

# Local Masonic Order At Least 111 Years Old

Porter Lodge 137, F & AM, which will dedicate its new \$250,000 temple at public open house Saturday from 1:30-4 p.m., has a history almost as old as Porter county itself.

According to an account prepared by a past master of the Porter lodge, Arne Eckerman, Porter Lodge 137 dates officially back to May 27, 1852, although the 111-year ago date was actually not the first attempt toward organization of a Masonic order in the county.

Eckerman noted that Porter county was organized by the Indiana Legislature in January, 1836, with the county seat known as Portersville. Plat of the town was recorded on Oct. 31, 1836.

"Within six months the name of the town was changed by legislative enactment to Valparaiso, it being shown that the county seat of DuBois county was also known as Portersville."

## First Dispensation

"In May, 1842, a group of masons at Porter county met at the home of Adam S. Campbell, located about one-quarter mile east of Center-Washington line on Route 2, and resolved to ask the Grand Lodge for a dispensation to organize a lodge in Valparaiso. On June 22, 1842, a dispensation was received," Eckerman noted.

Delving further into history, the account stated, "the lodge was fairly successful and it was decided to ask for a charter. A charter was issued on May 24, 1843 under the name of Mason Lodge 49."

However, lodge activities diminished and finally the first Masonic lodge in Porter county passed into oblivion.

"Interest among Masons in Porter county picked up again, and a dispensation to organize a lodge was granted June 25, 1850. A charter was granted Porter Lodge 137 on May 27, 1852."

## Buell First Master

George C. Buell was the first Master of Porter Lodge, and his photograph will hang on the wall of the new \$250,000 temple, alongside photos of all other Past Masters of the lodge.

Eckerman noted that Porter Lodge is one of the very few lodges in the country with a record of more than 100 years of existence that has photos of every man that has served the organization as Master.

In addition to the Campbell home, Porter Lodge has met in the Hamill house, which occupied the site of the present Woman's club; Hughart's Hall, 53 Lincolnway, 7 E. Lincolnway old Academy of Music building which was destroyed by fire and at 55 South Franklin while the new building was being erected following a spectacular blaze which destroyed the temple at 113 E. Lincolnway on March 15, 1961.

In strength, the lodge has grown steadily from 100 members in 1897 to 168 in 1910, 300 in 1914, 400 in 1917, 640 on its 100th anniversary in May 1952, and to the present membership of 697.