

Marine Lodge Merger With Orleans Recalls History Of Cape's Oldest Unit

Marine Lodge, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, No. 96, instituted almost 110 years ago and the oldest chapter of the Order on Cape Cod with a one-time membership of some 300, merged with Fraternal Lodge 132 of Orleans on Wednesday of last week with ceremonies conducted by Harry C. Hawthorne, grand master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and his staff in the Orleans Odd Fellows Hall.

Only two Cape End members of the once flourishing lodge were present. They were Sivert J. Benson and William Pierce. The present membership is 26.

It is noted in the historical sketch by William W. Johnson, published in the program issued for the celebration of the dedication of the large building at the corner of Winslow and Bradford Streets, now empty and idle, that "on the evening of October 20, 1845, eleven brethren namely: Leander Crosby, Jona. Crosby, Josiah Sturgis, Josiah S. Fuller, Kilborn W. Freeman, William Smith, William A. Atkins, Warren Smith, Joseph P. Johnson, Eben S. Smith and Emmons Partridge, residents of Provincetown 'assembled in an Old House belonging to Bro. Crosby, for the purpose of forming themselves into a Lodge to be known and hailed as Marine Lodge No. 96, of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.'"

Early Courage

It was agreed by the brethren that each should buy as many shares at seven dollars each, these to become the property of the Lodge which would pay six per cent interest per annum. The money was used to buy "Village Hall" which is still standing on the west side of the present Marine Hall. Commenting on this action Mr. Johnson wrote in his 1895 sketch. "We today can but faintly realize the moral courage then required to take such a stand, for throughout the country there was much opposition to all secret organizations. In 1843 many of the leading papers of Massachusetts openly denounced the institution of Odd Fellowship as the work of Satan, destructive to the Christian religion and dangerous to the liberties of the people.

"The name selected for the Lodge," Mr. Johnson observes, "was most appropriate, for at that

time the chief, if not the only, industry of our town was of a maritime nature and the sea furnished employment indirectly, if not directly, for all its members."

The early days of the Lodge were exciting and eventful. Leander Crosby was the first Noble Grand and under his guidance weekly meetings were held with ever increasing membership and spirited discussions. The ill received weekly aid, burial expenses met, help was given to needy widows and orphans of deceased brethren. "In those early days," wrote Mr. Johnson, "questions frequently arose which admitted of much discussion, but the amicable settlement of all such matters served to unite the Brethren more closely in the bonds of 'Friendship, Love and Truth.' Although the discussions were sometimes very spirited, it was only a war of words, as the following record shows: 'Resolved, That as our Swords are a useless article to this Lodge, we proceed to sell them.' It was rumored at one time that the doing of the Lodge had become known to the outside world. A committee was appointed 'to ferret out and punish those found guilty of the crime of tatling'; but as there is no record that any culprit was punished, it is fair to presume that 'Tatling' immediately ceased, if it had ever existed."

The history of the Lodge, like that of the town, has been one of rising and falling prosperity. In 1846 sixty-eight were admitted to membership. But there were many years when not a single new member was enrolled. Over-generosity in giving aid frequently bared the coffers, but the Lodge continued. "She has but one offspring, but of that she is justly proud—Charity Rebekah Lodge No. 17, instituted May 9, 1872 with 38 charter members," Mr. Johnson wrote.

Old Village Hall

He continues, "For fifty years Marine Lodge occupied the building in which it was instituted, originally known as 'Village Hall,' which was built by a "share company" in 1832, and purchased by our Lodge in 1846. The upper part was refitted for the use of the Lodge, and at times has been rented by the Masonic Fraternity and Orders of Good Templars and

sons of Temperance. The lower hall was used for a short time for a private school, presided over by a Mrs. Stearns, who, it is said, was a firm believer in the old adage, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' Later this room was used for a hall for lectures and social gatherings. In 1886 it was rented by the 'Provincetown Advocate.' The Advocate was printed in this old building for many years and then the presses and equipment were moved to the rear of the Town Crier gift shop building. However, some years later they were again moved back to the "Village Hall."

June of '73, Mr. J. F. Small of Provincetown began the manufacture of the "Sans Pareil" shirt. "It is patented," we learned, "and possesses many points which will recommend it to those desiring a nice fitting garment." This factory, which was located in Marine Hall, (now the New Beacon offices) also began to bring out other items of clothing in November of 1873, but we never did read what they were. One of the lady workers, who no doubt enjoyed her work tremendously, took the trouble to count the number of stitches that went into one of the Sans Pareil shirts, and discovered that "by machine there are 11,322 stitches and by hand, 1,337, making an aggregate 12,659 exclusive of bosom and cuffs." "And yet," says the reporter, "one woman made 12 shirts from Tuesday to Saturday." At that rate it must have needed quite a number of women to fill the order for the 100 dozen shirts we read Mr. Small received.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1958

Odd Fellows Hall Changes Hands

The Odd Fellows property at the corner of Bradford and Winslow Streets has been purchased by Gustav Aust, proprietor of the Advocate Press and managing editor of the New Beacon. The property, recently owned by Frank DeMello, includes the Odd Fellows Hall and the Marine Hall.

It is understood that the upper floor of the Odd Fellows Hall will be remodelled into apartments by the new owner, with work to start within a few weeks but that the print shop and New Beacon office will not be moved until next Fall, when Marine Hall will be torn down and the space used for a parking lot.

Odd Fellows Hall was built in 1895, but for a number of years has not been used for I.O.O.F. meetings.