Beginnings in the Pahrump Valley

A lodge takes shape

Pahrump Lodge No. 54, Free and Accepted Masons, grew from the efforts of local Masons who wanted a lasting home for their fraternity in the Pahrump Valley. The Lodge received its dispensation on July 27, 1985, under Grand Master Valdo A. Sei of the Grand Lodge of Nevada. Its charter followed on November 11, 1985.

The first officers

The officers named in the dispensation were Hershel Lee Trucks, P.M., as Master; Martin E. McClay, P.M., as Senior Warden; and Floyd B. Neth as Junior Warden. Trucks had previously served as a Master at Indian Springs. Floyd later became the Lodge's Master in 1986.

The gift of land

A.W. "Tex" Blackman and his wife, Isabelle Blackman, donated the land for the Lodge's permanent home. Floyd Neth recalled approaching Blackman about the gift. Their generosity gave the brethren a site on which to pursue the long-held goal of building their own Lodge.

Early fellowship

Before the Lodge had a building of its own, members met in community locations, including the Pahrump Community Center. Fundraising, planning, and the members' continuing commitment gradually brought a permanent home within reach.

Weepah Shrine Club

Floyd Neth also recalled the beginnings of Weepah Shrine Club in Byron Pixley's living room. Floyd and Edward Jablonski were not yet Shriners when the club was being organized. They were told that completing the next class would allow them to become charter members, and they did so. This recollection preserves another part of the valley's early Masonic fellowship.

Building a permanent home

Groundbreaking and construction

The Lodge broke ground on November 1, 1998. A construction history attributed to David M. Stundon, P.M., and read by Harry Smith records the concrete pour on November 2, 1999, one year and one day later. It describes a four-inch main floor and 85 yards of concrete.

The first block

The account places the first block at the northeast corner on November 15, following the concrete work. Ron Carrington of Casey's Construction laid it. Harold D. Waltz and David M. Stundon offered a prayer for the building's construction and future use. Casey's Construction was owned by Brother Harold "Casey" Doss, who served as general contractor.

Work shared among many hands

The building was described as 50 feet wide, 100 feet long, and 10 feet high, using 4,250 blocks. A local company installed the trusses in two days. Contractors handled major structural work, while brothers contributed labor to the underground work, interior construction, and finishing.

Overcoming a shortage of funds

After the trusses were installed, the Lodge still needed roofing, utilities, a firewall, plumbing-related work, restrooms, and other improvements. The construction history credits an unnamed Las Vegas lodge with providing funds to help complete the work. Pahrump's members paid for the cornerstone.

Floyd Neth’s crew

Floyd recalled returning from Five Mile Landing around April 2000 and taking charge of a work crew. The building still needed substantial interior work, including sheetrock. He remembered the first meeting in the new building taking place in September 2000.

The cornerstone

The cornerstone was laid in September 2000 under Grand Master G. Pat Williams. Designed to be read from both outside and inside the Lodge room, it bears the Lodge's name, its November 11, 1985 charter date, and the year A.D. 2000 / A.L. 6000. Its two-sided design gave members a continuing reminder of the work that created their home.

The members behind the rooms

The ceiling and star

The Lodge room's central ceiling feature reflects the work of several contributors. Floyd Neth credited Bob Riggs with designing and installing the star. Lonnie Light and a partner installed the ceiling sheetrock as paid work; brothers installed the remaining sheetrock. Chuck Bundy found the artist who painted the surrounding clouds. The planned sunrise-and-sunset effect was never fully completed, according to Floyd.

Kitchen and cabinetry

The Eastern Star purchased the kitchen appliances. Frank Heyer built cabinetry, including the kitchen cabinets, using materials purchased by the Lodge. These contributions supported the meals and gatherings that became part of the building's everyday life.

Furnishings made and found

Les Peterson built four pedestals for the Lodge. Red theater seats came from a Las Vegas movie theater that was to be demolished; the theater's name has not been confirmed. Other officers' chairs were purchased secondhand locally. Floyd's wife made covers, aprons, and other lodge items, including a canvas staircase. Her first name is not securely established in the surviving account.

Other contributions

Bill Payne donated the model sailing ship displayed in the Lodge and performed electrical wiring. A display plaque identifies the Knights Templar swords as being on loan from Bro. Treavor Meade, M.M. The plaque's spelling is retained here.

A more welcoming preparation room

W.B. Gregory Curtin, P.M., recalled transforming a plain white storage room into a more fitting preparation/entry room for new Entered Apprentices. With the Lodge's approval, he, Harry Smith, and Harold Scalzo undertook much of the work. Purple walls, cedar wainscoting, and decorative details changed the room's character.

The sign above the doorway

Gregory Curtin's father made and hand-lettered the sign reading "A Lodge of Holy Saints John of Jerusalem." Frank Heyer was also credited with woodwork and cabinetry in this area. Together, these handmade features added the work of individual members and families to the Lodge's surroundings.

A continuing life of fellowship

Brotherhood in 2014

During Dave White's year as Master in 2014, brotherhood was a central theme. Lodge life included breakfasts, family nights, trips, shared meals, and a Tuesday morning social gathering. An outing to Scotty's Castle and the Grand Master's visit on March 7, 2014, are among the occasions preserved in the Lodge's historical recording.

The tile project of 2016

The Lodge's existing history describes a further improvement proposed in early spring 2016: a traditional black-and-white tiled floor in the Lodge room. After the brethren approved the project, a lengthy search led to a Las Vegas supplier of 24-inch-square glossy ceramic tiles.

Volunteer craftsmanship

Brothers Dave Cook and W.B. Dave White volunteered to install the tile. Work began after the last stated meeting in June and took nearly a month. Although neither had laid tile before, both brought extensive building experience to the project. The tiled area around the altar measures 10 by 16 feet, or 160 square feet.

Preserving the Lodge’s story

The dispensation, charter, cornerstone, photographs, awards, and members' recollections preserve different parts of the Lodge's history. Together they tell of a fraternity sustained through gifts, practical skills, volunteer labor, and fellowship. The building's furnishings and improvements give that shared effort a lasting physical form.

Historical note

This account draws on the Lodge's historical recording and its established written history. Details based on members' recollections are attributed where appropriate. Some dates and names remain to be confirmed: accounts differ on the exact September 2000 cornerstone date, and a reported candlelight meeting date does not fit the construction sequence. Those uncertain details have not been used to establish the chronology here.

Acknowledgments

The historical accounts include recollections by Floyd B. Neth, a construction history attributed to David M. Stundon and read by Harry Smith, and remarks by W.B. Gregory Curtin, P.M., and Dave White. Bill Cookston supplied Gregory Curtin's identification. The 2016 tile account comes from the Lodge's existing written history. Compiled for Pahrump Lodge No. 54 in November 2026.

The founding petitioners

The 1985 dispensation records these twenty petitioners, preserving the names of the men who helped establish Pahrump Lodge No. 54.

Hershel L. Trucks, P.M.

Martin E. McClay, P.M.

Robert L. Nichelson

Jerry D. Bowman, Sr.

Harvey Rakestraw

Virgil O. Salisbury

Ira F. Copass

Vaughn A. Rasmussen

Jerry W. Hughes

Byron E. Pixley

Raymond L. Shockley

Harold A. Dolan

Edward E. Jablonski

Raymond L. Coady

Floyd B. Neth

Roland L. Huhn

Alfred W. Blackman

James W. Swillinger

Russell J. Sturgeon, P.M.

Burke A. Dysert

Names follow the readable dispensation. Consult the original document for formal archival verification of spelling, initials, and titles.