

**THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**PAPER No. 130**

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**CEREMONY OF THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE  
OF THE NEW FREEMASONS HALL, SYDNEY.**

(This building was situated at No. 102 York Street, Sydney, and was privately owned but occupied by the Corporation of Sydney as a Town Hall. It stood on the western side of York Street between Market and Druiitt Streets and the property extended through to Clarence Street. It was purchased for the sum of £5000. It was this land in Clarence Street which is referred to in this report).

**From an account in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 24 May 1860**

The erection of a masonic hall, having been for a long period felt to be much wanted by the Masonic body, whose members have much increased lately, the contemplated attainment of that object has been hailed with enthusiasm by the whole of the craft in this city.

The building, which has for a long time been used as the masonic hall, and which was formerly the Town Hall, has both from the increase in the craft and the unsuitableness of the interior to the purposes required, confirmed the determination of the heads of the masonic body in their desire to provide a building worthy of the order, and more suited to the requirements of the craft.

Yesterday being fixed for laying the foundation stone of the new hall, large numbers of the brethren, under the English Constitution, assembled at the hall, in York Street. The Provincial Grand Lodge, E.C., was opened in form, by the V.W. the D.P.G.M., Brother John Williams, and the necessary arrangements perfected for the procession to the site of the intended building. About twelve o'clock, the brethren of the Irish and Scotch constitutions arrived at the hall, accompanied by the officers of their Provincial Grand Lodges, and preceded by a band of music, when the following procession was formed (for greater convenience in the old burial ground), under the direction of the Prov. G. Director of Ceremonies, Br. M. Israel (P.M. 941):-

**BAND.**

Scotch Lodges (according to seniority)  
Irish Lodges (ditto)  
English Lodges (ditto)  
Prov Grand Lodge of Scotland  
Prov Grand Lodge of Ireland  
Prov Grand Lodge of England  
Prov Grand Architect, carrying plans and design  
Prov Grand Superintendent of Works, carrying brass plate  
Past Prov Grand Deacons  
Prov Grand Deacons, carrying wands

Prov Grand Secretary, W.Bro. J.A. Mathews, P.M., 548,  
carrying Book of Constitution  
Past Prov Grand Registrar  
Prov Grand Registrar  
Prov Grand Treasurer, carrying Coin to be deposited in the Stone  
Grand Junior Warden, with Corinthian Column

Banner of the Provincial Grand Lodge of New South Wales, E.C.  
Supported by W.Br. F.B. Davidson, W.M. 814  
Grand Senior Warden, carrying Doric Column  
Four Directors of the Masonic Hall Company -  
W.Br. Murphy, P.M., 942, P.P.G. J.W., Mayor of Sydney  
carrying the Square  
Br. R.W. Moore, P.M. 548. P.P.G.T. Carrying the Level  
Br. W.H. Aldis, carrying the Plumb Rule  
W.Br. Thomas Turner, P.M.267, carrying Corn, Wine, and Oil  
Grand Stewards - Bible, Square, and Compasses, supported by  
W.Br W.B. Bennett, W.M. Balmain Lodge  
V.W.D.P.G.M. Br J Williams, the V.W.D.P.G.M. of the Irish  
Constitution, Br. Lovecraft, and the Rev. Mr. King, who  
officiated for the Prov. G. Chaplain,  
Br G.F. Macarthur.

In the above order the brethren proceeded from the Old Burial Ground through George Street and Market Street, to the ground in Clarence Street, where, on arrival, the procession opened and allowed the members of the Provincial Grand Lodge, E.C., to advance to the platform, being followed by the Irish and Scotch brethren, the whole forming three sides of a square. During the procession a slight shower of rain fell, but did not long continue. After an appropriate prayer was offered by the Rev. Mr. King, the bed for the stone was prepared by the builders, Messrs Loveridge, when the V.W. the D.P.G.M., Brother J Williams, laid the brass tablet, bearing the following inscription in its place:- "This foundation stone was laid on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May A.D. 1860, A.L. 5860, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of her Majesty Queen Victoria; Sir William Denison, knight, K.C.B., Governor: J Murphy, Esq., J.P. mayor; directors, W. Brother R.W. Moore, P.M. 548, W.Brother, Thomas Turner, P.M. 267, I.C.; W.Brother J. Murphy, P.M. 942, E.C.; Brother W.H. Aldis, Lodge 548; secretary, W. Brother J. Alexander Mathews, P.M. 548; architect, Brother George Allen Mansfield, 843; builders, Messrs. S. and A Loveridge and Thomas Ralston; P.G. Chaplain, Brother Rev. G.F. Macarthur."

The following coins were also deposited: Sovereign, half-a-sovereign, five-shilling piece, half-a-crown, florin, a shilling, sixpence, fourpence, threepence, three-halfpenny piece, penny, halfpenny, farthing, and half-a-farthing, all of Queen Victoria.

The stone was then lowered down, and V.W. Br. Williams tried the stone, and, completing the ceremony by pouring corn, wine, and oil over it, said, "I hereby declare this foundation-stone has been duly laid in the north-east corner of the new Masonic Hall, dedicated to brotherly love, relief, and truth."

The Rev. Mr. King, who had kindly acceded to the request of the directors to officiate on the occasion, owing to the illness of the Prov. Gr. Chaplain, Br. Rev. George F. Macarthur, then delivered the following oration in a most impressive manner, and which was listened to with deep attention, by the large number of brethren present.

“It has been well observed that there are certain principles in social life, like beautiful landscapes in nature, which present one prominent idea, so striking in their effect, as to rivet the attention on itself, and to render any other subject connected with it comparatively overlooked, or only to be considered as merely auxiliary in effect to the principal feature. If there be a bold headland, or magnificent promontory, in the field of view, the eye will scarcely be able to withdraw itself from the sublime outline; and if the attention wander for a moment, it is immediately recalled by the natural attraction of the stupendous landmark; and the impression which is carried away from the scene, will be almost exclusively an impression of that imposing object which still stands forth in our imagination as the one all-absorbing object of the scene. It is precisely the same in our review of the principles of such a society as this, which we have the honour of commemorating this morning. We meet with one or two prominent landmarks as we pass our eye over the annals of the ancient and time-honoured Society of Free Masonry, in which there is to be found one commanding and pervading thought which immediately takes possession of the mind all that the speaker has to do in the review of such a well-known institution is to furnish an illustration of this thought in which we may gaze upon the one distinguishing idea originally presented to the mind.

The grand idea which the order of Masonic brotherhood presents to the contemplation is that of UNITY. When we fix our attention HERE there rises before the inspiration imagination a combined host of men, animated by one all-pervading spirit, and bound together as one individual; soul joined to soul, compact and cemented together like the stones of a noble edifice; and when we survey that living structure, that sublime building which never dies, whose foundation was laid in time immemorial - laid, we doubt not, under the auspices of the Great Architect of the earth and the heavens, must not our hearts echo that divine approval with which the Creator himself welcomed the crowning element of his sixth day's work on earth, when he surveyed that living temple, and pronounced his work to be 'very good'.

Nor does the thought rest here. A golden chain is seen descending from on high, encircling that vast and expansive band of brotherhood; and while it binds the soul of each to that consecrated society of which it forms a part, it links the whole body with their Universal Parent above.

And when I look around upon the present assemblage, and bear in mind the time and circumstances when first the devoted band which bore the honoured name of the masonic order sprung up in all the fervour and enthusiasm of sacred philanthropy; and, as the pioneers of the Cross, went forth from city to city, planting, as they traversed the earth, the holy banner of the divine Redeemer, and leaving with every people among whom they sojourned the hallowed emblem of Christian love and heavenly peace established in their midst, and pointing to the skies. When I survey, in my imagination, the consecrated memorials of the work and the labour of love of your predecessors, who, centuries ago, set to their seal that God is to be honoured by the work of men's hands, and that ONE SOCIETY, at least, shall publicly acknowledge and perpetuate, by their scientific art, and noble handicraft, that sublime acknowledgment, that 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof': and then, when I look around me now, and behold,

in this remote quarter of the globe, a society of the same sacred brotherhood - knit together by the same bond of peace, of loyalty, and of charity - a three-fold chord which no machinations of wicked men or evil spirits shall ever be able to rend asunder - I feel within my breast a glow of cheerful satisfaction, and congratulate my adopted country that the olive branch has taken root in the heart of her auriferous soil, and spread abroad its branches throughout her mild atmosphere. And here would I raise my humble supplication to the Prince of Peace that her leaves may be for the healing of all party dissensions, so that the heart of every colonist, as he gazes upon that mystic tree, may feel a glow of sacred patriotism, and his lips utter the hallowed ejaculation, 'God speed to its growth, may its branches multiply an hundredfold upon the parent stem, and may its leaf never wither'.

Ever bear in mind, brethren, the bond - the only bond - which keeps the brotherhood as one man. It is the mystic bond of LOVE. Originating in heaven, what thought can penetrate its height! Circulating through the human heart, what tongue of man or angel shall portray its calm and peaceful course! Let this love divine, like a live coal from the altar of God, but touch the heart as well as the lips of every man who bears the badge of this ancient brotherhood, and the grand ideal of charity is personified in your midst.

But this attribute must be to each of us the reigning principle of our lives. In order to elevate man to the possession of Christian affections we must surround him with the principle which constitutes the character of God. Man cannot exhibit in his life the principles of heaven, unless you surround him with the free amplitude of heaven itself. He cannot appreciate a religion built on mysterious union with God unless he is first lifted into the world of God's habitation. It is from the effectual working of Christian charity that the moral excellencies which adorn our character take their rise. Not even the gift of tongues possessed by the Apostles, nor the power of working miracles, nor the charitable bestowment of all their goods to feed the poor, could be placed, for a moment, in comparison with the vital principle - LOVE. This is the grace which never faileth; whereas the exhibition of miraculous powers were destined to cease so soon as their object was accomplished; but this is the permanent gift, whose abiding efficacy was to outlive even faith and hope - yea, that this is the very foundation on which faith and hope are to be built, for by it the Christian 'believeth all things and hopeth all things,' and now abideth these three (ABIDETH, as distinguished from miraculous powers which were soon to pass away) - faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity. Since, then, this special gift of Heaven has been chosen as the principle by which your society is to be governed - a principle which constitutes here below the first stage of that manifested glory whose full development shall open us in the courts above - ever bear in mind how circumspect should be the walk of him who here professes to bear within his breast this gift divine. Let no unworthy act towards a brother or to any son or daughter of man ever mar the brightness of that escutcheon with which you have been entrusted, when first your name was registered amongst the sacred brotherhood.

And if I inquire after the first type of your society among men, my research can find no resting-place until I have arrived back 3300 years - to that period when first a chosen generation was separated from the prevailing idolatry of the day, liberated from Egyptian bondage, and constituted a distinct community, with spiritual and intellectual enlightenment from on high. When I recollect the one single mind which pervaded the whole civil polity and spiritual worship of that people, the solemnity of their sacred anniversaries, the feeling of brotherly kindness which characterised them as a peculiar people among the nations of earth, I cannot regard them,

in their social standing, as a type and model which you do well to imitate. And when I contemplate the Heavenly Shepherd leading Israel as a flock, the divine Shekinah beaming the light of his countenance upon them in love, the universal Father shadowing forth in their history on earth a faint emblem of the new Jerusalem above; I would affectionately say to every member of your fraternity - brother, walk worthy of your high parentage.

To my mind there is no idea more grand, no scene more imposing, than that of the Divine ordinance under the Mosaic dispensation, which appointed ONE PLACE AND one temple for the united worship of the whole Jewish people. The one house of God - the centre round which the scattered families of Palestine circled in one combined, solemn act of worship - cemented together, while it sanctified the whole mass of the Israelitish people. Religion here flung her hallowed arms around the thousands and tens of thousands of the twelve tribes, and drawing them periodically close to her bosom, united them together in the bond of peace, while she whispered to their son the story of redemption, and symbolized to their senses the great sacrifice which should afterwards embrace the whole world. There, upwards of a million souls worshipped at one altar, bound together by the ties of common brotherhood, and identified under one acknowledged high patronage. The grandeur of such a scene, even in the weak conception of our present imagination, assimilates more to our anticipated contemplations of the general assembly and Church of the first-born above, than any other scene which this world has ever presented to our view; and if in your periodical assemblings the same hallowed spirit breathes from heart to heart, and the same Divine Shepherd by recognised as your common Head; if individually, as well as collectively, you feel that every drop which fills the cup of blessing in your earthly lot has been ministered by the hand of your Heavenly Father, and, every afflictive dispensation with which you have been visited has come in love and wisdom from the same merciful Guardian, whose omnipresence everywhere surrounds you, then will your participation in the anniversaries of your society become sanctified means for preparing your souls for that great and final assembly of the families of earth, where the Sovereign Judge will pronounce to every one of us, with reference to the deeds done in the body, our final award.

These few observations are the result of my reflections on the subject, which occupies your attention to-day; and for the consideration of which I have had but a few brief hours of preparation since I was honoured with the invitation to address you.

My visitations to certain sick friends occupied the greater portion of those few hours; but the thoughts which I have thus hurriedly embodied before you, if not studied, possess at least this quality, they are the impulsive utterances of my heart, and I trust they will meet with a sincere response from the heart of every brother whom I have the honour to address."

At the conclusion of the above address the reverend gentleman pronounced the benediction, and the usual masonic honours were then given. Three cheers were also given for the prosperity of the new building, and followed by one cheer more for the Worshipful the Mayor, who returned thanks to the brethren.

The very handsome trowel and mallet with which the ceremony was performed was afterwards presented by the directors to the V.W.D.P.G.M. Br. J. Williams, and is to have the following inscription - "Presented to the V.W.Br. J. Williams, D.P.G.M., E.C., New South Wales, on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the New Masonic Hall, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, A.D. 1860, A.L. 5860."



The procession then returned to York Street in the same order as before, where the English Provincial Grand Lodge was closed in due form, and the Irish and Scotch brethren who had so kindly assisted in the ceremony, proceeded to their lodge rooms.

### THE BANQUET

At three o'clock, a large number of the brethren sat down to a very handsome and well furnished banquet, provided by Brother A Cohen, in his usual excellent style. The chair was taken by the V.W.D.P.G.M. Brother Williams, supported on his right by the Rev. Mr. King, and on his left by the Worshipful the Mayor, Br. James Murphy; also, by W.Br. T. Turner, Br. W.H. Aldis, &c. The vice-chair was filled by V.W.Br. R.W. Moore, Prov. Gr. Tr.

After full justice was done to the eatables, the Chairman rose and proposed the first toast: - "The Queen."

Air - "God Save the Queen."

The Worshipful Chairman next proposed "The Prince Consort and the Royal Family."

Air - "Prince Albert's March."

The next toast proposed was "The three Grand Lodges, in connection with the Provincial Grand Lodge of New South Wales." Drunk with masonic honours.

Air - "Polka."

The Chairman then rose and said, the next toast he had to propose he was satisfied would be welcome. He need not elucidate the origins of Freemasonry, as his friend, the Rev. Mr. King, had already to some extent endeavoured to do so. He had spoken of the existence of Freemasonry for a period of 3300 years as an institution which had distinguished its professors as a peculiar class among men. He, however, would go further back than that, even to the Garden of Eden, where the Author of all Good Himself had endowed man with reasoning powers, and enabled him to protect himself by the exercises of his faculties. The signs and Mysteries of Freemasonry passed into the hands of the Egyptians, and subsisted even to the time of Moses. That religion and worship, which belonged to earth, was the precursor of that superior light which brought the Children of Israel out of slavery into liberty. The lore of ancient Freemasonry was acquired by the Phoenicians, by whom all science was learnt. They were the pioneers of Freemasonry, and its rules and instructions was transmitted to the time of King Solomon, and so on to us progressively even to the present time in Australia. They were now endeavouring to translate its symbols to all. He would give them this toast - "Freemasonry in Australia." Drunk with masonic honours.

Air - "Entered Apprentice."

His Worship the Mayor said, he was about to propose the health of one who, he was sorry to say, was not a mason, but who had, notwithstanding, exerted himself energetically in endeavouring to raise the social and moral tone of society in the colony - "His Excellency the Governor-General."

Air - "Fine Old English Gentleman."

The Chairman then, in proposing the next toast, said he was sure he should enlist their cordial respect and esteem for the gentleman whose health he was about to propose, from the fact that it was for the purpose of doing honour to their guest, the Rev. Mr., King, who had so kindly responded to the application of the directors to officiate in the interesting ceremony they had that day witnessed, and who, when the illness of their Br. The Rev. G.F. M' Arthur was made known to him, had responded in such a way that he trusted the Masonic Brotherhood would always be grateful for. When the directors were placed in the difficulty he alluded to, they in conjunction with his worthy friend and Brother, the Mayor, went to the Rev. Mr. King, when he unhesitatingly said: "Any service I can do, I am most happy to perform." He thanked him most heartily for his truly Masonic and fraternal feeling, and he would say he never experienced more pleasant feelings than at that time. He would call on the brethren to drink the health of their guest, the Rev. Mr. King, wishing prosperity to himself and family. Drunk with enthusiasm. Air - "The Englishman."

The Rev. Mr. King, in reply, begged to thank the brethren for the honour they had done himself and family in the toast just proposed, and received so warmly. It was not, however, only in the pleasurable remembrance of the duty he had performed that day, that he felt satisfied, but it was more so because they took for their groundwork and guiding-star the word of God, and he felt that, in acceding to their request he was only the more completely fulfilling his own mission, and doing that which was appertaining to his own peculiar calling. If he were asked what were the principles of Freemasonry, he would answer - the cause of philanthropy and of God. The rev. gentleman sat down amidst loud applause.

W.Br. M. Israel, Prov. Gr. Director of Ceremonies, said they had that day met and participated in a most gratifying and interesting ceremony. They had laid the foundation stone of a new Masonic Hall, and he would say, in Masonic terms - From the foundation laid that day may they raise a superstructure honourable to the builders. There were many older Masons than himself present who knew the difficulties the craft had to contend with in not having suitable places to meet in, and obliged to meet in public-houses. They had been rescued from that degradation by certain brethren stepping forward to purchase a building. This building which they were now in was now found too small for the craft, which had increased in respectability as in number, and they had determined to build a new hall. He would say "honour to whom honour is due," but where all had exerted themselves so beneficially, he felt it was but painting the lily to detain them any longer by anything he might say. He would therefore propose "The health of The Directors." Drunk with masonic honours. Air - "Jolly Good Fellow".

The V.W.D.P.G.M.Br. Williams, as chairman of the directors, returned thanks, and fully believed the intentions of the directors in their exertions was the benefit of the craft alone, and not in the desire to acquire any power, but simply to do their duty as Freemasons.

W.Br R.W. Moore stated that 1500 shares in the hall were held by the Masonic Orphan Fund, and he trusted the whole building would soon be entirely available for their benefit.

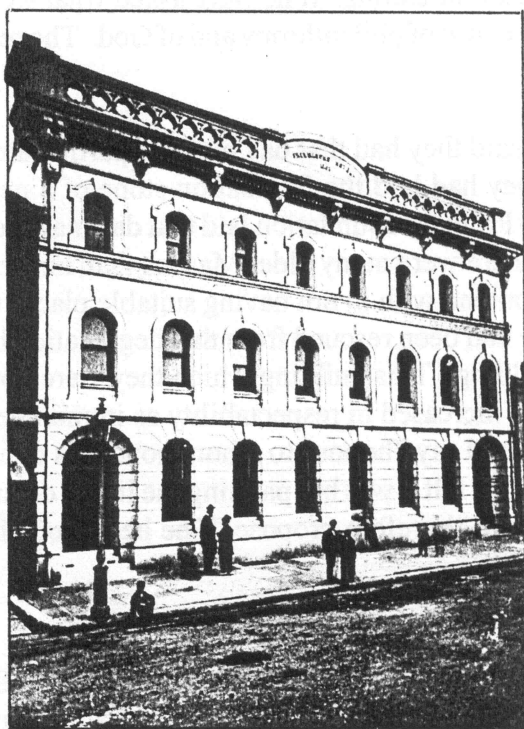
The Chairman then proposed, "The Universality of Freemasonry, the healths of the poor and distressed brethren, and speedy relief to them," which was drunk with masonic honours. Air - "Money in both pockets."

W. Br. W.B. Bennett then handed in a copy of verses composed for the occasion, which were sang by Br. P.M. Israel, and loudly applauded.

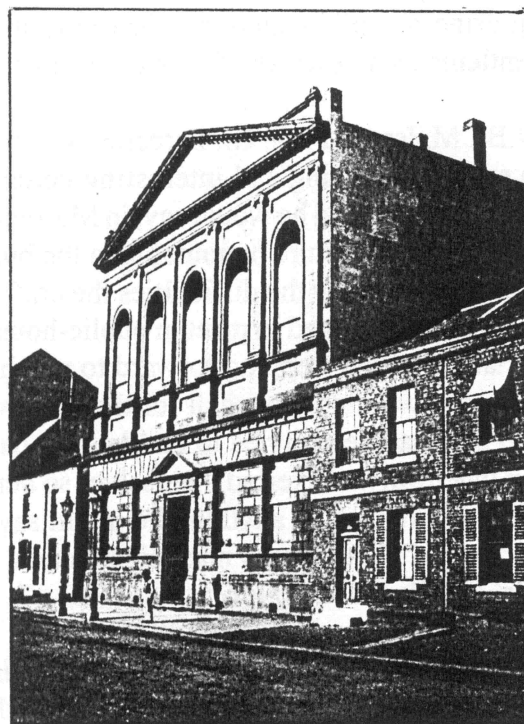
The Rev. Mr. King now retired, all the brethren standing.  
Air - "All Good Lasses."

The Chairman next proposed "The Ladies," to which Br. P.M. Israel responded in a humourous speech.

Several other toasts were then given and responded to, when, at about six o'clock the Chairman gave "Our next happy meeting," and the brethren separated, after having spent a most pleasant afternoon.



FREEMASON'S HOTEL, YORK STREET, SYDNEY



FREEMASON'S HALL, CLARENCE STREET, SYDNEY