

According to historians, modern Freemasonry, also referred to as “Speculative Freemasonry,” came into being out of Masons’ Guilds in London in the year 1717. Decline in membership in guilds prompted the organizations to accept honorary members, otherwise known as “Accepted Masons.”¹ The term “freemason” is speculated to have originated from the operative mason’s freedom from feudal serfdom and the ability to engage in trade. Using allegorical methods of exploring morality through the symbolism of the mason’s tools, modern Freemasonry seeks to build “spiritual edifices,” in contrast to the physical craft.² As the “Craft” grew in popularity, the organization established roots in the new thirteen colonies. Many of the Founding Fathers were Freemasons and, from the beginning of the nation, the organization was powerful and well-connected.³

From the founding of Elizabethtown, there has been the presence of Freemasonry in the area. With the nearest active lodge (Lodge No. 43) in Lancaster, PA, Freemasonry spread to local villages as the population moved to rural communities. On 3 September 1810, the original lodge created for the Elizabethtown community petitioned for a warrant under the name “Amicitia Lodge No. 116,” headed by Captain John Wolfley.⁴ Subsequently, on 4 April 1814, this lodge, for unknown reasons, relocated to Marietta, PA, eventually succumbing amid rising Anti-Masonic sentiments and vacating the warrant on 6 February 1837. Recovering from a retreat during the Anti-Masonic period of American history, Freemasonry Lodges expanded, yet again, from urban centers and renewed interest in reviving an Elizabethtown Masonic lodge at the turn of the Century.⁵

With this renewal of interest in Freemasonry, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania set about to create a home for its elderly and sick. Around 1912, twenty-four states contained such Masonic homes.⁶ In September of 1903, at the meeting of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, David A. Sawdey and other members of Freemasonry proposed the construction of homes for the specialized care of their brethren, wives, widows, and orphans.⁷ They formed a special committee of seventeen men to decide where to put the home, how to manage the homes, and make decisions in accordance with Freemasonry’s values.⁸ The committee went back and forth on where to plan the site of the Masonic Village. Some of the more promising options were Gettysburg, Carlisle, Lewistown, Middletown, and Elizabethtown.⁹ They chose the location of Elizabethtown because of the main line of railroad and its location in central Pennsylvania.¹⁰ Elizabethtown is 87 miles from Philadelphia, and 20 miles from Lancaster and Harrisburg.¹¹ Also, nearly 50,000 members of the fraternity lived within a three-hour train ride.¹² On 2 December 1908, the committee was able to finally purchase the land, appoint contractors, and get together all the plans for creating the village.¹³ The ground for Pennsylvania’s Masonic Homes was broken in June 1911.

With the creation of the Masonic Homes, the committee decided on building a Grand Lodge Hall as a headquarters for the village. On 12 June 1911, it was constructed in English Gothic Style architecture and served as the main building for the Masonic Homes. Twenty smaller cottages fanned out from the Grand Lodge Hall as well as a chapel, school, and a hospital. In 1910, the village held residence for about 700 guests.¹⁴ The Masonic

¹ Alvin J. Schmidt, Fraternal Organizations (Westport, CT: 1980), 120.

² *Ibid.*, 121.

³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴ Jean-Paul Benowitz, Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour (Elizabethtown, PA: 2015), 18.

⁵ Abraham C. Treichler Lodge No. 682, “Lodge History.” accessed 23 October, 2017.
<http://www.ETownMasons.org/our-lodge/lodge-history/>

⁶ de Bien, Lindsay A., ed. Masonic Village Elizabethtown, PA 1910-2010: 100th Anniversary. (2010), 4.

⁷ Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries. 1999, 181.

⁸ de Bien, Lindsay A., ed. Masonic Village Elizabethtown, PA 1910-2010: 100th Anniversary. (2010), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Benowitz, Jean-Paul Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour. 2015, 18.

¹³ de Bien, Lindsay A., ed. Masonic Village Elizabethtown, PA 1910-2010: 100th Anniversary. (2010), 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

Village became a popular place and soon the 2,000 applicants could not be housed. This caused more lodges and homes to be built and the village to expand.¹⁵ From the establishment of Masonic Homes, the village was intended to be fully self-sustaining containing the following: (1) natural springs to provide water for residents and facilitate daily tasks requiring water; (2) its own central plant providing electricity and heat to control the temperature for the residents' comfort; (3) vast acreage to facilitate massive farming operations, including the cultivation of corn, wheat, oats, grass, tobacco, alfalfa, and a variety of fruit trees.¹⁶ The department of farming also oversaw the raising of stock animals, such as pigs and cattle, in order to provide sustenance and fertilizer for the farming operations of Masonic Homes.¹⁷ Today, there is an all-year farm market on the campus of the Masonic Village which serves as the central market for residents to choose from hundreds of fresh goods produced on the Village's self-sustaining farmlands. The farmland utilizes a method known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to ensure the preservation of the farmlands for generations to come.¹⁸

On 2 October 1913, Peter Williamson, a fraternal member, proposed the use the homes as a place for the education of children of deceased Master Masons. In 1915 and 1916, homes for the girls and boys were created. Each home contained necessities for their welfare and were managed by house mothers, who oversaw the children.¹⁹ While these children were attending school they were treated like guests in the Masonic Homes.²⁰ Today, the Masonic Village continues to provide children from the community with engaging activities. In 2008, the Masonic Village Child Care Center supported about eighty families by providing after school and summer programs.²¹

With the focus of Freemasonry being on bettering oneself and community since the earliest history of the Fraternity, Masonic Homes continues to show support for the community's veterans and active military. On 14 August 1917, George B. Orlady called a meeting in the Masonic Homes to decide how the Masonic Village residents could assist the Red Cross in their help with World War I.²² Two weeks later, the guests formed an Auxiliary of the American Red Cross.²³ During this time, the intellectual engagement of the Masonic Homes community centered around the War. Many guest speakers visited and spoke about the War in Europe, America's role in it, and the history of the International Red Cross.²⁴ On 16 March 1918, a red oak tree was planted in the Village Green Area to memorialize the American Red Cross' anniversary. The Village Green Area also contains the Dulon F. Buchmiller Memorial fountain, memorializing brethren who served during the First World War. In addition, the Veterans Grove, commemorating those who have served, was established and trees were planted honoring the War's deceased.²⁵ Soon after the First World War's conclusion, influenza broke out globally. During the Influenza Outbreak of 1918, the Masonic Village willingly cared for those suffering from the illness outside the community.²⁶ Eighty-two people were treated at the Masonic Homes though they had no affiliation with the Masons.²⁷

Due to the community's hardships during the war, the Masonic Village was unable to admit new applicants. The committee decided to only consider Master Masons and their wives. Due to a lack of sufficient resources, the Masonic Homes could not sustain housing and necessities for widows and orphans, choosing instead to revert to its original intent to care for brethren and their spouses.²⁸ In 1920, the Masonic Homes received

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Masonic Village Farm Market, "About," accessed December 3, 2017.

<https://www.mvfarmmarket.com/pages/about-us>

¹⁹ Ibid, 20.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid, 186.

²² Ibid, 30.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, 31.

²⁵ Ibid, 178.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

a large windfall of \$100,000, a large fortune at the time, from Mr. Samuel Davis, as well as matching funds from the local lodges.²⁹ The committee allocated these funds to provide housing and care to orphans of Master Masons, eventually allowing the Masonic Homes to expand their services and construct new buildings to better serve their residents.³⁰ Founded in 1919 and 1923, respectively, the W. Harry Brown Home for Boys and the John Smith Homes for Boys were both funded as orphanages through Masonic Homes and provided education and housing for the sons of deceased brethren.³¹ For the daughters of deceased brethren, Masonic Homes established the Eisenlohr Homes for Girls, an orphanage which took a special interest in preparing the girls for pursuing formal college education.³²

During the post-war years, the Masons focused on the expansion of the village. Hershey created a fund of \$25,000 to build three dams as well as the Formal Gardens. Construction of the Formal Gardens occurred from 1930 to 1932.³³ The Gardens contain a grand staircase leading to hundreds of flowers, including rose climbing terraces. In the center of the Gardens there is a large, reflecting pond containing water lilies and goldfish.³⁴ In 1953, the bottom of the pond was reconstructed because the tarred caulk was killing the goldfish.³⁵ The pond was cleaned and enlarged in 1963, in order to irrigate the crops properly.³⁶ Sadly, frigid temperatures in the 1960s, caused the plants to die in the Formal Gardens. In order to have fresh flowers in the winter, a greenhouse was constructed in 1966.³⁷ Improvements included new furniture, modern equipment, and extensive groundskeeping.³⁸

Founded in 1928, the Thomas Ranken Patton Masonic Institution for Boys was established through the will of Mr. Patton to provide Masonic values and trade instruction to orphans at Masonic Homes.³⁹ By 1956, the Patton School also needed to be renovated. Thsons purchased the piece of land adjacent to the school and the campus was expanded.⁴⁰ In the early 1960s, the school's superintendent, Samuel E. Dibble retired and was replaced by Robert C. Landis. Robert C. Landis was able to change the curriculum and add a college preparatory course as an option for students wanting to go to college.⁴¹ The next superintendent of the school was John W. Kopp. In 1966, he created a new curriculum which included electronics, music, and foreign language programs. This curriculum made the student body increase.⁴² Despite his efforts, John W. Kopp could not keep enrollment up and by 1969, the Rutts Schoolhouse was demolished because of the cost of declining enrollment.⁴³ In 1976, to fix the admission problem, the Patton School adopted a non-discriminatory student enrollment policy.⁴⁴ Due to this policy and the difficulties with it, the school officially closed on 19 July 1978. The land was sold to the Masonic Temple.⁴⁵ In 1983, on the grounds of the Patton campus, a natatorium, the Masonic Conference Center, and a second chapel was built. On 14 September 1985, the new chapel containing an 879 square foot stained glass window, was dedicated and named the William A. Carpenter Chapel.⁴⁶ The original chapel, the John S. Sell Memorial Chapel, was dedicated in 1925 to honor the deceased member of the founding Committee on Masonic Homes.⁴⁷

²⁹ Ibid, 32.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 42, 44.

³² Ibid., 43

³³ Ibid, 70.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 79.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 86.

³⁸ Ibid, 81.

³⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 92.

⁴³ Ibid, 94.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 95.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 97.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 46

Originally, the only buildings of residence were the Grand Lodge, the Home for Girls, the Home for Boys, and the Daman Building. After World War I, medical services were in greater demand and an improvement of the on-campus Philadelphia Freemasons' Hospital was desperately needed.⁴⁸ In 1922, the hospital, which was built in 1916, expanded and two new wings were constructed, improving the hospital's ability to provide nursing and personal care services. Over the course of the Great Depression, the Masonic Homes only cared for the neediest of the fraternal community and the hospital was desperately needed due to abject poverty.⁴⁹ During World War II, the Philadelphia Freemasons Hospital lost many employees because of the nation's need for medical attention on the battlefield.⁵⁰ In 1948, the committee made plans to build a new wing and expand the hospital but the construction was put on hold due to financial restrictions.⁵¹ By 1953, the hospital had reached capacity until the Allegheny Rest Home was built to care for the overflow patients.⁵² But the Allegheny home was only a temporary fix, in 1954, they started building the new wing which was completed in May 1956.⁵³ This only meant more renovations to the old building. Finally in May 1958, after the remodeling and addition was complete, the hospital was dedicated by the Grand Lodge Officers.⁵⁴ In 1965, the Masonic homes made their treatment of patients more efficient by creating the Nursing Care Plan Program which provided more control of each residents health care and provided full-time care for guests.⁵⁵ In 1974, the hospital building was expanded and renovated again and is now known as the Masonic Healthcare Center and Freemasons' Building.⁵⁶ In order to best satisfy the needs of assisted living, this clinical building was renovated in five phases: (1) balconies and dining rooms were added to each floor (1991); (2) the demolition and rebuilding of the East Wing to specialize in care for those with Alzheimer's disease (Early 1993); (3) the renovation of the North Wing to provide space for clinical services (Late 1993); (4) the demolition of the West Wing and the "A" section of the Philadelphia Freemasons' Building and the construction of the Roosevelt Building, a "critical link" between all of the clinical buildings (1994); and (5) the redesigning of the Benjamin Franklin Building's ground and first floors to provide a location for the Adult Daily Living Center, which provides adult day care services and goal-oriented programs (1997).⁵⁷ In addition to renovating the Masonic Healthcare Center and Freemasons' Building, Masonic Homes also identified specific goals in 1999 to improve assisted living care. These goals focused on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the adoption of the Eden Alternative philosophy of Dr. William Thomas, a physician from New York who studied how to best eliminate the feelings of loneliness, boredom, and helplessness associated with assisted living.⁵⁸

In the late 1980s, the Masonic Homes began introducing care for not just the ailing and afflicted but also housing for independent living, a new service retirement homes were developing in the late twentieth century.⁵⁹ Renovations to the Masonic Healthcare Center deferred action on these plans until 1988, when the ground was broken in dedication of the independent living community. On 1 August 1990, the first residents of the independent living community moved in and all of the Masonic Homes' services were fully operational by October 1990. This venture was financed by a bond issuance of \$44,310,000, fully tax-exempt, through Smith Barney.⁶⁰ The independent living at Masonic Homes proved extremely popular among the Pennsylvania's aging Masonic population and renewable energy improvements were made to further the Masonic Homes' goal of creating a self-sustaining community.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 79.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 62.

⁵¹ Ibid, 72.

⁵² Ibid, 74.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 86.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 103.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 134.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 119.

In addition to the Masonic Homes' commitment to care for the elderly and sick, the organization also encourages civic engagement in the Fraternity among its residents. In conjunction with Abraham C. Treichler Lodge No. 682 in 1958, the Masonic Homes began hosting the Lodge's regular meetings in the newly constructed Masonic Temple on the property of the Masonic Homes from Heisey Hall. The Lodge also established an annual commencement award to recognize an outstanding senior boy each year from Elizabethtown Area High School. In 1980, a Permanent Charity Fund was created to assist national charities financially. The Lodge, in this period, continued its tradition of reading from the Holy Bible during stated meetings, despite national controversy over Freemasonry's religious secularism. In 1986, the Lodge reinstated the charter of the heavily active youth wing, Elizabethtown DeMolay, an organization promoting Masonic moral values in youth, and made supporting youth programs in the community a priority. In 1988, a Masonic Library was founded for all members of the Lodge. In recent decades, Treichler Lodge No. 682 members were appointed to several Grand Lodge positions and four members have achieved the highly desired Pennsylvania Franklin Medal to honor Master Masons for "their outstanding service to the Craft in general and Pennsylvania in particular." To this day, Elizabethtown's Masonic Lodge continues to serve the Masonic Fraternity, Elizabethtown community, and Masonic Village.⁶¹

Throughout its 106 year long history, the Masonic Village has grown into a continuing care retirement community, including residences for more than 1,800, people from apartments and cottages to studios and suites, and housing for adults with developmental disabilities.⁶² The Masonic Village has modernized over time but has kept the core values of Freemasonry's commitment to community, providing a place where the sick, homeless, and retired brethren could stay and have their needs met. Through all of its facets of care, the Masonic Village has made an impact in the lives of millions of Pennsylvanian families by utilizing advanced care for their sick and elderly loved ones.⁶³

⁶¹ Abraham C. Treichler Lodge No. 682, "Lodge History." accessed 23 October, 2017.
<http://www.ETownMasons.org/our-lodge/lodge-history/>

⁶² Ibid, 186.

⁶³ Ibid., 173.