



**SAM R. HAMILTON MASONIC LODGE #1031
GRAND PRAIRIE SIGNIFICANT LANDMARK
Site Medallion No. 51
110 ½ N. Center St.**

Historical Date: The cornerstone was laid by the Grand Lodge of Texas in 1946. Right Worshipful Bruce Brannum acted for the Grand Master of Masons in Texas. Tax records show that the building was built in 1948.

Historical Background: This Masonic Lodge was chartered on December 10, 1910. The Lodge was named for Sam R. Hamilton who was Grand Master of the Masonic Lodges in Texas in 1898-1899. It is not known if Mr. Hamilton was from the North Texas area. New lodges were often named after past Grand Masters. Such naming could not continue indefinitely since there are now 885 lodges in Texas. The minutes of every lodge meeting, since the charter, are stored in the present lodge building. Before completing this building, the lodge met upstairs at the southwest corner of Center and Main. Some remember that the stairs were very steep. The lodge Secretary was paid \$25/month at this time. On January 3, 1946 Worshipful Master (W.M.) and architect, E. Carlyle Smith, summoned the Lodge for the purpose of continued planning of a new Lodge building, designed by himself, to be built on a purchased vacant lot at 110 N. Center Street. Perry C. Nash reported that the building contract had been let to Phillips Construction Company for \$38,500. The estimated date for the building completion was January 1947. The Leasing Committee reported leasing the south half of the lower floor to Lone Star Gas for \$120/month for five years and \$70/month for the next five years. Mr. Nash also reported leasing of the north half of the lower floor to Texas Electric Service Company for \$110/month with options for the next five years at \$60/month. The loan to pay for the building was \$25,000 (some money had already been raised) at 4½ % interest. At the end of ten years there was an amount of \$2,500 to be refinanced. G.H. Turner was Chairman of the Finance Committee.

On October 1, 1946 Mr. Caraway offered to give the Lodge a neon sign for the new building with the Lodge paying for a transformer for it. This was referred to the Building Committee; it is believed that the offer was accepted. The sign was replaced in 2003. On August 5, 1947 the Lodge approved \$125 to equip the Secretary's office. In 1948 Mrs. R.L. Hight gave the Bible for the Altar, which is still used, in memory of her husband who was the first W.M. of Sam R. Hamilton Lodge in 1910; in subsequent years Past Master Hight served twice more as W.M.

Lodge member dues in 1948 were \$8/month. Freewill offerings were taken at most meetings to help pay for items like carpet, tile, etc. On February 3, 1948 the Secretary was given authority to spend \$125 to purchase the necessary books and files to activate the system; this was to be complete by May 1, 1948. In March of that year \$27 was collected to buy a vacuum cleaner. In June the Secretary's salary was raised to \$75/month. There was so much Lodge activity that the job was essentially full-time.

Past Master John M. Barker, whose profession was in the air conditioning field, said that the building, when built, may have been the first building in Grand Prairie to have a gas-burner air conditioning system. Basically, the burner boiled water with ammonia in it. The boiling produced a gas with a fine mist that passed through capillaries that produced cooling. The air conditioner may have been a Coleman.

There is a brass plaque upstairs outside the Lodge meeting room that reads: "The furniture in this lodge room was presented to the Lodge by W.C. Hardman Jr. and family in memory of his father, W.C. Hardman Sr., who served as the W.M. 1924-1925 and again in 1943-1944." Lodge members started meeting in the new building in the summer of 1948.

After the first downstairs leases were up, Grand Prairie Office Supply leased all of the downstairs. Later, Bennett Office Supply leased the space. Then, in 2003 Rhonda Vaughn Interior Designs, who still occupies the space, leased the downstairs.

There is an electrical chair-lift at the stairs to assist those unable to climb the stairs to participate in Lodge activities. In Spring 2005 the Lodge installed a two-person elevator. This enables many to attend who cannot negotiate the stairs or care to ride the chair-lift. Other Masonic and related bodies have met in the lodge for many years. They are: Order of the Eastern Star, the York Rite Chapter and Council, Rainbow Girls, and DeMolay. The current sign on the building, which depicts symbols of all of these bodies, was donated by a donor who desires to remain anonymous.

As of June 1944, the Lodge had 173 members and Perry C. Nash was W.M. In June 1945, membership had grown to 286 members; E. Carlyle Smith was W.M. Following WW II, growth continued strong with 326 members in June 1946 when Vick T. Maples was W.M. When J.P. Aderholt was W.M. in June 1947, membership had grown to 384. A year later in June 1948, now in the new building when A.E. Trantham was W.M., membership had grown to 423. These were very busy and happy times for the Lodge. Between monthly meetings, it was not unusual to have ten called meetings for the purpose of hearing candidate proficiencies and degree work. In February 2005, the Lodge had 290 members, and the dues had been recently raised from \$40/year to \$60/year to help pay for the elevator.