

In 184 there were three homes in the area where the Norton Moses Lodge #336 A. F. & A. M. would later be organized. Tom Hornsby, Harmon Smeltzer, and James Rice had settled on land received fro earlier service to the Republic of Texas. (1). James Rice had been a lieutenant in Tumlinson's Rangers which had built Block House Fort about three miles southeast of is later home. It was also Lt. Rice who discovered Manuel Flores, a Mexican officer, acting as an Indian agent in the same general area. (2).

In 1851 James Rice sold his home to Charles Babcock. The arrival of the Babcocks was the real beginning of the founding of the community. That same year, 1851, the government built a line of forts to the west of Austin with Ft. Groghan being the closest. The home of the Babcocks, lying half-way between Austin and Ft. Croghan, fell on what became known as the "military" road because of the army traffic. His place, at times, was used as a camp ground for the military. Babcock built an inn facing this much travelled road and in 1854 surveyed a townsite which, at the time, was without a name. (3).

Others came and opened stores, blacksmith shops, and other ventures. Thomas Huddleston came and named the community Bagdad after his old home in Tennessee. Huddleston became the first postmaster of Bagdad in 1855. (4).

On June 24, 1868, a group of Masons met at the home of J. L. Rucker, for the purpose of organizing a Masonic Lodge in Bagdad, Texas. A committee was appointed to locate suitable land for a building. Members of this committee were Thomas Huddleston, B. J. Oliver, J. L. Rucker, James Branch and Henderson Kirk. James Babcock donated lot #1 in the town of Bagdad. The lot was located about one hundred yards east of the town crossroads on the south side of the road and in the near vicinity of a log school and church building.

A 28' x 77' two-story building was planned. It was to be of native stone quarried on the headwaters of Running Brushy Creek (Cedar Park). The lower floor was to be used for school, churches, and public meetings. The upper floor was reserved for the Masonic Lodge. (5). Estimates for the stone work and wood work were \$2163.00 and funds were needed. Thomas Huddleston agreed to lend \$1000.00 at 10% interest. Ero Talbert, of Georgetown, donated

scaffolding and rafters. Several others made donations of gold, silver or labor. The original note to Thomas Huddleston was signed by thirteen members. The deed for the land was given and signed July 12, 1868. By-laws were formed. (6).

Some contracts made in July 1868, were for building supplies: 300 bushels of lime, at 18 cents per bushel; 40 perches of stone, at \$30.00 quarried and delivered; 2 doors, 8 windows for \$45.00. Also, 2 water barrels for \$2.50, and \$75.00 for hauling one perch of stone. (7).

On December 2, 1870, R. M. Johnson was employed as the first teacher. His pay relied on tuition. School began on the first of December and was held for five months. Old bills show the cost of one desk for \$13.00, and 24 desks ordered from Philadelphia for \$177.00. (8).

The Presbyterian Church organized February 14, 1857, on the headwaters of Brushy Creek. For a time their services were held in a log cabin which had been moved to Bagdad. After the Masons built their two story building, they, too, used it for services. (9).

A petition was submitted to the Grand Lodge of Texas to form a lodge to be located at Bagdad, Texas, by the following: James Kelly, John H. Heinatz, D. L. Emmett, R. B. Davis, J. W. Branch, Henderson Kirk, T. M. Price, James P. Smith, Morris Meay, John W. Branch, James E. Babcock, M. Jennings, J. M. Cook, James P. McGill, W. Wilson, S. A. Hamilton, T. S. Snyder, M. J. Wells, J. L. Rucker, and A. Hamilton. (10).

On January 27, 1871, a letter from the Grand Master at Corsicana notified D. L. Emmett that a charter would be given to form a lodge in Bagdad, Williamson County, Texas. The letter further stated a dispensation would be granted for the lodge to work until the charter could be obtained. (11). The Lodge was to be called the Norton Moses Lodge #336 A. F. & A. M. after Norton Moses, the District Deputy Grand Master of District #32. (12). Norton Moses, born in Georgia on July 23, 1823, came to Texas in January, 1846. He moved to Georgetown in 1862, and then to Burnet County in 1865 where he was County Commissioner. In 1889, he was elected to the House of Representatives.

He was made a Mason at Bertram Lodge #159 in 1855. He died in June 1908. He never tired of Masonic Work. (13).

The lodge at Hoperville, #277, and Round Rock, #227, had recommended that a charter should be obtained. (14).

In a letter received February 14, 1871, Norton Moses stated that he would arrive the following Saturday to set the lodge work. (15). The first meeting in the building was held on February 18, 1871, with Brother Moses presiding. D. L. Emmett was Worshipful Master, T. W. Price, Sr., was Senior Warden, P. T., and J. W. Branch was Junior Warden. (16).

At the next meeting, by-laws were adopted and dues set at \$4.00 per year. The charter was granted and dated June 1871. Brother Davis, District Deputy of the Grand Lodge, presented the charter. The first officers were installed December 27, 1871. In the 1880's, the dues were cut in half due to the drought. (17).

On October 7, 1871, the lodge gave formal permission for the lower floor of the lodge to be used as a school that the lodge had helped establish. (18). The Methodist Episcopal Church South was given permission to use the lower floor of the lodge hall from 1871 until its church was built in 1879. In 1885 the lodge gave the newly formed Grange Association permission to use the lower floor of the lodge as a meeting place. (19).

Roads in Texas were few and in poor condition. From 1850 to 1882 the government encouraged the building of railroads as a means of developing the country and getting products to market. The Civil War, Reconstruction, and a threat of a European War in 1879 help progress of the railroads back for a time. On April 29, 1881, the Austin and Northwestern Railroad incorporated. The charter provided for building a narrow gauge railroad running northwest from Austin to Burnet which would eventually link Austin with Abilene. A spur from Burnet to Marble Falls would provide transportation for granite needed in building a new capitol for Texas. When approached, the men of Bagdad refused to allow the line to go through their community. They did not want their peaceful way of life disrupted. (20). The railroad officials changed their route by moving the line one mile east of Bagdad.

In the summer of 1882, some of the merchants of Bagdad realized their mistake and moved their business to the area of the railroad. Their move created Leander. On July 17, 1882, the railroad company sold lots. At this time most of the residents moved to the townsite which had been named Leander. The post office moved from Bagdad to Leander on October 6, 1882. (21).

After receiving dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Texas, the Norton Moses Lodge was moved to Leander on September 12, 1899. (22). The met above the Jennings Mercantile Store which was rented for \$60.00 a year. (23).

In 1901 the members of the lodge moved the Methodist Episcopal Church South from Bagdad to Leander, Texas by the use of log beams and mules. In that same year, the old lodge building in Bagdad was torn down stone by stone and moved to Leander, Texas where it was re-erected and donated to Leander as a public school. (24). The lot in Bagdad was deeded to the cemetery, (25).

In 1907 the lodge purchased the Jennings's building and property, where the lodge now stands, for \$386.13. (26).

In 1910 the Order of the Eastern Star, Leander Chapter #73, was given permission to use the building as their meeting place. (27).

The Leander Public school burned and once again, beginning September 1938, the lower floor of the lodge was used as a schoolroom for a year. This same room was also used as a voting precinct for many years. (28). The lodge celebrated their 100th anniversary in July 1971 at a regularly stated meeting. The anniversary date of 1971 was from the 100th year of the charter.

The city of Leander was incorporated in 1978. Streets were named and houses were numbered by October 1980. (29). The Norton Moses Lodge now had a specific address which is 201 North Brushy, Leander, Texas. In 1980 members of the lodge set up a Norton Moses Chapter of the De Molay and gave permission to them to use the building. (30).

The History Of Norton Moses Masonic Lodge #336 A. F. & A. M.

On February 19, 1983, the 112th birthday of the lodge was celebrated. The celebration, held in the lodge, included the presentation of a plaque to Lois Giddens for 60 years continuous service to the lodge. Giddens has been active in many areas of the Leander community. One of the local schools was named after him. (31). The members of the lodge, are and always have been concerned with the work towards a better community.

Leonard Allen and Warren Jones have each received recognition for fifty years service. Roy Shelton has been District Deputy Grand Master #47. (32).

On July 18, 1983, the Norton Moses Lodge and members of the Grand Lodge of Texas held a cornerstone ceremony at the new Leander High School. The school is located midway between Leander and Cedar Park. The ceremony had previously been held in 1975 at the Faubion Elementary School, Leander I.S.D., in Cedar Park, Texas.

Lodge meetings are still held on the first Saturday of each month, the same as it was in 1871.