



Masons honor one of their own: Gerald R. Ford

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Freemasons across Michigan will drape the altars in all 335 Masonic Lodges throughout the state for 30 days in memory of former President Gerald R. Ford, who was a Mason.

Grand Master Walter F. Wheeler of the Michigan Masons ordered the Freemasons to perform the brief ceremony of putting a black drape over the altar, followed by a moment of silence at their January meetings.

Saginaw County has seven lodges: two in the city of Saginaw and one each in Birch Run, Bridgeport, Chesaning, Merrill and St. Charles.

Ford took his initiation into Freemasonry -- along with his half-brothers Thomas G. Ford, who died in 1995 at 77, Richard A. Ford, 82, and James F. Ford, 79 -- at Malta Lodge 465 in Grand Rapids on

Sept. 30, 1949.

Gerald Ford became a master Mason on May 18, 1951, at Columbia Lodge 3 in Washington, D.C.

Ford obtained further offices in Masonry and was a 33rd degree Mason. Freemasons can earn 32 degrees in Scottish Rite Masonry; the 33rd degree is honorary.

Ford was the last president who was a Mason.

Before him there were 13 others -- George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James A. Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman.

Lyndon B. Johnson took the initiation into Freemasonry but did not follow through with the second and third initiations required to become a master Mason and is therefore not considered a Mason by members of the craft. v

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