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LAYING OF A CORNERSTONE OF A MASONIC LODGE

A Draft Statement Prepared According to the Instructions of
The Honorable Robert Dole

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LAYING OF A CORNERSTONE OF A MASONIC LODGE

We have assembled here today to participate in an ancient custom--
the laying of a cornerstone. This ritual with little or no change is one
in which Masons have participated for hundreds of years. It is, perhaps,
the last remaining link between Operative and Sepulcative Masonry.

The ceremony of the cornerstone is full of significance, with special
reference to its form, to its position, to its durability, and to its con-
secration. The laying of this cornerstone acknowledges our belief that he
who has a heart must have an altar and Freemasonry is no less the index of
what humanity is and needs.

Our Order stands before the world today, not merely as a marvelous
monument of antiquity, but as an institution that has maintained for so
many centuries the essentials of its primary organization. Freemasonry
has outlived the circumstances which gave it birth. Originally a company
of builders, whose monuments of rare skill adorn almost every part of the
old world, the hand of time has brought its operative labors to a close.
But the everlasting principles upon which it was founded are intact today.

History tells us that George Washington, who was at the time Master
of his Masonic Lodge, officiated at the laying of the cornerstone of the
Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. This was a memorable occasion for it
marked the realization of a dream that had been in the minds of our Founding
Fathers for many years.

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In all ages there have been adventurous spirits, restless to push out beyond the known frontier, and to search out new lands. Particularly has this been true in America. The hardy pioneer crossed the barriers of the mountains to find spread before his eyes a new and more glorious empire. But the pathfinder was never content--he pushed ever toward the setting sun.

Among these pioneers were Masons who took their Masonry with them and set up lodges as soon as, and at times before, the symbols of civilization could be established. With the great expansion westward to the Pacific between the years 1850 and 1875, a Grand Lodge was established in Kansas in 1856. From that time forward Freemasonry in Kansas has been concerned with the problems and vital issues of the communities of this State. This building further represents the strength of Freemasonry in your community today.

At a very early period in the course of his initiation, a candidate for the mysteries of Freemasonry is informed that among the great principles of the Order are brotherly love, relief, and truth. These virtues are illustrated, and their practice recommended to the aspirant, at every step of his progress. The instruction, though continually varied in its mode, is constantly repeated to impress upon his mind the absolute necessity of these principles in the constitution of a good Freemason.

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Brotherly love might well be supposed to be an ingredient in the organization of Freemasonry. But the brotherly love which we inculcate is not a mere abstraction, nor is its character left to any general and careless understating of the candidate, who might be disposed to give much or little of it to his brethren, according to the peculiar constitution of his own mind, or the extent of his own generous or selfish feelings. It is, on the contrary, closely defined. Its object is plainly denoted and the very mode of its practice is detailed in words and illustrated by symbols, so as to give neither cause for error nor apology for indifference.

Every Freemason is acquainted with the Five Points of Fellowship. He knows their symbolic meaning. He can never forget the interesting incidents that accompanied their explanation. While he has this knowledge and retains this remembrance, he can be at no loss to understand his duties, and what must be his conduct in relation to the principle of brotherly love.

It may be well to recall for a moment, Dr. Mackey's enumeration of the Five Points in his encyclopedia:

"Indolence should not cause our footsteps to halt or wrath turn them aside; but with eager alacrity and swiftness of foot, we should press forward in the exercise of charity and kindness to a distressed fellow creature.

"In our devotions of Almighty God, we should remember a brother's welfare as our own; for the prayers of a fervent and

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sincere heart will find no less favor in the sight of heaven, because the petition for self is mingled with aspirations of benevolence for a friend.

"When a brother intrusts to our keeping the secret thoughts of his bosom, prudence and fidelity should place a sacred seal upon our lips, lest in an unguarded moment, we betray the solemn trust confided to our honor.

"When adversity has visited our brother, and his calamities call for aid, we should cheerfully and liberally stretch forth the hand of kindness, to save him from sinking, and to relieve his necessities.

"While with candor and kindness we should admonish a brother of his faults, we should never revile his character behind his back, but rather, when attacked by others, support and defend it."

My friends, no further explanation of the Masonic meaning of brotherly love should be necessary.

This edifice not only is symbolic of brotherly love, but its creation presents to this Lodge and its members the challenge of opportunity.

Many of us feel a little sorry for the man who explains his status in life by saying, "I have no opportunity."

It has come to be accepted in the modern world that "absence of opportunity" is most often the absence of courage, and to be short of it

is a grievous flaw in one's equipment for happiness and success. But for those who are not so courageous as they would like to be, there is always this comfort: opportunity is infectious. One man of boldness and vision who conceives an idea and then goes forward to put it into operation in spite of all the numerous wiseheads who say, "It has never been done before," and "Do you not think the risk is too great?"--one such man making his own opportunity, makes opportunities for scores, hundreds, and perhaps thousands of other men. The man who clearly foresaw the commercial future of wireless telegraphy, for instance, made for himself a great opportunity, but thousands of others have found in it opportunities for themselves.

So the Freemason who looks into the real heart of his obligations will find opportunities which in their development will stimulate others in service. It is like a snowball rolling down hill--this living and working with firm courage and faith in behalf of others. But until man can find their forte in the larger world outside their own perfunctory daily tasks, they will suffer by the precise limitations they themselves impose. Truly has the poet said, "where there is no vision the people perish." (Proverbs, XXIX, 18)

We owe much to the sound and constructive thinking and the clear vision of our eminent predecessors who built wisely and well over the years. To the present-day Freemasons of this community is being given the challenging responsibility of erecting this building. The responsibility must be cherished. It is for us today to lay the cornerstone of an edifice dedicated to the spiritual values of Freemasonry.