

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

24 Issues of "The Kentucky Freemason" Now Available

In 1878, the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home Board reported that Brother James A. Hodges (Hiram Lodge No. 4) was teaching the printing trade to boys of the "Home" and within five years, Volume 1, No.1, of *The Masonic Home Journal* was published on June 14, 1883, under the editorial guidance of H. B. Grant, Grand Secretary. However, several Masonic news publications had previously been available and privately printed in Kentucky, including: *The Masonic Miscellany and Ladies Literary Magazine*, *The Masonic Mirror*, *The Kentucky Freemason*, and, of course, PGM Rob Morris's various publications.

According to Kentucky Masonic historian Charles Snow Guthrie (*Kentucky Freemasonry 1788 – 1978*; pages 215-216), little is known about *The Masonic Miscellany and Ladies Literary Magazine* other than it was published by William Gibbs Hunt at Lexington in 1823. In this period, newspapers could easily "be here today and gone tomorrow."

The Masonic Mirror, published in Covington by Brother David Crookshanks, was referred to a Grand Lodge Committee and was adopted as the official organ of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky. Unfortunately, Brother Crookshanks died within a year, and *The Masonic Mirror* publication of W. C. Munger, was then recommended to the Masons of Kentucky (See *Proceedings of The G.L. of KY 1843-44-45-47*).

Albert G. Hodges, a Frankfort printer, and Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, began publishing *The Kentucky Freemason* with the first issue appearing in January 1868. Within a year, the Grand Lodge

recommended it to the Craft and, a year later, the local Lodge Masters were requested to appoint a Committee of one to secure subscriptions from the membership. It was further recommended that each lodge should also subscribe. As the magazine grew, Masonic news, poetry and short essays filled the expanded 16-page monthly magazine. A failed attempt was made by some members for the Grand Lodge to take control of *The Kentucky Freemason* and then print the Grand Lodge *Proceedings* and other magazines. Of course, some controversy followed. The remedy came when the boys of the Widows and Orphans Home printed their first Grand Lodge *Proceedings* in 1878, and in 1883, the first publication of *The Masonic Home Journal*.

How very fortunate for William O. Ware Lodge of Research to obtain these extremely rare 24 issues of the approximately 150-year-old *The Kentucky Freemason*, and preserve these issues on their website for the benefit of the brethren who visit. This is certainly a great opportunity to take a look back and learn about Kentucky Freemasonry in the past. All of those who take advantage will definitely find it most enjoyable as well as immensely interesting.

(It should be noted that Rob Morris had previously published his own magazine with the same name, "The Kentucky Freemason", beginning in May, 1853, but several years later changed the name to The American Freemason in order to win over more subscribers outside of Kentucky).

William J. Lorenz

**Past Master, William O. Ware Lodge of Research
William O. Ware Research Fellow**