

## Taking Care of Their Own: History of the Masonic Children's Home in Guthrie, Oklahoma



*By Pamela Webb\**

“That’s what we are all about,” is the proud statement of James Weems, who is both a Mason and a former resident of the Guthrie Masonic Children’s Home. “Masons take care of their own as well as other people.”<sup>1</sup> Service to humanity is the spirit and strength of Masonic brotherhood.<sup>2</sup> The Masonic philosophy is:

We’re kind of like a civic club, a charitable institution and a fraternity—all rolled into one. We’re like a civic club in that we do a lot of community and statewide projects. We’re like a major charity in that we give almost \$1.5 million away every day. But, most importantly, we are a fraternity for men—doing good things for each other, and trying to bring men of good morals and ethics together in our community.<sup>3</sup>

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The Masons' support of their orphans, widows, and the elderly provides evidence of this philosophy. They provided a home for orphans with Masonic ties from 1907 to 1978. By their magnanimity, children who did not have anyone to take care of them had the privilege of living at the home and the opportunity to become productive and successful citizens.

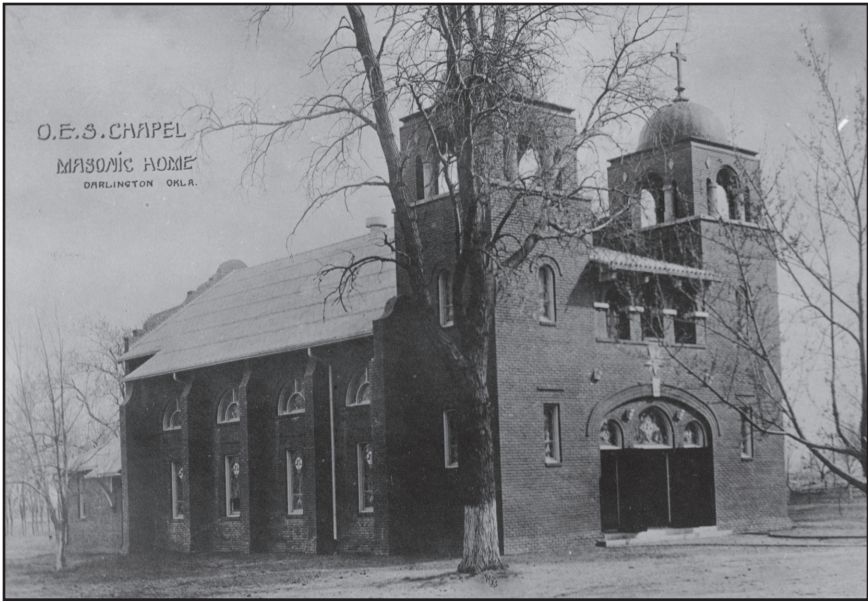
The resident children did not consider themselves orphans, nor did they call where they lived an orphanage. The majority had at least one living parent and called themselves home kids. They lived, played, studied, and worked hard at their chores. They did everything the town kids did, except go home to a mom and dad each night. The number of their siblings equaled the number of children living in the home. They cared so much for each other that they still hold reunions every other year. The advantages provided by the Masons and the Order of the Eastern Star (OES) exceeded many town kids' dreams.<sup>4</sup> The following history of the Guthrie Masonic Children's Home covers the years 1897 to 1942.

Discussion of providing a home for the orphans, widows, and the elderly began during the time of the two Grand Lodges in Oklahoma: the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory, 1874–1908, and the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory, 1892–1908. Each Grand Lodge set the goal of raising \$50,000 toward the establishment of such a home. During the time funds were being raised, leaders of the lodges saw that Indian and Oklahoma Territories would eventually merge into one state, and Masons of both lodges worked toward amalgamation of the two grand bodies. Funds from the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory, amounting to more than \$50,000, far exceeded the amount raised by the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory. This financial disparity was one reason that the two Grand Lodges postponed their merging until 1908.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, despite barriers to a merger, the 1906 session of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory voted to accept a permanent orphan's home supported by the Masons. The Order of the Eastern Star, along with the Masons, provided funds and assistance. A temporary location, which was the former Murrow Orphans' Home in Atoka, Oklahoma, became the first Oklahoma Masonic Children's Home. Twenty-three children moved to the home on December 31, 1907.<sup>6</sup> The first matron, Eastern Star Sister Emma Telle, stayed with the children and moved with them to their next facility in Darlington, Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup>

Out of the need to centralize control of the home's activities after the two territorial groups merged in 1908, a Board of Control was created in 1909. The board's responsibilities included the hiring and discharging of employees. Composed of five Masonic members, including one

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*Order of the Eastern Star Chapel at the Masonic Home in Darlington, Oklahoma (4343, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).*

representative from the OES, the governing board, which only met at the home a few hours each month, could not adequately oversee the operations. This lack of involvement changed in later years.<sup>8</sup>

Located in Atoka until April 30, 1910, the home's sixty-five children then moved to a permanent location in Darlington, Oklahoma.<sup>9</sup> Arrangements made with the federal government for the purchase of the Darlington Indian Agency buildings allowed for use of the facility as the permanent Masonic Children's Home.<sup>10</sup> Located five miles northwest of El Reno in Canadian County, the home consisted of a farm with 676 acres. The Masons bought the acreage with approximately twenty buildings for \$73,882 to be paid in several installments.<sup>11</sup> The Masons planned to house not only children but also elderly Masons and the widows of Masons.

Difficulties plagued the Darlington home. Records indicate that the property, which contained not only living quarters but also a large working farm, required extensive repairs and remodeling. Thus, the location would not support a home without additional funds expended. Also, due to the high alkaline content of the water, it could not be used for drinking or household use. The cost of the nonbudgeted repairs

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*Thomas P. Gore (4634, W. P. Campbell Collection, OHS).*

in the original estimates resulted in a financial strain on the Grand Lodge. However, the Masons provided the funds to pay for the renovation.

In 1911 a shortage of Masonic Lodge funds existed, and the final amount due to the federal government for the home and properties could not be paid. Senator T. P. Gore assisted with the arrangements, which allowed the Masons to pay the remaining debt over a five-year period. The arrangements also involved the purchase of an additional forty acres, called the Spring 40, which had a natural spring of excellent drinking water. The lodge received authorization to make the final payment for the property in 1914.

The Christmas season was an especially joyous time for the children through the generosity of the Masons and Order of the Eastern Star. The Christmas Fund, started in 1910 and in place until the home closed in 1978, allowed additional items to be purchased for the home's residents. The matron of the OES received and spent the donations.<sup>12</sup> Any funds left from the Christmas season moved to the Pleasure Fund for use anytime during the year.<sup>13</sup> Staples such as "linens, bedding, canned fruit, fresh fruit, clothing and other articles that were needed

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in any home” came from the OES throughout the home’s existence.<sup>14</sup> They also provided items of “beauty and comfort.”<sup>15</sup>

The distance between El Reno, the nearest town, and the Darlington home measured five miles. Traveling to church each Sunday could be a challenge as adverse weather often made the road leading to the home difficult to use. The Order of the Eastern Star appropriated \$6,000 to build a chapel on the home grounds. At the chapel’s completion in 1914, three hundred members of the OES traveled by train to El Reno to attend the dedication at Darlington.<sup>16</sup>

The home’s self-contained operation also provided schooling within the facility. The in-home schooling proved to be a wise decision due to the often impassable roads to the El Reno public schools. During the last year of the home at the Darlington site, six teachers offered eleven grades.<sup>17</sup>

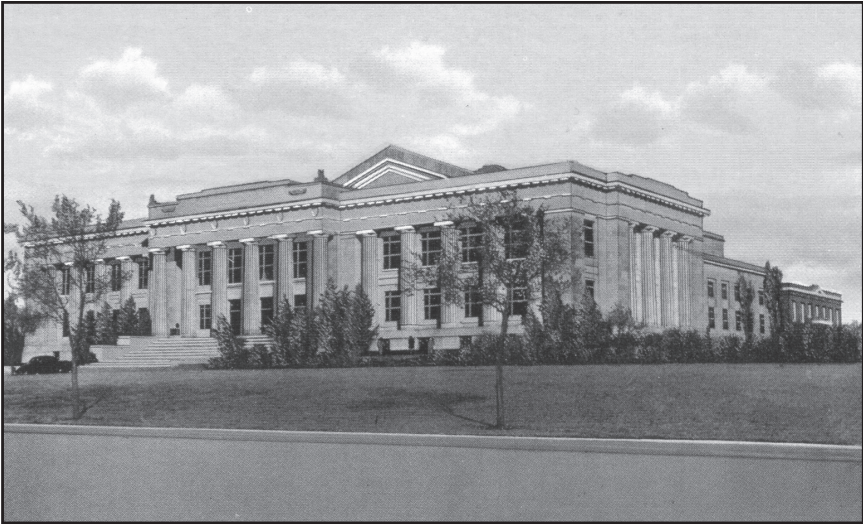
As the children lived in a large group, it was difficult to learn how to cook or take care of oneself. A four-room cottage became a cooking area for girls ages fourteen to sixteen to learn how to prepare meals and keep house for a limited number of people. They learned how to cook, clean, and maintain a home in this fashion.

After concluding that the continued maintenance of both the home facilities and farm were economically unfeasible, the Grand Lodge discussed selling half of the property in 1918. Nothing resulted from the discussion. However, the members of the lodge began to look for alternative solutions for the care of the home’s residents.

A pivotal meeting of the 1920 Grand Lodge caused a great deal of change in the home and its operations. The discussion included such different ideas as separating the elderly from the children so there would be no association between the two groups, and moving the home to another location. The Board of Control advocated removing it from the Darlington location because they found getting to the home for annual meetings difficult due to the poor road conditions, particularly in adverse weather.<sup>18</sup>

Considered in the discussion of moving the home was an offer from the El Reno Chamber of Commerce of a site for a sanitarium of not less than five acres. Anticipated costs for the sanitarium building ran from \$100,000 to \$150,000. Another alternative was the offer “worth fully \$300,000” from the Masonic Consistory at Guthrie.<sup>19</sup> The offer contained the donation of the buildings and grounds from the old temple site on Harrison Street, requiring that the Grand Lodge move the Masonic Children’s Home location to Guthrie. From the many options discussed came the plan to appoint a committee of four men, two who supported removing the home from Darlington and two who opposed

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*Scottish Rite Temple in Guthrie (20892, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).*

the relocation. These four men prepared papers for and against the change. Printed and distributed, the papers went to each lodge in the jurisdiction to vote on the removal. Upon the votes being counted at the December 1920 election meeting, only 6,018 out of the 45,000 Master Masons had voted. Determined not to be a valid majority of opinion, the matter continued to the next Grand Lodge meeting.

The 1922 Grand Lodge meeting not only passed the motion unanimously to move the homes from their present location, but also reviewed propositions for relocation.<sup>20</sup> Bartlesville, Hugo, Guthrie, Tulsa, and Muskogee had proposed property sites in their towns. The Masons determined that Muskogee and Guthrie had provided the most complete proposals.<sup>21</sup>

The Muskogee proposal contained an offer of five and one-half acres of land at no charge to the Masons for the new home. Included in the offer was an adjoining seven acres available for purchase for \$17,000. Free water on the home property, reduced rates for hospital services, and free public schools also were included in the proposal. The churches and civic organizations extended their invitation to the Grand Lodge hoping that they would choose Muskogee. The offer for a home, or homes if the Masons wanted to build more, included both the children and the elderly.<sup>22</sup> As they had recently succeeded in winning the location of the veteran's hospital, leaders in Muskogee had taken

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options on three tracts of land, confident their town would be chosen as the site for the children's home.<sup>23</sup>

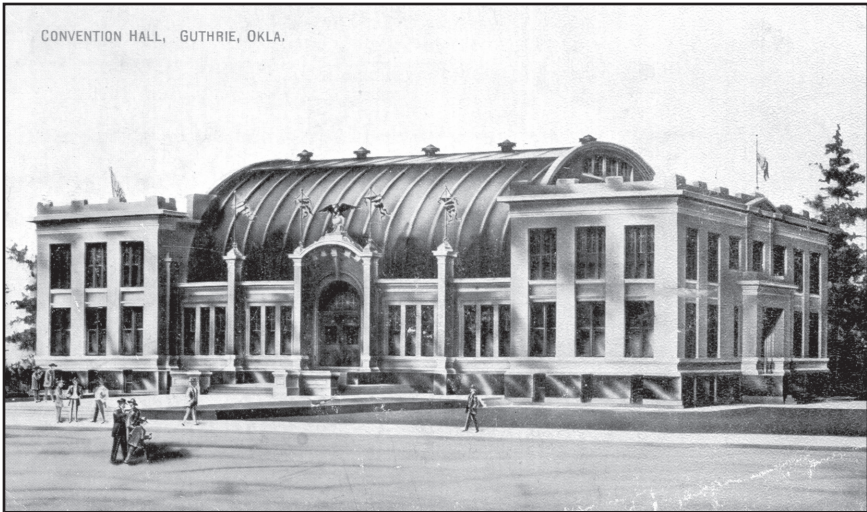
The City of Guthrie offered twenty-eight acres of land with water furnished at no charge, and the nearby Oklahoma Methodist Hospital proposed a low minimum rate for the hospitalization of home patients. The low rate consisted of \$5 per week in a ward and \$15 per week in a private room. These rates included hospital and medical services. Guthrie's offer also included free public schools with a special kindergarten school provided, if necessary. As with the City of Muskogee, the Guthrie churches and civic organizations extended to the Grand Lodge their invitation to locate the Masonic homes in their city. An added incentive included reduced rates, as the Oklahoma Corporation Commission could authorize, for electricity and gas. Still available, the Guthrie Consistory offered to donate the buildings and grounds from the old temple site on Harrison Street to be used as a home for the elderly and widows, contingent on the Masonic Children's Home being moved to Guthrie.<sup>24</sup>

Much discussion ensued, with each city's advantages discussed. The paper ballot results were: Guthrie, 876 votes; Muskogee, 208 votes; Darlington, 10 votes; Norman, 1 vote.<sup>25</sup> The minutes of the meeting stated that a Muskogee representative, "voicing the complete good will of the Muskogee brethren, moved that the vote be made unanimous in favor of Guthrie, which motion was seconded and carried unanimously."<sup>26</sup> Within three months, work would commence.<sup>27</sup>

Not everyone agreed with the congenial statement as reported in the 1922 *Grand Lodge Official Proceedings*. The *Oklahoma Weekly Leader*, published in Guthrie, indicated a different attitude in an article entitled "Muskogee's Own Story of the Home Overbid." This article quoted the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, saying, "Muskogee had just about as much chance of winning the \$500,000 Masonic orphanage as of becoming the capital of the United States."<sup>28</sup>

The Home Committee planned to move 136 children and 15 elderly people and widows to Guthrie on August 1, 1922. Facilitated by the quick completion of the sketches by architects Hawk & Parr, the work actually began sometime around September 1, 1922.<sup>29</sup> The architects received \$6,005 for their work.<sup>30</sup> Contour maps were made by local surveyor T. B. Reder.<sup>31</sup> Paid \$184,000, the Campbell & Price construction company erected the building. Contracted on a cost-plus plan, the construction company received payment for actual costs and a percentage for managing the builders and subcontractors.<sup>32</sup> Final cost for the Guthrie Masonic Children's Home was approximately \$500,000.<sup>33</sup>

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*Convention Hall in Guthrie (9241.B, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).*

The Home Committee's plans for the members of the Darlington home included moving them before completion of the new home in Guthrie. The children were relocated to the 1907 Convention Hall, used during the time when Guthrie served as the Oklahoma state capital and then part of the new Scottish Rite Temple, until construction of the new home facility was completed. Masonic workmen transformed the Convention Hall located on Drexel Street into dormitories.<sup>34</sup>

On September 9, 1922, 125 children moved to the Convention Hall.<sup>35</sup> The move began with trucks carrying the belongings and furnishings to El Reno and then loading them onto five freight cars. Trucks moved the laundry equipment to Guthrie. Although a total of 125 children occupied the home, only 60 children, 44 boys and 16 girls, were present to move on the actual moving day. The remainder returned to the Guthrie home at the conclusion of their summer vacation.<sup>36</sup> Those children present on moving day, along with the other residents and staff of the home, moved from El Reno to Guthrie in special interurban cars with the assistance of the Order of the Eastern Star.<sup>37</sup> The move to the Guthrie home cost \$2,259.<sup>38</sup> The 60 children, 12 assistants, and the teachers arrived at their temporary Guthrie home with Superintendent Arthur J. Weir and his wife, who served as the head matron.<sup>39</sup>

In anticipation of their arrival, and to make the children feel more at home and not so out of place, the Guthrie public schools opened one week later than originally scheduled. Also, the city voted for bonds to



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provide relief to the now overcrowded schools. With funds provided, the City of Guthrie added new school buildings to accommodate the additional children.<sup>40</sup>

Twenty elderly Masons and widows also moved from the Darlington home to Guthrie. Housed with the children in the Convention Hall, they waited for the building of the new Scottish Rite cathedral so they could move into the abandoned, but updated, Masonic Temple located on Harrison Street.<sup>41</sup> The old building, however, was determined not suitable for renovation to house the elderly and had to be demolished. After the demolition, construction began on a building to meet the special needs of the aged and infirm. Until completion of the new building, they continued to live with the home children. They were able to move into the new facility on Harrison Street in 1927.<sup>42</sup>

One of the ancient traditions of Masonry is the laying of a cornerstone with much pomp and ceremony in a new building while it is under construction. Those involved in the laying of the cornerstone for the Guthrie Masonic Children's Home on February 28, 1923, included members of the Masonic order, the Order of the Eastern Star, the townspeople of Guthrie, and the home children.<sup>43</sup> The home's cornerstone contained a copy of the Holy Bible, the proceedings from the last Grand Lodge, and the constitution and a code of laws of the Masonic Grand Lodge. Also included were rosters of membership of the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Consistories and a roster of the residents of the Masonic home as of that date.<sup>44</sup>

The *Oklahoma Weekly Leader* described the Masonic Children's Home as follows in its March 1, 1923, edition:

The main building built in colonial style of architecture, mottled red brick with white stone trimmings, red tiled roof and a dome. . . . It is 45 by 96 feet in size, three stories, a basement and a dome. On the first floor is the superintendent's office, two reception rooms, two music rooms and a large sewing room, on the second floor the superintendent's living rooms and an assembly room for the children, the third floor being given entirely to an isolation hospital for the sick.

At the rear of the main floor is the dining room 50 by 100 feet in size with kitchens, store rooms, and pantries, etc., above the dining room very attractive living rooms for the employees and in the basement is a regulation size gymnasium 50 by 87 feet in size with lockers, full equipment, etc., and next to the gymnasium what will be one of the finest indoor swimming pools in America.

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The pool is 32 by 80 feet in size with marble floor and tiling and a ceiling in relief when complete \$25,000, which amount is given by E. W. Marland, the Ponca City oil man, who made the donation when he learned that the original plans of the home did not include a swimming pool.

The entire interior construction of all this and all the other buildings is reinforced concrete, with hollow tile partitions, metal lathing, and other complete fire proof materials. In the dining room, the massive reinforced concrete girders add to the attractiveness of the room.

Flanking the main or administrative building on either side are four dormitories each 34 by 109 feet in size and two stories in height. These buildings are also colonial style of architecture, two of them are for boys and two for girls and each floor in the building will be a home unit itself. One lower floor for girls and one for boys is arranged on the ward plan for the very small children but each of the other floors has twenty rooms for inmates, a room a for a matron, a living room, bath lavatories, etc. Each room will have a bed table, chair and a built in clothes press and the living room will have a fire place, easy chairs, tables, games, blackboard and other homelike equipment.

Each dormitory floor is connected by enclosed corridors with the main building, dining room, gymnasium, swimming pool, etc., and each floor also has a fine large porch with an outlook over the grounds and surrounding country.

Every modern convenience is to be found in the buildings, all gas, water, steam pipes and wiring cables being conducted through tunnels beneath the basements and every provision made for rapid exits from all parts of the buildings in case of fire. In addition to the usual equipment of such buildings, the gymnasium, swimming pool and other features, a first class moving picture machine will be installed and operated for the entertainment and to assist in the educational development of the boys and girls in the home.<sup>45</sup>

Thirty-eight girls and sixty-six boys entered the school in the fall of 1923. Many of them had spent their vacation with relatives and friends during the summer break from school. A number of the girls had bus-

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*Masonic Children's Home, 1929 (2012.201.B0232.0442, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).*

ied themselves embroidering bedspreads for use in their new rooms. Five of the girls embroidered bedspreads that were exhibited at the Logan County Fair. They also embroidered dresses, aprons, pillowcases, a sofa pillow, and a handmade handkerchief for exhibit.<sup>46</sup>

At long last, the children moved into the newly constructed home on Elm Street on November 23, 1923. Different organizations furnished a variety of rooms. Some of the groups that provided items were the Rainbow Girls, the Nova Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, and the Hugo Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star.<sup>47</sup> Outfitted by Sister Mabel Sherin as an OES project, the parlor's furnishings consisted of rugs, a piano, furniture, lamps, and oil painting prints.<sup>48</sup> The home continually received household items for use by the children from their Masonic or OES sponsors.

Built on the south side of twenty-eight acres, the magnificent structure contained 56,101 feet of living space with 5,261 feet of hallways.<sup>49</sup> The interior consisted of dormitories, a swimming pool, a basketball court in a gymnasium (later a skating rink), a dining room, living areas, a kitchen, and a basement.<sup>50</sup>

An advertisement in the *Guthrie Daily Leader* documented the pride in having the Masonic Children's Home located in Guthrie. The November 15, 1923, ad stated, "The incentive for locating both the Cathedral and the Masonic Home at Guthrie was the character of its people, its schools, its churches and its unlimited supply of both Pure and Curative Waters."<sup>51</sup> The publicity of the Masonic home moving to Guthrie,

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*Guthrie's Masonic Children's Home, 1982 (2012.201.B0232.0445, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).*

plus building the cathedral, brought Masons and visitors from all over the world.

Authorized by the Grand Lodge to sell the Darlington homesite buildings and land in 1923, a special committee sold a portion of the property to the State of Oklahoma. The state wanted the property for use as a hospital for treating drug and alcohol addiction. Senate Bill Number 385 provided for the purchase of the property for this use.<sup>52</sup> This bill was passed after the matter had been discussed by the Oklahoma State Legislature and two legislative delegations had considered the property and fully approved the purchase. Even with the discussion and approval, there were people who did not want the property to be sold.<sup>53</sup> The clamor died down and the funds for the property were paid. The Masons received the final payment in 1925.<sup>54</sup>

To enter the home, a child could not be under three years of age or over fourteen and could stay until the age of eighteen. If, at eighteen, the child showed an aptitude for further schooling, an appeal issued to the sponsoring lodge normally resulted in funds to continue education.<sup>55</sup>

The criteria for admission to the home in the 1930s stated that a child could not be admitted if a living parent, or anyone else, could care

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for the child. While some children had a living parent, very few had an estate to use after they left the home, so the children required practical vocational training.<sup>56</sup> The lack of training consistently troubled all who had to make their living when leaving the home. Discussions during the Grand Lodge meetings concluded that the home could have a garden to provide vocational training and cut back expenses. Tending a garden and raising a few cows, pigs, chickens, and rabbits could accomplish the goal of vocational training and provide income for the home. To enhance the children's skills, an instructor to teach shoe repair, printing, and barbering skills was hired. They also discussed adding a "manual training shop, tailor shop, electric shop, domestic science, as well as a domestic art department" to the home.<sup>57</sup> In 1931 a partial solution to the lack of vocational training included some training in the home's laundry and kitchen as well as in several Guthrie businesses.<sup>58</sup>

Lack of vocational training continued to be a valid problem. Several things happened to assist the children in obtaining an education that would help them to obtain employment upon leaving the home. The home's administrators decided to use all suitable land for cultivation and gardening.<sup>59</sup> From this garden, the boys from the home furnished most of the vegetables for both the children's home and the home for the elderly, including three hundred bushels of sweet potatoes in one year. Even though there was limited vocational training, almost all the graduates from the home in 1932 obtained employment upon leaving.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Superintendent Allen initiated an agricultural plan of making hot beds to be used in the planting and caring of a garden.<sup>61</sup>

Other similar institutions, like the state-supported homes in Oklahoma, also used farming as vocational training. A report from the State Planning Board stated, "Farming is practical for the orphan homes, since it has provided not only a higher degree of self-sufficiency but also vocational training for the children."<sup>62</sup>

To supplement and enhance the home's vocational training, the Grand Chapter of the Eastern Star provided a tailor shop and a full-time music instructor in 1934.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the home received funds from various lodges for purchases that included "seven small pigs, a shoe shop, two cows and calf, a sewing machine, five radios, and a mold for making grave markers for the Masonic home cemetery."<sup>64</sup> Funds received also bought furniture for the parlors, domestic science equipment for the girls' vocational science department, and printing shop equipment.<sup>65</sup>

Before 1934 children who had estates did not use their money to pay for their upkeep. In 1934 anyone with an estate had to pay \$20 per

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month for their maintenance. If the estate contained less than \$500, half of the amount paid went toward their education or in teaching them a trade after they left the home.<sup>66</sup>

Debate during the 1931–34 Grand Lodge meetings on the ongoing problem of lack of solid vocational training bore fruit in the realization of funds. These funds came from the Order of the Eastern Star and various Masonic Lodges to buy a printing plant valued around \$1,300 and “partial equipment for several trades or vocations.”<sup>67</sup> Small in size, the printing plant provided training for only a few children.

Discussion of a vocational building, to be located on the home's grounds, began in the 1936 Grand Lodge meeting.<sup>68</sup> The idea became reality by the end of the meeting, as plans were approved to build such a facility. At the cost of \$12,000, the Masonic Arch Grand Chapter paid to erect a building for use as a printing shop. Completed in the fall of 1937, the fireproof brick building helped fill the vocational training void. Funds in the amount of \$5,000 came from the Order of the Eastern Star to purchase additional printing equipment beyond what had been purchased in previous years. This additional equipment included a linotype machine.<sup>69</sup>

Built on the southwest corner of the home property, the building measured forty feet by one hundred feet. The new building contained the printing shop previously used by the boys, a manual training room, and a shoe shop. Those involved in the laying of the cornerstone for the printing shop on September 7, 1936, included many members of the Masonic order.<sup>70</sup> With this addition, the home not only offered a printing plant, but also education in trades such as “cleaning, shoe repairing, domestic science, nursing, music, stenography, and teaching.”<sup>71</sup>

The number of children living in the home never equaled or exceeded the number that moved to Guthrie in 1922. Although the population of Oklahoma's state-maintained orphan homes increased by 175.3 percent between the years of 1925 and 1935, the number of home children declined.<sup>72</sup> Crowding in state homes became very severe in 1935 when statistics showed the institutions were 32.4 percent beyond the normal capacity.<sup>73</sup> Only the 1936 *Grand Lodge Official Proceedings*, which reflect the number of children in the Masonic Children's Home in 1935, offered an explanation for the number in their home reducing instead of expanding. The explanation stated that only in rare cases had children been admitted who had a living parent, and only the children in the most need entered the home. Due to this policy, the home experienced a small decline of numbers.<sup>74</sup>

In 1936 the State of Oklahoma maintained three homes: Whitaker State Orphans Home at Pryor, Western Oklahoma State School for

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White Children at Helena, and the Industrial Institute for the Deaf, Blind, and Orphans of the Colored Race at Taft. The land value of these state homes amounted to approximately \$151,195 with a building value total of \$576,312.<sup>75</sup> Listed at \$5,500 land value with \$475,000 building value for the one privately maintained facility, the value of the Masonic Children's Home in Guthrie far exceeded that of any single state-maintained home.<sup>76</sup>

Reported to be "low in value, inadequately maintained, and in many cases unsuited to their respective uses,"<sup>77</sup> the buildings of the state-maintained homes did not measure up to the standards of the Masonic Children's Home. The lack of quality in the state homes appeared to be due to the inconsistency in amounts received to maintain them year to year. With funding provided from state "legislation appropriations, small incomes, and any produce from their farms," the amount of funding received could not be guaranteed and usually did not adequately cover the increasing costs to maintain the homes.<sup>78</sup> Funds received only increased 9.5 percent from 1918 to 1935 for the three state-maintained homes listed previously.

Funds for the Masonic Children's Home came from various sources. Some of the sources listed for 1935 included the Order of the Eastern Star Endowment Fund, a percentage of yearly dues, Christmas Fund, Activity Fund, and donations either to the home in general or to an individual child sponsored. Funds from the Masonic Lodges came from the Grand Lodge general funds, which consisted of a percentage of yearly dues and interest on investments. Trust funds, another source of income, came from children's estates that included property, money for investments, and mineral rights. A cost comparison of the average monthly cost per person between the state-maintained homes and the Masonic home shows that the funding provided for the home always exceeded the amount for the state homes.<sup>79</sup>

The structure of the children's daily life in the home was similar to life in a private home with parents and siblings. They awakened to alarm bells and performed chores until time for breakfast. The assignment of chores was contingent on age and sex. The older children took care of their individual rooms as well as an assigned area, such as the girls cleaning the Rainbow Girls room or the boys cleaning the DeMolay room. The younger children cleaned their dormitories and assisted in various other chores. The girls ironed shirts and sheets; the boys mowed the lawn and worked in the kitchen cleaning up after meals. They went to public schools and summer school classes. All extracurricular activities at the home, whether school year or summer, were structured around education. Some went on home group vaca-

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*Steven Clark, a resident of the Masonic Children's Home, enjoying a field trip to the Oklahoma City Zoo in July 1970 (2012.201. B1002.0081, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).*

tions while other children visited their parent or other family members during the summer months.<sup>80</sup>

For recreation, they had many activities from which to choose. On Saturday afternoons, the theater in Guthrie gave the Masonic Children's Home tickets, and if they had not lost the privilege of going to the movies during the week, the children went to the movies.<sup>81</sup> Caring for dogs, cats, and horses, as well as tending the garden, kept the children busy outside.<sup>82</sup>

They received a good, moral upbringing in their respective churches. Almost all the children were highly active in Rainbow Girls or DeMolay. The home kids were not only members, but also officers in those clubs.<sup>83</sup>

Also known for their high academic success, the children consistently made outstanding grades. They received praise and encouragement



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from the adults at the home to continue their scholastic success. If it appeared they would not complete high school by eighteen, they would be scheduled for summer school to take any classes required for graduation. If the child showed aptitude for continuing their studies, a scholarship was often provided for assistance.<sup>84</sup>

The home closed in 1978, with the last three children moving to private homes of Masonic members until their eighteenth birthdays. In the intervening years the building deteriorated, stripped it of its marble, flooring, tiles, and window glass. It “s[at] there waiting for someone to do something with it to benefit the community.”<sup>85</sup> In 2000 the building opened as Dominion House, a renovated event venue.

Those who lived there remember their time in the home with fondness. They are nurses, printers, owners of real estate companies, secretaries, beauty operators, professional people, and one is reported to hold a University of Oklahoma department chair. James Weems, Mason and former resident of the Guthrie Masonic Children’s Home, summarized the influence on him:

I know in my own heart, that all was made possible—my owning my own business, my own building, being elected Mayor of Guthrie for four years as well as elected to the Guthrie City Council for ten years—by my coming to that Children’s home.<sup>86</sup>

Endnotes

\* Pamela Webb is a resident of Edmond, Oklahoma. The information in this article was submitted in support of a master of arts degree from the University of Central Oklahoma that was granted on May 9, 2003.

<sup>1</sup> James Weems, telephone conversation with the author, Guthrie, OK, April 2, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), April 19, n. y., Guthrie #1 envelope, Masonic Temple, Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts (OCUSA) Newspaper Archive Collection, Guthrie, OK.

<sup>3</sup> "What is Freemasonry?" information card, 1997, Masonic Lodge, Guthrie, OK.

<sup>4</sup> Pauline Lentz, telephone conversation with the author, Guthrie, OK, April 4, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> J. Fred Latham, *The Story of Oklahoma Masonry: The First Seventy-Five Years of Symbolic Masonry, 1874-1949*, (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1978). The past grand master of the Guthrie Masonic Lodge provided an excellent summarization of the first seventy-five years of Oklahoma Masonry. A Grand Lodge meeting is the yearly gathering of Masons from the state in which the lodge is located, e.g. the Oklahoma Grand Lodge meets in Guthrie, Oklahoma. A specific meeting is identified by the year, such as the 1918 Grand Lodge.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Freudenberger Holmes, *The Logan County History, 1889-1977, Volume II: The County and Its Communities* (Guthrie, OK: Committee for the Logan County History, 1980), 325.

<sup>7</sup> Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star of the State of Oklahoma, comp., *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.: The Story of the Order of the Eastern Star in the Indian Territory, Oklahoma Territory, and the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1952), 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Fortieth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Fourth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1932), 119.

<sup>9</sup> Holmes, *The Logan County History*, 325.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>11</sup> *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 170.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Latham, *The Story of Oklahoma Masonry*, 301.

<sup>14</sup> *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 132-33.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, OK), April 19, n. y., Guthrie #1 envelope, Masonic Temple, Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts (OCUSA) Newspaper Archive Collection, Guthrie, OK; *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 132.

<sup>17</sup> "Oklahoma Masonic Orphans Are Moving to Town," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 17, 1922.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> "Scene at Masonic Ground Breaking Was Like First Inauguration of Governor," *Daily Oklahoman*, May 16, 1920.

<sup>20</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Forty-Ninth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Thirtieth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Fourteenth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1922), 129.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Muskogee Reds After Home," *Oklahoma Weekly Leader* (Guthrie, OK), March 2, 1922.

<sup>24</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1922, 132.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> "State Masonic Home is Located at Guthrie," *Oklahoma Weekly Leader*, March 9, 1922.

<sup>28</sup> "Muskogee's Own Story of the Home Overbid," *Oklahoma Weekly Leader*, March 9, 1922.

<sup>29</sup> "Plans Ready for Masonic Orphans' Home," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 18, 1922; "Masonic Home Will Be Real Show Place," *Guthrie Weekly Leader*, July 13, 1922; *Official Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Thirty-First Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Fifteenth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1923), 38.

<sup>30</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 113.

<sup>31</sup> "Plans Ready for Masonic Orphans' Home"; "Masonic Home Will Be Real Show Place"; *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 38.

<sup>32</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 112–13.

<sup>33</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Fifty-First Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Thirty-Second Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Sixteenth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1924), 27.

<sup>34</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 38.

<sup>35</sup> "Darlington Orphans Removed to Guthrie," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 11, 1923.

<sup>36</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 89.

<sup>37</sup> *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 132; "Darlington Orphans Removed to Guthrie."

<sup>38</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 117.

<sup>39</sup> "Darlington Orphans Removed to Guthrie"; "Masonic Ceremony Inspiring," *Oklahoma Weekly Leader*, March 1, 1923.

<sup>40</sup> "Oklahoma Masonic Orphans are Moving to Town," *Daily Oklahoman*, September 17, 1922.

<sup>41</sup> "Masonic Orphans to Come to Guthrie Aug. 1," *Oklahoma Weekly Leader*, March 30, 1922.

<sup>42</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Thirty-Sixth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twentieth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1928), 80.

<sup>43</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1923, 119; *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 134.

<sup>44</sup> "Masonic Ceremony Inspiring."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Mrs. A. J. Weir, "Masonic Home Notes," *Guthrie (OK) Daily Leader*, November 8, 1923.

<sup>47</sup> Jennie Harris Oliver, "For the Shorn Lamb," *Daily Oklahoman*, November 18, 1923.

<sup>48</sup> *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 138.

<sup>49</sup> Data sheet provided by the Logan County Court Clerk for property 4-16W-2W, requested by the author.

<sup>50</sup> Pauline Lentz, interview by the author, Guthrie, OK, April 8, 1997.

<sup>51</sup> "Masonic Cathedral," *Guthrie Daily Leader*, November 15, 1923.

<sup>52</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1924, 27–28.

<sup>53</sup> Latham, *The Story of Oklahoma Masonry*, 540.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>55</sup> "Oklahoma Masonic Orphans are Moving to Town."

<sup>56</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Sixty-First Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Forty-Second Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of*

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*Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Sixth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1934), 166–67, as an example.

<sup>57</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Fortieth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Fourth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1932), 129.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>59</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Sixtieth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Forty-First Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Fifth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1933), 72–73.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1934, 135.

<sup>62</sup> Oklahoma State Planning Board, Oklahoma City, *State Homes for Orphans and Veterans in Oklahoma: A Preliminary Study of Present Facilities and Conditions*, 1937, 15, Research Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

<sup>63</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1934, 141.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>67</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Sixty-Second Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Forty-Third Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Seventh Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1935), 53, 60.

<sup>68</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Sixty-Third Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Forty-Fourth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Eighth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1936), 55.

<sup>69</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Sixty-Fourth Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory and the Forty-Fifth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma Territory and the Twenty-Ninth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma* (Guthrie, OK: Masonic Print Shop, 1937), 101.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *The Legend of Oklahoma, O.E.S.*, 173.

<sup>72</sup> Oklahoma State Planning Board, *State Homes for Orphans and Veterans in Oklahoma*, 9.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1936, 158.

<sup>75</sup> Oklahoma State Planning Board, *State Homes for Orphans and Veterans in Oklahoma*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1937, 168.

<sup>77</sup> Oklahoma State Planning Board, *State Homes for Orphans and Veterans in Oklahoma*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Official Proceedings*, 1936.

<sup>80</sup> James Weems, interview by the author, Guthrie, OK, April 4, 1997; Pauline Lentz interview.

<sup>81</sup> James Weems interview; Pauline Lentz interview.

<sup>82</sup> James Weems interview; Pauline Lentz interview.

<sup>83</sup> James Weems interview; Pauline Lentz interview.

<sup>84</sup> James Weems interview; Pauline Lentz interview.

<sup>85</sup> Mrs. Pat Ringrose, telephone conversation with the author, Guthrie, OK, April 4, 1997.

<sup>86</sup> James Weems interview.