

Masonic Minutes—February One

The Order of the Eastern Star

The Order of the Eastern Star is a Masonic-related fraternal organization open to both men and women. Its stated purpose is to provide an organization where women and men with high moral and social character, can join together and contribute time, energy and wisdom to the Order while promoting Charity, Truth and Loving-kindness for the good of all mankind throughout the world. The teaching of the Order is centered on the heroic moral characteristics demonstrated by five notable women from the Bible, but it is open to people of all religious beliefs. It has approximately 10,000 chapters in twenty countries and approximately 500,000 members under its General Grand Chapter.

The initial concept of the Order began in 1850 when noted Freemason, lawyer and educator Rob Morris was teaching at the Eureka Masonic College in Richland, Mississippi. While confined by illness, he set down the principles of the Order in his *Rosary of the Eastern Star*. By 1855, he had organized a “Supreme Constellation” in New York, which chartered chapters throughout the United States.

In 1866, Dr. Morris started working with Robert Macoy, and handed the Order over to him while Morris was traveling in the Holy Land. Macoy organized the current system of Chapters, and modified Dr. Morris' *Rosary* into a *Ritual*. The “General Grand Chapter” was later formed in Indianapolis, Indiana on November 6, 1876. Committees appointed at that time created the *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star* in more or less its current form.

The requirements for joining the Order are that you must be 18 years of age or older; men must be Master Masons and women must have specific relationships with Masons. Originally, a woman would have to be the daughter, widow, wife, sister, or mother of a Master Mason, but the Order now allows other relatives as well as allowing Job's Daughters and Rainbow Girls to become members when of age.

The Order has a charitable foundation and has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Alzheimer disease research, as well as research for juvenile diabetes and juvenile asthma. The Missouri Grand Chapter has adopted four charities for philanthropic giving: *Eastern Star Training Awards for Religious Leadership (ESTARL)* which provides scholarships to students of theology and religious music; *ABC Youth Fund* whose donations are divided between the three Masonic Youth Groups—Assemblies, Bethels and Chapters; *Cancer Research of Columbia, Missouri* to which the Grand Chapter of Missouri has provided funding totaling over \$500,000.00; and, *Homes for Our Troops*, a recently formed nation-wide charity that builds or refurbishes homes for our veterans that are physically challenged. Currently there have been three of these homes built in Missouri.

The Order of the Eastern Star provides Masons with an opportunity to have their spouses and other family members participate more fully in the philosophy of social graces and service to others that Freemasonry engenders. Perhaps this is something that can strengthen the bonds of community service within your family. For more information about the Order of the Eastern Star, you are encouraged to contact members of your lodge who are also members of the Order. Or, you can contact Bill George, Past Grand Patron at tangcob.bg@gmail.com or Sister Debbie Olds, Grand Secretary at grsec@missourioes.org.