

## Thomas Wildey...

Founder of  
North American  
Odd Fellowship



Thomas Wildey,  
founder of Odd

Fellowship in North America, was a man of immense vitality, humor, and warmth. He was born in London, England, in 1782. He was left an orphan five years later - and the Odd Fellow pledge to "Educate the Orphan" sprang from his personal childhood experiences. At the age of 14, Wildey went to live with an uncle. After he had 9 years of schooling, he became an apprentice to a maker of coach springs. He joined the Odd Fellows in 1804.

When restlessness brought Thomas Wildey to America in 1817, the British were still unpopular in the States because of the War of 1812. In that year Baltimore was suffering both a yellow fever epidemic and mass unemployment. An outgoing personality, Wildey missed companionship and advertised in the newspaper to determine if there were any other Odd Fellows in Baltimore; he requested them to meet him at the Seven Stars Inn.

On April 26, 1819, Wildey and the four men who responded to the advertisement met and began the process that would lead to the forming of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in North America, dedicating the Order to achieve philanthropic goals. Other Englishmen who were Odd Fellows had grouped in the states along the Eastern Seaboard, and Wildey gathered them all into the newly formed fraternity. He traveled widely to set up lodges in the most recently settled parts of the country.

At the time of his death in 1861, there were more than 200,000 members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows across North America.



## Contact Information

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# The Independent Order of Odd Fellows & Rebekahs



# We are Odd Fellows & Rebekahs.

To Improve and Elevate the Character of Mankind...

In 18th century England, it was odd to find people organized for the purpose of giving aid to those in need and pursuing projects for the benefit of all mankind. Those who belonged to such an organization were called "Odd Fellows." Odd Fellows are also known as "The Three Link Fraternity" which stands for Friendship, Love and Truth.



*Odd Fellows are very involved in supporting their communities through a variety of civic projects.*

Today, the Odd Fellows is a worldwide fraternal Order having over 10,000 lodges in 25 countries. We are actively involved in a variety of civic and philanthropic efforts on a local, national and international level. Highlights of these include:

## The Order at Work

- The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs spend over \$775 million in relief projects annually
- The Educational Foundation provides substantial loans and grants to students
- SOS Children's Village provides a caring home for orphaned children in Cambodia
- Living Legacy focuses on planting trees and enhancing our environment
- The Arthritis Foundation
- Visual Research Foundation supports vision care and research through the Wilmer Eye Institute.
- Pilgrimage for Youth
- Annually sponsor a float in the Rose Parade



*The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is proud to sponsor many Housing Projects throughout North America.*

## Consider Joining the Odd Fellows

A man or woman of good character, who is loyal to his or her country and believes in a Supreme Being, the creator and preserver of the Universe, is eligible for membership. Odd Fellowship strictly forbids any interference with one's religious beliefs or political opinions. Most jurisdictions require candidates for the adult lodges to be 16 years old. Junior Lodges and Theta Rho Girl's Clubs accept members 8 to 18 years old (some jurisdictions have a minimum age limit of 10).

## How to Join

If you are interested in learning more and possibly becoming a part of the Odd Fellows or Rebekahs, you are encouraged to visit our website at [www.ioof.org](http://www.ioof.org). Click on the Jurisdictions link to find contact information for your State or Province. When contacting us, share with us your interest in joining and we will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Should you decide to join, an application and instructions will be provided. Simply contact us on the web, phone or mail. We look forward to hearing from you!

[ioof.org](http://ioof.org)

