SETTLING THE MAINE WILDERNESS

Moses Greenleaf, Maine's First Mapmaker

LESSON 10 *The Craft- Freemasons in Maine*

SUBJECT

Exploration of the importance of the Masonic community to Moses Greenleaf and his fellow members.

STUDENTS WILL

Explain the importance of social, civic, and educational organizations to a town's success

VOCABULARY *see note regarding Vocabulary in "How to Use" section*

fraternal organization, rites, masonry, square, trowel, tenets, temperance, fortitude, prudence, bigotry, a circular, cadre, ecclesiastical councils

PREPARATION

***** Teachers should be aware that Freemasonry may be a controversial topic for some people. Before assigning any research on Masonic symbols or beliefs, you may want to screen materials and websites.**

1. Read and copy for each student Chapter 9 of *Settling the Maine Wilderness*, "The Craft," pp. 45-48.

2. Read and copy *What is Freemasonry?*

3. Explore the information on the following websites: www.history.com (Freemasons, Masons, and Masonic Lodges) and

http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/freemason-symbols.html

BODY OF LESSON

Introduction to activity

Discuss the following:

What is a club? Why do people want to belong to clubs? Are you in a club? How would you feel if people said negative things about your club? Would you defend it? Have you ever had to "stand up" for your beliefs?

Activity 1.

Have students brainstorm clubs that they are familiar with. List them on the board or overhead, and ask students to identify the purpose or goals of the group. Note the main ideas on the board. (Possible groups that may be known to students include 4-H, scouts, Grange, Rainbow Girls, DeMolay, Lions Club, Eastern Star, Redmen, Odd Fellows, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Shriners, PTA/PTO.)

Ask students to think about what the clubs have in common, and how they differ. Tell them that they will be reading about an organization that was important to Moses Greenleaf and perhaps to the development of Williamsburg.

Activity 2.

Read about Moses Greenleaf's involvement with the fraternal club of Freemasons on pp. 45-48 in *Settling the Maine Wilderness,* and read *What is Freemasonry?*

Activity 3.

Remind students that the Greenleaf family had a history of involvement in Masonic groups. Moses was deeply disturbed by Reverend Sheldon's proclamations against Freemasonry, and composed a 28 page response. Ask the students to write a letter from Moses Greenleaf to the Rev. Nathan Sheldon, the minister who denounced Freemasonry. Their letter should show what they think Moses might have said to the minister and how he might have defended his fraternal organization, using what they learned in the reading. They should include examples of how Moses would have believed the Freemasons helped the community of Williamsburg. **(Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Evaluation)**

Activity 4.

Optional discussion questions:

*Women are not allowed to become Masons. Discuss any pros or cons.

*The rituals of Freemasonry are secret. Discuss any positive or negative ramifications of secret societies.

* How are the goals of Freemasonry similar to Moses Greenleaf's ideas about a "Household of Faith."

ASSESSMENT

Based on the writing assignment

EXTENSIONS

1. Have the students draw an image with symbols that represent their personal beliefs. For example, if they love nature or the environment, they could draw an animal or a tree. A paragraph describing their picture should accompany their work.

1. Go on a field trip to a local Masonic Lodge
2. Discuss with students the meaning of the Masonic symbols in the drawing at the beginning of the *Settling the Maine Wildernes,* Chapter 9, p. 45 (an enlarged view is attached).

Chapter Nine

THE CRAFT

Toil as we've toiled in ages past, to carry out the plan –
Tis this: The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man.

LAWRENCE GREENLEAF, "THE TEMPLE" (1916)

The road from Williamsburg to Sebec Village runs westward; not the proper direction, symbolically, for a Masonic journey, but the way in which Moses and Eben Greenleaf traveled when the moon was full, and they and their brethren "met upon the level and parted on the square."

Perhaps they rode in silence, as brothers and close friends often do. Then there would have only been the measured cadence of the horses' hooves against the timeless song of the vireo and the white-crowned sparrow. Through their minds might well have run their brother Goethe's lines:

The Mason's ways are
A type of Existence,
And his persistence
Is as the days are
Of men in this world.

Moses and Eben Greenleaf were Freemasons – not casually but with deep devotion to principle. The purpose and responsibilities they carried in their hearts spread in a network uniting men of stature across vast distances and equally wide diversities. They shared in an old faith, which asserts that a prevailing and creative process grooves the universe and creates a momentary expression in the life of every man. Call it God, express it as the Light, name it as best you can; it is the Architect of things eternal as men would be of things that come and go. It is this eternal spirit, this Master Builder of all worlds, that breathes in man the urge and the capacity to construct a better earthly home for humankind. This was the affirmation Moses and Eben shared as they rode toward Sebec.

Across the hills, other men would be traveling toward Sebec. John Thompson, who had received his Masonic degrees in far-off Greenock, Scotland, would be making his way over the footpath from his log cabin in Milo. Colonel William Morrison and Captain Ephraim Moulton, both veterans of the Revolutionary War, would be coming down from their hillside farms, and a score more men besides, all anxious to meet with their fellow Masons—the "dear brothers of the Mystic tie," as Robert Burns had characterized the fraternity. Eben Greenleaf spoke of this comradeship when he wrote to thank the brethren of Somerset Lodge in Skowhegan for the gift of batons used in Masonic rites:

I give to you the salutations of every Mason in this remote part of the country. We are

stimulated to exertion in the diffusion of light and knowledge when we remember that Brethren at a distance and personally unknown take so much interest in our welfare!

Wishing you all the happiness that can result from a strict adherence to the principles of our order, I am your friend and brother...[1]

We know from what Moses Greenleaf wrote that he saw in Freemasonry a philosophical expression of the earthly purpose for a man, a purpose that should become both a duty and a happiness. He loved the Craft of Masonry, and knowing this we find a deeper insight into the nature of his thoughts and beliefs.

What is the nature of this institution that drew men from farms and villages when hours were scarcely long enough in those days of pioneering and nights too short to heal all the strain? The fraternity in form and ritualistic language dates from the first half of the eighteenth century. From that point backward in time, the trail is at first distinct, but beyond the era of the great cathedral builders it becomes increasingly difficult to trace a direct lineage until, as when following a path long unused, one finds oneself losing and again finding the way. On an altar in Pompeii were found the symbols of level and plumb line; hidden in the base of Cleopatra's Needle were discovered a square, a trowel, and the word temple written in hieroglyphics; and, in the foundations of a very old bridge in Ireland, workmen found this inscription:

Live ye life by love and care
Upon the level and on the square.

The farther back one searches, the more universal seem the sources. We find them in the West, the Near East, and in the Far East where Confucian philosopher Mencius wrote, "Ye who are engaged in the pursuit of wisdom must also make use of compass and square." Thus it is not a continuity of organization that one discovers in a search for the historical foundations of modern Masonry so much as a kinship of aspiration embodied in a particular symbolism. It is the story of builders whose trade was the utilization of the arts and sciences and whose architectural aspirations early led them to speculate not only on the proportion of pillars, the grace of line, and the reach of arches, but also upon an eternal order forming a fabric over all.

To understand the genius of this fraternity, one must realize the coalescence that Freemasonry achieved. To the ancient affirmation of a Divine providence, creative purpose, and immortality, Freemasonry blended the tenets of the Enlightenment, which took delight in the arts and sciences, insisted on the rights of the individual, and sought a more perfect human expression.[2] As a result, hope of a better society arose within the ancient fraternity, enlivened by the new "fund of science and ingenuity" and supported by the old acclamation of morality and faith. This vision came to the hills of the Piscataquis in the spirits and minds of men who, each according to the Light within, considered it a privilege to be a brother and a builder.

The tenets by which modern Freemasons strive to live are compassion, the obligation of relief – which includes "restoring peace to troubled minds"[3] – and truth, by which is indicated the opposite of "hypocrisy and deceit." Reemphasized were the old cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice—the latter being considered to be a "boundary of right" that enables one "to render unto each human being what is justly due without distinction." The Masonic memorial service honoring the memory of a departed brother reads: "Though perfection of character is not of this world, yet we are persuaded that he sought to live by these principles of Masonry and that by them his life was made fuller and more meaningful."[4] By all this, Moses Greenleaf did intend to live.

Frequently the beliefs and intentions of the Fraternity have been misunderstood by the public at large and, while Moses and Eben met with their brethren and labored in their lodge, the darkest period in the history of American Masonry was about to descend. Fed by political intrigue and religious bigotry, the Anti-Masonic movement spread across the nation, even to Williamsburg and

Sebec. But until that darkness came, Piscataquis Lodge, the lodge of the Greenleafs, existed in peace and harmony.

It was Eben Greenleaf and Josiah Towle, a storekeeper in Sebec, who first sent out a circular requesting Masons to gather for the purpose of establishing a lodge. That was in the year 1822. The call assembled nine men, and the result was the chartering of Piscataquis Lodge, number forty-four in the new jurisdiction of Maine. Moses was elected master and Eben chosen secretary. The lodge progressed, as Eben Greenleaf wrote in the lodge records, "as fast as the infant state of this country [would] allow."[5] Moses became district deputy grand master, following in this position his brother-in-law Jacob McGaw of Bangor, and Dr. David Shepard took Moses' place as master of Piscataquis Lodge.

No doubt it was Dr. Shepard who was called to tend Moses when his last illness came. If so, then two men, friends and brothers, parted with a mutual faith and hope that did not end when Shepard left Greenleaf Hill and rode back to Sebec. So the order of men changes and the eternal relationships remain.

Moses and Eben came by their interest in Masonry both by inclination and family tradition. The Greenleafs were a family of Masons. The Reverend Jonathan Greenleaf was the first chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Maine. Simon Greenleaf led the group that formed that Grand Lodge. It was a distinguished cadre and probably not the easiest from which to draw a unanimous opinion. Included were such figures as Governor William King, Samuel Fessenden, and Robert Dunlap.[6] Simon became the second grand master of Masons in Maine, following William King.

Though Moses Greenleaf's father died before Piscataquis Lodge was formed, he would have taken pride in that accomplishment. He had himself been made a Mason in Newburyport, served his lodge as master, and then during the Revolution acted as master of Washington Lodge in the field—a lodge composed of men from the Massachusetts Line, and one that General Washington often attended. Captain Moses liked to tell how the general came and took his place without fanfare as though he were a private.[7] On moving to New Gloucester, Captain Moses had carried on his Masonic activities by assisting in the formation of Cumberland Lodge.

His own father had been a Mason also, taking an active part in the formation of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Massachusetts (an appendant Masonic body). So years later, in 1827, Moses and Eben Greenleaf were following the tradition of their father and grandfather when they helped form Mount Moriah Chapter in Bangor.

Moses Greenleaf began his Masonic career on October 1803 in Rising Virtue Lodge located at Bangor. The members of this lodge were a stimulating group. Dr. Elisha Skinner, who had been a surgeon during the Revolution, was master; Oliver Leonard, a lawyer and graduate of Brown, was senior warden; and General John Blake, another Revolutionary War veteran and then agent to the Penobscot Indians, was junior warden. Among the active members were Park Holland and Mark Trafton, both of whom have been mentioned in previous chapters.

All this took place under a high sun for Masonry, a time when men far from their original homes met with friends and brothers, old and new, swapped remembrances and the latest news in the anteroom, and renewed their convictions in the lodge hall. It may be true that "when it is darkest one can see the stars," for when the Anti-Masonic movement gained momentum, one quickly saw just who among the brethren would keep the faith.

In 1829 the Reverend Nathan Sheldon of Brownville, Maine, preached a sermon that placed Freemasonry beside intemperance, slavery, and infidelity as signs of the beast Sheldon thought now stalked the earth, ready to make its final slash at the throat of degenerate mankind. Sheldon's inclusion of political party spirit among his long list of present evils was particularly ludicrous considering the political hay he made by eliciting a fear and hatred of Masonry.

Still, Sheldon must have felt that he was doing God's work in denouncing Freemasonry. He appears

to have been a competent preacher, one of the first graduates of Bangor Theological Seminary and chosen to give an address at its first exhibition. He was elected clerk of the Penobscot Congregational Conference and was a prominent member of the ecclesiastical councils that were called for ordinations and matters of church discipline. He should have been better informed about Masonry, for he had received his Fellow Craft Degree in Piscataquis Lodge, being proposed by none other than Moses Greenleaf.

When Moses left the church that morning, he told Sheldon that if what had been said in the sermon were true, then he, Moses, would be "bound to renounce Masonry, and if not true, he was bound to vindicate" the institution. Moses' rebuttal to Sheldon's sermon filled twenty-eight pages—which, in his small script, means a lengthy epistle.[8] It was a thorough and clear statement following Sheldon's sermon outline, point by point. What effect Moses' retort had on Sheldon is not known, but the effort stood Moses and the Craft in good stead. The year following, he was appointed head of a Grand Lodge committee commissioned to consider "the peculiar duties of Masons at the present time." Their report ends with the following admonition to the brethren:

> that all true Masons should quietly let the tempest take its course, and fear not its consequences, while they endeavor to vindicate the sincerity of their profession by a well-ordered life and conversation, and by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

On December 10, 1829, Piscataquis Lodge decided to take just such a course. Moses was again elected master and Eben, secretary. They would wait with patience to hold their regular meetings until the storm of protest wasted itself. Moses was not to live to sound the gavel once more in Piscataquis Lodge, nor would Eben live to make another entry in his record book.[9]

On a Sunday afternoon in October 1947, three hundred Masons and their friends met on Greenleaf Hill where the road north parts with the road westward to Sebec. Before them was the memorial that Piscataquis Lodge, with the help of neighboring lodges, had just erected. It was a large, rough slab of granite with a plaque reading: TO MOSES GREENLEAF, PIONEER, SURVEYOR, AUTHOR, MAGISTRATE. FIRST MASTER OF PISCATAQUIS LODGE, NO. FORTY-FOUR.

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is the world's largest and oldest fraternity, or organization of men. There are approximately three million Masons in the United States (perhaps you know one,) and nearly five million in the world. In medieval times stonemasons were building the great cathedrals of Europe. They formed craft guilds so that they could protect the secrets of their trade and share their knowledge with apprentices. During the 1600s the English guilds began accepting members who were not working stonemasons, but learned men who had stature in the community. These men, "accepted Masons," eventually split into a separate organization called Freemasonry.

Masons are committed to becoming better men. They want to be of service to their families and their communities. The Masonic lodge provides men with a community of mutual support. Men join for different reasons; some are looking for other like-minded men, some are attracted by the history and tradition, some may be following an admired relative or friend, and some want a focus for their service to the community. To join a Masonic order in the United States a man must be over the age of 21, and must profess his belief in a Supreme Being.

Freemasonry teaches morality and ethics. It is not a religion, but members must believe in a God of their own understanding. It is not a political group, but Masons are taught to be active citizens and they are devoted to their country. Freemasonry is not a charity, but members give money to operate hospitals, clinics, Senior housing projects, and other service facilities. They provide college scholarships and loan programs, and support many community charitable projects.

Some Masonic lodges meet once or twice a month, while others meet only four times a year. Lodges often organize social events, outings, dinners, and sporting events for themselves and their families. In Maine, many lodges sponsor public suppers to raise money for charitable projects.

Masonic rituals and ceremonies are secret, largely due to tradition. The ceremonies focus on virtues such as temperance, mercy, fortitude, justice, honor, and prudence. Some people believe that by not disclosing secrets a Mason is showing that he is discreet and a person who can be trusted.

The most widely recognized Masonic symbols are the square and compass, tools of stonemasons. The symbols remind Masons to "square their actions" and "circumscribe their desires." Many Masonic symbols teach moral lessons, as they represent more complex or spiritual ideas. Some symbols of Freemasonry go back thousands of years and are found in ancient cultures. Because the notion of a Supreme Being is central to Freemasonry, many Masonic symbols (e.g. the Eye of God and the Masonic Altar) represent the Deity. (See enlarged drawing from page 45 in *Settling the Maine Wilderness.*)

www.freemasons.freemasonry.com/symbol.html
www.freemasons.freemasonry.com/historyfm.asp
web.mit.edu/dryfoo/masonry
www.masonicinfo.com/primer.htm
www.local.com/results.aspx? Keyword = freemasonry