

Sunday Masonic Paper No 767

Are You a Landmark?

By Wayne D. Anderson

Are you a Landmark?

What is a Landmark? Brother Webster defines a Landmark as: *A recognizable natural or artificial feature used for navigation, a feature that stands out from its near environment and is often visible from long distances. And, an event, discovery, or change marking an important stage or a turning point.*

If you're sailing from Europe to New York, the Statue of Liberty will be the landmark that lets you know you're in the right port. If you're walking to your cousin's house, the pizza shop on the corner is the landmark that lets you know you just have two blocks to go. Getting your driver's license, getting married, having a child these are all landmark events.

Masonic Landmarks are a set of principles that many Freemasons claim to be "both ancient and unchangeable precepts of Masonry". Issues of the "regularity" of a Freemasonic Lodge, Grand Lodge or Grand Orient are judged in the context of the Landmarks. Because each Grand Lodge is self-governing, with no single body exercising authority over the whole of Freemasonry, the interpretations of these principles can and do vary, leading to controversies of recognition. Different Masonic jurisdictions have different Landmarks.

Under the Grand Lodge of A.F. and A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario, the landmarks are not numerated or listed, but in our ritual we hear about the Worshipful Master "guarding the Landmarks"; where as in my Mother Lodge, under the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia - we have numerated and listed twenty five landmarks. Each year, in my Mother Lodge, the landmarks are read out in open lodge.. If you wish to know what the twenty five are let me know I will get that information for you.

But under this Grand Jurisdiction as I said the Landmarks are not numerated or read out...but are understood that they are infallible and unchangeable. The great Masonic Author Roscoe Pound determined that there are seven unchangeable Landmarks.

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in the persistence of personality
3. A "book of the law" is an indispensable part of the furniture of every lodge
4. The legend of the third degree
5. Secrecy
6. The symbolism of an operative art
7. That a Mason must be a man, free born, and of age

"Your fidelity must be exemplified by a strict observance of the Constitution of the Fraternity, by adhering to the ancient landmarks of the order, so must your obedience be proved by a close conformity to all our laws." So runs an ancient charge in the First Degree, simply stated any landmark could be that corner peg which indicates the limit of your property, or any other prominent projection that immediately identifies our location.

A little known story from World War II of a small church on the East Coast of England that had been destroyed by the enemy. When the British Navy asked whether or not the parishioners were prepared to rebuild, their answer was that they had a shortage of funds and this made the idea of rebuilding nearly impossible. "Well, if you cannot rebuild the church then we will" Said a Navy Commander, "because that little church is a landmark on our charts." To the Navy that little Church, their landmark and that they were approaching a safe haven, and home.

As you can see by this story this particular landmark was important to every sailor on every British ship coming into that area. Landmarks occupy a place of importance in our busy work a day world. W.Bro. Andrews heading east on highway 2 from Kingston as he passes the Gananoque Town Gate he knows by that Landmark he is nearing his home.

Brethren a more thought provoking and sobering fact is that Every Mason is a Landmark too. My father told me that during World War II street photographers were often seen out snapping photos of people on the street whether the subject of the photo wanted to be photographed or not. Some would turn their noses up while others would put on their best smiles and pose for the photograph. Whatever the person did, those images later showed up on the film negatives. However, we should not be lead to believe this humiliating or pleasing experience, as the case may be, is limited to the casual photographer, because, Brethren, every day people are taking notice of our everyday actions. All too often unconsciously we are making an imprint on the public. When the Junior Warden is asked by the Worshipful Master "Are you a Master Mason" his reply is "I am, try me and prove me." In doing so he is not only responding for himself but for everyone else as well.

The story goes of a police officer witnessing a car at a cross walk and two very elderly people were crossing very slowly. The driver of the car was spewing profanities and casting aspersions on the elderly couple with many hand gestures and foul language. Finally the old couple got across the street and the car moved off, the police officer pulled the man over, took him from the car and placed him in handcuffs. The driver of the car protested and the police officer told the man he had been arrested for car theft. The handcuffed man protested loudly that this car was his, he owned it, had it insured and it was ridiculous to say it was stolen. The police officer took the man by the arm and walked him to the back of the car, and pointed at the Square and Compass, Royal Arch, and Shrine decals on the back of the car. He said "I thought the car was stolen because no Mason would act the way you were and say the things you were saying to those elderly folks." The driver hung his head in shame and the police officer removed the handcuffs. The Police Officer said to the driver "you should always remember you are someone's idea of a Freemason."

The challenge of Masonry meets us on every corner, in business and professional relationships in occupations and recreations, but more especially Outside the Lodge rather than Within. We have all heard the phrase "And while the All Seeing Eye bids us,,,,," let us not forget what influence we are exerting when others see us and register their mental thoughts accordingly about whom they see. It is for this reason that our Ancient Landmarks in Masonry are so important. These are, in a sense, the shorthand of Masonry, summing up much of the wisdom of that which has gone before. The Mason who demonstrates by his deeds rather than by his words the moral qualities of truthfulness, honour, integrity and charity undoubtedly does more to convince the world at large of our sincerity in contrast to the ritualist whose life outside the lodge may be coloured by moral deviation.

"Charge your brethren to practice outside the lodge those duties which are inculcated within it and by amiable, discreet and virtuous conduct convince the world."

That "world" is no vague distant country; instead it is that little community in which each of us lives and moves and has our being.

Be Proud of who you are; Be Proud of What you Do, and Be Proud to be a Mason.