



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 8, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

There was a time in America when being a member of a fraternal order was the norm. At the turn of the prior century (around 1900) almost 5 million Americans belonged to a fraternal order - and there were over 300 such orders in this country. In fact, the attached chart shows that the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was once the largest fraternal order in the United States, boasting 939,307 members. Today, however, Odd Fellowship in the United States totals 40,889 (as of December 31, 2011). Of that total, 4,782 are in California.

But the precipitous drop in our membership, although distressing, is not actually the most distressing fact that faces the Order. What is even more disturbing is to look at the attached list and realize that the vast majority of fraternal orders identified on the list are gone now - historical relics and footnotes. Even the mighty Knights of Pythias (once the third largest order in the USA) is today a mere shadow of itself, having less than five Lodges in the entire nation. And the Improved Order of Red Men is similarly situated, with a handful of small Lodges scattered about the west. And most of the other fraternal orders on the list are completely defunct today - having faded into history generations ago.

What does this foretell of the IOOF? Simple. If we continue down our present path, we will devolve like the Knights of Pythias and the Improved Order of Red Men - at the rate of decline we have seen, within a decade, only a few Lodges will survive. Alternatively, if we are ready to evolve into a modern fraternal order that attracts new and younger members, we can turn the tide and actually institute a resurgence in the fraternal movement.

It is for our generation to make this change. At the rate our Order is declining in membership, we simply cannot wait for the next generation to "save" us. The task is ours.

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Dave Rosenberg

The Fraternity Movement in America

By 1900 the United States had in excess of 300 different fraternal organizations. The following numbers were taken from the World Almanac of 1896. It shows the membership in the major fraternal orders of that time, and where the total fraternal membership totaled 4,764,098.



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Odd Fellows 939,307
Freemasons 920,459
Knights of Pythias 456,944
Ancient Order of United Workmen 341,371
Knights of the Maccabees 209,831
Royal Arcanum 169,531
Improved Order of Red Men 161,408
Junior Order of United American Mechanics 153,268
Modern Woodmen of America 144,403
Knights of Honor 121,183
Ancient Order of Foresters of America 115,967
Ancient Order of Hibernians of America 115,000
Knights and Ladies of Honor 84,000
Sons of Temperance 59,680
Knights of the Golden Eagle 58,535
Order of United American Mechanics 55,689
American Legion of Honor 55,055
Woodmen of the World 52,558
National Union 47,625
Catholic Benevolent Legion 40,106
Order of Chosen Friends 38,095
Catholic Mutual Benefit Association 38,000
Ancient Order of Foresters 36,825
Equitable Aid Union 35,118
Independent Order of B'Nai B'rith 30,500
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks 27,000
Catholic Knights of America 24,000
Improved Order of Heptasophs 23,905
Order of the Golden Cross 20,257
Royal Templars of Temperance 19,210
New England Order of Protection 18,429
United Order of Pilgrim Fathers 18,100
Order of United Friends 17,000
Irish Catholic Benevolent Union 15,000
United Ancient Order of Druids 14,600
Royal Society of Good Fellows 12,870



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Smaller orders combined total was 73,209