

16th & L Street Masonic Temple History
Given in York, Nebraska MSRICF Meeting
October 26th, 2006

Genesis Lincoln's New Lodge Building Dedicated Monday
Miss Dolan's Murals Adorn Masonic Temple (article
written by Eva Mahoney Omaha World Herald circa 1935)

Dateline -Lincoln, Nebraska September 7th, 1935

Elizabeth Dolan, whose murals are acclaimed as taking rank with the finest in America, has added to her renown in a set she has just completed for the new Masonic temple here, which is to be dedicated Monday at 2:30 p.m. There are 10 murals, each 6 feet square. Nine of them decorate the walls of the smaller lodge room on the second floor, the tenth, yet to be completed, is to be placed on a space in the main hallway to be seen as one enters the first floor.

The subject of the Murals-all related to the Masonic Ritual-are as follows: Jacob's Dream; Saint John the Evangelist, writing revelations; Moses and the burning bush; the Sepulcher; Saint John the Baptist in the wilderness; Sir Galahad in search of the Holy Grail; King Solomon, King Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram, the architect; the Prophet Jeremiah pleading with King Zedekiah; Sir Galahad finding the Holy Grail; the high hill and the low, the latter to be placed in the lower hall when finished.

Wizard of Color

As in her Murals in the Museum on the University Campus, Miss Dolan has again demonstrated her uncanny ability to combine tans and browns and greens in lovely woodland effects, and to employ a bright golden yellow for luminosity and brightness. In some of these murals Miss Dolan has again introduced tender little blue spots of water and touches of rich verdure in striking contrast to her wilderness setting. Perhaps the most appealing study is that to the left as one enters the lodge room, Jacob's Dream. There, beside a small body of water lies the young Jacob, a handsome black-haired youth, relaxed in sleep, dreaming of the angel sprites descending from heaven on shafts of light.

By expert manipulation of oils in the sepulcher scene, Miss Dolan has endowed the angel who shoves back the stone from Christ's tomb with a peculiar transparency that conveys a sense of spirit life and unreality that is startling.

Vigor in Heads

And if there is one thing among all others that characterizes these murals, it is the vigor and strength of the masculine figures. The heads, handsome and strongly Hebraic, and each strikingly different, mark Miss Dolan as a portrait painter with few peers.



The New Masonic Temple which these murals adorn is located at Seventeenth and "L" Streets and replaces the one at 236 South Eleventh Street for the last 32 years.

Meginnis and Schaumberg were architects for the temple, which cost 125 thousand dollars, is free from encumbrance, and was one year in building. It is constructed of an ivory-cream Silverdale stone that comes from Kansas, is 80 x 112 feet, and built on modernized classic lines. Set in an unbroken green award with great maple and elm trees in the foreground and background, the structure is exceedingly beautiful.

(From article written by Don W. Sigler of Lincoln Journal and Star dateline September 8th, 1935)

“At the dedication of the temple, Miss Dolan, reviewing the fruits of nearly a year's labor, revealed the difficulties in which she worked. In the first place, the canvases, measuring six and one-half feet square, had to be mounted and started in her studio. Then after two thirds completed, they were rolled up and stored in a vault until all were ready for the trip to their permanent home. There, each were mounted in a prepared niche, so they cannot touch the wall to the back - a safety measure which is thought will enable them to be preserved. " The big task was to keep the tints and hues in harmony with surroundings of the temple, so all the work had to be finished on the wall." Models were necessary, but there weren't as many available as there were characters. Sir Galahad and sleeping Jacob were one and the same, the other male characters were made from another subject.

The coats, tunics, armor, etc. now outmoded caused no ends of trouble. She even sewed a make-believe tunic for a character or two. The white steed was another problem. She made many trips to the University Agricultural College just to draw horse's hoofs until she felt qualified to do the gleaming white horse. Her model was coal black.

Dr. David Hilton, a mason, helped her by suggesting titles and offering suggestions for the panels. After the building is opened, the final painting will be done entitled "High Hills and Low Vales" and will face the opened door at the entrance. It will represent early days of Masonry, when meetings were held in secret either in high hills and low vales as a protective measure. Above the main north entrance with its three broad steps is a carving from a sketch by Elizabeth Dolan, representative of the whole of the order's work. Three figures suggest youth, manhood, and old age. The carving from the sketch represents the three ages of man as suggested by Dr. D. H. Hilton. Youth is pictured with its guardian angel; middle age is symbolical of strength, with power depicted in the rearing horses beside it; and old age " going west" walks with the lion, taken from the Masonic ritual. Banding the building is a carving of Masonic symbolism in which the star is prominent and high on the structure, is the insignia of the participating organizations.”

Post Script: It should be noted that the following lodges occupy this temple. They are:



ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS:

LINCOLN LODGE #19, LANCASTER LODGE #54, LIBERTY LODGE #300

YORK RITE MASONS:

LINCOLN CHAPTER #6, LINCOLN COUNCIL #4,
MOUNT MORIAH COMMANDERY #4

ORDER OF EASTERN STAR ELECTA CHAPTER #8

INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF JOBES DAUGHTERS BETHEL #5

INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF DEMOLAY, EICHE CHAPTER

History of the Masonic Building Corporation

The Masonic Building Corporation was formed in 1921 to accumulate funds and it was dissolved after the completion of the temple by the stockholders on May 1936, with final authorization by the officers of the Corporation on the 27th of August, 1940. The Masonic Building Corporation was distinct from the New Masonic Temple Association of today. From the minutes of the New Masonic Temple Association, it was found that the New Masonic Temple Association was formed after the Masonic Temple at 11th & M Street was destroyed by fire in 1899, It owned the property at 236 South 11th Street and completed the New Temple at 17th & L Street. A committee was selected in August 1919, composed of members of the lodges to form a Masonic Building Association. They were from #54: Lee Dunn, Walter Anderson, Max Meyer; from #19: Dr. D.C. Hilton, H. W. Meginnis, and W. A. Sellick; from #300: Herman Mattley, William Garfitt and Walter DeButts; from York Rite: W.W. Day, J. Wynkoop, L. C. Oberlies, J. L. Kennard, and D. E. Green. The Company incorporated in 1921 by Sellick, Dunn, and Hilton advancing \$100.00 each. Thus, The Masonic Building Corporation was formed. Common and preferred stock was issued. Only Masonic lodges were exempt from paying taxes so only the lodges could hold stock.

Monies received from the lodges: #54 - \$7,600.00 & \$9,900.00, #300 - \$2,500 & \$2,500, #19 - \$31,250.00. Money was also received from individual members, dues etc. Money in the corporation in 1922 was \$69,900.00. Interest in the new temple was gained. They also asked other blue lodges to join but these attempts were futile, and only the original lodges and York Rite participated.

In 1926, property was purchased from the Lahr family on lots 1, 2, 3, of block 94 for \$32,500.00. Then lot 4 was purchased from the Women's Temperance Union for \$17,500.00. In 1927, lots 5, & 6, were purchased from Mr. Edwin Jeary for \$65,000.00. In 1928, the



corporation's worth was \$190,000 of which \$115,000 was invested in real estate. The plan contemplated raising \$500,000 but only \$167,000 was raised.

Plans were drawn up by Meginnis and Schaumberg for \$8,500.00. More efforts were made to raise the capitol needed. The depression came and stopped all progress. Money gained by that time was insured and in order to stop insurance payments that money was returned to the donors. The Lincoln Trust Company filed for bankruptcy and the corporation sustained a loss of \$11,000.00, but through court action received back \$10,000.00.

On July 9th, 1934, The Grand Master of Masons of Nebraska, Virgil R. Johnson of Beatrice gave his permission to erect a new temple at 17th & L Streets in Lincoln, Nebraska. The New Masonic Temple Association undertook the task of building the new temple. The real estate was bought at cost, and stock and monies from the Masonic Building Corporation was turned over to the New Masonic Temple Association and The Masonic Building Corporation was dissolved. This made it possible to complete the new temple.

On September 14th, 1934 the cornerstone of the new Masonic Temple was laid. There is a picture in the archives of the Grand Treasurer, John Wright of Lincoln Lodge #19, assisted by a craftsman of the Grand Lodge placing a casket in the cornerstone in the northeast corner of the Temple under construction. Construction began by the builder Charles Olson Construction Co. of Lincoln at a cost of approximately \$125,000.00. The week of Dedication of the temple commenced on Monday, September 9th, 1935.

The dedication was by the Nebraska Grand Lodge of which William C. Ramsey of Omaha was the grand master. Meetings of the individual lodges followed all week.

(From an article written by LuLu Mae Coe of the Sunday Journal & Star - dateline September 8th, 1935)

“Designed by Meginnis & Schaumberg, Silverdale limestone from Kansas, warmer than the usual white, with its very pale peach tones, has been chosen for the building, 78 by 112 feet. The stone is waterproof, serving to prevent loss of color from dirt & dust. It is two stories in height with a semi-third floor and a partial basement. Opening to the north is a trio of heavy bronze doors, with the stone casing paneled in the star design. Above the entrance doors are etched glass panels in a squared design.

Entrance to the corridor of the main floor is through a small vestibule, the floors of the promenade are of terrazzo, with the walls wainscoted in travertine marble. The softly tinted and veined marble is a Montana product more beautiful than the Italian variety. The vaulted ceilings, its arches marked by self-toned capitals and the texture plaster above the wainscoting, create a very interesting effect. Lantern lights are used in the corridor.



To the left of the central entrance is the library worked out in seventeenth century English. The upper walls and ceilings are simple with the exception of a broad band on the ceiling above the opening, suggestive of the strap work motif in Elizabethan architecture.

On the south side of the building beyond the Library is a large colorful, dining room, its ceiling of concrete construction is painted and stenciled in colorful designs. Modernistic aluminum lights suspended on straight tubes, complete the room which is 80 foot long and 47 feet wide.

Opening from the dining room is a kitchen capable of meeting the needs of the dining room. It has very large cupboard space, slick topped tables, modern sinks, and latest equipment to dissipate some of the terrors of mass cooking. The boiler room which is a memento of a former structure there, opens from the kitchen down a short flight of stairs. The edifice has a complete ventilating system to draw air in and carry it out. Openings north of the corridor are the Ladies rest and cloak room, men's restroom, and small secretary's room and service closet.

The staircase to the second floor leads to a generous sized lobby. The same textured walls and travertine marble is continued here with a formal narrow molding edging the wall. Along this corridor to the lobby and then to the large lodge room is the telephone room and #54 and #19's storage room. One stairway to the 3rd floor goes up from the north corridor and on that side are the restrooms.

Immediately east of the corridor on the north side and beyond an entrance hall is the small lodge room, a very lovely thing, 27 by 52 feet in size. Here are the nine murals done by Miss Elizabeth Dolan, five on one side and four on the other. Done in the oldest and simplest type of Greek design, the Doric, the murals are between the pilasters, and above each, a sculptured wreath, contrasting the Masonic symbolism, the beehive, the hour glass, the star, and other attributes at either end. Indirect lighting shines orange over and through the delicate flutings outlining the room and ceilings and roof give way to symbolical heavens. It is carpeted in green and robing rooms opens into the meeting place.

Access through a foyer which leads to the second stairway to the third floor or from the second floor lobby is the large lodge room 71 feet by 47 feet in size. Ionic Roman was chosen for this, with the walls treated to achieve a stone effect, its straight lines broken by the pilasters. Between the heavy beams of the ceiling, the spaces are of acoustical plaster necessary in a room of such proportions. A central chandelier has veri-colored lights to show the five points of the star and at one end will show the illuminated letter G. Ceiling lights can be dimmed gradually. The excellent mahogany divans, tables, and other furnishings, have been refinished and brought from the Eleventh street temple where they have been familiar for years, for this room. In the meeting lobby the oak furniture, freshened also, and from the former lodge rooms, is being placed.



New for this temple was the beautiful toned Kimball two manual organ with a pedal base and tubular bell or chimes used in the ritual. It was purchased by individual donations. It has a very attractive mahogany console harmonizing with the lodge room furniture. The chamber has been specially designed for it and the opening from there is enhanced by an artistic grille, concealing the swell shutters from the lodge room.

West of the large lodge room and up the stairs is the upstairs lounge 24 feet by 26 feet. The wainscoting and texture plaster and narrow paneling is carried throughout. The ceiling is white and beamed and the floor has terrazzo covering. The somewhat hidden third floor is devoted to rooms for the Knights Templar, secretarial offices, the vault, and robing rooms. Now, they are primarily used for the youth groups.”

EDITORIAL: Friends and Brethren,

This was a true "labor of love" for the brothers who set out on such an undertaking. This project started in 1919 when it was mandatory to raise the necessary funds, through the hard times of the depression, continuing with the construction process of building our beautiful Masonic Temple and culminating with the closing of business of the Masonic Building Corporation in 1940. We are all deeply indebted to these fine men, our brothers, who saw this project through to completion. We name a few of them here:

Masonic Building Corporation

From #300; Walter E. DeButts, William Garfiitt, Herman Mattley, N. Ray Hall, F. D Eager, F. E. Gillen, O. E. Jerner, From #54; Max Meyer, Walter Anderson, L. J. Dunn, W. E. Hardy, R. O. Hodgman, From 19; William Sellick, David Hilton, Harry W. Meginnis, J. C. Seacrest, H. J. Whitmore, From Commandery; Joseph L. Kennard, Charles Stuart, From Royal Arch; DeForest E. Green, Fred W. Tyler, J. Blair, J. J. Loomis, And others. There were many of our brethren that served on the Temple Board of the New Masonic Temple Corporation that served during the time of construction that are two numerous to mention, but nevertheless they deserve much thanks.

Much thanks has to be given to the brethren who saved all of this information for posterity for without them we could not have written this report.

Roger W. Miner, KYCH
Past Master, Liberty Lodge #300

