

THE EIGHTH LANDMARK
(A Discussion)
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In the ANCIENT LANDMARKS or THE UNWRITTEN LAW OF FREEMASONRY which have been adopted by the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia the Eighth one is of interest to us for the purpose of this paper. The Eighth Landmark reads:

THE PREROGATIVE OF THE GRAND MASTER TO MAKE MASONS AT SIGHT.

The practice of "Making a Mason at Sight" is unknown to most Canadians, yet it may be traced back over many years. Only on three occasions has this taken place in Canada. I originally thought that the Master might take the proposed recipient off to one side, or some private place, obligate him in one or more degrees and simply declare him to be a Mason.

Making a Mason at sight is quite a complicated ceremony and the term used in describing it is a misnomer. It is not simply the Grand Master touching someone on the shoulder and declaring him to be a Mason. The candidate must possess all the qualifications that any other candidate possesses as required by the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of the Jurisdiction: residential, physical, intellectual, free-born, of lawful age and well recommended.

The term "Making a Mason at Sight" was coined by Lawrence Dermott, Grand Secretary of the Atholl Grand Lodge of England. In 1778, he set out the regulations then in use in his Grand Lodge. Dr. James Anderson, the author of the first constitution in 1723, called it "Making a Mason in an Occasional Lodge."

Our ancient brethren, the operative masons, adopted certain customs which eventually were woven into the daily fabric of their lives and became rules governing their actions with the force of law. Some of these time-honoured customs became landmarks and were carried over into the speculative Craft when the great transformation took place between 1650 and 1717. They were called 'Ancient' because beyond the shadow of a doubt they dated back to the medieval practices of the stone-masons of the Middle Ages. They became 'landmarks' when they became rules of conduct for the government of the lodge --- rules that in many instances preceded any man-made regulations.

WHAT IS A LANDMARK? Mr. Webster's Dictionary says "some distinguishing feature that marks a boundary or site"; but, Masonically the term requires a stricter definition. The best writers on the subject are unanimous on two essential points:

(1) A Landmark must have existed 'from the time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary'.

(2) A Landmark is an element in the form or essence of the Society of such importance that Freemasonry would no longer be Freemasonry if it were removed.

If these two qualifications are used STRICTLY to test whether certain practices, systems, principles or regulations can be admitted as landmarks it will be found that there are in fact very few items that will pass this rigid test. Landmarks are not the written law of Masonry, nor are they the

common law or traditional law that governs the Craft. They are a peculiar body of tradition and customs written and unwritten that govern the Craft and without which, as preciously mentioned, our institution would not be Freemasonry.

The oldest existing Masonic manuscript, the Regius Poem (circa 1390), talks of certain prescribed rules for Masons to follow. Succeeding manuscripts, about 130 in number dating from 1390 to 1825, called the Ancient Charges or Gothic Constitutions, set forth other traditional practices, some of which are recognized today as Landmarks. But no one attempted to codify them in early years of organized Masonry. Indeed many English Masons are unaware that many Grand Lodges overseas have adopted specific codes of Landmarks usually printed as preambles to their Constitutions.

Probably the most influential list was drawn up by Dr. Albert Mackey, a great American Masonic writer (1807 - 1881). In 1858, Dr. Mackey was asked to enumerate the Landmarks of Masonry. Although he based his selection on the two essential points mentioned earlier, quoting them almost word for word, his list ran to twenty-five items, most of which could never have passed as Landmarks if he had applied his own test.

In his Encyclopedia published in 1874, Mackey boldly and erroneously claimed that no writer prior to his 1858 publication had ever published a list of Landmarks. He also claimed that his list was 'ancient, universal and immutable' and in his Landmark 25 stated "THE LAST AND CROWNING LANDMARK OF ALL IS THAT THESE LANDMARKS CAN NEVER BE CHANGED", which would seem to give Brother Mackey the last word on the subject!

Then, however, 'all hell broke loose!' Several American Grand Lodges immediately adopted them and have never rescinded their action. Others tentatively approved them, without official adoption and have followed them ever since. Other Masonic scholars studied, dissected and discussed Mackey's list and no one agreed; in fact, most such scholars fully disagreed, even while accepting that some of the 25 were essential elements of Masonry under anyone's interpretation. For example, even though Mackey's Landmark 21 stated that "A "BOOK OF THE LAW" SHALL CONSTITUTE AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE FURNITURE OF EVERY LODGE" and that it must lie OPEN on the Altar of every legally opened Lodge, this practice did not even begin until about 1760, some forty years or more after the formation of the first Grand Lodge and after William Preston by motion induced the Premier Grand Lodge of England to name the Bible as one of the Great Lights. Bro. Roscoe Pound, another American Masonic scholar, reduced Mackey's list to seven, while Bro. Harry Carr, the great English Masonic authority, compiled a list of five acceptable landmarks that would conform to the two-point test, which are:---

1. That a Mason professes a belief in God (the Supreme Being), the G.A.O.T.U.
2. That the V.S.L. is an essential and indispensable part of the Lodge, to be open in full view when the brethren are at labour.
3. That a Mason must be male, free-born and of mature age.
4. That a Mason, by his tenure, owes allegiance to the Sovereign and to the Craft.
5. That a Mason believes in the immortality of the soul.

The first four items are derived directly from the Old Charges of 1390, while the last item in the list, 'immortality', is implicit in the religious beliefs of that period. Carr's list is in close accord with (though not identical to) the code adopted by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

Our Masonic rituals are filled with some of the most sublime and poetic phrases ever written in the English language but nowhere in the ritual of the three degrees of Freemasonry is the matter of "Making a Mason at Sight" ever referred to. When Mackey included this proposal he had reason to do so, even if his logic was faulty: the first Book of Constitutions of The Antients Grand Lodge of England, published in 1777, stated that the Right Worshipful Grand Master had the power to make a Mason at sight; in January 1856, the Minnesota Constitution, in its Landmark No. 10, not only gave the Grand Master such authority but also authorized him to 'grant a dispensation to a lodge for the same purpose' which, in the opinion of many Masonic Scholars, carried it much too far. Mackey included the prerogative but did not include the specific power in the Grand Master to grant a Dispensation for this purpose, although in Landmark No. 6 he did give the Grand Master power 'to grant Dispensations for Conferring Degrees at Irregular Times', which might be so interpreted. Mackey simply repeated what many preceding Masons had talked about for years and which Minnesota had finally codified. As a matter of interest, although Minnesota was the very first instance of a Grand Lodge, or anyone else for that matter, specifically stating that the Grand Master had such authority, no Grand Master in Minnesota has ever exercised his inherent right to "Make a Mason at Sight."

In every case recorded in recent years, the candidate because of his professional duties or manner of living, was unable to become a Mason in the usual pattern. Usually he expressed a desire to join the Order, or at least expressed an interest in it.

The ceremony in all essentials must be performed by the Grand Master --- none other may preside. It cannot be performed in private but in open Lodge with at least the perfect number in attendance. No previous notice need be given for such a meeting. Each degree is conducted separately, with Lodge opened in due form for each degree. Obligations are administered in the usual way and all essential lectures given in full. No examinations, of course, can be taken between degrees.

When a person has been made a Mason in such a fashion, he is considered to be a "Mason at Large". He is not a member of any particular Lodge. He may then petition for affiliation with the Lodge of his choice or be elected an honorary member. It is usual for all this to be arranged in advance but cases have been reported when all did not go as planned.

ENGLAND

Regardless of the origin of the practice, in 1731, Lord Lovell, the Grand Master, formed an occasional lodge at Houghton Hall, Sir Robert Walpole's house in Norfolk, and there made the Duke of Lorraine, afterwards Emperor of Germany, and the Duke of Newcastle, Master Masons. These seem to be the first recorded cases.

Six years later, in 1737, Dr. John Desaguliers, Past Grand Master, initiated, passed and raised Frederick, Prince of Wales, in an Occasional Lodge. As Desaguliers was not Grand Master, there is some evidence that it was contrary to custom. No doubt he acted under dispensation from the Grand Master who at that time was the Earl of Darnley.

In 1766, Lord Blaney, Grand Master, convened an Occasional Lodge and initiated, passed and raised the Duke of Gloucester.

The following year, John Salter, the Deputy Grand Master, who was acting Grand Master, conferred the three degrees on the Duke of Cumberland.

On the death of the third Duke of Atholl, Grand Master of the Ancient or Atholl Grand Lodge of England in December 1773, the election of Grand Lodge officers was postponed until March 1775. On the latter date the Grand Secretary, William Dickey, reported the following transactions of the Grand Master's Lodge:---

"February 25, 1775 --- admitted His Grace, the (fourth) Duke of Atholl, into the first, second, and third degree; and after proper instruction had been given (it was) proposed that (he) should be immediately installed Master of Grand Master's Lodge which was accordingly done."

"Upon the secretary reading the above transactions, His Grace, the Duke of Atholl, was unanimously elected Grand Master, and on the 25th of the same month was duly installed."

This case did not follow the usual pattern as there was no Grand Master although there must have been an acting one in the interim.

It is also interesting to note that it was the custom in the Atholl, or Ancient Grand Lodge and in Provincial Grand Lodges warranted by it (for example, Ontario in 1792) to have a lodge called Grand Master's Lodge over which the Grand Master presided. (Ontario's oldest Lodge is Niagra No. 2. Number 1, long extinct was Grand Master's Lodge).

Since the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813 no Grand Master has used his prerogative to make a Mason at sight and it is doubtful if such an action would meet with the approval of the English Brethren of today. It is well to note that those who were made Masons in this peculiar fashion were of the Nobility and in many cases they were given special treatment in order that they might become head of the Craft.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

There are numerous examples in the United States of "Making a Mason at Sight". Thirteen of the fifty States acknowledge the right of the Grand Master to take the action although not all of the States have made use of it.

The last instance in New York State was in 1867 when Grand Master Robert D. Holmes reported to Grand Lodge that he had made Hon. James T. Brady a Mason at sight on account of his personal merit. Previous cases in this state are not at hand.

Pennsylvania seems to be the State with the most cases. In 1887, Joseph Eichbaun, Grand Master, initiated, passed and raised a candidate although the name is not recorded among the sources studied.

Governor Asa S. Bushnell of Ohio was made a Mason at sight in 1892 by Grand Master Levi C. Goodale.

On March 30, 1898, John Wanamaker, a successful merchant and philanthropist of Philadelphia, was made a Mason at sight by Grand Master Wagner. He was followed by two judges,

Pennypacker and Gordon of that state.

The Making of Admiral Schley by Grand Master Small of the District of Columbia in 1899 caused widespread discussion. It was reported that all three degrees were conferred in full form for the Admiral. Several years later, Governor Foster M. Voorhees, New Jersey was made a Mason in the Opera House at Elizabeth, N. J.

Perhaps the best known and most widely publicised case was that of President-elect William Howard Taft. The ceremony took place on February 18, 1909, at the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Cincinnati, Ohio. Before being nominated for the Presidency, Taft expressed the desire to become a Mason. His father and brother had been members for some time. The necessity of him being continually on the move and the many calls upon his time made it difficult for him to devote much time to the organization and prevented him gratifying his wish. William B. Melish and Levi C. Goodale, Past Grand Masters of Ohio, and Jacob H. Brownwell, Grand Secretary, petitioned Charles S. Hoskinson, Grand Master to perform the ceremony of making Taft a Mason at sight.

The Grand Masters of twenty States were in attendance as well as the candidate's brother.

General Douglas MacArthur, famous hero of World War II, was made a Mason at sight by Samuel Hawthorne, Grand Master of the Philippines, on January 17, 1936. He immediately applied for affiliation with Manila Lodge, No. 1. Of his own volition he advanced through the Scottish Rite becoming an Honourary 33 degree Mason in 1947.

On December 26, 1946, a most unusual instance occurred when Grand Master Frank J. Myers of Wyoming, made a Mason at sight of his own son, Ralph E. Myers, when the latter was on his death bed at a hospital in Buffalo. The circumstances under which the Grand Master in one jurisdiction entered the territory of another and conferred the three degrees upon the candidate remains a mystery. This was the first occasion in the history of Wyoming that such a making had taken place.

In most, if not all, the cases here recorded, it would seem that the sentiments behind each case resembled those that actuate the granting of honorary degrees by universities.

More recently the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio MWBro H. Ray Evans convened the Grand Lodge of Ohio in a Cincinnati Hospital intensive care unit and conferred the Fellowcraft and Master Mason Degrees on Bro. John J. Robinson on Dec 3, 1992. Bro Robinson is a member of Nova Caesarea Harmony Lodge No. 2 and is the man that wrote the book "Born in the Blood". It was his greatest wish to me a Master Mason before he died. He had become very ill and the Grand Master wanted him to have his wish since he had done so much for the Craft with his book. Bro Robinson is well on the road to recovery at this writing.

CANADA

According to RWBro Wallace McLeod of Toronto, Canada has made Masons at Sight on three occasions --- one each in Ontario, Alberta and Nova Scotia. Lets take a look at each case.

Dr. Henry J. Cody was born a native of Ontario and although educated as an Anglican curate he became attached to the University of Toronto, becoming its President in 1932, continuing in office to 1947. He served a term as Minister of Education for the province of Ontario in 1918-1919; twice he refused a bishopric, preferring to stay with the University and received more than a score of

honourary degrees in Canada and the United States.

On October 13, 1937, after due notice to the brethren that a matter of unusual interest would occur in University Lodge No. 496 in Toronto on that night, Grand Master William James Dunlop, who himself was on the staff of the University, and after the Lodge was duly opened, convened an 'Occasional Lodge' and conferred the three degrees 'at sight' on Brother Cody.

Thereafter a strange development occurred. It is well known that the use of this power by a Grand Master provokes antagonism in some quarters of the Craft. When a motion was made the following month that Dr. Cody be elected an honorary member of University Lodge No. 496, which required a unanimous ballot, someone voted in opposition. A high-ranking Mason present said: 'I did not think, as I watched the ceremony, that it was in the best interests of Freemasonry or of Dr. Cody himself.' A Past Grand Master, RWBro John A. Rowland, said 'I'd rather not discuss the action of the Grand Master, but it is something which I decidedly did not ever do'.

After University Lodge No. 496 had refused to elect Bro. Cody as an honorary member, Prince of Wales Lodge No. 630, in Toronto, rushed into the breach and did so. Later, in the following June, University Lodge had a change of heart and repaired its bridges by electing him also to honorary membership and peace was restored.

The Province of Alberta had an outstanding citizen in the person of Walter Barfoot who, after a distinguished military career in World War I, became an Episcopalian rector, a college president and, after serving as Archbishop, became Primate of the Anglican Church in all of Canada.

In 1946, the Grand Master of Alberta was Bro. George Crane-Williams, who had been an Anglican Missionary in China, and later a world-wide executive for Austin Motors, and had served as Grand Secretary of the District Grand Lodge of Japan. A third person involved was RT Rev A. H. Sovereign, Bishop of Athabasca. On June 11, 1946, an Occasional Lodge was opened in Edmonton and Bishop Barfoot was given the Three Degrees 'at Sight'. Six Grand Masters assisted. The next morning a Church service was held in Edmonton's All Saints Cathedral with a sermon by Bishop Sovereign. Thereafter, the Annual Grand Lodge was opened and Grand Master Crane-Williams reported on the ceremony of the evening before, which met with universal approval.

On July 14, 1966, MWBro Ronald S. Longley, Grand Master of Masons in Nova Scotia convened an "Occasional Lodge" in the Commonwealth Room of the Nova Scotian Hotel, Halifax, N.S. at 2:30 pm.

There was present a large gathering of members of the Craft in Nova Scotia, together with a number of distinguished visitors from across Canada, and from the New England States, the guests of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, meeting in its Centennial session on the following day.

The candidate on this occasion was His Honour Henry Poole MacKeen, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, a man of many distinctions civil and military, and the Grand Master proposed that the three senior Lodges of the jurisdiction to confer the three degrees.

The First Degree was conferred by Virgin Lodge No. 3, Fellow Craft Degree by Saint John's Lodge No. 2 and the Third Degree by Saint Andrew's Lodge No. 1. St. Andrew's Lodge is the oldest Lodge in the British Commonwealth Overseas and has had among its membership twelve Past Grand Masters.

The Drama portion was put on with the main characters and about thirty others taking part of nobles, guards, craftsmen and ruffians, and the necessary make-up, properties and directors; the "work" being done according to the authorized work of the jurisdiction, under the direction of Bro

A. D. Grayston, with most dramatic effect.

On retirement of the cast the Grand Master thanked those who had taken part in the conferring of the three degrees, and after a few words from the newly raised Brother, the Occasional Lodge was closed in due and ample form. It was truly a memorable night.

Brother R. J. Meekren says: "If 'to Make Masons at Sight' be understood as meaning that a Grand Master may take a candidate aside privately and make him a Mason, I should unhesitatingly say it was against the general trend of opinion and tradition among Masons in all countries and all times so far as we have record; although power to do so has been claimed, and probably at times exercised by holders of high degrees.

If, however, the phrase be taken in the sense that a Grand Master may summon a sufficient number of Masons, and with them form a Lodge, and in the Lodge initiate, a candidate without the regular formalities of investigation, it is within his right, as in so doing he only exercise in one case the general dispensatory powers that belong only in his office, where not specifically limited by constitution or statute.

The Grand Master is the sole inheritor of the powers once common to all Master Masons, and in an institution founded on antiquity, such a traditional right ought to be maintained, and exercised in special cases where the character and position of the candidate, and the general circumstances, combine to make it appropriate and beneficial to the Craft."

Should the practice be allowed to continue? First, we must recognize that Grand Lodges are wholly independent and self-governing bodies and may legislate as they see fit, with the sole restriction that they must 'preserve the Old Landmarks'. But since each Grand Lodge may determine for itself what those Landmarks are, this really amounts to no restriction at all. Thus a Grand Lodge may approve the practice of making masons at sight or may forbid it by appropriate legislation as some have already done. Correspondingly, Grand Lodges may withdraw recognition of others for what they consider violations, as was done when the Grand Orient of France removed the Bible from its Altars in 1877.

Has Masonry been harmed in any way by the use of the prerogative? While there have been temporary disagreements over the propriety of its use, in the end all worked out well. Not only has the fabric or body of Masonry gone unharmed but in many ways the good of Masonry has been enhanced, especially by the calibre of some of the men who have been so admitted. If nothing else it has emphasized the unique character of the institution. We may learn that the power, if used sparingly, can be beneficial, not only to the individual, but to the whole body of Masonry. Therefore we perhaps should not condemn its use, for fear to see the prerogative exercised. If the virtue, 'Prudence', be maintained and if the ends of 'Justice' are met, Masonry will be the better for it.

The 'Cody' case raised such a furore that it is unlikely that Ontario will repeat the exercise within the foreseeable future -- certainly it has not done so in the almost 50 years which have elapsed since that event. Nevertheless, many Brethren consider that the prerogative should be maintained and continue to exist. However, as in all Masonic endeavour we must carefully follow the ancient warning "PROVIDED ALWAYS THAT THE OLD LANDMARKS BE CAREFULLY PRESERVD."

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