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Ms. Fisher

Hometown History

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The Masons are a service fraternity that helps the public and their own members in need.<sup>1</sup> The fraternity was founded in 1717 by groups of cathedral builders and stonemasons of medieval times.<sup>2</sup> Many prominent figures in history were Masons, including, but not limited to: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Harry Houdini, and Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>3</sup>

Charles Avery organized the Winchester Masonic Lodge on January 25, 1844,<sup>4</sup> introducing the first Worshipful Master, Edward Edger, and the first Freemason listed is Brother Jacob Eltzroth.<sup>5</sup> The very first meeting was held in the courthouse before they permanently moved into the Masonic Hall, and during World War II, the Masons opened the second floor of their building to the Red Cross to aid wounded soldiers. In 1994, the lodge burnt down after they failed to update the electric wiring in the building, and the fire marshal was also out of town during the fire.

When they were without a lodge, multiple other masonic lodges offered for them to use their buildings temporarily such as the Lynnville Lodge #396 and the Turpen Lodge #401. Soon

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<sup>1</sup> Hawley, Jason Worshipful Master, Masonic Lodge #56. Interview with author, Phone interview, Dec 2022

<sup>2</sup> Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Freemasonry." Encyclopedia Britannica, October 18, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Freemasonry>.

<sup>3</sup>"Famous Freemasons." Masons of California, November 18, 2022. <https://freemason.org/famous-freemasons/>.

<sup>4</sup> "A Powerful Organization: The Masons" Dec 7, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Writer, Scott Shaffer, News-Gazette Feature. n.d. "Winchester Masonic Lodge No. 56 Celebrates 175 Years of Service." Winchester News Gazette. Accessed December 7, 2022. [https://www.winchesternewsgazette.com/news/winchester-masonic-lodge-no-56-celebrates-175-years-of-service/article\\_42982ab4-dad5-11e9-b7c5-c30fc495b9dd.html](https://www.winchesternewsgazette.com/news/winchester-masonic-lodge-no-56-celebrates-175-years-of-service/article_42982ab4-dad5-11e9-b7c5-c30fc495b9dd.html).

enough, they bought the old Moose Home on 125 East North Street for \$5,000, along with another eight feet of acreage to the north on July 3rd, 1944.

In the middle of June of 1946, the lodge was asked to serve as an emergency hospital while the Randolph County Hospital, which now contains the Journey Home, was being built. The lodge housed beds and patients until the new hospital could be used for its intended purpose. The Masons even contained a surgery room where actual operations took place.

On July 7th, 2012, the Masonic Lodge #56 hosted multiple Masons from across the entire state of Indiana when the Masons braved very high temperatures during the remodel of the courthouse to place the clocktower back on. The most northeastern stone was placed by the Masons as a testimony to their service.<sup>6</sup>

The Masons nowadays help out the community by funding and hosting events that support many programs around the county. In May, they organize a children's breakfast where donations are taken and the proceeds go to various children's programs around the county. Their events help small children's programs in our county thrive as they touch the hearts of children all around Randolph County.<sup>7</sup> They arrange a chili cook off where all the money donated goes to the Journey Home.

The Masonic Lodge of Winchester is abundant in its history and information. The Freemasons are a complex and numerous group that are an essential part of Winchester, America, and the entire world. From the first Masonic lodge that opened in the United Kingdom, to the Masonic lodge Charles Avery opened in Winchester, the fraternity has come a long way through history.

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<sup>6</sup> "Winchester F & Am Lodge 56 'Better Men Make a Better World.'" Winchester F & AM Lodge 56 "Better Men Make A Better World", February 4, 2016. <https://sites.google.com/site/masoniclodge56/home>.

<sup>7</sup> Hawley, Jason Worshipful Master, Masonic Lodge #56. Interview with author, Phone interview, Dec 2022

