

# THE HISTORY OF SODUS LODGE No. 392 F. & A. M.

Property of Bro. William Grosz.  
Updated by Bro. Jay A. De Wispelaere, June, 2006.

Under date of October 22, 1855, the First Meeting of the petitioners of Sodus Lodge was held and the By-Laws of Pultneyville Lodge were adopted so far as compatible with the new Constitution. It was resolved that regular meetings of the Lodge shall be the Tuesday on or before each full moon, also each second Tuesday following the full moon, meetings to open at 6:00 P.M., and the initiation fee to be \$15.00. Meetings continue to be held the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 8:00 P.M., with the exception of summer recess. In 2005 dues were raised from \$33.00 to \$58.00 to compensate for rising costs, currently the initiation fee is \$100.00.

In the Lodge room over the Roger's store the first regular communication was held on October the 23, 1855, under dispensation, with the following present; Asahel Yale, A.L. Steeger, F.S. Woodhams, John Cheetham and Samuel Woodworth. Members raised under the dispensation were; William Shaver, John W. Sweeney, James Lewis, Ormon Nobel, W.T. Gaylord, Edwin Mason, Riley Belden and Orrin Danford.

On July 1, 1856, Right Worshipful Brother Asahel Todd, authorized by the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, assisted by Bros. Vaughn, Cotterall and Cornell of Pultneyville Lodge, discharged his duties as Instituting and Installing Officer, installed the first officers of the Lodge; Asahel Yale, W.M; John A. Paddock, S.W; William Shaver, J.W.; John R. Sweeney, Treas.: Riley Belden, Sec'y; Ormon Nobel, S.D.; Orrin Danford, J.D.; W.T. Gaylord, M. of C.: James Lewis, Tiler.

There were 14 members when the Lodge received its Charter and by July 1, 1866, the Lodge had grown to 102 members, and out-grown the Lodge room. They moved into larger rooms over the Green and Winchester Store. Some years later they moved into rooms over the Wride and Granger Store where they stayed until June 22, 1906, when fire destroyed the Lodge rooms and all their belongings. During this period two fires destroyed the wooden buildings at both ends of the Main Street business district. The destroyed buildings were replaced with stone and brick building which, including the current Lodge building, still stand. The Records, being in the hands of the Secretary, were saved. The Lodge raised a class of Candidates in the Pultneyville Lodge Rooms the following week using their equipment. The Lodge was then closed for the summer recess until October when it was again held in the Green Block.

On August 2, 1907 a resolution was passed to erect a new Temple at a cost not to exceed \$12,000.00. On August 1, 1908, the corner stone was laid in the present Temple by Most Worshipful Nelson Sawyer, Grand Master. The first communication was held in the Temple December 15, 1908. That month a

Masonic Fair was held which raised \$2,200.00 toward the new Temple. This Temple continues to house the Brothers of Sodus Lodge, and also hosts Royal Arch Masons, Order of the Eastern Star and occasional Master and Warden's meetings.

One of the largest attended events by the Lodge was for the funeral service of Worshipful Brother Edward Pullman, when 134 members attended. Brother Pullman was Master of the Lodge in 1890 and 1891. He was also a member of Wayne Chapter R.A.M. He was foully murdered at 2 A.M. on March 28, 1906, while in the discharge of his duties as constable and night watchman of the Village of Sodus. His body was found by a Brother Mason at 6:30 A.M. From the moment the body was found it was in the hands of his Masonic Brothers until it reached its final resting place.

On April 18, 1871, a bill was passed to pay for the meals of the District Deputy, and for the feeding of his horse during his Official Visit. Fuel bills, until moving into the new Temple, were all for cord wood. In 2006 Lodge bills are met by the Brother's dues, income from business renting space in the Lodge building and by the annual corn booth ran at the annual Sodus Firemen's Field Days. In addition to covering its operating expenses the income of the Lodge is used to fund high school and middle school scholarships for the Sodus Central School District. Community groups such as Sodus Little League, Girl Scouts, the Pines of Peace and Ronald McDonald House and National Honor Society honorees also benefit from the Lodge's activities.

Two candidates from the jurisdiction of another Lodge joined Sodus Lodge and the other Lodge insisted that the initiation fees be turned over to them. It was the custom of the early years to appoint a committee to settle differences between some of the Brothers which had long existed between them.

During its history Lodge Brothers have been called to serve at home and abroad. For doing its part to support Brothers serving overseas during World War Two the Lodge received a Grand Master's Citation for fund raising. Brothers Charlie Riddervold and Jeffrey Gagnon are currently on duty serving their country.

The census of 1850 lists the population of Sodus as 300, the Village of Sodus was listed as 200, with a further seventy households listed for Alton, Sodus Center and Joy. By 2004 the population of the Town of Sodus had risen to 8,859. Sodus Lodge grew in its first 100 years from the original 14 Charter members to 863 members having joined the Lodge, 733 by initiation and 130 by affiliation. In 1956 the Lodge had 276 members in good standing, 96 of whom had over 25 years membership. At that time there were six members of 50 years or more standing, with Brother Oscar Malcolm the longest serving with has 56 years to his credit. During the first 100 years of the Lodge only 26 members reached the 50 year record, one missing by only one month, another by three months. Frederick Espenschied held the longest membership in the Lodge's first

100 years with 62 years and nine months. In 2006 this honor is held by Brother Herm DeMay with 70 years membership. Brothers were honored at the annual Awards Night dinner with plaques for milestones in membership. Between its 100<sup>th</sup> and 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries membership in Sodus Lodge peaked at over 300. At the time of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary over 1100 brothers have joined Sodus Lodge, its current membership is 123.

By its centennial three Sodus Lodge members had served as District Deputy Grand Master; Charles C. Fields in 1906, Mark E. Norris in 1940 and DeWitt F. Kelly in 1953. In the following fifty years five more members have served the Wayne District; Floyd Norton in 1966, Don Fisher in 1979, Bill DuBois in 1989, F. Edward Powley, 2002 through 2004, and the current District Deputy Grand Master, James Gagnon.

In preparation for the celebration of its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, efforts were made to improve the condition of the Lodge rooms and building. Maintenance was done to the building's roof and façade. Plaster from a roof leak was repaired and new paint applied in the main hallway, cloak room, Tiler's Room, Preparation Room and the ceiling in the meeting room. New curtains were purchased for the dining room and upstairs hall. Carpeting in these rooms was also cleaned or replaced. Many of these improvements were made possible by a generous bequest of \$5000.00 made to the Lodge in 2005 by Brother \_\_\_\_\_, specifically for the purpose of maintaining the Lodge.

Brothers of the Sodus Masonic Lodge continue to be visible in their community as Little League baseball and soccer coaches. Members of this Lodge represent all professions and practices; Law enforcement, public service, private industry, education, the clergy and self employment. Serving the Town of Sodus and the Villages of Sodus and Sodus Point, Sodus Lodge Brothers, elected and appointed are Justices, Mayor, Planning and Zoning Board members and the Sodus Town Highway Superintendent and Supervisor. Brothers span the range of ages from their 20s into their 90s and include second, third and fourth generation members.