish; you will feed him for a day. But, if you teach a man to fish, you will feed him for a lifetime." Simply pointing someone in "the right direction" might help them sustain themselves indefinitely. As President John F. Kennedy often said, "A rising tide lifts all boats."



There is another cliché, which says that successful people pull-themselves-up by their own bootstraps. That is all fine and good. But, those people have to have boots - the means of pulling/propelling themselves, and they must have bootstraps that aren't already weak or broken. "Friends and Brothers" lend a helping hand. Many hands working together for a common-goal usually achieve more than one desperate soul trying to go-it-alone. Fraternal non-profit groups exist because helpfulness is made easier via the assistance of CARING FRIENDS. Putting in a good word for someone, or driving them to a job-site, may fill a void that they have difficulty overcoming themselves. In Bro. John T. Bates' case that Team of Horses and Wagon "donated by Masons and Odd Fellows" could have been his 'store' (if he were a "Traveling Salesman" of his day). It could have also served the dual-purpose of being his makeshift 'home' or domicile. In this presentation, I gently remind my fellow Brothers and Frates, that we need to remember those among our own ranks, in today's world.

Worthy organizations such as the United Way, The American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army (along with many others) provide good, rapid responses to various crises and natural disasters. My aim is NOT to replace them; nor, to take the place of conventional government Employment Departments or Temporary Employment Agencies. However, I believe that newly created (and future) Masonic Employment Bureaus would rejuvenate our Fraternity by utilizing the wide spectrum of eyes and ears of Brothers seeking to give a hand-up to another Brother...and not a hand-out.

Masonic Charity, like all other Charity, should begin at home.

It's a complex & fairly delicate issue. But, my plan is so narrow that it wouldn't be hindered by non-profit status...since no monies would be involved. It would essentially be a mouth-to-ear Clearinghouse, or perhaps more realistically a "bulletin-board clearinghouse."

Sources / Recommended Readings / Exhibits:

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33^o, and a Knight Templar. Section on "CHARITY".

- Photograph taken circa year 1919: John T. Bates Team of Horses and Wagon Donated by Masons and Odd Fellows". Kansas City, Missouri, metro area.

- Archives of The Masonic Grand Lodge of Missouri, showing Bro. John T. Bates' Masonic membership records.

- Archives and Literature of The worldwide Independent Order of Odd Fellows, now headquartered at Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

- Philanthropy Journal. "Key Components" of raising funds (or stimulating interest). "Helping Non-Profits convey emotion." Permission granted to James A. Marples from Jill Warren Lucas, Managing Editor of "Philanthropy Journal" to quote the guiding principles of this topic, and show how it can be applied in a positive light, for various adaptations.

* Author's Note: Temple Gate Masonic Lodge #299 was merged with another Lodge on April 6, 1999.



About the Author:

Frater James A. Marples, VII^o, is a Perpetual Life Member of Mulvane Masonic Lodge #201 A.F. & A.M. in Mulvane, Kansas. He is a Life Member of The International Peace Gardens Lodge of Freemasons (Canada-USA) and also an Honorary Member of Golden Rule Masonic Lodge #562 in Willard, Ohio; as well as an Honorary Member of Nelson Masonic Lodge #77, in Nelson, Nebraska, which has recently consolidated with the Superior Masonic Lodge at Superior, Nebraska.

Companion and Sir Knight Jim is a Life Member of the Wichita York Rite Bodies (Wichita Chapter #33 R.A.M.; Wichita Council #12 R. & S.M.; and Mt. Olivet Commandery #12 K.T.). He is also a Life Member of the Lincoln Nebraska Scottish Rite Bodies; The Robert-the-Bruce Association (California); The George Washington Masonic Stamp Club; Masonic Order of the Gordian Knot (Indiana); Masonic Order of the Sword of Bunker Hill; Kentucky Chapter #134 of National Sojourners and Heroes of '76; North Texas York Rite College #118 of Sherman, Texas; and Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.

He is a Regular Member of The Allied Masonic Degrees; Grand College of Rites; St. David Conclave of The Red Cross of Constantine; Shawnee County Kansas Square and Compass Club; and Holyrood Council #61 of Knight Masons (Nebraska).

In addition, Bro. Jim is a Past Noble Grand (Past Presiding Officer) of Greenwich Odd Fellow I.O.O.F. Lodge #587 in Greenwich, Kansas. His additional past and present civic and fraternal memberships are too numerous to catalog here.

