

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
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VISIT TO THE GRAND LODGE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

by

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1986 - 2

Brethren:

It is a great honour and privilege to have been commissioned as the Representative of the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, near the Grand Lodge of British Columbia in 1979.

It is of THE GRAND LODGE OF THE MOST ANCIENT AND HONORABLE SOCIETY OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS FOR THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PR()VIDENCE PLANTATIONS, that I wish to address you this evening.

The one-hundred and ninety-fifth Annual Communication held in the city of Cranston, in the State of Rhode Island on May 18th and 19th, 1986.

By invitation from the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Julio A. Paniccia, a memorable visitation as their guests was made to this Sister Jurisdiction. This was a beautiful and pleasurable visit. For their gracious hospitality and many courtesies extended to invited guests and our Ladies made us feel at home. We appreciated that very much. This was our third visit.

The first Colonist Founded and Settled in Rhode Island in 1636, when Roger Williams, Baptist Minister and a group of followers escaping oppression in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, came to settle in the new world. He named the Capital City in "Commemoration of God' s Providence", and constructed their first Meeting House, which later became the site of the First Baptist Church in America, built in 1775.

In Rhode Island as in other localities, we find traces of a pre-historic age of Freemasonry. The earliest date, when according to tradition the Masonic System, was known and practiced within the limits of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, goes far back of authentic records.

This supposition seems to rest for the most part, as far as any direct evidence is brought to bear upon it, on a statement made by Bro. J.L. Gould of Connecticut in a "Guide to the Chapter." Published by him in 1868. In this work the following paragraph appears

"The earliest account of the introduction of Masonry into the United States is the History of a Lodge organized in Rhode Island A.D. 1558, or Fifty-nine years before the revival in England in 1717, and seventy-five years before the establishment of the first Lodge in Massachusetts."

As confirmatory of such a statement, the Author of the "Guide" declares that the Rev. Edward Peterson in his history of Rhode Island, had affirmed that, - "In the Spring of 1658, Mordecal Campennell, Moses Peckeckol, Levi and others, - in all fifteen families, arrived at Newport Rhode Island from Holland. They brought with them the first two Degrees of Masonry, and worked them in the house of Mordecal Campennell and after in the Synagogue and continued to do so They and their successors to 1760."

In an attempt to confirm that Freemasonry was then and there organized,

Grand Master Gardiner

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of Massachusetts wrote to Bro. N.H. Gould on the subject, and the reply of that Brother appears in the Massachusetts Grand Lodge Proceeding for 1870. The letter contains the following statement. "In January of the year 1839 Hannah Hull, a distant relative of Bro.Gould's and a descendant of Governor Wanton who was Governor of the Colony from 1724 to 1740, died. When her estate was administered upon by Bro. Gould's father, among the effects in a garret under a leaky roof, was found a dilapidated, moth-eaten, mouse-eaten and colorless trunk, which was found to contain various papers and this document.

The year (the day and month were obliterated) 1686 or 8 (not certain which as the place was stained and broken, the three first figures were plain). We met at ye House of Mordecal Campbunall and after in the Synagog. We gave Moses the Degree of Maconrie. (This is the way it was spelled).

It seems quite likely that in a thriving commercial town such as Newport was in the latter part of the 17th and the early part of the 18th century's, there should have been members of the Craft dwelling within its borders and included among its visitors.

Henry Price, a young man, came to Boston in 1723, resided there for several years, then went back to London, where he was initiated a Mason. Probably in 1731, he was Commissioned Provincial Grand Master of New England - April 30th 1733 by Lord Montague, Grand Master of Masons in England Having such authority, he returned to Boston in 1733, and on July 30th of that year he called together, ten Brethren at "The Bunch of Grapes" Tavern in Boston and proceeded to Constitute a Provincial Grand Lodge. At this Meeting several Candidates were Initiated.

"The Holy Lodge of St. John" was constituted in Boston by Grand Master Henry Price on the 31st of August 1733. Freemasonry in Massachusetts has continued to make advancement and extend its benign influence.

The organic life of Freemasonry in Rhode Island, goes back to the warranting of St. John's Lodge, Newport, December 27th, 1749. This Lodge was authorized by St. John's Provincial Grand Lodge of Boston, Massachusetts. Thomas Oxnard, Grand Master. Caleb Phillips was the first Master of the Lodge thus authorized. Some unpleasantness having been caused by the Master withholding from the Lodge the dispensation thus granted. A second warrant was issued dated May 14th, 1753.

Under these warrants, the Newport brethren were only authorized to confer the first two degrees of Freemasonry. They did not recognize the limitation, however, and proceeded to confer the Masters degree as supplementing the degrees of Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft. On being called to account for thus extending the authority granted them, they made so good an explanation of the causes that had led them to transcend their powers, that the Grand Lodge confirmed them in the exercise of such powers by granting them a Charter to hold a Master's Lodge.

A little more than two years before the granting of the confirmatory charter to the brethren of Newport, a Masonic Lodge had been organized in Providence, also taking the name of St. John's. A warrant for this Lodge was issued by the same authority that created the body established at Newport.

These two Lodges, St. John's Newport and St. John's Providence agreed to

appoint Committees to consider a plan for the formation of a Grand Lodge for the State. This movement went forward with dispatch on Monday 27th of June 1791. The first Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Chris Champlin was chosen by the Lodge of Newport The Deputy Grand Master by the Lodge of Providence, Rt. Worshipful Brother Jabez Bowen. The other Officers were equally divided between the two Districts. The first Officers to continue in Office for two years. St. John's Lodge was numbered One Newport or "N", the other St. John's Lodge was numbered One Providence or "P" and remains so today.

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The Grand Lodge Annual Communication was held on May 19th, 1986 in the Scottish Rite Cathedral in the City of Cranston, Rhode Island and was convened by the Deputy Grand Master Rt. Wor. Brother Edward V. Hudson at 9.00 a.m.

The invocation was given by the Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodge was declared open, and the Most Worshipful Grand Master Julio A Paniccia was escorted into the Lodge Room by the Grand Marshall, given Grand Honours and escorted to the East, where he was welcomed by the Deputy Grand Master, presented the Gavel of Grand Lodge and proceeded with the business of the 195th Annual Communication.

First the reception of the 29 Distinguished Guests from other Jurisdictions. There were four from Canada. The Grand Masters from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and myself a P.D.D.G.M. from British Columbia. The Grand Marshall presented each guest to the Grand Master in the East. Afterward we were seated in the North Side.

The Grand Lodge of Rhode Island has 45 Constituent Lodges, total membership 11,500 in seven Masonic Districts. Each year the First District Deputy Grand Master in District No. 1 is elected Junior Grand Warden. After serving in most cases seven years as R.W.D.D.G.M. only one D.D.G.M is appointed by the incoming Grand Master and placed in the 7th District as each D.D.G.M. moves down one District. Except if there is a drop out by sickness or moving to another State. The Deputy G.M., Rt. W. Brother Edward V. Hudson was elected and Installed Most Worshipful Grand Master.

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Edward V Hudson served in the seven Districts from 1976 through to 1982, Deputy Grand Master in 1985.. and is now M.W. Grand Master in 1986, starting on his eleventh year. A truly dedicated Freemason.

We had a wonderful visit in Rhode Island, R.W Associate Grand Chaplain Edward F. Ellsworth and his wife Grace invited us to be their guests for a few days at their residence in Barrington R.I.

We ended our visit with a trip to Mimico Lodge No. 369, Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. Their Strawberry Festival Night, which was a great success, enjoyed by all. For the past 13 years St John's Lodge No. 1 Providence and Mimico Lodge No. 369 Toronto, Ontario, have exchanged visits bi-annually. It was a pleasure to meet Wor. Bro. Bernard Carr and members of his Lodge in Rhode Island and again in Toronto