

MEMORIES OF
MARTHA'S VINEYARD LODGE A. F. & A. M.

ON ITS MERGER WITH
ORIENTAL LODGE A. F. & A. M.

JANUARY 29, 1994



A. D. S.
A. Douglas Stewart, PDDGM

MARTHA'S VINEYARD LODGE, A.F. & A.M.
TISBURY 1860-1964

The history of a Lodge can prove to be a rather dull and monotonous listing of names, dates and events. Two accounts of the past of Martha's Vineyard Lodge have already been written, the first on the occasion of the burning of the mortgage of the hall on Church Street, March 9th. 1916, and the second for the hundredth anniversary on June 6th. 1959. Several interesting items included here have been selected from those histories. The rest is rambling memories of an old Past Master who was Junior Steward for the hundredth anniversary celebration.

There seem to have been a number of early Lodges on our island. King Solomon Lodge of Perfection is listed as lasting from 1791 to 1797, although it might have been instituted as early as 1783. This was followed from 1797 to 1822 by King Solomon Lodge in Perfection, all very confusing. A diploma is also said to exist dated 1787 presented to a Bro. Arthur Fenner by a Royal Arch King Solomon Lodge held in Edgartown, attesting to his receiving the Third Degree. In 1820 Seven Star Lodge of Edgartown was organized but surrendered its charter four years later.

The present Martha's Vineyard Lodge of Tisbury was organized in 1859 and instituted 1860. Of interest to our present Grand Master may be the fact that Marine Lodge of Falmouth conferred the degrees on six brethren so that there might be a sufficient number to form the new Lodge.

Oriental Lodge of Edgartown, with which we are now merging, organized in 1866, and an Ocean Isle Lodge, Oak Bluffs, was proposed in 1878. If one wonders why, on such a small island, three Lodges should exist or be proposed in towns but several miles apart, remember the transportation and communication difficulties of a century and more ago. Automobiles and paved roads were a long way off, and horse and wagon, stage coach, or perhaps sail boat were the alternatives. Attendance at Grand Lodge was seldom possible and island Lodges appointed proxies from the Boston area.

Among the treasures of Martha's Vineyard Lodge is the Holy Bible displayed on its altar since August 7th. 1860. It seems that a group of eight gentlemen from Boston visited the harbor on

their yacht and were entertained by brethren of the new Lodge. Seven of the visitors were members of the Craft. In gratitude for the kindness shown them they purchased the handsome leather-bound volume and presented it to the Lodge at a public ceremony. Their committee chairman was Right Worshipful William D. Coolidge, then Junior Grand Warden. He later served as Grand Master, 1861 and 1862. The Bible's Fly-leaf contains the names of these generous gentlemen.

The Lodge's first quarters were on Main Street, over a paint store, where they met, paying \$40 a year rent, until 1878 when the rent was increased to \$60. This was apparently too much and a move was ^{made} in the summer of 1883 to new apartments, still on Main Street, over Luce Bros. Store. Only three meetings were held there when the Great Fire of Eighty-Three swept the town. All the contents were lost including the Charter, the Holy Bible and Regalia being all that was saved. A new Charter was obtained from Grand Lodge in November of the same year. Grand Lodge and the District Deputy Grand Master of the 27th District to which the Lodge belonged contributed funds to the brethren. Insurance of \$300 did not cover the loss of \$500.

Another move was made to over Swift Brothers store where meetings were held until property was purchased around the corner on Church Street. This building was originally built for the Methodist Church in 1833 which it occupied until 1845. From the latter date until it was bought by the Lodge it was known by the name of Capawock Hall and used for many purposes including the showing of plays, dances and for Town Meetings. This was the building in use when the Lodge celebrated its Hundredth Anniversary in 1959 and where many of the present brethren were raised. It is once more serving as a theatre for plays.

One more move was to come. By the late seventies both Island Lodges were having difficulties in maintaining their respective Halls and paying rising insurance premiums. Both buildings were put on the market and steps taken to purchase land in Oak Bluffs midway between the two towns. Edgartown sold their Hall first and for over a year held their meetings in Vineyard Haven. This proved to be the start of real Masonic Unity on Martha's Vineyard.

In due course the present, all steel, Temple was completed and solemnly dedicated to Freemasonry in ancient form by Most Worshipful J. Philip Berquist in November of 1982. During the past several years many members of one Lodge have affiliated with or become honorary members of the other, and some have been officers in both. Thus the two Lodges have worked hand in hand for fifteen years or more. Each Lodge has gone through lean years followed by prosperous ones, usually when one was up the other was down. As a result the idea of a merger was raised for at least the second time.

During the early sixties, what with much improved roads and more automobiles, committees were formed to see about a possible merger. A number of old-timers being strongly against the idea, and Grand Lodge showing little enthusiasm, plans died aborning.

Now, after months of discussion, negotiation and voting, the merger is a fact. The brethren of Martha's Vineyard Lodge must view this with very mixed emotions of sadness and joy: sadness at seeing their Charter surrendered after 134 years; joy as they look forward to a brighter Masonic future.

Over the years Martha's Vineyard Lodge has been ably served by sixty-six Worshipful Masters. R.W. Gilbert L. Smith, a retired whaling Captain, holds the record with thirteen years over a nineteen year period. R.W. A. Douglas Stewart, a distant relative, is next with five terms in the Chair. The Lodge can also boast of eleven members chosen to serve as District Deputy Grand Masters, and another, R.W. Stephen Carey Luce, Jr., elected as a Senior Grand Warden. Bro. Luce also wore a Gold Plated Henry Price Medal, and it is believed Bro. Gilbert Smith had a similar medal which he purchased in 1888 when it was offered for sale to raise moneys for needs of Grand Lodge.

Since 1930, when it was first authorized, four Distinguished Service medals have also been awarded. They are generally known as the Joseph Warren Medal, and were presented to R.W. John E. Palmeira, Wor. Joseph C. Allen, R.W. S. David Cronig and R.W. A. Douglas Stewart. Bro. Joe Allen was known throughout New England as "The Oracle" in Yankee Magazine and also wrote "The Wheelhouse Loafer" column in our local weekly paper.

There are at present seventeen living Past Masters, with R.W. S. David Cronig being the senior, having served in the East in 1949-50. He is one of six now living off-island. We still feel the loss of Wor. Clayton Taylor, Jr., who not only served as Master in our Lodge but also in Abraham H. Howland Lodge in New Bedford. He greatly enlivened our rehearsals with his antics. A Grand Lecturer once remarked that there were three kinds of ritual: Grand Lodge, Blue Lodge and "Red" Taylor.

In spite of the solemnity of our degree work there have been many hilarious incidents. We can remember the time the Junior Warden informed the candidate that he had been caused to kneel on his naked left breast, the time a Past Master acting as Senior Deacon in giving raps with his rod brought it down on his toe and broke it, and when two candidates, each well over two hundred pounds, had their feet placed in proper position and when told to advance to the altar each proceeded to hop with their feet still in position! The entire building trembled.

We remember also the old-timers telling us that that wasn't the way they had done it and that our lectures had been pretty good, BUT, we had said "this" when it should have been "that". We remember when Grand Lodge had to give us a dispensation when a candidate from Oak Bluffs applied to our Lodge because that was in Oriental's jurisdiction. One old-timer recalled learning his lectures "mouth to ear" seated on the box with the stage coach driver in the days before cyphers. Now many of us are the ones who sit on the side lines and ask, "Why does Grand Lodge have to keep changing things?"

We fervently hope that those who have gone before us, those who have labored so hard and for so many years for Island Masonry are here with us in spirit and are pleased at this merging of our two Lodges. They, too, must be having mixed emotions at the surrendering of the old Charter. But then, what is a Charter but a piece of paper when compared to Masonic Unity? May the Supreme Architect of the Universe bless, prosper, and cause His face to shine upon "Oriental-Martha's Vineyard Lodge".

"We met upon the level
Near our harbor's sandy shore.
Now I'm just an old Past Master
Of a Lodge that is no more."

PAST MASTERS

*Joseph T. James	1860,61,62	*Walter S. Booker	1935,36
*Benjamin Clough	1863,64	*William A. Colby	1937
*Henry Bradley	1865,66	*Curtis S. Athearn	1938
*William Leach	1867,69,76	*Joseph C. Allen	1939
*J. Weldon Holmes	1868	*Elijah W. Crowell	1940
*Stephen A. Thomas	1870,71,72	*R.W. John E. Palmeira	1941,42
*Henry Beetle	1873,74,75	*R.W. Arhtur A. Mayhew	1943,44
*Andrew Hillman	1877,78	*Theodore C. Howes	1945,46
*Matthew L. Smith	1879,80	*James F. Morrice	1947
*R.W. GilbertL. Smith	1881,82	*James A. Boyle	1948
	83,84,85,86,87	R.W. S.David Cronig	1949,50
	88,89,90,93,98,99	*R.W. Lawrence W. Winterbottom	51,52
*John H. Crowell	1891	*E. Everett Howell	1953,54
*Charles F. Chadwick	1892	*Louis M. Greene	1955,56
*William F. Neifert	1894,95	*William E. Adams	1957
*William D. Harding	1896,97	*Philip V. Cole	1958,59
*Herbert N. Hinckley	1900,01	Robert B. Boren	1960
*Henry W. McLellen	1902,03	B. Crume Lamb	1961,62
*R.W. Wm. J. Look	1904,05	R.W. David L. Welch	1963,83
	06,07	R.W. A. Douglas Stewart	1964,65,66
*Alvin H. Cleveland	1908,09		69,85
*Abbot L. Baker	1910,11,21	Charles V. Maida	1967,68,76
*R.W. Ulysses E. Mayhew	12,13	R. Donald Bermudes	1970,71
*Norman Johnson	1914,15	Ronald H. Tolin	1972
*Lester H. Bumpus	1916	*Sidney G. White, Jr.	1973,77
*Dana C. Swift	1917,18	David R. Guay	1974,75
*Alton C. Tuckerman	1919	*Clayton Taylor, Jr.	1978,79
#*R.W. Stephen C. Luce, Jr.	'20	Richard R. Mello	1980,84
*Fred K. Snow	1922,23	Kenneth Ward	1981
*George G. Churchill	1924,25	James M. Beckman	1982,90
*Winthrop C. Rheno	1926	Arthur J. Bailow	1986,87
*Erwin C. Burleigh	1927,28	Christopher Keniston	1988,89
*Charles B. Dunbar	1929,30	Alfred H. Hopp	1991
*Hariph C. Hancock	1931,32	Nathan Hunt	1992
*Walter E. Flanders	1933,34	Leonard P. Reid	1993

*Deceased

#Past Senior Grand Warden

MARTHA'S VINEYARD LODGE A. F. & A. M.
Organization 1993

Worshipful Master	Leonard P. Reid
Senior Warden	Wor. Christopher Keniston
Junior Warden	Wor. Nathan H. Hunt
Treasurer	Frederic D. Mascolo
Secretary	Wor. Alfred H. Hopp
Chaplain	R.W. A. Douglas Stewart
Marshal	Wor. Arthur J. Bailow
Senior Deacon	John R. Tucker
Junior Deacon	Robert E. Kinnecom II
Senior Steward	Robert E. Maciel, Sr.
Junior Steward	Paul S. Bettencourt
Inside Sentinel	Donald Mc. Fisher
Tyler	William A. Silva
Organist	Wor. James M. Beckman

GRAND MASTER OF MASONS IN MASSACHUSETTS

M.W. David W. Lovering

DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER 31st NANTUCKET DISTRICT

R.W. Robert C. Corr