

PRINTED MASONIC CORNER CARDS ON USPI POSTAL STATIONERY

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Historical Background:

The first legitimate Masonic lodge in the Philippines was established in 1762 by British troops during their occupation of Manila in the war between Spain and England. The lodge lasted only a few years and ceased to exist once the British withdrew. Despite prohibitions imposed by both the Spanish authorities and the Catholic Church, Masonry continued to spread, though under conditions of extreme secrecy. Meetings were irregular, seldom held in the same location twice, and permanent lodge houses were impossible.

During Spanish rule, Masonry was regarded as treason. Many Masons were executed, while others faced arrest, torture, exile, or harassment. As the movement grew in size and influence, Spanish friars became increasingly alarmed and branded all Masons as "*insurrectos*." Under their influence, the colonial government launched campaigns of persecution. In this climate, Philippine Masonry evolved into an organized protest movement against oppression, promoting ideals of freedom and democracy. By 1896, Masonry was completely banned in the Philippines, and many Filipino Masons who survived the persecutions took up arms in the revolution against Spain.

Following the Spanish-American War, the United States assumed control of the Philippines in 1898, and Masonry was revived. On October 10, 1901, Manila Lodge No. 342 received its charter from the Grand Lodge of California, becoming the first lodge formally recognized during the American period. As membership grew, additional lodges were chartered: Corregidor Lodge No. 386 in Manila on December 11, 1907, and Cavite Lodge No. 350 on October 15, 1908, to serve members living outside the capital.

By 1912, Masonry had advanced to the point where the formation of a Philippine Grand Lodge became possible. On December 19 of that year, through the petition of Manila, Cavite, and Corregidor Lodges, the Grand Lodge of the Philippines was chartered by the Grand Lodge of California. These lodges were renumbered as Manila Lodge No. 1, Cavite Lodge No. 2, and Corregidor Lodge No. 3 under the new jurisdiction.

Efforts to consolidate all lodges under a single body soon followed. On February 14, 1917, through the leadership of Most Worshipful Manuel L. Quezon, 27 lodges affiliated with the Gran Oriente Español were merged with the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. This unification ended longstanding divisions and established one sovereign body: the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines. On the same day, elections were held. William H. Taylor was reelected Grand Master, while Manuel L. Quezon was chosen Deputy Grand Master. To maintain balance between American and Filipino members, Quezon proposed a gentleman's agreement ensuring that leadership of the Grand Lodge would alternate between the two groups. The following year, Quezon became the first Filipino Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands.

