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Worcester Lodge

Ancient Free & Accepted Masons,

No. 280.

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Historical Notice.

Of the early history of the Craft in the City of Worcester we have but few traces, nor is this remarkable when it is considered that until a comparatively recent period nothing which concerned the Order was permitted to appear in print, the Book of Constitutions being first published only in 1723 ; and that until the union of the Grand Lodge of York, of which the Duke of Athol was appointed Grand Master in 1772, and was succeeded by the Duke of Kent, and the Grand Lodge of England, under the Duke of Sussex, in 1813, the Masonic Records of the Country could not assume that consolidated and regular form for which they are now distinguished. A Lodge existed in Worcester under the Athol Constitution, bearing No. 60, and was held at "The Free Masons Arms," but at what period this Lodge became dormant has not yet been ascertained. From the costume of Brother William Thompson, P.M., as shewn on his portrait now in the Worcester Lodge, it would appear that he was not initiated in that Lodge, and as he was a resident in Worcester, he may have belonged to Lodge No. 60, with which his insignia would correspond ; but the speculation arising from this small fact is the only present means of assuming that it had so modern an existence. Lodge No. 60 had a successor in Lodge No. 574. On the 9th of October, 1790, a Warrant was issued, under the seal of Masonry, enabling the Brethren named therein to open a Lodge at the

"Rein Deer Inn," in the City of Worcester. The following is a copy of the Warrant:—

RAWDON,

A. E. M.



No. 574.

To all and every our Right Worshipful, Worshipful and loving Brethren, We, Francis Rawdon Hastings, Lord Rawdon, &c., &c., &c., Acting Grand Master, under the authority of His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales, &c., &c., &c., Grand Master of the most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons,

Send Greeting,

Know ye, that we, at the humble Petition of our Right Trusty and well-beloved Brethren, Richard Harris, Moses Leviston, Daniel Brookholding Curwen, Thomas Smith, Joseph Dillon, Richard Hill, John Barnesley, Edward Connop, John Whitaker, and several other Brethren residing in or near the City of Worcester, DO HEREBY CONSTITUTE the said Brethren into a Regular Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, under the Title or Denomination of

"The Worcester Lodge,"

to be opened at a house known by the name of the Rein Deer Inn, in the City of Worcester aforesaid, AND DO FURTHER, at their said Petition, and of the great Trust and Confidence reposed in every of the said above-named Brethren, HEREBY APPOINT the said RICHARD HARRIS to be Master, MOSES LEVISTON Senior Warden, and DANIEL BROOKHOLDING CURWEN Junior Warden for opening the said Lodge, and for such further time only as shall be thought proper by the Brethren thereof: It being our will that this our appointment of the above Officers shall in no wise

affect any further Election of Officers of the Lodge, but that such election shall be regulated agreeable to such By-laws of the said Lodge as shall be consistent with the General Laws of the Society, contained in the Book of Constitutions. AND WE HEREBY will and require you, the said Richard Harris, to take special care that all and every of the said Brethren are or have been regularly made Masons, and that they do observe, perform, and keep all the Rules and Orders contained in the said Book of Constitutions. AND FURTHER, that you do from time to time cause to be entered in a book kept for that purpose an account of your proceedings in the Lodge, together with all such Rules, Orders, and Regulations, as shall be made for the good government of the same; that in no wise you omit once in every year to send US or our Successors, Grand Masters, or to Sir Peter Parker, Baronet, our **Deputy Grand Master**, or to the Deputy Grand Master for the time being, an account, in writing, of your said proceedings, and copies of all such Rules, Orders, and Regulations as shall be made as aforesaid; together with a list of the Members of the Lodge, and such a sum of money as may suit the circumstances of the Lodge, and reasonably be expected, towards the Grand Charity. Moreover, we hereby will and require you, the said Richard Harris, as soon as conveniently may be, to send an account in writing of what shall be done in virtue of these Presents.

Given under our Hand and Seal of
Masonry, this Ninth day of October,
A. 5790, A.D. 1790.

By the Grand Master's Command,

Witness,
WM. WHITE, G.S.

P. PARKER, D.G.M.

A Lodge was accordingly opened in the month of October, 1790, at the Rein Deer Inn, and Brother Richard Harris was installed as W.M.

In 1797 the Lodge appears by the calendars to have been held at the Star and Garter Inn on the

first Wednesday in the summer months, and the first and third Wednesday in winter; it was afterwards resumed at the Rein Deer Inn, where it was continued until 1842.

The following interesting letter, dated April 23rd, 1842, from the then Secretary of 280 Lodge to the son of the landlord of the Rein Deer Hotel, has lately been presented to the Lodge by our present W.M. (W. Bro. E. W. Larkworthy):—

“SIR.—I am directed by the Worshipful
 “Master, the Wardens, and Brethren of the
 “Worcester Lodge of Free and Accepted
 “Masons, to tender their most heartfelt thanks
 “for the attention which was uniformly paid to
 “the comforts of the Brethren by our late
 “and much lamented Brother Burnidge for the
 “space of about half a century, during which
 “time the Lodge was held at his house.

“The Brethren having, however, the interests
 “of the Lodge materially at heart, and from the
 “number of Members lately added, with the
 “expectation of other additions, and the inade-
 “quate accommodation afforded at the Rein
 “Deer Hotel, have determined upon moving
 “their place of meetings to a more convenient
 “situation.

“The Brethren at the same time desire to
 “record their thanks to Mr. George Burnidge
 “for his kind and liberal treatment since the
 “demise of his father. Wishing also still
 “farther to trespass upon his kindness by
 “desiring permission to meet as usual at the
 “Rein Deer Hotel on Thursday evening next,

“I remain, sir,

“Your most obt. Servt.,

“A. R. LINGARD, Sect.

“April 23rd, 1842.

“Fore-Gate Street.”

From 1842 until 1876 the Lodge Meetings were held in the Masonic Hall at the Bell Hotel, where its opening was celebrated on the 24th June, being the Festival of St. John the Baptist. For a long time past the Brethren had been desirous to acquire private rooms for their meetings instead of occupying a portion of an inn, and on the 9th May, 1876, the Lodge by resolution decreed the transfer of its habitation to the New Masonic Hall, 95, High Street, Worcester, where its first meeting was held on 21st September, 1876, and its formal inauguration celebrated on the 5th October, 1876. The Lodge still growing in importance and membership, it was ultimately decided, in conjunction with its sister Lodge ("Semper Fidelis," No. 529), to take steps to have a special building erected for Masonic Meetings. A private Company, called, "The Worcester Masonic Buildings Company," was formed for that purpose amongst the Freemasons in the Province, and the present Masonic Hall of St. Nicholas Street was ultimately erected in 1896. This was formally opened by the P.W. Provincial Grand Master, Sir A. F. Godson, M.A., M.I., P.G.D., at a special combined meeting of Lodge 280 and Lodge 529, on the 30th August, 1897, and on Wednesday, the 20th October, 1897, a Special Meeting of the Lodge was held at the new building, when the following resolution was moved and carried unanimously :—

"That the Worcester Lodge 280 be permanently removed from the Masonic Hall, High Street, to the recently erected and more commodious premises known as the Masonic Chambers, St. Nicholas Street, and for the future will hold its meetings there."

Long may it prosper in its new home !

It will be observed that the number of the Lodge on the granting of the Warrant in 1790 was 574 on the Roll of the Grand Lodge of England. In 1792, from the closing up of the Register of Lodges, the Worcester Lodge became No. 483 ; at the union of

the two grand Lodges in 1813, and the consequent consolidation of the two Registers of Lodges, it became 526 ; at the closing up of the numbers in 1832, it attained the number of 349 ; and in the revision of 1863 it became No. 280. On Tuesday, October 7th, 1890, and two following days, the Centenary Festival of the Lodge was held, and was in every respect a brilliant and marked success. The Festivities began with a Conversazione held in the Guildhall, to which about 400 guests were invited by the W.M., Wardens and Brethren. On the Wednesday a luncheon was given by the Lodge previous to the holding of Provincial Grand Lodge, which was held in the Chapter House by the kind permission of the Dean and Chapter. Several distinguished Brethren were present, including V.W. Marquis of Hertford, P.S.G.W. of England, Prov. G.M. of Antrim ; Right Hon. Sir A. Hicks Beech, M.P., P.G.M. of Gloucestershire ; V.W. Bro. J. D. Allcroft, P.G. Treas. of England ; Very Rev. the Dean of Gloucester, P.G.C. Gloucestershire ; V.W. Bro. Rev. W. K. R. Bedford, P.G.C. of England, &c. The Brethren attended service in the Cathedral. The four Lewises who carried the volume of the Sacred Law were Alfred Vernon Rowe, Frederick John Underwood, Harry Baylis Perrins, and Archibald Foreshaw Dutton. The sermon was preached by Rev. W. K. R. Bedford, P.G.C. of England. The Banquet was held in the Guildhall, under the presidency of R.W. Bro. Sir E. A. Lechmere, Bart., M.P., P.G.M. On Thursday a special Centenary Lodge was held in the Lodge Room, the W.M., W. Bro. John Stallard, in the chair, the other chairs being filled by Bro. J. Sharman Wood, S.W., and Bro. Robert Clarke, J.W. There was a large number of Brethren present, including the P.G.M., D.P.G.M., and other Officers of P.G. Lodge. The Charter presented to the Lodge in 1790 was read, as also the Centenary Warrant granted in 1890. The W.M. presented a Centenary Jewel to the Secretary, Bro. Samuel Southall, in recognition

of his valuable services in connection with the Centenary. W. Bro. F. G. Underwood presented to the Lodge a history of its transactions since its formation. Various votes of thanks and congratulations were moved and carried. In the evening the Festivities were brought to a close with a grand Centenary Ball, which took place in the Guildhall, and to which over 200 invitations were issued. The Committee appointed to carry out the arrangements for the Centenary Festival were:—W. Bro. John Stallard, W.M.; Bro. J. Sharman Wood, S.W.; Bro. Robert Clarke, J.W.; W. Bro. G. F. Hough, Chaplain; W. Bro. T. Lamb Smith, Treasurer; Bro. Samuel Southall, Secretary; W. Bro. F. G. Underwood, P.M., D.C.; W. Bro. W. B. Hulme, D.P.M.; W. Bro. W. Barkley, P.M.; W. Bro. Henry Rowe, P.M.; W. Bro. R. C. S. Carington, I.M.; W. Bro. A. B. Rowe P.M.; W. Bro. W. B. Williamson, P.M.

On November 19th, 1902, an event very rare in the annals of Freemasonry, and unprecedented in the records of this Lodge, was the Initiation of Bro. Alfred Vernon Rowe, son of W. Bro. A. B. Rowe, P.M., D.C., F.P.S.G.W., and grandson of W. Bro. Henry Rowe, P.M., P.P.S.G.W. The ceremony was performed by W. Bro. A. B. Rowe, W. Bro. Henry Rowe occupying the chair of S.W.

In 1906 the Lodge sustained a great loss in the death of the B.W. Prov. Grand Master, Sir A. F. Godson, M.P., P.G.D. Eng., for many years a member of the Lodge. In October, 1908, W. Bro. General W. Campbell, C.B., P.G.M. Designate of Worcestershire, and P.G.D. Eng., was elected as a joining member, the duties of P.G. Master meantime having been fulfilled by W. Bro. W. T. Page, D.P.G.M., another member of this Lodge.

Amongst the names which appear in the Records of No. 280, may be found a large proportion of those citizens who have been remarkable for integrity, ability, and professional and commercial success, and whose memory still lives in the respect and esteem of

a new generation. The Worcester Lodge has witnessed periods of great prosperity, and some clouds of depression and difficulty, and it is matter for congratulation to the Members that its prospects were never more bright, or its stability as an Institution more secure than at the present time. May they long so continue; and may the Brethren, by the faithful discharge of the great principles of Freemasonry, and by the practice of every commendable virtue, especially of that which may justly be denominated the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart, Charity, deserve for their Lodge an increased prosperity, and give to it a sphere of enlarged usefulness.

ERNEST W. PARKWORTHY, W.M.
CHARLES E. MOORE, Secretary.

*Masonic Hall, Worcester,
Nov., 1909.*

