



# The Knights of Pythias

by Van Beydler

The Pythian Castle once was the site of meetings of the Knights of Pythias in Rolla. The organization has its own secret initiation and rites, in which the Bible and the national flag play important parts. Meetings were held upstairs on the second floor while businesses took up space in the building's lower section.

The Pythian castle was dedicated on April 25th, 1908 with the laying of the cornerstone. Rolla observed Pythian Day and the town was filled with Knights of Pythias from neighboring towns and St. Louis parading down Pine Street. The castle was located at 7th and Rolla Streets and was built at a cost of \$15,000.

The Rolla Lodge No. 231 received its charter in 1893 and by 1908 had 143 members. Justus Henry Rathbone (1839-1889) founded the Society of the Knights of Pythias in 1864 in

Washington, D.C. The chief governing body of the Knights of Pythias is the Supreme Lodge. Below it are the district grand lodges and subordinate or local lodges. The organization currently has about 200,000 members in the United States and Canada. The Knights of Pythias carry on charitable work and places great emphasis on high moral standards. There are three auxiliaries, the Pythian Sisters, the Dramatic Order Knights of Khorassan, and the Junior Order Princes of Syracuse. Currently, the Rolla Knights of Pythias meets at the Carpenter's Local Union building on Highway 72 South. The Pythian Castle was torn down several years ago.

Legend records that Pythias and Damon were two noble Greek youths of Syracuse. Their friendship and loyalty to each other made them famous. Pythias had been condemned

to death by Dionysius of Syracuse. He was allowed to leave the city to put his affairs in order when Damon promised to die in place of Pythias if Pythias failed to keep his promise. Pythias was delayed and arrived just in time to save Damon from death. Dionysius so admired this display of friendship that he pardoned Pythias and asked the two to become his friends.



## Did You Know?

Did you know Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Railroad Shows was scheduled to exhibit at Lebanon, Missouri on Friday, September 25th, 1891? The show was one of the largest in America and arranged with the railroads to sell cheap round trip excursion tickets to their shows.



The Pythian Castle was the meeting place of the Knights of Pythias fraternal order. The K.P. Hall met upstairs at the building which was located at 7th and Rolla Streets. Downstairs businesses included an undertaker's establishment. (Photo courtesy of Earl and Anna Roberts)

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