

THEN and NOW

Touch the past ~ Embrace the Future

"The use of history is to give value to the present hour and its duty"

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Masonic Interpreters' Luncheon

Black Creek Pioneer Village
Saturday, 19 April 2008

R.W. Bro. Raymond S. J. Daniels
Deputy Grand Master
Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Canada
in the Province of Ontario



W. Bro. Arnold McCausland, Chairman, Black Creek Masonic Heritage

V.W. Bro. Michael S. Ikonomidis, Worshipful Master, The Heritage Lodge

M.W. Bro. Ronald E. Groshaw, Past Grand Master

Ms Olga Petrunovsky, Translator

Mr. Chris Bagley, Supervisor of interpreters, Black Creek Pioneer Village

Ladies and Brethren

Thank you M.W. Bro. Groshaw for the introduction

I consider it a very great privilege to be invited to address this annual Appreciation Luncheon for the Interpreters at the Masonic Lodge in Black Creek Pioneer Village. The immense contribution that you have made and continue to make through your volunteer services here at the Village is measureless. Your Grand Lodge is most grateful for your dedication. Some years ago, M.W. Bro. Richard Fletcher, the Executive Director of the Masonic Service Association of North America said, "Freemasonry does not need to be *defended*, but it must be *explained*." Your knowledge of the Craft and your skill and ability in explaining it have led countless thousands of visitors from the four quarters of the globe to a better understanding and greater appreciation of what Freemasonry is and who Freemasons are. I apologize in advance to the ladies and special guests present. My remarks this morning will be addressed for the most part to the Masonic Interpreters

Then and Now

here present. V.W. Bro. Ikonomidis, I thank you for courtesy extended by inviting mt wife Brenda to join me this morning. The presence of our ladies here proves that there can be innovation in Masonry. The only consolation I can offer is to remind you that lunch follows.



When we celebrated the Sesquicentennial in 2005 marking the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the institution of our Grand Lodge, the theme ‘THEN AND NOW’ was chosen. During the next few minutes, I want to explore that theme using the metaphorical symbolism of a window.

The etymology of the word ‘window’ is interesting and instructive. The word originally meant a ‘wind-door’ – an opening for ventilation. It is derived from two old Norse words: *vindr* – wind, and *auga* – eye; *Vindauga*, thus combining the two values of *air* and *vision*. It is this sense that I would draw an analogy with the purpose of the Historic Lodge here at Black Creek and your function as Interpreters.

There is an old Rabbinical tradition that the windows in the Temple of Solomon were constructed with narrow openings on the inside and wider openings on the outside in order to let the light generated from inside the Temple be spread to the world at large outside. The Masonic Lodge in the Village, opens a small window on Freemasonry and sheds forth light to the world community that climbs the stairway at the rear of the Tinsmith Shop.

“What’s past is prologue.”

William Shakespeare – The Tempest

Friedrich Nietzsche, in an essay entitled, ‘The Use and Abuse of History’ wrote: “*The knowledge of the past is desired only for the service of the future and the present.*” For this reason, the first window that I ask you to look through is the ‘Window on the Past.’ It is rather like driving down the highway of life and checking in the mirror what is behind you through the

rear window. Alfred Kazin wrote: *“To have a sense of history one must consider oneself a piece of history.”* Walking through the Village our rich past comes alive.

Then and Now.

The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.

Willa Cather (1879-1947)

One of the single constants in the history of Ontario has been Freemasonry. Through its Landmarks, Masonry teaches permanent and unchanging values – timeless yet timely principles by which to live. This year the Grand Master is attending anniversary celebrations in lodges across the province where Masonry has been an integral part of the life and times in communities both urban and rural for 150 years. This too is living history as the ancient customs, usages, rites and ceremonies unique to Freemasonry have been performed by successive generations.

The ultimate meaning of history – as of life – we can find only within ourselves.

Henry Kissinger – The Meaning of History, 1950

1867 was a crucial year in Canadian history. On July 1 the Dominion of Canada came into existence, and Canada West became the Province of Ontario. It took all the genius and gin that Sir John A. could muster to achieve the union of the four Provinces (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia). Our American neighbours are justifiably proud that the first President of the Republic, George Washington was a Freemason. We can be equally proud that Bro. Sir John A. Macdonald was the first Prime Minister of the Dominion. He was initiated in 1844 in Ancient St. John's

Lodge, Kingston. He attended the 13th Annual Communication held in London during July 1868, when he was accorded the honorary rank of Past Grand Senior Warden, and R.W. Bro. Sir John A. Macdonald was commissioned as the Grand Representative of the United Grand Lodge of England.

In 1867 M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson was serving his second term as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada. (The qualifying phrase '*in the Province of Ontario*' would not be appended to our style and title until 1887.) There were approximately 7,000 Masons in Ontario and 184 lodges. The census of 1860-1861 recorded the population of Upper Canada as 1,396,091.

In the reports of Masonic activities published in the press of the day, we read about public processions in full regalia, the laying of cornerstones with full consecration ceremonies, public lectures, and festivals. There was an openness that is not equalled in our own day of freedom of access legislation. We wonder why? What drove us behind closed doors and shuttered windows?

Nor should we ignore in this backward glance the existence and contribution of the concordant Masonic bodies and orders in the Province. This past year the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario celebrated its sesquicentennial. Our first Grand Master, William Mercer Wilson also served as the first Grand First Principal in 1857. The Supreme Council for the Dominion of Canada of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry was established October 16th 1874 at a convention in Ottawa.

Let us now look through the front window to check the road ahead. Today, the population of Ontario numbers 12,028,895. Now there are

approximately 50,000 Masons active in 585 lodges. The last Prime Minister of Canada to be a Freemason was Bro. John George Diefenbaker (1957-1963), and the last Premier of Ontario to be a Brother was Frank Miller (1985).

At the Conference of Grand Lodges of Canada held last month in Winnipeg which I was privileged to attend with the Grand Master, one of the presenters suggested that our foremost and urgent duty as Masonic leaders was *'to get our own house in order first – to get Freemasons understanding Freemasonry.'* He challenged us to devise a short, one-line definition of Freemasonry to encapsulate the essence of its meaning; not parroting the ritual phrase beginning, *"a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory"* but a personal and insightful statement of what Freemasonry really means. As examples, he cited some of the slogans that immediately identify some of the highly successful companies: KFC – finger licking good; Coca Cola – the pause that refreshes; American Express – don't leave home without it; Stelco – our product is steel, our strength is people.. What might we use for Freemasonry? *Invest your time in a Building Society.*

In the Introduction to his book that I will recommend to you later, Bro. Mark Stavish writes: *"Building is what masonry is all about: building a better person, a better community, a better society, a better world – all in that order."* Well said.

Polls taken indicate that at one time our well-known logo, the Square and Compasses, was instantly recognized by 85% of the general

population, but now only 3% know what it stands for. The window looking into Freemasonry would seem to be like looking through a glass darkly.

Our Grand Lodge, through its several outreach programs – especially ‘Friend to Friend’ – is willing and eager to tell people what Freemasonry is. It might be more productive to show who Freemasons are, and demonstrate what Freemasons do. *Precepts may lead, but examples draw.*

As many of you are aware, yesterday Brenda and I drove back from Atlantic City where we had been among the guests of M.W. Bro. John S. Ryan, Grand Master, when I represented our Grand Lodge at the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey. On our arrival we were greeted in the hotel lobby by several New Jersey Masons wearing shirts with this slogan:

FREEMASONRY

LOVE IT

TALK IT

LIVE IT

I cannot think of a better slogan, and I just might seek permission to copy it. It seems an apt description of the Masonic Interpreters here at the Village.

In this assembly we have some of the most knowledgeable and experienced members of the Craft in all of Ontario. How would you describe Freemasonry in ten words or less? Perhaps you might take that as an assignment as preparation for your first tour of duty when the Village reopens for the season next month.

Because most of us in this room are veteran Freemasons of long standing, it behoves us to keep abreast of the evolution of Freemasonry as we move into the 21st century. *'Masonry is a progressive science'* and we as veteran members of long standing should take regular refresher courses. We must be conscious that the young Masons who are joining the fraternity in increasing numbers are a new breed – keen, intelligent, articulate, well-educated, and well-read. They are more interested in exploring the profound spiritual and esoteric mysteries that our Masonic heritage embodies. I would expect the questions posed to you by the visitors here also reflect this shift in focus, probably attributed to the popularization of these themes in novels, such as Dan Brown's 'DaVinci Code' and movies such as 'National Treasure.' We should be grateful that Freemasonry has been brought to the attention of the general public by these outside agents, but we must be prepared to redress the misinformation and inaccurate facts presented, separating documented fact from romantic fiction.

Old teachers can never resist giving reading assignments! I would recommend two recent books that I have found most instructive.

- The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts & Fictions, by Margaret C. Jacob, professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles. Some of you may have attended a lecture given by Dr. Jacob here in Toronto a year ago. The chapter on *'Women in the Lodges'* gives a comprehensive resource for questions of gender in Freemasonry. It might provide some answers to the inevitable question, "Why can't women join?"
- Freemasonry: Rituals, Symbols and History of the Secret Society, by Mark Stavish, an active Freemason in the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, (Scottish Rite, Knights Templar, Order of the Eastern

Star) and a published authority on the traditions of Western esotericism.

It was John Buchan, the Governor General, in a speech to the people of Canada on the occasion of the Coronation of King George VI, that uttered this admonition: "*We can only pay our debt to the past by putting the future in debt to ourselves.*" The Grand Master's stated theme is "Masonry, making a difference."

Finally, (and I know that is the word you have been waiting for) let me propose a manifesto that could inspire our great work of opening the windows of Freemasonry to the world.

There is no better statement of the Credo of Masonry than that given by M.W. Bro. Lou Copeland, Grand Master 1955-1956, in his Address to Grand Lodge delivered at the Annual Communication in 1987.

I believe in people and I especially believe in Masons.

I have found in Freemasonry
a cause to be championed,
a life to be lived,
a truth to be shared,
and a future bright with promise.

I believe in Masonry because I believe in its influence for good and to that influence I would give myself and challenge each of you to join with me in making our Freemasonry come alive during our allotted time.

Then and Now

The future is in our hands - yours and mine.

Let us be sure that those who follow us tomorrow can be forever proud of our achievements in Freemasonry today.