

1

The occasion of this gathering tonight is not only a matter of great pride to the members of Isle of Patmos lodge, but also of special interest to Masons everywhere. One hundred eleven years viewed nearly as a matter of time does not occasion much concern but viewed as a fact in the life of a state, or in what is of greater interest to us tonight, the life of an organization, is indeed a matter of much interest. The fact that this lodge is so ancient presents some interesting ideas for our consideration.

First among these is the fact that more than a century 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 school house found their way the Masonic Lodge soon followed and just as religion played a large part in creating the fine physical fibre 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 at so early a period. Consider first of all that the first actual settlement was made by the French at Alburg in 1782 only <sup>30</sup>nine years before the Isle of Patmos lodge was given its charter. To pioneer the wilderness and make it fit for the habitations of men is not an easy task and it does not require much effort for the imagination to produce a fairly accurate picture of the stupendous task that lay before those men and women who domiciled themselves in the heart of our Island forests. Today we feel that good roads are vitally essential in our state. To the man of a century ago the problem of roads must have been a perplexing one and yet it proved no barrier to the support that the organizations of the community sought and received 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 frequently find the names of at least thirty men in attendance. There were no railroads, automobiles, airplanes, radios or telephones, yet in spite of these primitive conditions that called for extreme sacrifices Masonry drove 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.

I mention with regret the fact that the lodge records, the real source from which we might expect to gather our information are exceedingly meager in details. If Brother Alson Landon who signed his name to the records as secretary on May 16, 1825, had only known that his records would have been read more than a century later he surely would have been moved to include incidents of community and masonic interest which would have proved of historic value today. Added to this was the still more unfortunate fact that the secretary's records for the first four years from 1821 to 1825 are missing. This is without <sup>doubt</sup> a great loss. For our very limited information regarding the beginning of the lodge we are indebted to the Grand Lodge records and the charter. The Grand Lodge records read under date of Tuesday Oct ~~7~~ 10, 1821, as follows, - "The same committee made report on the petition of sundry brethren in South Hero and Grand Isle that in their opinion the <sup>Prayer</sup> thereof ought to be granted which report was read and ~~excepted~~ <sup>accepted</sup> and a charter 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,

