

The occasion of this gathering tonight is not only
a matter of great pride to the members of the Isle of Patmos Lodge, but
of special interest also to ~~Masons~~ everywhere. One hundred years,
viewed merely as a matter of time, does not occasion much concern but
viewed as ^{a fact} ~~a fact~~ in the life of a state, or in what is ~~of~~ greater interest
to us tonight, the life of an organization, it is indeed a matter of
much interest.

The fact, then, that the Isle of Patmos Lodge is a century old today
presents some interesting facts for our consideration. And first among these
is the fact that a hundred years ago Masonry was instinctive and very
pronouncedly a part of the American pioneer spirit. It is like the
instinct for education and religion- wherever the church and the school-
house found their way the Masonic Lodge soon followed. And just as religion
played a large part in creating the fine physical fiber and moral
stamina of our first settlers in Vermont, so Masonry put a kind of moral
iron in the blood that helped mightily toward making a race of courageous,
steady, honest, and reliable men.

To bring this fact a little more vividly to your attention, may I ask
you to let your imagination draw a picture of what community life might
have been on these ~~Islands~~ ^I Islands a century ago. Consider, first of all, that
the first actual settlement was made by the French at Alburg in 1782, only
thirty nine years before the Isle of Patmos Lodge was given its charter.
Now, to pioneer the wilderness and make it fit for the habitations of
men is not an easy task. ^{now} ~~it~~ ^{it} does ~~not~~ require much effort from the imagination
to produce a fairly accurate picture of the stupendous task
that lay before those men and women who, ~~a hundred years ago~~, domiciled
themselves in the heart of our Island forests. Today, even with our
fairly good roads, the question of roads is vital, especially in Vermont.
Every phase of our rural community life is dependent, ultimately, for its
solution on the question of good roads. The church, school, markets,
social and community life all ~~hark~~ ^{hark} back to the question of good roads.
To the man of a century ago the problem of roads must have been a perplex-

ing one; and yet it proved no barrier to the support that the organizations of the community sought from these early settlers. If one will review the secretary's records of the meetings of this lodge, held a hundred years ago, one will find the names of, at least, thirty men in attendance. Today, our modes of conveyance are many and varied. One may ride as slowly or as swiftly comfortably or as uncomfortably, elegantly or inelegantly as one may choose providing one have the price - and almost anybody has the price to buy a Ford. A hundred years ago there was no such thing as a railroad in America; the automobile was still farther in the distance, while the flying machine as a comfortable, safe, and convenient mode of travel was a good century away. The telephone, which is an unspeakable good to every rural community, when the Isle of Patmos Lodge was first organized, was not even a dream. And, yet, in spite of these primitive conditions that called for extreme sacrifice, Masonry struck its roots down deep into the soil of community life, drawing to itself the best men within a wide area and becoming a bond that held them to the highest and best mutual endeavor.

Touching now upon the hundred years, from a historical point of view, may I be permitted to mention with regret the fact that the lodge's records, the real source from which we might expect to gather our information, are exceedingly meager in details of historic interest. If brother Alson Landon who signed his name to the records as secretary on May 16, 1825 (the earliest records preserved) had only known that his records, a century, very probably centuries, in the future, he surely had been moved to include incidents of community and Masonic interest that not only would have proved of historic value but read with a peculiar relish. Added to this, still more unfortunate fact that the secretary's records for the first four years from 1821 to 1825 are missing. This is, without doubt, a great loss since these records might have, at least, satisfied the natural curiosity which we at this distance might naturally feel.

For our very limited information regarding the beginning of the lodge information we are indebted to the Grand Lodge records and the charter. The Grand Lodge records read, under date of Tuesday, October 10, 1821 as follows: "The same

committee made report on the ^{petition 3.} ~~petition~~ of sundry brethern in South Hero and Grand Isle, that in their opinion, the ^{prayer thereof} ~~charter thereof~~ ought to be granted; which report was read and excepted and a charter ordered ~~ordered~~ to be issued accordingly. The charter bears the following names: Abner Keeler, Nathaniel Healy, Alson Landon, Abial Adams, Ephraim Beardsley, Bird Landon, Ebenezer Allen, Jonathan Worthing, William Gale, Consider Belding, Franklin Robinson, Timothy Allen, Aside from this meager information we have nothing authentic from which to present the origin of No. 54 Isle of Patmos Lodge.

It might be interesting at this point to give , if possible, a short biographic sketch of the men who applied for a charter and whose names the charter now bears; but here, ^{as} ~~as~~ ^{names} elsewhere information is very fragmentary. There are three or four , however, to which we must make brief reference since they are of peculiar interest to us today. The first is that of Abner Keeler, Worshipful Master in 1825. Mr Keeler who was the brother of brother Homer Keeler's grandfather, came to South Hero in 1806. For a number of years he conducted ^a ~~the~~ mercantile business here; and being a ^{shrewd} ~~shrewd~~ and careful business man, he accumulated a very substantial fortune, estimated \$150, 000. We judge Mr Keeler to have been a strong and aggressive Mason from the fact that besides being Worshipful Master 1825, he was at times entrusted with large Masonic responsibilities; one of which is noted in the Masonic records under date of November 3 , 1825, to wit "Voted that brother A. Keeler be a committee to provide ~~for~~ a cupboard for the refreshment room. Mr Keeler died in 1852 leaving no direct heirs, His estate was willed to his brother's children who immediately came from Connecticut to take possession of ^{it} ~~the~~ estate. This not only, in a measure, accounts for ^{brother Homer} ~~brother~~ Keeler's presence on the Island today, but as well for his affluence and wealth.

Another name that sounds somewhat familiar is that of Alson Landon, secretary of the Lodge in 1825. Mr. Landon was the son of Thaddeus Landon, one of the earliest settlers on the Island. Many years ago, he moved westward to Michigan, it is thought, where his descendants now live. His records were kept with precision and care, and bespeak a man of education and intelligence. Brother Will Landon can look with some degree of pride on his connection

with Isle of Patmos Lodge since two great uncles, Alson and Bird, were not only honored with their names on the charter but held important offices - secretary and treasure respectively.

Mr Bird Landon, the ~~brother~~ grandfather of brother Tom Landon whose name has already been mentioned in connection with that of his brother Alson was treasurer during the years of 1825 - 1827. The system of dues, during the early years of the Lodge was somewhat different from now, the requirement being a fee of ten cents at each meeting. It is interesting to note this item in the records of each meetings as follows: "Evening dues paid" with an amount affixed corresponding to the number present, at ten cents per member. This basis of computation, however, didn't always work out to the cent since under date of "First Thursday in January 1826" we find recorded attendance of a financial statement of \$1.87. Some fellow must have blown himself to the extent of an extra Canadian dime worth in American money \$.07. However, brother Bird Landon, like his brother Alson must have been, judging from his very careful and methodical ^{financial} statements a man of good mind, steady habits and deeply interested in Masonry.

(Another familiar name is that of Robinson.) Tonight we go back, in our thought to the time when this name crosses the name of Landon and begins that almost inexplicable maze of family relations in which this community finds itself woven today. (Franklin Robinson, the ^{grandfather} ~~grandfather~~ of brother Juan Robinson, came to the Island in 1802,) married a daughter of Thaddeus Landon and raised the proverbially large family (He had the distinction of being the first to carry the United States ^{mail} from Burlington, North Hero and intervening points at the munificent salary of ~~\$100~~ ^{enormous} \$100.00 per year. Twice every ~~week~~ week, winter and summer he made the trip carrying the mail in bags astride his faithful horse. It may be noted that brother Franklin Robinson was not only one of the original charter members, but was also one of two charter members ~~who~~ who helped to bring about the reorganization of the Lodge in 1850.)

(Regarding the spirit of the Isle of Patmos Lodge and the work accomplished during those first years preceeding the anti - Masonic period which extended from 1826 - 1850 information is very meager. From the reports made to the Grand Lodge we gather that from 1823 - 1825 during which time Nathaniel Healy was Worshipful Master, 17 were made Master Masons; from 1825 - 1827 Abner Keeler, W.M. ~~were~~ nine were reported raised; from 1827 - 1828 three reported raised. And from 1828 - 1830 Robinson Ferris, Master, no number reported raised, in the Grand Lodge report; and no record of any kind given in the records of the Lodge after December 1828 until January 1850.)

Of the spirit of the Lodge during those beginning years, considering the many hindrances, one might expect in a settlement newly and roughly hewn out of the forest it may be said, with admiration, that it was truly and seriously Masonic. It certainly speaks well for Masonry that it not only found championship in the heart of those cautious and conservative New Englanders but as well that its business was pushed with much seriousness and enthusiasm. I think, and I am not in any sense reflecting on anything in the present, it would be amazing if you could see the actual picture that lies back of these records of 1821 - 1829. And the thought that comes to me tonight with no little force is the thought that there must be a human grip in Masonry that is akin to the instinct for family, home, and community life, otherwise those men of a century ago whose time ~~and~~ ^{was} spent were, of necessity put to the stern task of forcing the wilderness to yield them and their families a living had no part or interest in it. Masonry was a sort of moral passion with them. The human element in it drew them together socially but even stronger than this human element was the ~~fact~~ ^{spirit} that Masonry meant a solemn and serious moral compact which could not otherwise than be productive of the best for community life.

(Coming now to the housing of the Lodge, it may be interesting to some of you, who may not already be familiar with the fact, that its first home occupied the upper part of a store owned by Abner Keeler, and was located close by the railroad-crossing on the property ~~now~~ ^{once} owned by Steven Wadsworth. In 1827 this store, a wooden building, was moved back to the rear to give

place to a large and splendid ⁶~~brick~~ ^{stone} building said to be the finest of its kind in the county in which Mr. Keeler carried on a very successful retail and wholesome mercantile business. During the period of building, the Lodge removed its quarters to the home of John Knight of North Hero where it remained for about two years, supposedly returning at the end of that time to South Hero to again make its abode in Mr Keeler's store. However, from January 1829 until January 1850 which we remember as the ante - Masonic period, the secretary's records as I suggested are totally blank from which we may gather I think, that no regular sessions were held - at least, in the Lodge room. From reliable authority we gather that Masonic meetings of some character were held during this period in the home of John Knight of North Hero who again opened his doors and extended his hospitality to the Craft in time of need. And it was at ^{his} home in January 5, 1850 that the Lodge reorganized under its new number ¹⁷~~54~~ naming Bros. D. Mott, W.M. ; James Tobias, S.W. ; Franklin Robinson, J.W. ; S. Macomber, Treas. ; Charles Perrigo, Sec. ; E. Parks, S.D. ; J. Williams, J.D. ; J. Knight, Tyler. In 1891, thirty years ago, the Lodge moved to ^{the stone} ~~its present~~ ^{opposite the Keeler homestead} building which it purchased for the small sum of two hundred dollars. The records under date of July 24, 1891 read as follows: "A committee was appointed to visit ^{from} the (Peter Troville) house and report on the feasibility of purchasing the place for a Lodge room and if favorable on the plans of furnishing the house at the expence of the same". No record was made of the committee's report, but under date of October 22, 1891 the records state that a committee consisting of brother Fred Sears, William Center, and George Tracy were appointed to attend to the matter of shingling the Lodge building - from which we may safely conclude that the committee not only approved the purchase of the building but consummated it. (During the years many improvements ^{were} have been made in the building making it both very neat and comfortable.)

Some time might be spent with interest in a brief discussion of the Morgan episode which resulted so disastrously for Masonry everywhere during the years between 1826 - 1850. I can give but a brief reference to it and that more particularly as it relates to the Isle of Patmos Lodge.

IN 1825 a man, William Morgan by name said to be of bad habits and ugly disposition of whose real ^{8 bava from} initiation into the rights of Masonry there was great question was permitted to sign a petition for a new chapter of the order in Batavia , New York. Due to discoveries made afterwards which reflected on his personal character, another petition was drawn up and his name left off. This made him very angry and he thereupon determined to expose the secrets of Masonry, taking ~~an~~ accomplices a man of literary culture in New York who had been expelled from the order in 1824, and an ex - Batavia newspaper editor and printer named Miller. Added to his anger there was the selfish hope of making large returns from the sale of the expose. During the night of September 10, 1826 the printing office of Miller was fired, supposedly by Miller himself, since he had plenty of water standing about in barrels with which to extinguish the flames - Miller's object , of course, being to further advertise the forthcoming publication and enhance the sale of it. I will not attempt to give a whole and complete history of details . The story goes " Morgan immediately upon being released from ~~the~~ jail in Canandaigua into which he had been thrown because of an unpaid debt was seized by two men and thrust into a carriage while he was heard to shout 'Murder'." That was the last ever seen or definitely heard of the man. His abduction was at once and "probably with justice" as a recent writer says "regarded by the public as the act of three Masons and a great sensation ensued." Whoever may have been the guilty persons the responsibility could never have been considered an official act of Masonry. However, for at least twenty years Masonry suffered unspeakably . It was socially ostracised, religiously condemned, and was made a sort of political slogan for selfish and unscrupulous men. An anti - political party was formed in western New York whose avowed purpose was to drive every Mason from political office. It polled thirty thousand votes in 1828, seventy thousand ~~xxx~~ in 1829, one hundred twenty eight in 1830 spreading over a majority of the states. In 1832 it nominated a candidate for president against Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay as both of these were free Masons and Past Masters.

Only one state however, was carried in this presidential election by the anti - Masonic party and that the state of Vermont. This ~~campaign~~ ^{political party} wrote its doom in this campaign since immediately following it, it slowly but surely declined. Now what may seem unusually strange, the secretary's records do not give even a hint of any Morgan episode; whether the securing of information was difficult for people living at remote distances and news took time to sink in it is hard to say. Anyhow, during the years 1826, 27, 28 when the feeling throughout the country was most bitter the Isle of Patmos Lodge seemed strong and carried on its meetings regularly and with a good attendance. At a regular meeting, dated the first Thursday of August 1828 the following item recorded: "Notice that brother Hiram S. Clark be summoned by the secretary to appear before the Lodge at its next regular communication to show cause why he should not be expelled or suspended for his past un-Masonic conduct." At the next regular communication, first Thursday of September 1828 the matter of Clark's un-Masonic conduct was discussed and a committee appointed to draft, as stated, specifications against Hiram S. Clark and to furnish him with a copy thereof. In October, first Thursday 1828 the specifications were read in open Lodge and Mr. Clark informed that proceedings on the specification would be laid over until the next regular communication. At the next meeting Thursday, December 1828 the matter was again postponed until the next regular communication; but the trial was never held for the door of the Lodge closed ^{successfully} tight for twenty years or more. Whether brother Clark's un-Masonic conduct had anything to do with the Morgan affair or not there is no telling. Anyway, it was the last act before the curtain drops and leaves Isle of Patmos Lodge a blank from January 1829 until the fifth day of June 1850. (To the honor of the Lodge may it be said that) what ever the bitterness of the fight may have been (its charter was never voluntarily surrendered) Brother Steven Wadsworth remembers hearing some of his old Masonic brethren tell of how in ^(and that during) those days ~~that~~ ^{which} were dark for Masonry, Franklin Robinson, B.F. Hodgekiss(?), Seneca Tobias, and one or two others would ride by wagon north to the Hurlburt farm crossing from thence by boat to the home of John Knight where they secretly

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met at frequent intervals for the sole purpose of maintaining their Masonic charter. In 1849 a number of lodges, among which was the Isle of Patmos Lodge were given one year in which to organise under their old charter. In 1850 Isle of Patmos Lodge was represented in Grand Lodge and numbered "17". From this date on until now Masonry has grown ~~by~~ leaps and bounds until now it has become a mighty force in the land. Nowhere has any Lodge felt the benefit of this increase more than Isle of Patmos Lodge ~~now~~ today it is a strong and healthy Lodge of ^{about} 130 members.)

(For ^{more than} one hundred years, a fine fraternal spirit has been maintained in this Masonic organization. Jealousy and petty discord have been kept out to a large degree. Moreover, the Masonic atmosphere has been kept morally clean.) In other Lodges, one frequently hears ^{of} early - day debauchery, but there is no indication that this Lodge has ever been so effected.

(The following resolution was made by brother S.P. Wadsworth at a regular communication dated January 25, 1866; "Resolved: that every member of Isle of Patmos Lodge No. 17 who shall spit on the floor or smoke in the Lodge shall pay a fine of twenty five cents for each offense to be paid to the treasurer of the Lodge, also there shall be no talking about the Lodge while at labor without leave from the W.M. Also that every member of Isle of Patmos Lodge shall guard against the use of profane language in or out of the Lodge.") The secretary must have been somewhat confused judging ^{from} ~~of~~ the action of the Lodge ~~since he~~ ^{which is} writes as follows: "Voted ~~and~~ the resolutions passed. Motioned that the resolutions lie on the table. Vote taken and passed that the resolutions lie on the table." Whether ~~the~~ brother Wadsworth's resolutions on spitting and profanity ever got from the table we have no record. ^{Possibly, we had better consult the floor}

(It would be tempting to discuss, at some length the Lodge of these latter days - its fine personnel, prosperity, and opportunity for aggressive work in behalf of real Masonry; but you are familiar with these things and any statement I might make would only be going over ground with which you are now very well acquainted.) You have some brethren in your Lodge who

have helped to carry the burden for more than fifty years - bros. Steven and Horace Wadsworth, George Tracy, and perhaps others. It would be fitting to remember them with a few words of exaltation; but the Lodge I trust, will do that in a way more fitting than I could do it.

(I closingg) this very and imperfect sketch (I wish that I might be able to impress upon your minds the tremendous challenges that comes to Masonry today.) It survived those twenty two years of bitter persecution, a persecution that in some measure was due to the fact that the world knew more, and made more capitals of the "secret society" phrase in Masonry than it knew of the virtues of Masonry. Men, it is not enough to say or to carry out the idea by being ^{" "} mum that you have something the other fellow ~~has it - if he is not a mason~~ ^{is not a mason}. (Masonry, as I understand it, is not a conglomeration of signs and symbols - ^{as it is} ~~but~~ ^{sometimes} we are prone to make it that and that only. There is not one thing in Masonry that the whole world might not know so far as the legitimacy and upright character of our work is concerned. But there must be a fence high enough that the man who is not a Mason may not look over and share in certain rights and benefits for which he has not been duly and truly prepared, worthy and well qualified. That, and that only is the meaning and significance of the secret element in Masonry. As Masons we must have some disguinishing mark that we get in our signs, symbols, and passwords. But Masonry has a positive element in it - ^{too} don't forget that! You cannot expect thousands and tens thousands of men to band themselves together unless they band themselves for something good or ill. Masonry stands for principles, positive principles, the evercise of which if faithfully persued cannot fail to mean a moral uplift to society. *end*

The challenges that comes to Masonry is twofold.

First: a challenge to defend our sacred American institutions.

The Masonic Lodge means an Open Bible. That means more perhaps, than we are seriously considering today. The Bible is the Cornerstone of all our national and state institutions. Limit, in anyway, a man's approach toward this book and it is only a rabbit jump to the time when you have an autocracy, ecclesiastical or political, I care not what you call it worse

than that ~~set~~ of which Germany ever dreamed. In 1901 Bishop Potter wrote a letter in which these words were written: "Today it (Masonry) lies in the hands of the modern man largely an unused tool capable of great achievements for God, country, for mankind, but doing very little. For one, I believe that circumstances may easily arise when the highest and most sacred of all freedoms, being threatened in the land, Free Masonry may be its most powerful defender, unifying all minds and commanding our best citizenship." That men, is just the thought I wish to emphasise, Masonry will always stand for a broad and intellectual ^{spirit} ~~actual~~ democracy. It commits itself to no political party, to no ecclesiastical organization, it yields to no bias and has no ax to grind, it seeks to meet on the level and act on the square, to govern itself and to have all men govern themselves in the spirit of charity and brotherly love.

The second Challenge that comes to Masonry is a challenge to defend the principles of right and morality. If we would interpret the real spirit and purpose of Masonry from its ritual and ceremony we can reach only one conclusion, the conclusion that it is profoundly moral if not religious. Our object, plans, material, the tools of our profession are intensely religiously. We are seeking to build together the grand and glorious temple of truth, justice, mercy, charity, and love. It is a big job, worthy of the great and good men who have preceded us in the task and it is a big job, worthy of us and worthy of those who are to follow us. To be a good Mason means being, as much as it means anything, being a good man. When the world gets this conception of Masonry from the life of every Mason it will be a great day for Masonry and a great day for the world.

I thought we remembered the memory of those men who 100 years ago, laid the foundations of Masonry in France Dec 20 - 2 whose life & labors are memorialized in the organization that you are today. They could not see us, as we are tonight - there's was largely a venture of faith - but we can see them in their consecration to the principles of Masonry. A century from now when you see I have formed that immortal thing, may it be that hands shall handle these tools of the craft, with the same spirit of gratitude to their brothers (and)

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masons of the past, as we are who
 dedicated these ~~maisons~~ with pride &
 gratitude to the men ^{before} who labored
 from labor to refreshment — & from
~~refreshment~~ ^{refreshment} to labor — and ^{after} whose
 footsteps we ~~have~~ thoughtfully tried
 to follow —

By Rev. George Gordon Ross