The Chesley family was from Aroostook County, Maine. Bela Chesley and two of his sons, Hiram and Jefferson, were affiliated members of Kinmundy Lodge #398 until the early 1870s.

Bela Hammond Chesley and his wife, Matilda Ann Haynes, started their family of eight children in Maine, when two of their sons came of age and enlisted in the Civil War. After their son Hiram was wounded at Gettysburg, the family moved West to assist Hiram in his recovery, and then brought Hiram to Marion County, Illinois. Bro. Bela left Marion County, Illinois in 1873 and was living afterward in Kanabec, Minnesota, where he died 29 Nov 1883.

Hiram Henry Chesley was born 8 Sep 1844 at Aroostook County, Maine. It is likely that Bro. Chesley received his Masonic degrees in Maine before he enlisted in the Civil War 29 Aug 1862 with Company H, Twentieth Regiment, Maine Volunteer Infantry. Bro. Chesley participated in the historic battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, the Wilderness, Gettysburg and others. He received a gunshot wound through the neck at Gettysburg, which led to his being mustered out 29 Apr 1864, and which crippled him for life. He lay paralyzed for eighteen months, entirely helpless, and suffered misery and pain every hour for his remaining 45 years.

Jefferson Thomas Chesley was born 1846 at Aroostook County, Maine, and also likely received his Masonic degrees before enlisting in the Civil War 2 Dec 1863 with Company F, 1st Heavy Artillery regiment, Maine Volunteer Infantry. Jefferson took temporary leave during his service in 1864 to assist his brother in his recovery. He then returned to service, and mustered out 1 Sep 1866. Jefferson married Mary Philipene Seewald and after living briefly in Marion County, moved to Summerfield, St. Clair County, Illinois where he died 21 Mar 1874.

Hiram Chesley recovered enough to travel to Marion County, Illinois, in September 1865, within a year after Kinmundy Lodge received its charter. He studied law here in Marion County, and was admitted to the bar in 1867. He was married, January 23, 1868, to Mary E. Tubbs, daughter of Alva Tubbs; Mary was born in Jennings County, Indiana. Hiram was living in Louisville, Illinois in April 1870, where he engaged in his law practice for nearly forty years. In addition to affiliating with Kinmundy Lodge #398, Mr. Chesley was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic. He was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 1876, and served one term to the satisfaction of his constituents. Bro. Hiram Henry Chesley died at age 64, 27 Jan 1909, and is buried at Orchard Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Illinois.

The Chesley family is an early part of Kinmundy Lodge #398 history, as well as the history of the United States. Their family is an example of the Westward expansion during the 1860s and how lives were influenced due to the Civil War. Their story demonstrates the lengths that families would go to support their children and siblings, and instructs us as to the extremes that individuals had to endure. Hiram’s story inspires us to overcome great challenges, and to make a meaningful difference in the lives of many.