



Freemasons' Hall: A New Vision

by Christopher Hodapp, PM

Broad Ripple No 643 / Lodge Vitruvian No 767

Effective with the first of the year, Indiana Freemasons' Hall in Indianapolis has a new slate of officers, and with these new brethren, comes an exciting vision for the building and its future. It is the statewide headquarters of our fraternity. Every Indiana Freemason is a partial owner of this building through the Grand Lodge, and it is the goal of the Board to make the Temple a place that all of us can be proud of.

You may have heard many rumors over the years, but the Board wishes to put an immediate end to them now. Indiana Freemasons' Hall is not for sale. We are not engaged in any negotiations to sell the building, nor do we intend to consider that as an option. Freemasons' Hall is a jewel of Indiana Freemasonry. The building is approaching its 100th anniversary in 2009, and we have every intention of this Temple looking every bit as spectacular as it did on the day of its opening.



We are currently undertaking several projects that will make an immediate impact on the Temple for our members and visitors.

- A new concrete wheelchair ramp and entry for the south entrance to replace the crumbling steps and the inadequate (and undersized) wheelchair lift that exists.

- Expanded parking and new signage that will identify the building to the tens of thousands of cars who drive past us every week, never knowing that they are seeing the home of Indiana Freemasonry.

- Exterior lighting that will turn the Temple into a spectacular addition to the Indianapolis nighttime skyline.

- Placing the Temple on the National Register of Historic Places, making us eligible for certain grants for improvements.

- A website – www.indytemple.org – inform our members and the public about news specific to the Temple building, as well as to provide an online photographic tour, and a central calendar for Temple events, tied into the Grand Lodge online calendar.

There are other important projects in the planning stages. These include air conditioning, auditorium renovation, expanded and improved rest rooms for the ballrooms, elevator upgrades, a new welcome area and reception lobby desk, the “front door” to Freemasonry for so many men looking to join us.

When our visionary brethren constructed this Temple, it was not built solely through funds from the Grand Lodge and its tenant lodges themselves. A substantial portion of the cost (comparable to \$16 million today) came from the pockets of individual brethren. Hundreds of brothers stepped up and donated \$10 and \$20 a century ago, comparable to \$200 – \$400 today, along with more than a few benevolent Masons who made more substantial donations. It is our sincere hope that like-minded brethren will again come together to help us return the Temple to its former grandeur. A 501(c)3 foundation exists for tax deductible donations for parts of the building. In addition, the Grand Lodge of Indiana voted last year to increase the per capita across the state to provide matching funds for the improvement of the Temple. While that was a generous move, it amounts to just \$50,000 per year – a very small portion of what it will take to bring the Temple back to its former glory.

The brethren of Ancient Landmarks No 319, Pentalpha No 564 and Wayne Guthrie No 753 have already done exemplary work on the 5th floor, turning their lodge and social spaces into showplaces. In the coming months, we will be assessing what must be done to the Temple, along with what it will cost to follow through on some exciting dreams.

While grants from outside sources may add a much needed windfall, it is not proper for members of the largest, greatest and most prestigious gentlemen's fraternity the world has ever known to go begging for money to the outside world to preserve our Temple for us. In the next few months, we will announce a new capital fund raising campaign, and we will ask the help of Indiana's Freemasons to start working and dreaming along with us. We need the generosity of brothers today, just as it was needed back in 1909.

We will update the fraternity on our activities regularly, and we hope you will share our vision. Grand Master James Barkdull has chosen as his slogan for the year, “Proud To Be A Freemason.” *We hope that same spirit will extend to the Temple as well, so that every Indiana Mason will be able to say they are justifiably proud of Indiana Freemasons' Hall.*