



City of Grand Island

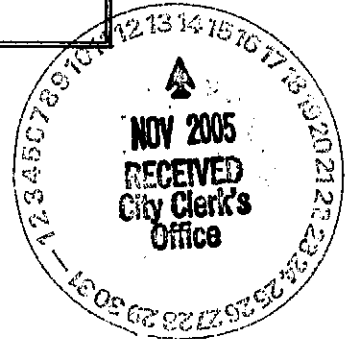
Tuesday, November 22, 2005

Council Session

Item H1

**Request from Wayne E. Vian for Ashlar Lodge No. 33 AF & AM
for Permission to Re-Dedicate the Cornerstone at Edith Abbott
Memorial Library and Policy and Procedures for Future City
Buildings**

Staff Contact: Wayne Vian



REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEM

If you have a specific topic that you would like the City Council to discuss at a future meeting, please list your name, address, telephone number, and the specific topic. The item will be reviewed and possibly scheduled for a future meeting, or forwarded to City staff for appropriate action.

Name: Wayne E. Vian for Ashlar Lodge No. 33 A.F. & A.M.

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Telephone #: 384-4717 H 398-7435-Work cell

Date of Request: 14 November 2005

Description of Requested Topic: 1. Ashlar Lodge No. 33 A.F. & A.M. is asking for the Grand Island City Council's permission to re-dedicate the cornerstone at the Grace Abbott Memorial Library.

2. Ashlar Lodge No. 33 A.F. & A.M. is asking for a procedure or policy where Ashlar Lodge can lay a cornerstone at future city buildings at no cost to the city for the cornerstone.

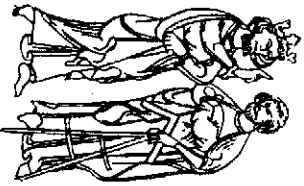
Today's Reasons for an

Ancient Tradition

What is a Cornerstone?

Until the development of steel-frame construction in this century, most buildings were erected by stacking stone on stone. Each part of the building was marked by ceremonies. The Foundation Stone was the first stone placed underground at the beginning of the building's foundation. The Cornerstone was the first stone placed above ground level, usually a massive stone which marked the north-east corner of the building. At the top of the building was a Cap Stone.

The ceremonies of placing these stones were under the direction of the stonemasons who built the buildings, although the highest officials of the church and state usually participated, including the king or his representative. The placement of the stones were occasions for public celebrations and fairs, each marking the progress of the building of the cathedral or castle.



Today, there are few actual cornerstones being placed, although you can easily find them on buildings built as late as the 1950's. Instead, a stone plaque, about 16 inches square and about the thickness of a brick, is used. Technically, it is called a "Commemorative Stone" since it is not part of the structure of the building but is put in place after the building is finished. But "Cornerstone" has remained the most common

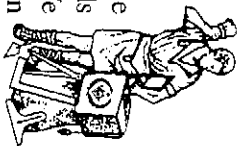
term.

Cornerstones have played an important role in the history of our nation as well as Europe. George Washington laid the cornerstone of the nation's capital building, both in his role as President of United States and his role as a Freemason.

Before that, Benjamin Franklin had established the tradition by laying the cornerstone of the state house in Philadelphia, when Grand Master of Pennsylvania. Since then, cornerstones have traditionally shown the date, the name of the Grand Master, and the Masonic emblem. Such a cornerstone has been part of the construction or dedication of almost every federal building and seat of state government since, including the state capital building of Nebraska.

Why does the Masonic
Fraternity place Cornerstones?

The Masonic Fraternity—the Freemasons—developed from the guilds of stonemasons of the Middle Ages. We are the oldest and largest Fraternity in the world, with a tradition dating back more than a thousand years. Our forefathers laid the first cornerstones, and we continue in their tradition.



Each large organization does things in the public interest—things related to their own heritage. The V.F.W. holds ceremonies in cemeteries on Memorial Day to honor the men and women who gave their lives in defense of the nation. The American Legion presents American flags to schools and gives programs on flag etiquette. Freemasons conduct cornerstone ceremonies and provide the stones, at no cost to the owners of the structure, on public buildings or buildings dedicated to religion, education, civic service or philanthropy. More than 10 such stones are placed in Nebraska each year.

What is the Ceremony Like?

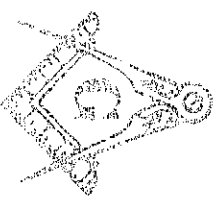
It has changed very little since George Washington laid the cornerstone of our nation's capital with full Masonic honors and ceremonies, as shown on the cover. The clothing has changed, of course, and much smaller stones are used now, but the rest is about the same. There are two elements to the event—the ceremony itself, and the celebration preceding and following it. Usually the audience is called to order, a color guard presents the American flag and everyone joins in the flag salute. A prayer is then offered.

What follows next depends on the wishes of those responsible for the building. You may want remarks by local officials (the Mayor, local ministers, council members, etc.) to proceed the Masonic ceremony, or you may want the Masonic ceremony to go first.

The Masonic ceremony itself is short, only about 30 minutes long. The Grand Master (state president) makes a few remarks, and then the stone is symbolically "tested" with the ancient tools used by the stone-masons—the plumb, the level, and the square. With each, there is a brief reference to history and expression of appreciation for those responsible for the building, and an expression of hope for the future.

The cornerstone deposit is made.

The officers then dedicate (or rededicate) the stone and building with corn (which represents nourishment and plenty) wine (which represents joy) and oil (which represent peace, healing and comfort). Those three "elements" have been used in dedications of buildings since the time of ancient Rome.



Cornerstone Deposit

From the time of ancient Mesopotamia to the present, "deposits" have been made in the foundations of buildings or behind cornerstones. Deposits usually include information about the building, the ceremony, artifacts of the time, and other material, sealed away for posterity. For many years, boxes of soldered copper were used to protect the deposit, but today containers made of PVC are used. They are more permanent and far less likely to leak. The Fraternity will provide some of the items for the deposit, but for the most part the selection is up to you. Providing the deposit can be one of the most exciting parts of a cornerstone event. See the PLANNING card for some ideas.

Companion Stone

Sometimes a companion stone is set next to the cornerstone. It is the same size, 16" x 16", and can be engraved with many different things. If the stone is set on a school, the companion stone might show the name of the architect, the builder, and the School Board. If it is set on a church Board. If it is set on a church, it might show the name of the Minister and Church Board or Elders. If it is set on a City Hall, it might show the names of the Mayor and City Council members.

Whether or not there is a companion stone, and what it says, are up to you.

Is the cost?

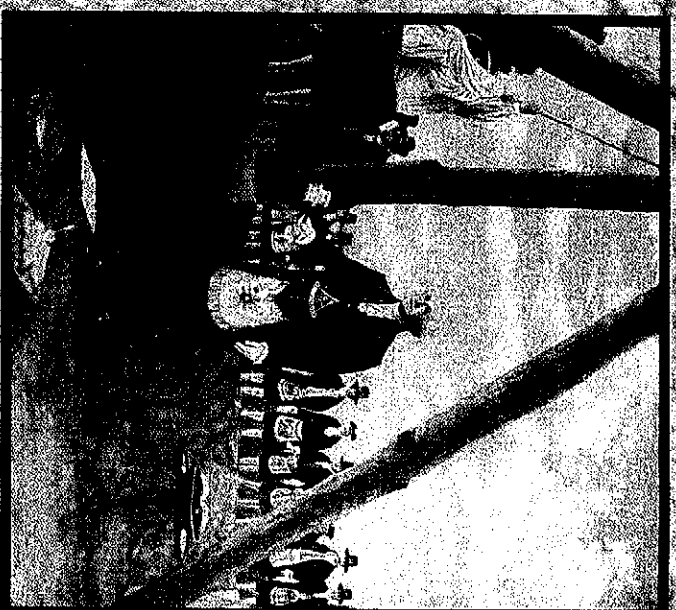
There is no cost to you for the Masonic portion of the celebration. The Grand Lodge of Nebraska pays for the cornerstone and the cost of having a local brick mason actually set the stone in its position in the wall of the building after the ceremony is over.

The only costs to you are for events you may decide to hold with the celebration such as public picnics, contests, etc. (see the PLANNING card for some useful ideas)

How do you arrange for a Cornerstone?

Arrangements are made through your local Masonic Lodge.

Today's Reasons



Corner- Stones



Cornerstones - either the placement of a new stone or the rededication of an existing one - provide great opportunities for celebrations for the whole community. The activities can be small scale, or they can be made major community events.

Most communities find it helpful to appoint a committee to plan and oversee events surrounding the ceremony. Sometimes day-long festivals can be planned with events designed to appeal to differing groups in the community. It often helps to involve local civic groups, schools, business associations, fraternal and sororities as sponsors or participants.

Idea Starters

Community Picnic/Barbeque - Arrange for some civic or business group to hold a barbeque, cooking the food near the town square (if that is where the stone is located).

Poster/Essay Contest - Ask the schools to have students create posters or, for older students, write essays about the event. For example, if there is a cornerstone on the city hall or county courthouse (or an existing stone is to be rededicated), students might write essays about the founding of the town, the role of local government, or contrasting the role of a citizen now and 100 years ago. Posters might show a vision of the original ceremony or town life 100 years ago, or of what life might be like in the year 2050. The posters and essays can be displayed as part of the celebration and some even included in the deposit.

Old Fashioned Town Concert - Have the high school band play a concert in the town square or on the school grounds.

Home Heritage - Contact groups of quilters, people who can fruits and vegetables, who sew, or who do crafts such as carpentry. Have them go to schools and tell students about the crafts and products and display them.

Town History - Arrange for local historians to write booklets about the history of the town or to give programs in the schools and at the celebration. A copy can be included in the deposit.

Family Funfest - As part of the celebration, set aside time and space for "old-fashioned" activities such as horse shoe pitching, three-legged races, etc.

Video Archive - Announce a contest for the best video tape chronicle of the events of the celebration.

"Time Capsule" Deposits - If a new stone is being laid, or if an original stone is being rededicated, invite the community to provide deposits for the time capsule. A time capsule can be placed behind a new stone, or buried in some marked spot (perhaps under the side of the building) for a rededication. Set up a location on the day of the celebration to receive the materials.

✓ Ask people for business cards to be included.

✓ Have photographers taking pictures of townspeople and students at the event. Use black and white film and deposit the negatives rather than prints (take less space and lasts longer).

✓ Have children record greetings to the children 100 years from now; include the tape in the deposit.

✓ Interview citizens to create an "oral history" of the town and include the history of the capsule.

✓ Include materials made or grown in the region. If it is a wheat-producing region, include a sample of wheat in a sealed test tube. (Make sure combustible materials like seeds are sealed separately to avoid spontaneous combustion.) If there are manufacturers in the community, include samples of their products if they are small enough, otherwise, include literature from the company describing the product.

Historic Costume - Especially if an older stone is being rededicated, invite the citizens to dress in the clothing of the period when the stone was placed. You might even plan a contest for the best costume.



Planning makes all the difference when it comes to having a community cornerstone event. Some things to consider include:

How large do you want the event to be?

The event can be fairly small - the Grand Lodge Officers and a few local officials can simply place or rededicate the stone with such citizens as happen by. It can be quite large - a two or three day event with public barbeques, dances, contests, family events, and many other activities. (Some additional ideas are on the card marked The Community Celebration.) But since this is a great opportunity to build public support of city government, unity within the community, and civic awareness in school children, it's worth some time and effort.

When do you want to hold the event?

It's important to start planning early, since it may take a couple of months to find a date convenient to your community when the Grand Lodge Officers are available. And weather is a factor. If the event is planned for outside, it's best to avoid both the dead of winter and the height of summer. It's a good idea to hold the celebration during the school day, so students can attend. More are likely to attend during the school day than on a weekend or evening.

Decide who will participate

The Masonic part of the ceremony is fairly brief (see the brochure *Today's Reasons*). You will probably want to ask some guests and civic leaders to make remarks before or after the cornerstone laying itself - perhaps the Mayor or your State Senator or Representative. Select the people you would like to have speak and invite them (it's a good idea to suggest a time limit such as 5 or 10 minutes). Be sure to have a list with names and titles ready to give to the Grand Secretary before the event begins.

Make a Deposit List

It will be very helpful if you make a list of the materials to be deposited in the time capsule. The list does not need to be detailed--it's fine to say "business cards from citizens" rather than trying to list the names of each person who deposits a card.

Where is the stone to be located?

If a stone is to be placed on a new building, the architect can plan a space for it in the construction. (The stones are 16" x 16"; if a companion stone is also used, a space 16" x 32" will be needed.) Sometimes, instead of setting them in the wall of the building, a short column of brick, stone, or cement is built, and the stone is set in that. If an existing stone is being rededicated, you may decide not to add an additional stone and simply provide for the burial of the time capsule. Perhaps under the sidewalk in front of the building. Sometimes a new stone is set in the sidewalk, covering the time capsule. Many combinations are possible.

Is there to be a companion stone?

Sometimes a companion stone is set next to the cornerstone. The companion stone might show the names of city council members, or school board members, or, if the building is to be dedicated to some well-known citizen ("The Michael Smithson City Office Center" for example), the companion stone might give a brief biography of the person.

Invite the media

The more advanced publicity you have, the better turnout from the citizens you can expect. It will be helpful to contact local radio and television stations, as well as the newspaper, and get them "on board" - asking for their help in spreading the word and building public excitement in the ceremony and surrounding events.



Why would you want a cornerstone on your civic building?

- ◆ It's traditional. Many county courthouses, city halls, and public office buildings have a Masonic cornerstone. So do many schools, churches, buildings on university campuses, and recreational facilities in state parks. There are even Masonic cornerstones on school buildings which were built before statehood.
- ◆ It helps instill civic pride. Ceremonies of dedicating a new building by placing a new cornerstone bring a sense of completion and participation in a major project. Rededicating a historic building by rededicating an existing stone is a chance to reflect on past accomplishments and share in optimism for the future.
- ◆ Cornerstones and their time capsules are a way to preserve the contemporary history of your community for the citizens of the distant future.
- ◆ Cornerstone ceremonies are a way to unite the citizens of the community in a celebration they can all share. Each group and interest can be a part of the activities surrounding a cornerstone ceremony.

- ◆ Cornerstone ceremonies provide an occasion for special school projects in civics, the recording of oral history by senior citizens, articles on community history in local newspapers, and many other activities to make local citizens more aware of their heritage.
- ◆ They also provide an opportunity for living study in American history. The children and adults will see a cornerstone ceremony which is virtually the same as that used by George Washington when, as both President of the United States and Acting Grand Master of Masons of Virginia, he laid the cornerstone of the nation's capitol building with full Masonic honors.
- ◆ Rededications of existing stones can combine an appreciation of the past with a commitment to the future and can serve as a bridge between generations.



Placement and dedication of Cornerstones on churches, schools, public buildings and facilities is a service of the Masonic Fraternity in Nebraska. Your local contact person is listed below:

For Cornerstone Information, contact:

Name _____

Address _____

Day Phone _____

Evening Phone _____

Lodge No. _____

**The Masonic Fraternity in
Nebraska**

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