

MASONIC RELIEF ASSOCIATION

MASONIC RELIEF ASSOCIATION of the United States and Canada

Thanks to Donald E. Krueger, PG.M and Executive Secretary the following material (from various sources) was put together to inform us about the great work being done by the Masonic Relief Association.--Editor

The exercise of relief upon this globe has had an enormous effect in the affairs of men. It has been said, that the practice of relief among men has put civilization into the heart of man, allowing him to survive through the ages. We, as Masons, recognize this, for happy is the day when it becomes our turn to comfort, console, or help others in time of need. But, what of that other day, when you, as a Mason, must seek help. Further, what if you're away from home, vacationing or traveling in another grand jurisdiction and misfortune strikes Who could you turn to if such hardship came upon you and/or a member of your immediate family while traveling away from home?

Years ago, in rural areas, Masons interrupted their own work to lend a hand to a member in need, or to his family. When a member of a Lodge passed away and left a family, they were taken care of by the members of the Lodge, or neighbors. Very few were the cases where part of a family had to go to the "County Poor Farm".

As this country grew and as travel increased by land and sea, more Masonic families required the assistance of others in their struggle for survival. Very often when the need arose these Masonic families were many miles from their original home, friends, and relatives. They turned to the nearest Masonic Lodge for aid.

Frontier and Seaport towns were growing rapidly and many contained several Masonic Lodges. In these towns it became apparent that a central point in the community should be established to which these sojourning or transient Masons could be sent for assistance. Thus Boards of Relief and Service Bureaus emerged. Several have been in continuous operation for more than 100 years, helping the sojourning member with his problems. Since then the Boards have assumed additional duties assisting members within their own jurisdictions by arranging and conducting funerals, administering blood banks and employment agencies, plus various forms of aid, both personal and financial.

FOR EXAMPLE:

"We received a call from a Social Service worker in a Chicago Hospital asking our help for the widow of a Mason, whose only means of support was a small Social Security check. She could no longer live alone, because of her age and physical condition, and she had used up her Medicare and supplementary benefits. The woman was unsure about her husband's lodge, but was certain that he belonged to a Chicago Lodge, and had had a Masonic funeral. We checked

with the office of the Grand Secretary, who informed us of the name of her husband's lodge, and we contacted the Secretary of that lodge, and he has arranged for her entry into our Masonic Home."

HOW WE WERE FORMED

In 1885 an informal meeting was held at Baltimore, Maryland by some fifteen to twenty Masons from various places, and a plan was organized, with committees appointed, to report at a meeting to be held the following year in St. Louis, Missouri. From this small meeting 104 years ago The Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada was born.

The second meeting took place on November 17, 1886, at St. Louis, at which time By-Laws were adopted, and a general plan was approved to centralize communication and activities for the relief of worthy Masons, and also publicize fraud, and eliminate assistance to imposters. Nineteen delegates attended, four from Canada and fifteen from the United States. The name adopted at that time was The General Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada.

At the time of organization, at this second meeting, the group had already received receipts totaling \$529.94, with disbursements of \$393.32.

The Grand Lodges of Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia, together with thirty-three constituent lodges, provided the funds. In its early days the Association distributed an official "Warning Circular", which later was replaced by our present day publication called The Bulletin of The Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada.

After its formation the Association met annually, until 1893; since 1895 meetings have been held biennially. In 1897, in its birthplace city of Baltimore, the name was changed to The Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada.

Today, with the support of 42 Grand Lodges, the Association includes 135 Boards and Agencies, located throughout the United States and Canada, with its publication "The Bulletin" being mailed to over 14,000 constituent lodge secretaries.

WHAT WE DO

Presently, the Association acts as a clearing house to assist local lodges and Boards of Relief throughout the Continent with inter-jurisdictional communication and problems. Consequently assistance may be more quickly and efficiently implemented. It also plans and organizes biennial meetings, providing a forum for Agency delegates to discuss mutual problems and solutions, and continue to develop more prompt and effective methods of handling cases of inter-jurisdictional relief. The official publication, "The Bulletin", provides information regarding Board announcements and activities, and exposes the identity of unworthy Masons and imposters preying upon the Fraternity.

Almost all of the Relief Boards and Agencies are available on a 24 hour, 7 day basis. The office of the Executive Secretary of the Association is similarly available at any time.

RELIEF The following are a few examples of relief that the Masonic Relief Association has administered:

- ù Hospital and nursing home visits upon the request of the brother's lodge.
- ù Assist elderly brothers to be admitted into nursing homes and hospitals.
- ù Many Boards of Relief have assisted grand jurisdictions in the distribution of benevolent funds.
- ù Provide food and look after the welfare of a widow while awaiting the outcome of an investigation of circumstances.
- ù Masonic memorial services arranged. There are several instances where the Boards of Relief have advanced necessary funds to enable a widow to take the remains of her husband back home.
- ù Several Boards of Relief own cemetery lots for the exclusive interment of indigent sojourning brothers.
- ù Many times blood donations requested by the families from his lodge have been transferred to sojourning members of their families.
- ù Assisted sojourning brothers when they were victims of crimes.

FRAUD

With the honest and legitimate members of any group can always be found a minority who weaken and resort to getting by with the least effort. Former members of the fraternity and many non-members who observed the sincerity of Masons helping each other conceived and put in practice the idea of seeking help illegally. Many imposters started to prey on members of the fraternity, going from town to town, begging and borrowing money.

All brethren please note. The Masonic Relief Association publishes a quarterly newsletter entitled, the BULLETIN. This newsletter informs the Masonic fraternity of up-to-date warnings, frauds, awards and other relevant information. It is important that lodge officers review this newsletter as it may save themselves financial embarrassment. Ask your lodge secretary to see your lodge's copy of the BULLETIN. It has information of value for all Master Masons.

On a happier note the following story again points out very vividly how we try to help: "A young man called our office, stating that he was completely without funds, and his father was a Mason. We explained how we function, and asked him if he had contacted his family, but he said he did not want to do this. After some time, we persuaded him to let us contact his family, which we did. His parents were very grateful to us, as they had not heard from him for several months, and were understandably worried about him. We made arrangements for them to pick him up at a

designated location, saw that he was fed, and made comfortable until the time when he was picked up."

Specifically who do you contact if an urgent need arises while traveling and whom do you contact to find the localities of various Boards. The answer: You may contact your local lodge secretary or the Grand Secretary or write directly to M.W. Donald Krueger, PGM, Executive Secretary, 3213 Seidel Drive, Burlington, Wisconsin 53105.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Masonic Relief Association is a joint venture comprising member Grand Lodges from BOTH the United States and Canada!

ALWAYS REMEMBER: The Masonic Way is to Give Without Remembering and Receive Without Forgetting