

Good evening Most Worshipful Sir, Officers of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, Ladies, Gentlemen and Brothers. Thank you all for being here this evening for the rededication of Marion Lodge Number 6 and the celebration of our 175th Year of Masonry in Iowa.

To give you a relative understanding of where Marion Lodge Number 6 has been and how we've progressed to today, I have prepared a few excerpts from our lodge history book.

The Grand Lodge of Missouri is the ancestral origin of Masonic lodges in Iowa. Our ancestral line traces from Missouri to Tennessee, to North Carolina and to the Grand Lodge of England.

Masonry began in Iowa Territory on November 12th, 1840. After petitioning the Grand Lodge of Missouri for a charter and being recommended by Napoleon Lodge No. 25 of St. Louis, a lodge in Burlington was granted a charter on November 30th,

1840 as Des Moines Lodge Number 41. A Lodge in Muscatine began labors under dispensation February 4th, 1841 and was chartered October 10th as Iowa Lodge Number 42. Dubuque Lodge No. 62, received its dispensation October 14th, 1842, and its Charter was issued October 10th, 1843. The dispensation of Iowa City Lodge No. 63, is dated October 15th, 1842 and its Charter was issued October 10th, 1843.

The first four Iowa lodges, Des Moines Lodge, Iowa Lodge, Dubuque Lodge and Iowa City Lodge, were represented in Iowa City on January 2nd, 1844 when the Grand Lodge of Iowa was formed at its session on January 9th, 1844. Each lodge respectively received numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The Territorial capitol had recently been established at Iowa City, and the Legislature was in session. William Abbe, of Marion, believed to have been the first white settler in Linn County and also later served as an Iowa state senator, was in attendance and was also interested in getting a dispensation

from the new Grand Lodge to form a subordinate body in Marion.

He soon learned that Marion's petition would have to arrive promptly to obtain the coveted "No. 5", from the first dispensation to be granted. But a generous act on his part made this impossible. The Burlington lodge was chosen by the delegates to be honored by the selection of its Master, Oliver Cock, as the first Grand Master. However, he was not in attendance when he was elected on January 3rd. So, William Abbe volunteered to ride horseback to Burlington and return with him. In the meantime, George McCleary, of Wapello, had taken advantage of the situation, presenting the first petition.

Marion's petition was received in Burlington on February 6th, 1844. Dispensation to form our lodge was granted on the same day and it bears the names of Oliver Cock, Grand Master, and T. S. Parvin, Grand Secretary. The eight names on the petition were: John Berry, William Abbe, Lawrence Hollenbeck, Samuel

Hunter, Abel Stevens, Thomas Kemp, David Styles, and Joseph McKee.

At the second annual communication of the Grand Lodge of Iowa on January 6th, 1845, four charters were granted, Wapello Lodge No. 5; Marion Lodge No. 6; Hiram Lodge No. 7 and Mt. Pleasant Lodge No. 8. Marion Lodge Number 6 was the western outpost of Masonry in Iowa.

The first meeting held in Marion was on March 18th, 1844, six years after the Territorial government had been established and two years before Iowa became a state.

William Abbe presided at the meeting and the officers elected were:

William Abbe, W.M. (farmer and trader)

Lawrence Hollenbeck, S.W. (blacksmith)

John Berry, J.W. (farmer and public official)

Joseph McKee, Treasurer (potter and farmer)

A. E. Skinner, Secretary (preacher)

Samuel Hunter, Deacon (farmer)

David Styles, Deacon (millwright)

H. F. Camp, Tyler (occupation unknown).

It was decided that Thursdays preceding the full moon at 6 PM were to be the regular meeting dates and time. The phase of the moon was important to early members who crossed unbridged streams and unmarked prairies.

Across from the north end of the public square, directly opposite our present Masonic temple, there still stands the old double store room erected in 1843 by Addison Daniels. The upper floor of this building, which now leans comfortably against the Commercial Bank building, was known as “Daniels Hall”, and was the first Masonic lodge room in Marion.

The first Bible which became the property of the lodge was purchased from O.S. Hall, agent for the American Bible Society, and cost \$2.25. Uriah Hartley sold the lodge its jewels for the sum of \$1.50.

Fees for the degrees were \$20, half of which accompanied the petition. By the way, accounting for inflation, that's equivalent to \$670 in now-year dollars. There were monthly dues of ten cents, and at each semi-annual communication, the sum of twenty-five cents. Grand Lodge dues were included.

In March, 1847, Marion Lodge left the Daniels location, and moved to the old Court building, then owned by the Methodist congregation. The lease called for monthly payments of \$2.50, half of which was assumed by the "Sons of Temperance", who were co-tenants.

Candidates for the degrees became more numerous in 1849, and a better location for the lodge was needed. A room over the Hosea Gray store was leased in June of 1850 for \$30 a year. The Gray building was near the site of the present Masonic temple, and was burned in the fire of 1872.

The fourth location of Marion Lodge was above the Holmes & Ristine store, north of the public square. The lease was signed on February 10th, 1855, covered five years and called for annual payments of \$75. Marion was “booming”, and the membership of our lodge was increasing rapidly. There was confidence also that a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons would soon be established and share expenses.

At the Grand Lodge communication held at Oskaloosa on June 3rd and 5th, 1856, Marion Lodge No. 6 reported a membership of seventy-seven, which was the largest in the state. The number of subordinate lodges had increased to 87, plus four under dispensation.

On February 15th, 1862, Marion Lodge moved to its fifth location, a room over the Yearnshaw book store, on the northwest corner of the intersection of Twelfth street and Seventh avenue. The rent was fixed at \$60 a year but reduced to \$40 when the Good Templars became co-tenants. In 1863,

Marion Lodge reported forty-eight members, and had settled financially with the Grand Lodge.

During the summer of 1867, the Yearnshaw building, then known as the "Post Office corner", was replaced by a larger building. The lodge continued as tenant, and a new prosperity enabled it to pay \$125 annual rent.

On January 1st, 1876, the Chapter leased the roomy and comfortable upper floor of the Mentzer building, which still stands at the northwest corner of the intersection of Tenth street and Seventh avenue. Both bodies moved there after the purchase of furniture, carpet, marble and carpenter work for a total of \$436. The two bodies divided this expense and annual rent was \$225.

On March 3rd, 1877, sixteen members of No. 6 petitioned for demits. A month later, they applied to the parent body for a recommendation to organize a new Masonic lodge here. The

recommendation was given, and arrangements made to allow them to use the same lodge hall. A Charter was granted on June 5th, 1877, designating them as DeMolay Lodge No. 383.

Marion Lodge Number 6 had grown despite the national financial panic of the early 1870's. There were seventy members in 1870, increasing to ninety-nine in 1876 which held close to that figure until 1880, when the word "apathy" appeared in the minutes of the lodge. In 1887, the new DeMolay lodge had accumulated fifty-eight members — five more than were enrolled in No. 6.

Then, on September 3rd, 1893, Marion Lodge No. 6 voted unanimously to consolidate with DeMolay Lodge No. 383, preserving its own name and number. The reunited lodge membership numbered one hundred and thirty-three, of which No. 6 contributed forty-one.

The credit for restoring No. 6 to a healthy condition belongs to Edwin Alderman, who was Master of DeMolay Lodge and later became Imperial Potentate of the Shrine, and Rev. John Wesley Geiger, his friend and pastor, and an active worker in Grand Lodge circles. One result of the union was the abandonment of the moon as our Masonic timepiece. The present meeting date, the third Tuesday of the month, was established with the adoption of the by-laws of DeMolay lodge. Marion's streets in that year were lighted for the first time by rather dim and uncertain incandescent electric bulbs. The two bodies joined in a public installation of officers in the year 1885 which seems to be the first instance of the admission of the public to such affairs in our recorded history. Our membership fees in this year were advanced from \$20 to \$25.

The eighth lodge hall occupied by Marion Lodge was located on the upper floor of the "Owen Block", becoming co-tenants with the Knights of Pythias in April of 1887.

The ninth move made by Marion Lodge reunited it with the other Masonic bodies in the Mentzer building. Patmos Commandery, as lessee, fixed the rent at \$30, the same amount they had been paying.

In the months immediately preceding February 6th, 1894, the reunited lodge was under the leadership of Masons who were capable and aggressive. The brethren were undaunted by the dark clouds of a business depression which overhung the land. Plans for the erection of a Masonic temple were progressing satisfactorily. Some of the patriarchs who had guided Marion Masonry through decades of storm and sunshine took up this project with renewed zeal. A permanent home was in sight, after years of wandering.

The "Festival" held on Tuesday, February 6th, 1894, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Marion Lodge No. 6 remains outstanding in the history of the lodge.

There were two hundred and forty-two members and guests present.

The tiled lodge was opened in form on the third degree in Mentzer's hall, called to refreshment, and properly closed at the conclusion of the festivities, which lasted well into the following morning. The hall was decorated with appropriate emblems. A large, black banner was displayed, upon which were gold letters, "MARION LODGE NO. 6, A. F. & A. M. 1844-1894".

At ten o'clock a banquet was served at the Daniels hotel followed by an hour of dancing at Mentzer's hall. The bills presented at the following regular meeting were for 242 dinners, bouquets, music and incidentals for a total of \$388.

The first serious proposal for the construction of our present Masonic temple was made on February 9th, 1893. Patmos Commandery issued a call for a Masonic mass meeting to be held on March 7th. A few days later, the group announced that

its preliminary canvass had resulted in the sale of over nine hundred shares of stock at \$10 a share. The campaign continued, and on March 24th, articles of incorporation were filed by the Marion Masonic Temple Association. The proposed capital stock was placed at \$25,000.

The building site was chosen, and the property purchased on March 1st, 1894. On June 13th, architects were engaged to draw up plans for a two-story building, with two large rooms suitable for stores on the ground floor.

The work of excavating the basement began on September 17th, 1894. By the middle of December, the basement, including floor and joists, was made ready at a cost of slightly under \$1,300.

On March 16th, 1895, contractors were asked to present their bids. The contract was let on May 15th for a building 48 x 110

feet in dimensions, of brick and stone construction. A. H. Connor & Co., of Cedar Rapids, proved to be the successful bidder at \$7,000.

On June 27th, 1895, George W. Ball, Grand Master of Masons in Iowa, with nearly all of his associate officers, visited Marion for the purpose of laying the cornerstone. In the large crowd which had assembled were representatives of Masonic lodges from more than a dozen neighboring towns.

The Grand Lodge being opened, a procession was formed, escorted by Patmos Commandery No. 27, and led by a brass band. Upon reaching the temple site, the cornerstone was formally laid according to the ceremonies of the fraternity. A program of addresses followed, including those by Grand Master Ball, Grand Secretary T. S. Parvin, Grand Chaplain G. C. Edmunsen, and General George Jones, of Dubuque.

This building was accepted on November 2, 1895 and the contractor received his final payment, with the help of a bank

loan of \$2,500. In February, 1896, a committee representing all of Marion's Masonic bodies agreed that No. 6 should lease the second floor of the new building. The temple association had set the yearly rental figure at \$300. The lease was signed on March 17th, but the building was not ready for occupancy until May 1, 1895.

An elaborately planned reception was held at the new temple on May 2nd, with nearly five hundred invited guests.

As of today, Marion Lodge Number 6 has 119 members and 1 outstanding petition.

Well, you've heard of our beginnings, how we've celebrated some of our significant year milestones and that brings us to today. The rededication of Marion Lodge Number 6 and our 175th year of Masonry in Iowa. Interestingly, our lodge in the past year has undergone significant physical change as some of

you may have noticed when you entered our building this evening.

How did that happen? Well, after most of our stated and some of our called meetings, several brothers have found their way to the Middle Chamber. What, we went to the Middle chamber?

Remember that it was in the Middle Chamber that the Masons who built King Solomon's Temple received their wages. Some of you may have unknowingly visited our Middle Chamber for it was once also known as Bill's Tap or Ramsey's Wine Bistro and now Uptown Snug designed for guests to converse, relax, and enjoy the beautiful restoration of the historical Memorial Hall building. They have a long table in the back that seats 12 to 14 which is conducive to all manner of stories and conversation.

It has been in the Middle Chamber, wherever located, that many thoughts were and still are bandied about from which

many great ideas have come. It was in our first Middle Chamber that early discussions about how we could help disadvantaged children began which eventually became known as Clothe-A-Child. The discussions sometimes meander but beneath it all is, “How do we attract or interest new members?” “What do they want to see?” “If they were to join, what would they want to get from Freemasonry?” “What do they need to have to become interested in becoming a Mason?” And it was on that, that we began the planning for the refurbishment of our Lodge. We agreed that we need this building to be more inviting - something along the lines of a gentlemen’s club - warm and welcoming.

Before continuing, I want to recognize two of our Past Masters, Nathan Caraway and Kyle Martin. These two brothers were the impetus that began the movement of our lodge into a new era. Many thanks to you both for setting the stage for a successful plan forward.

After much planning, estimating and fundamentally creating a business case that we could all support, the brothers of Marion Number 6 accepted and approved the plan and efforts began in earnest to refurbish the lodge.

January 2018 was the beginning of the removal of the drywall and suspended ceilings in the 3 rooms you first encounter after climbing the stairs to enter the building. I wonder how many of you Masons noticed how many steps there are in the stairway. I don't remember the first flight but the second flight has 15 steps consisting of 3, 5, and 7 steps. Cool, Huh? And where do those 15 steps lead? You're right --- to the Middle Chamber, but only when exiting the building, of course.

The dust level in the building was unbelievable because after the studs were removed to expose the brick walls, ancient radiators that weighed hundreds of pounds were removed and old wiring was removed, the real fun began when refinishing the old, stamped tin ceilings. Fortunately, before doing so,

Nathan was careful to research the original colors of each ceiling and then the sand blasting began -- dust everywhere! New heating and air conditioning duct work followed by new electrical service and new walls, new paint, and new auxiliary heating. The ceilings have been restored to their original colors and new carpet installed.

Then, the erection of a stupendous work of art and allegory. If you haven't read the story of the magnificent fireplace, please do so before you leave tonight. I believe that you will be amazed at the thought that has been put into its creation.

Additionally, in anticipation of accumulating adequate funds, we have already laid footings for an elevator shaft and have provisioned for the structure. We have no schedule for the elevator other than we want to install one but that will have to wait.

This brings us not to the end but the beginning of the story of our next 175 years. Thank you to our Grand Lodge Officers for the beautiful rededication of our Lodge and to all of you who attended to take part in this momentous occasion.