

Keweenaw National Historical Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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## FINDING AID

# Free & Accepted Masons records 1900-1986 (bulk dates: 1906-1961)

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## HISTORY

Originally founded by stone masons in the fourteenth century, freemasonry is the oldest and most well documented of all secret societies. The stone masons became known as “freemasons” because they were not serfs and so were not tied down to one place but were free to find work wherever they chose. Only stone masons were permitted to be members of Freemason societies. In 1619, gentlemen of other professions were “accepted” into the Freemason societies upon payment of twice the amount of dues as a stone mason would pay, thus creating the Free & Accepted Masons.

York Masonry is the oldest and best known of all Masonic rites. In 1813, the Ancient York Grand Lodge merged with another group called the Modern Grand Lodge to form the United Grand Lodge of England, and served as the foundation for the present system of Symbolic Lodge Masonry. The York Rite consists of four distinct and separate sovereign Masonic bodies: the Symbolic Lodge, the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the Council of Cryptic Masons, and the Commandery of Knights Templar.

The degrees in the Lodge, Chapter, and Council, and the Orders conferred in the Commandery have been arranged into a system or rite referred to as the American, Canadian, or York Rite of Freemasonry. It is American in structure because it is a democratic organization where every member has a voice and a right to be heard. Royal Arch Masonry was established in England approximately 1740, and was brought to the United States in 1797. The Royal Arch Chapter degrees are the culmination of the degree system of Freemasonry. Only those who have attained the Royal Arch may be said to have completed their Masonic work. Local chapters operate under the jurisdiction of the Grand Chapter of each state, which is governed by the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International. The General Grand Chapter constitutes the largest Masonic body in the world, with three thousand chapters and nearly three hundred thousand members alone in the United States in 1994.

There are many “Knights” associated with the Freemasons, but the Knights Templar is the highest achievement in the York Rite of Freemasonry. The first recorded reference to the Knights Templar in the United States occurred in Boston in 1769, but the modern organization of the Knights Templar was established in 1816 with the ratification of the current constitution. In the Commandery, the Chivalric Orders of Christian Knighthood are conferred on members. The Order of the Temple is the crowning glory of York Rite masonry and is regarded as the most solemn and impressive experience in masonry. Local commanderies are governed by the Grand Commandery of each jurisdiction, and then placed under the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States. Membership appears to have peaked in 1923 with just over four hundred thousand members. Membership has steadily declined with fewer than four hundred thousand members in 1968, and only three hundred thousand in 1994.

### **The F. & A.M. Calumet Lodge, No. 271 (1869-1984)**

The Free & Accepted Masons Calumet Lodge was instituted on August 2, 1869, and received its charter on January 14, 1870. In 1888, they along with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hecla Lodge, No. 90, formed the Union Building Association to construct a new building, with income-producing commercial space on the ground floor, and lodge halls on the upper floors. The Union Building was built on a lot leased from the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company at the corner of Fifth Street and Red Jacket Road, at the entrance to downtown Calumet. Meetings were held on the third floor on Thursdays, on or before each full moon. On October 23, 1984, the Calumet Lodge was consolidated into the Copper Country Lodge, No. 135.

### **The Knights Templar Montrose Commandery, No. 38 (1885-1986)**

The Montrose Commandery was formed in Hancock, Michigan under dispensation from the Grand Commandery of Michigan on June 11, 1885 and received its charter on May 11, 1886. Their meetings were held in the Masonic Temple on Hancock Street in the city of Hancock until they moved their commandery to Calumet, Michigan in July 1889. They started with a charter membership of twenty-eight and grew so large that in October 1908, fifty members left and formed the Palestine Commandery, No. 48 in Houghton, Michigan. The Palestine Commandery had to surrender its charter on March 31, 1958. The Montrose Commandery's meetings were on the first Friday of each month at their asylum in the Union Building on the corner of Fifth Street and Red Jacket Road in Calumet. As membership decreased, they were consolidated into the Lake Superior Commandery, No. 30 in Marquette, Michigan, on June 6, 1986.

The Montrose and Palestine commanderies together hosted the fifty-ninth annual Grand Commandery of Michigan Conclave from June 7th through June 10th of 1915. Those who attended the Conclave would take a train between Houghton and Calumet for different events or ceremonies. While in Houghton, the first floor of the Douglass House Hotel was used as the headquarters and when in Calumet, they used the first floor of the Union Building.

### **The R.A.M. Calumet Chapter, No. 153 (1909-1971)**

The Royal Arch Masons (R.A.M.) Calumet Chapter was established on May 19, 1909. They met the third Monday of every month at the Union Building. On November 1, 1971, the Chapter was consolidated into the Gate of the Temple Chapter, No. 35 of Hancock, Michigan, due to declining membership. The Gate of the Temple Chapter was incorporated into the Negaunee Chapter, No. 108 on March 30, 1994.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

Free & Accepted Masons records  
1900-1986 (bulk dates: 1906-1961)

CATALOG NUMBER KEWE 40008

VOLUME [Count] 126 [Extent] [Type of Unit] EA.

DESCRIPTION The Free & Accepted Masons records are comprised of booklets, financial documents, membership information, and various other materials pertaining to the administrative and ceremonial aspects of the Free & Accepted Masons and their affiliates that were part of the Calumet community from 1869 to 1986.

The groups represented in the material of this collection include the Free & Accepted Masons Calumet Lodge, No. 271; the Knights Templar Montrose Commandery, No. 38; and the Royal Arch Masons Calumet Chapter, No. 153. All three organizations had their meetings in the Union Building.

The strength of the collection is in the membership records of Calumet Lodge, No. 271 dated 1907, 1925 to 1926, and 1961. The membership rosters and degree applications would be of interest to genealogists for the lists of local members.

Lesser strengths, such as the by-laws and financial receipts of the Knights Templar Montrose Commandery, might provide some insight for researchers into other aspects of the social history of the community.

ORGANIZATION [Organization]The Free & Accepted Masons records are divided into three series, one for each of the lodges represented in the collection. The three series are organized chronologically based on lodge establishment date. Subseries headings within each series include administration, membership, financial, publications, and books in that order as applicable. [Arrangement]Materials within each subseries are generally arranged in chronological order; any discrepancies are caused by similar materials from different accessions having a range of dates that somewhat overlap or fill in gaps.

**PROVENANCE**

The Free & Accepted Masons records came to Keweenaw National Historical Park in four accessions. The primary accession is accession number KEWE-00183 which contains material salvaged from the third floor of the Union Building by Keweenaw National Historical Park on May 6, 2004.

Materials from accession number KEWE-00051 were salvaged from the Union Building by former owner Ray Ostermyer. The materials were purchased by Keweenaw National Historical Park from Mr. Ostermyer on August 20, 2002.

The records in accession number KEWE-00181 were rescued from the Eagle Harbor Waste Management incinerator by Michael Braman, an employee at the incinerator who recognized the historical significance of the material. Mr. Braman donated the materials to Keweenaw National Historical Park on April 4, 2004. These materials are believed to have been owned by Ray Ostermyer, who moved to Keweenaw County before his death on May 5, 2003. These records complement records from accession number KEWE-00051.

Items from accession KEWE-00044 were collected by Art Vasold of Lake Linden, Michigan. Among the material was a Masonic Bible, a certificate, several Degree booklets, and a membership roster for the Calumet Lodge, No. 271. It was all donated to Keweenaw National Historical Park by Mr. Vasold on March 22, 2002.

**RESTRICTIONS**

NO

**ASSOCIATED MATERIALS**

The Copper Country Masonic Lodge Collections; Collections #MS-035 Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections

## **HIERARCHY**

### **I. SERIES 001: F. & A.M. CALUMET LODGE, No. 271, 1907-1986**

- A. SUBSERIES 001.01: ADMINISTRATION, 1944
- B. SUBSERIES 001.02: MEMBERSHIP, 1907-1961
- C. SUBSERIES 001.03: PUBLICATIONS, 1948-1986
- D. SUBSERIES 001.04: BOOKS, 1951

### **II. SERIES 002: KNIGHTS TEMPLAR MONTROSE COMMANDERY, No. 38, 1900-1917**

- A. SUBSERIES 002.01: MEMBERSHIP, 1900-1910
- B. SUBSERIES 002.02: FINANCIAL RECORDS, 1900-1917
- C. SUBSERIES 002.03: PUBLICATIONS, 1908-1915

### **III. SERIES 003: R.A.M. CALUMET CHAPTER, NO. 153**

- A. SUBSERIES 003.01: ADMINISTRATION, date unknown

## CONTAINER LIST

### Box 1

#### SERIES 001: FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS CALUMET LODGE, No. 271

##### SUBSERIES 001.01: Administration

Folder 1. 00014/001.01-001 Blue Book Supplement, Visitor Cards (4)

##### SUBSERIES 001.02: Membership

Folder 2. 00014/001.02-001 Rosters, Transfer Certificate (3)

Folder 3. 00014/001.02-002 Applications, Letters and Applications for Transfer (30)

Folder 4. 00014/001.02-003 "33 Degree" Certificate and Presentation Case (2)

##### SUBSERIES 001.03: Publications

Folder 5. 00014/001.03-001 Mason Degree Books, Mystic Shrine History (6)

Folder 6. 00014/001.03-002 Ceremonial Song Cards (2)

##### SUBSERIES 001.04: Books [shelved separately]

Book 1. 00014/001.04#001 "THE BIBLE/AND/KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE/IN/MASONRY/Illustrated." [Inscription: "Presented to/Brother James R. Bowns/Initiated Dec. 1st, 1952/Passes March 2, 1953/Raised April 6, 1953/By/Kenneth C. Pierson, Master/Elmer E. Kuhl, Senior Warden/Paul Millerwise, Senior Warden/Attest: Henry Gruehn, Secretary"] Kelchner, John Wesley. Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company, 1951.

#### SERIES 002: KNIGHTS TEMPLAR MONTROSE COMMANDERY, No. 38

##### SUBSERIES 002.01: Membership

Folder 7. 00014/002.01-001 Cape Checks and Baggage Tags, Admission Request (29)

**Box 1 (cont'd)**

**SUBSERIES 002.02: Financial Records**

Folder 8. 00014/002.02-001 Dues Receipt Books, Receipts (5)

**SUBSERIES 002.03: Publications**

Folder 9. 00014/002.03-001 By-Laws, Dance Card (40)

**SERIES 003: R.A.M. CALUMET CHAPTER, No. 153**

**SUBSERIES 003.01: Administration**

Folder 10. 00014/003.01-001 Blank Forms (4)