

CALIFORNIA MASONIC MEMORIAL TEMPLE

GENERAL INFORMATION

HISTORY

In 1947 it was recommended that the Grand Lodge erect a new adequate Temple for Grand Lodge requirements. After a thorough study, the Memorial Temple Committee recommended the purchase of the Nob Hill property located at 1111 California Street corner of Taylor Street, San Francisco, for a new and modern Grand Lodge building.

GENERAL STATISTICS

LOCATION Southwest corner, California and Taylor Streets. Cable cars pass the door. Public parking facilities are within the building.

MARBLE FACING The terraces, entrance porch, foyer, and two major sides of the Memorial Temple's exterior are faced with pure white Vermont Marble.

MEMORIAL SCULPTURE The sculpture, topping the east end of the California Street wall, is dominated by four huge figures, each twelve feet high, representing branches of our country's armed services. Adjoining them, a frieze of fourteen marble figures depicts a Titanic tug-of-war, in the global struggle between the forces of good and evil. Below this portrayal is a dedicatory inscription; DEDICATED TO OUR MASONIC BRETHREN WHO DIED IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.

TERRACE AND ENTRANCE PORCH Reached by a short flight of steps from California Street on the Temple's north there is a terrace, accessible both from the street and Auditorium. Five living olive trees - emblematic of peace, decorate this area.

The Cornerstone was placed in the Northeast corner of the building at an impressive Masonic ceremony, on September 19, 1956. Within the stone is a copper casket containing historical Masonic and contemporary documents.

Fronting California Street, at the northwest corner, is the colonnaded entrance porch flanked by two massive white marble pillars. The pillars are symbolic of the pillars on the porch of King Solomon's Temple, which have significance in Masonry. Each pillar is 23 feet high, and weighs more than 14 tons.

ENTRANCE FOYER AND HISTORICAL WINDOW Finished in white marble, the foyer is dominated by the huge endomosaic historical window, 45 feet wide, by 48 feet high. The endomosaic process is the use of thousands of bits of metal; parchment; felt; linen, silk; natural foliage and thinly sliced vegetable matter; shells and sea life; plus some 180 colors of stained glass - all glued to a sheet of plexiglas, with another sheet of the same plastic fused to the first, holding the impressive work in place.

Research and study have shown that the history of California Masonry falls into two distinct categories - the wayfarers and seafarers. Some of the first Masons to visit this state were seafaring men, and the Charter of California Lodge No. 1 was brought aboard ship from Washington, D. C., via the Isthmus of Panama, and to San Francisco by Levi Stowell. The wayfaring members of the Masonic Fraternity were included in every group of emigrants arriving from the eastern states, in the middle 1800's. Saschel Woods carried the Charter for Western Star Lodge No. 2 on his trip from Missouri to

California in 1848. These two categories are depicted on either side of the central figure the wayfarers on the left, and the seafarers on the right.

The first figure in the wayfaring group is shown holding a fruit, and he symbolizes the farmer and rancher of California, and the agricultural riches of the state. The second figure holds a musket and powder horn, is representative of the hunter and trapper, the land trader and the overland scout. The third figure, with a mining pick in hand, symbolizes the gold mines and miners of the gold rush era, in which Masonry played an important part.

To the left of this group of wayfarers will be found eight vignettes of scenes dating from 1840 to the present. The first scenes portray the crossing by covered wagons over the great plains on the trek to California. The two scenes above this show the meeting places of Lodges Nos. 1 and 2, pictured as they were when first organized. Above this is a scene representative of the "little red schoolhouse," symbolizing the free, tax-supported public schools system founded by John Swett; and above this the Capital at Sacramento is shown and a scene depicting modern methods of transportation.

In the seafaring group, the first figure to the right of the central figure holds a compass. He symbolizes the sea-captains and other seafaring men who came from New England via Cape Horn and from China and the far Pacific about 1812-1843. The next figure is shown holding a rolled-up Charter - symbolic of the historic voyage of Levi Stowell. The final figure represents the fisherman - who contributed in no small part to the early history of the state.

The vignettes located on the seafarers side begin at the bottom with a depiction of the early schooners which came around the Horn, in the China trade, coming to California by way of the Hawaiian Islands. Above this is a scene of some of the early steamboats which followed after the sailing vessels fell into disuse, and a scene of the wharf at San Francisco in the late 1800's.

Above this are still other boats, indicative of the importance of the sea and of the nautical history of San Francisco, and a pictorial representation of Colton Hall - the home of the first Constitutional Convention at Monterey. The top vignettes show modern liners of today and the Golden Gate Bridge.

All of the men on either side of the central figure are represented, in one way or another, which epitomizes the Master Mason of the present day; the culmination of all of their efforts, deeds, words and acts in the historical formation and the present honored position of California Masonry which this central figure denotes. Surrounding the figure as a fitting background, are representations of all the industries, callings, occupations and professions of the Masonic Fraternity, in this Jurisdiction.

Above and below the main theme of the window will be found a frieze of appropriate Masonic Symbols including the American and Bear Flag of the California Republic.

Below the lower frieze of symbols, at the base of the window, are various stratas of the earth composed of the actual gravels and soils of the 58 counties of California and the islands of the State of Hawaii, symbolizing the antiquity of the Grand Lodge of California and Hawaii. On either side of the window will be seen the Acacia Tree - symbol of immortality, innocence and initiation. Its roots are shown firmly planted in solid earth, being fed by the soils of the 58 counties.

This important Masonic symbol, the All-Seeing Eye, is fittingly portrayed at the uppermost portion of the window where it governs the sun on the right - the moon on the left; the stars - the comets and man (represented by the heart).

Below the historical window panels of clear plate glass looking over the balcony, providing a panoramic view of some of the San Francisco Bay area to the east, south and west.

To the left of the lobby, on the Temple's north wall, are listed the date of the formal dedication (September, 1958), the names of the Memorial Temple Board of Trustees, the architect for the building, and the names of each of the Past Grand Masters after 1947 - the eleven years in which the Memorial Temple was proposed, planned and built.

The Open Book is now completed and is on display in the Third Floor Lobby. It contains the names of donors to the Memorial Temple. California and Hawaiian Masons honor those whose gifts made this beautiful Temple possible. This is a permanent record of their generosity and their love of the Fraternity.

MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM Opening into the main entrance of the Auditorium are aluminum and bronze grilled gates, whose decorative theme is featured by bronze wreaths of victory. Above the gates is the inscription; "California Freemasons honoring their heroic dead erect this Temple dedicated to Freemasonry, Virtue and Universal Benevolence that the cause of freedom for which they died shall ever be therein the sacred trust of their brethren and of Freemasons yet unborn."

The background of the stage is a wall of Roman Travertine marble - surrounded by gold-leaf panels and surmounted by a gold-leaf canopy. The central ornament of the wall is a golden sunburst and in its center is a transparent letter "G" which can be illuminated if desired.

The two hardwood pillars in the Auditorium represent the pillars on the porch of King Solomon's Temple. They were lovingly and carefully made from specially selected woods by Masonic Master Craftsmen. All Auditorium lighting has been specially planned and designed to provide the most modern effects.

GENERAL FACILITIES Another of the major features is the multi-purpose room (17,000 square feet in area) on the Ground Floor with direct access by a short flight of steps from California Street, or from within the building. This room is planned for exhibits, displays, or will provide dining capacity for 1200 diners served from an adjoining catering kitchen. Next to the exhibit area (and also back of the Auditorium on the first floor) are a series of committee rooms. Four large committee rooms available for conventions and group meetings. These rooms will seat 80 to 100 and can be divided by roll-back veil curtains. Connecting with the exhibit area is the public garage (privately operated) with a 500-car parking capacity. Automatic electric elevators serve all floors of the building. The leasing of the California Masonic Temple and its physical maintenance is controlled from the offices located on the first floor.

MEZZANINE FLOOR This floor gives access to the Auditorium balcony. The Masonic Museum on this floor maintains an exhibit of historic Masonic articles. From the balcony an additional and more impressive view of the endomosaic window is visible. On this floor, too, is the Bronze Plaque listing the Merit Roll Lodges - the "Builders of the Temple."

THIRD FLOOR The top floor is occupied by the administrative offices of the Grand Lodge, F&AM of California; the Masonic Homes of California; the Grand Master's Office; and the office of the Grand Secretary and his staff. Opening off the third floor is a loggia from which is visible still another sweeping panoramic view of the San Francisco Bay region.