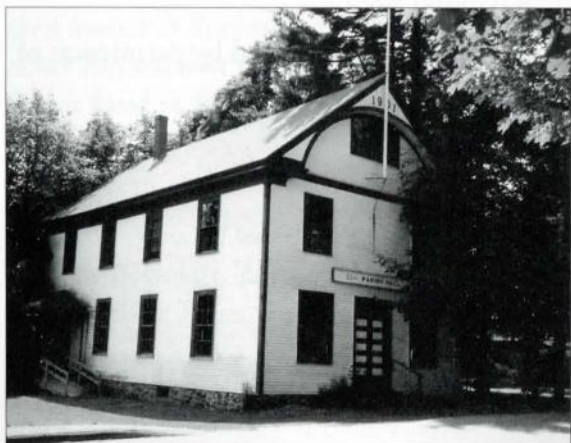


South West Harbor, Maine. Main Street looking South.

*Masonic and Odd Fellows Halls (left) on Main Street,
Southwest Harbor, c. 1911*



*Knights of Pythias Hall,
West Tremont*



*Eden Parish Hall in
Salisbury Cove,
which may have been
a Grange Hall*

Fraternal Organizations on Mount Desert Island

William J. Skocpol

The pictures at the left are examples of halls that once served as centers of associational life for various communities on Mount Desert Island. Although built by private organizations, they could also be used for town meetings or other civic events. This article surveys four different types of organizations on Mount Desert Island that built such halls – the Masons, Odd Fellows, Grange, and Knights of Pythias – plus one, the Independent Order of Good Templars, that didn't.

The Ancient Free & Accepted Masons

The Masons were the first, and highest status, of the “secret societies” present in Colonial America. The medieval guilds of masons, such as those who built the great cathedrals, were organized around a functional craft but also sometimes had “Accepted” members who shared their ideals and perhaps contributed to their wealth. As the functional work declined, a few clusters of “Accepted” masons carried on the organization. From these sprang hundreds of lodges throughout the British Isles, well documented by the early 1700s.

The first lodge in Massachusetts (of which Maine was then a part) was founded at Boston in 1733, and the ensuing Provincial Grand Lodge chartered the Falmouth Lodge in 1769. Another Grand Lodge in Boston with roots in Scotland chartered the second Maine Lodge, Warren Lodge in Machias, in 1778. Its charter was signed by Paul Revere. The fourth lodge (Hancock) was founded at Penobscot in 1794 and moved to Castine in 1803. By 1822 Maine was a separate state, with its own Grand Lodge, and the Lygonia Lodge Number 40 was founded at Surry (now Ellsworth).

Nowadays the Ancient Free & Accepted Masons (AF&AM) are still a going concern, along with their women's counterpart, the Order of the Eastern Star, and a “non-Masonic” organization open only to 32nd-degree holders in the Scottish Rite higher ranks of Masonry. Officially known as the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, the Shriners in Maine have Temples in Bangor and Lewiston. Every 4th of

July they come from Bangor's Anah Temple with their marching bands, their miniature trucks and boats, and their exciting go-karts, to enliven Bar Harbor's parade, viewed by thousands. There are still tens of thousands of Masons in "blue lodges" in thousands of communities across America. The symbol to look for is a crossed square and compass, with a G inside.

There are four Masonic buildings on Mount Desert Island currently used by their lodges. The **Bar Harbor** Lodge No. 185 (chartered 1882) occupies an old school on High Street, in the middle of a residential block. [See <http://www.BarHarborMasonicLodge.org> for interior views.] In **Somesville**, the rustic auditorium of the Mt. Desert Lodge No. 140 (1867), across from the fire station, is the summer home of the Acadia Repertory Theater. As is typical, the lodge rooms are upstairs, above the auditorium. The **Northeast Harbor** Masonic Lodge No. 208 (1904) has an inconspicuous sign marking the entrance to their upstairs hall, above the Holmes Store. In **Southwest Harbor**, the Tremont Lodge No. 77 (1856, first on the island, chartered when Southwest Harbor was part of Tremont) is at the corner of Main Street and Clark Point Road. A 1950s view shows E. A. Trundy's IGA store beside the door that leads to the 2nd floor auditorium, which frequently was the site of town meetings and other events. This picture also shows that the intersection then had a full-fledged traffic light!



*Second Masonic Hall, Southwest Harbor,
1950s - Photo by W. H. Ballard*

The final Masonic Lodge founded on the island, and one of the last in the state, was the **McKinley** Lodge No. 212 (1910). At that time McKinley was the name of the village we now know as Bass Harbor. In 1969 this lodge merged into the Tremont Lodge in Southwest Harbor.

Masonic “secret” ritual emphasizes upright behavior in the tradition of the ancient craft, symbolized by the Mason’s apron, as well as other traditions. There also is a long Masonic tradition of caring for each other, including widows and orphans. The Shriners, founded in 1872 as an organization where leading Masons “could have some fun,” are also widely known for their Hospitals for Crippled Children, their Burn Hospitals, and other philanthropic endeavors open to all.

An extensive history of the Masons in Maine can be found at <http://www.mainemasonrytoday.com/history/>. This website deals forthrightly with the anti-Masonic persecution of the 1830s, triggered in part by a political battle between Boss Tweed and Governor DeWitt Clinton in New York. By 1837 nearly all the 49 lodges in Maine were dormant, and only one dared attend the annual Grand Lodge meeting. However, by 1845 they were rapidly springing back to life. This history also gives examples of the bonds of Masonic brotherhood across the battle lines and in the prisons of the Civil War. The Grand Lodge of Maine sent \$100 to help their Columbia, S. C. brethren rebuild their hall, which had recently been destroyed by General Sherman’s March to the Sea.

The high point of Masonic membership came in the early 1960s, but in comparison with other lodge-type organizations, it has declined rather slowly. The Grand Lodge of Maine celebrated its 150th Anniversary in 1970. That year there were 207 active lodges in the state with 45,254 members, and 180 of these lodges had counterparts in the women’s Order of the Eastern Star, totaling another 32,309 members.



*Tremont Lodge,
Southwest Harbor*

Affiliated youth orders open to sons and daughters (and their friends) were the Order of the DeMolay for teenage boys, and Rainbow Girls for teenage girls.

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows

The Masons were not the only fraternal group that flourished in America – far from it. Another British fraternal order that came to the United States was the Order of Odd Fellows. Its distinctive American form split off in 1847 as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Some wives or daughters were given an honorary Daughters of Rebekah degree as early as 1851, but the founding of Rebekah Degree Lodges, run by and for women, did not occur until 1868. (Of course, each Rebekah Lodge had some male Odd Fellows as members, just to keep an eye on things.)



IOOF Ocean Lodge Badge

The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs were truly organizations with mass appeal. There were three pairs of IOOF/Rebekah lodges on Mount Desert Island, and their combined membership in 1926 exceeded the total number of males and females on the Island who voted in 1924 for President. (Calvin Coolidge carried MDI by a landslide 75%.) And it



Masonic Hall, Northeast Harbor, where the Odd Fellows also met, with the Holmes Store on the ground floor

wasn't that nobody voted; the membership tallies equaled approximately half of the adult population of MDI! It is unlikely that this was inflated by residents of surrounding areas, because there were also strong Odd Fellows Lodges at Winter Harbor, Ellsworth, Blue Hill, Brooklin, and Swan's Island. Summer people would have their primary membership at home, simply presenting their membership card (and secret handshake?) when visiting "from away."

The Odd Fellows virtues were Friendship, Love, and Truth (FLT) and their symbols included three linked rings and the all-seeing eye of God. Their ritual acknowledged the unity of all three Abrahamic religions (Jews, Christians, and "Arabs"), and incorporated a vast number of other meaningful symbols. In addition to social and educational activities, Odd Fellow membership provided a form of disability and life insurance for its members. The insurance function in particular was a common impetus to the formation of hundreds of similar organizations, from the 1860s through the 1920s, most of which did not survive the emergence of commercial insurance companies.

The three MDI IOOF lodges were Island No. 120 in **Bar Harbor** (founded 1889); Pemetic No. 135, **Southwest Harbor** (1895); and Ocean No. 140, **Northeast Harbor** (1898). Their corresponding Rebekah counterparts were Unison No. 107 (1902); Rowena No. 91 (1899); and Asticou No. 114 (1905). As with the Masons, the lodge numbers refer to the order of establishment in the state of Maine.

The Northeast Harbor IOOF/Rebekah lodges always met in the Masonic building, and did not construct their own. They surrendered their charters in the early 1970s, and consolidated into Island/Unison in Bar Harbor, which later merged into Lejock 67 in Ellsworth.



*Odd Fellows Hall,
Bar Harbor*

The Bar Harbor Odd Fellows Hall is still labeled as such at the top of its façade. It is now the Mayfair Mall between the Criterion Theater and Rodick Street. If you ascend the stairs at the center of the building to the second floor, you find a large hall with wooden flooring presently used for dance classes and the like. There are ancient rheostats on the walls for controlling the lights, and a huge safe still labeled Island 120 is sitting at the edge of the room.



*Postcard:
Masonic and
Odd Fellows
Block, SW
Harbor
(undated)*

*1997 photograph
of the same scene
by the author*



The Pematic/Rowena-IOOF/Rebekah hall in Southwest Harbor is next to, and taller than, the Masonic Hall. It presently is the Dry Dock Café and Inn, and retains no symbols that show its origins.

The original Southwest Harbor Masonic and Odd Fellows Halls had more distinctive gables than the present ones. However, each was destroyed in its own devastating fire. The Odd Fellows building burned in the general fire of March 1922 that destroyed much of downtown Southwest Harbor, but the Masonic building was saved. Similarly, the Masonic building burned down in January 1939, but the replacement Odd Fellows Hall was saved.

In recent times, the Odd Fellows men disbanded and sold their building. Somewhat sheepishly they couldn't bring themselves to warn the women, who were busy making new curtains and redecorating right up to the moment that they found out about the sale. At that point the nearest lodge was in Ellsworth, which had moved from the magnificent Victorian manse on Main Street near the river (now Rooster Brother and other businesses) to a very small building at the east end of Main Street, near the VFW. The Rowena women went there for a number of years, but by the late 1990s the number of members who could get around easily dwindled to fewer than the number of officers required to hold a ceremony, and the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs of Mount Desert Island became virtually extinct.

The Patrons of Husbandry

Another highly popular organization, which had rural roots, was the Patrons of Husbandry, more commonly known as the Grange. The idea of a Masonic-type organization for farmers was conceived in 1867 by

Oliver Hudson Kelley (1826-1913), who had been asked by the Commissioner of Agriculture to travel around the war-ravaged South after the Civil War. He was struck by the level of destruction and devastation that he witnessed during the survey. To improve the situation, he conceived of a secret society of farmers, which would assist in binding up the nation's wounds by emphasizing fraternal and brotherly love. While this new Order was being conceived, Kelley responded to pressure from his niece, Caroline A. Hall (1838-1918), a feminist, who successfully lobbied the founders to give women equal rights within the new Order.¹

Eventually nearly 600 Granges were founded in Maine, the last one being Rascohegan No. 588 in Georgetown, in 1985. For nearly a century the Grange had great political influence on behalf of farmers at the county, state, and national level. Moreover, the local grange hall was a unifying center of life for many rural communities, sponsoring educational programs, community suppers, and dances in a way that individual churches were less likely to do.

The Bay View Grange No. 267 was chartered in 1884 at **Salisbury Cove**. The Eden Parish Hall (pictured on page 36) there has the classic

design of the typical grange hall, and may have been built as its home. The **Mount Desert** Grange No. 278 was chartered in 1886 at Long Pond village in the Town of Mount Desert. This was a small community at the north end of Little Long Pond which soon moved itself over the hill to the newly developed village of Seal Harbor. The site now is part of the Rockefeller properties, and the last remnants of the Long Pond farming community have long since been removed.

The Mountain View Grange No. 484 was chartered in 1908 at **West Eden** (now Town Hill). Its grange hall was on the second lot west of Aquarius Antiques. All that remains are an old pump at the back of the property and wonderful stands of lupines each spring. The Ocean View Grange No. 508 was chartered in 1911 at the village of **Center** in the Town of Tremont.

Much later, the Mt. Cadillac Grange No. 564 was founded in **Otter Creek** in 1938, and the Rockbound Grange No. 568 was chartered in 1939 at **Islesford**, on Little Cranberry. Robert Pyle, Northeast Harbor librarian and local historian, says that he was a member of the latter grange in his youth. It met in the Islesford Neighborhood House until recently.



Mt. Cadillac Grange Badge

At present, the **Trenton** Grange No. 550 (founded 1925) is located on Route 3 at Route 120, and the **Bayside** Grange No. 476 (1907) is located on Bay Shore Road south of Ellsworth. These are the only nearby granges that still hold meetings.

The Knights of Pythias

The Knights of Pythias are a fraternal lodge for men founded on principles of Friendship, Charity, and Benevolence (abbreviated as FCB). Their female counterpart is the Pythian Sisters. Travelers headed downeast on Route 1 may still notice a modern Pythian Hall in Gouldsboro, and spot a large trailer-mounted castle on the left in a yard near

the Steuben line, used as a float in parades. Today, there is one surviving Knights of Pythias lodge on Mount Desert Island, **Bernard** No. 125. It has about a dozen members, but its Commander, Harold R. Beal of Manset, reports that meetings are no longer held.

The Knights of Pythias were founded in 1864 in Washington, D.C. The ritual and symbolism is based on the Greek story of Damon and Pythias, two friends who stood by each other in mutual willingness to sacrifice their lives for each other. The K of P reached Maine in 1872, when the Maine Grand Lodge was established. In all, more than 150 Maine K of P lodges were established, but by 1997 there were only 19 left.

The first Knights of Pythias lodge on MDI was Porcupine No. 86, which met in **Bar Harbor** from 1893 to 1917. Its counterpart Pythian Sisters Temple was named "Mascot". When Bar Harbor celebrated its Centennial in 1896, the Hamor Block on Main Street at Albert Meadow was decked out with bunting and a ten-foot-high Pythian symbol (with crossed axes and the letters FCB on a colorful shield). There is no evidence from Grand Lodge financial records that Porcupine No. 86 ever built their own hall.

The first K of P Hall on MDI may have been constructed in 1897 for the newly founded Atlantic Lodge No. 113 in **Northeast Harbor**, which lasted until 1908. The lodge had unusually large expenses of \$758 during 1897 and of \$850 in 1908 (just before it stopped submitting returns). Robert Pyle told me that there had once been a Knights



Hamor Block, Bar Harbor, where the Knights of Pythias met

of Pythias Hall in Northeast Harbor at what are now some stone steps and a grove of trees on the north side of Summit Drive a short distance from Main Street (east of the church and little park). The hall may have been converted to other uses when the lodge went dark in 1909.

The best documented K of P Hall on Mt. Desert Island belonged to Bernard Lodge No. 125 of **West Tremont**. At its founding in 1899, the lodge met in the Masonic Hall in Southwest Harbor, which was a village of Tremont at the time. In 1905, when Southwest Harbor separated from Tremont, K of P Grand Lodge reports begin to list the lodge as Tremont rather than Southwest Harbor. In 1908, the Grand Lodge record changes to West Tremont, coinciding with the building of a fine three-story hall (located on the southwest corner of the intersection of the West Tremont Road with the Dix Point Road). This also was when the Pythian Sisters Temple Pacific No. 84 was established.

Harold R. Beal, head of the lodge, told me that the move from Southwest Harbor to Tremont occurred on a cold winter's evening when most of the members had trekked from Tremont, and relatively few Southwest Harbor denizens bestirred themselves. The Tremonters packed up the records and paraphernalia in a sleigh and left town, never to return. It seems obvious that this incident was related to tensions surrounding the separation of the two towns, and surely preceded the decision to build in West Tremont.

The West Tremont Knights of Pythias Hall (pictured on page 36) is described in Raymond Robbins' book *The Houses of West Tremont, Vol. II*. Until its loss to fire in the mid 1940s, the hall served as both the K of P Hall and an important community center. At the Tremont Sesqui-centennial history night in July 1998, several residents came up to me and described playing on the steps of the hall, attending functions there, and even trudging up the interior stairs to carry fuel to the lodge meeting rooms upstairs.

By the time the hall burned, the lodge paraphernalia was being stored elsewhere. The postwar K of P met in the Town Hall in Bernard, and then it acquired the old school house that is now Edward Higgins's Antique Wicker store. Higgins later built a smaller, one-story Hall for the Bernard Lodge in exchange for the former school. Eventually the lodge also had to sell this property too, which has been converted to a

private residence.

The survival of the Bernard Lodge in a small town like Tremont shows that the organization was deeply rooted in the community. In 1917-1918 Bernard Lodge was briefly threatened by an abrupt membership decline (when the men went off to war?), but the membership of the Pythian Sisters Temple held steady and the Lodge survived to prosper in the 1920s, when the Pythians reached about 125 in each organization. Through the Depression and World War II, membership was low. After the War, however, membership revived to 1920s levels of approximately 125 men and 125 women. This number was quite remarkable, considering that there were also a total of 250 men and women in the McKinley (Bass Harbor) Masons and Eastern Star. The population of Tremont in both periods was only slightly over 1000, and that included all the children!

The Knights of Pythias Triad No. 61 in Seal Harbor (chartered 1915) met at the Neighborhood Hall there. Its counterpart Pythian Sisters Temple Mt. Desert No. 12 was chartered two years later. (Note that the K of P and Pythian Sisters reused the numbers of lodges that went dark.) The first Neighborhood Hall was financed by subscriptions and constructed in 1914, just before the founding of the lodge. This hall burned on January 28, 1919, when someone threw a cigarette into a wastebasket after basketball practice. But a much larger hall was immediately built on the same location, and was ready for occupancy by October 11, 1919. Mildred L. Wright (in the Seal Harbor chapter of *Mount Desert: An Informal History*) provides this information and states that both the Knights of Pythias and Pythian Sisters met in the new hall in 1920.²

The main floor of the hall had “a large auditorium and stage, with a balcony overlooking it. Downstairs were a banquet room, two Sunday school rooms and a kitchenette. The hall had lodge rooms on the third floor.” It survived until the 1970’s, when it was demolished, and the



*Bernard Knights of
Pythias Badge*

land was turned into a small park “appropriately named the Neighborhood Park”. The Seal Harbor Triad K of P lodge was merged into the one in Portland (!) in 1955. This suggests that it had a rather cosmopolitan membership “from away”.

The Independent Order of Good Templars

The IOGT was a temperance organization founded in western New York in 1852. It derived from certain Knights of Jericho lodges that had been established for young temperance activists who were too young for the established “Sons of Temperance” groups and yet had outgrown the juvenile “Cadets of Temperance”. The founder of the Order of Good Templar lodges found himself in disagreement with some of his first fourteen lodges, and started over with a new, and ultimately more successful, Order that declared itself “Independent”. Three IOGT lodges formed the first month, with the third admitting women from the start. Within the year all IOGT lodges had both men and women as equal participants.

By 1860, there were 80,186 members, including 20,339 in Canada, and a Grand Lodge for Maine was established, based on the existence of approximately ten local lodges. The Civil War disrupted its activities, and Maine membership in 1865 was only 9 lodges with 506 members. As the war-weary men returned, however, IOGT membership in Maine soared, reaching 21,849 just two years later.

That year (1867), A. C. Fernald of Sutton’s Island purchased a book describing the IOGT organization. When my wife and I purchased his copy of the book at an antique store in 1998, the corner was turned down on the page marking the IOGT funeral ritual. Fernald is listed in the 1872 and 1876 *Maine Registers* as a manufacturer of fish barrels, &tc. The *et cetera* presumably included coffins, and the services that went with them. Fernald later moved to Somesville, bought A. J. Whiting’s store and operated it as a general store, undertaker’s workshop, and post office. Today, the Fernald Funeral Chapel is being carried on by the third generation, and Fernald’s original Somesville store is now the Port in a Storm bookstore.

IOGT membership in Maine peaked at 29,144 in 1868, fell below 16,000 in 1876, and then recovered to around 23,000 in the late

1880s. Lodges tended to last at most a decade, and were continuously founded (in declining numbers) into the 1900s. The Maine membership declined to 20,000 in 1890; 11,000 in 1900; 4,000 in 1910; and 1,000 in 1920.

We have analyzed selected *Maine Registers* at four to six year intervals from 1872 to 1926 and turned up at least a dozen IOGT lodges on Mount Desert Island alone, and more than 66 in Hancock County at various times throughout the period. The table below presents the MDI lodges, their meeting days, and the directories in which they appear.

MDI Village	IOGT Lodge Listed	Maine Register Year									
		1872	'76	'80	'86	'90	'96	1900	'04	'10	'14
Mt. Desert	Green Mt.	Thurs									
West Eden	West Eden		Sat								
NE Harbor	Sea Shore		Sat	Sat	Sat	Sat					
Bar Harbor	Eagle Lake			Mon							
Mt. Desert	Progressive Fountain			Mon							
Manset	#341				Wed	Wed	Wed	Wed			
NE Harbor	Echo Lake #362				Mon						
Seal Cove	Mountain					Wed	Wed				
Seal Cove	Cool Ocean Echo					1Tue	1Tue	1Tue	1Tue		
Bar Harbor	Oasis #174						Thurs				
Seal Harbor	Name not given							?			
West Eden	Granite							Fri	Sat		

IOGT groups tended to remain small, and to meet in homes and churches. I have seen no evidence of any of them ever having a Hall on Mount Desert Island.

Temperance is associated with opposition to imbibing alcohol, but it actually had a broader meaning. A Currier and Ives 1872 depiction entitled *The Tree of Temperance* has a trunk labeled Health and major branches marked as Strength of Body, Happiness, and Prosperity. Beyond, one sees a well dressed family on the way to the village church, a horse and farmer at the plow, and distant hills. The tree itself bears more than 40 fruits labeled with such virtues and rewards as Fortitude, Discretion, Honesty, Faith, Hope, Charity, Self Respect, A Useful Life, Riches, Length of Days, and A Peaceful End.

Two Leaders of the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs: Watson C. and Constance J. Robbins of MDI

The grand buildings at Cottage and Rodick Streets in Bar Harbor (presently the Mayfair Mall), and on Main Street in Southwest Harbor (presently the Dry Dock Café and Inn) were built by and for the local lodges of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. At its peak in the 1920s this national organization and its parallel women's organization, the Rebekahs, had more than 1.8 million members. Its history on MDI is surveyed in the accompanying article.

By the 1950s the century-old IOOF was at half its peak strength, but still had vital hopes of reviving its full prosperity. The following intimate glimpse of an MDI husband and wife team shows the dedication and deep involvement that the organization could still inspire.

Watson C. Robbins was born on Swan's Island on July 25, 1910, the youngest son of Chester C. and Phoebe (Walls) Robbins. He was educated in the public schools of Southwest Harbor and graduated from high school in 1928. On April 11, 1934 he married Constance Irene Joy, born May 5, 1916 in Manset. Her father was Walter Joy, and her mother was Eva Leone Mayo Joy.

Watson initially worked as a mason in and around Southwest Harbor. In 1936 he began working for the Roscoe B. Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor. He soon had charge of the Hamilton Station large-animal facility of the Lab and eventually rose to the position of Superintendent of the entire Jackson Memorial Laboratory, one of the world's premiere sources of specially bred strains of mice for cancer research. Watson's father, Chester, and older brother, Eugene, were active members of the Odd Fellows Lodge Pemetic 135 in Southwest Harbor. Watson joined in 1937, and served as Noble Grand in 1940-41. Even though he and Connie moved 12 miles away on the opposite shore of Mount Desert Island, to Hulls Cove, Watson continued to participate in the Southwest Harbor lodge.

In 1941 Connie joined the Rebekahs, the predominantly female branch of the Odd Fellows. With what seems to be an unusual degree of independence, she joined the nearest Rebekah lodge, Unison 107 in Bar Harbor, rather than Rowena 91 in Southwest Harbor. (Or perhaps



"Happiness for Everyone Through Song"

*Rowena Rebekah Lodge No. 91 - President's Visit March 30, 1961 - "Degree Team".
Connie Robbins is in the front row, far left.*

Watson was the unusual one, staying with his family's lodge rather than transferring to the one for the town in which he now lived.) Connie was an active worker from the first, and was elected Noble Grand of her lodge for the year 1947-8. This coincided with the year that her husband was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maine.

Watson C. Robbins was elected and installed as Grand Master on October 15, 1947. Beginning October 17th, fires in several parts of tinder-dry Maine began to get out of control. Odd Fellows Lodges in the hard-hit towns of Waterboro and Brownfield were destroyed, as well as in Fort Fairfield at the opposite end of the state. But most of the world heard primarily about the fire at Bar Harbor. It burned much of Acadia National Park, destroyed the Jackson Laboratory, and threatened to obliterate the entire resort town of Bar Harbor. As Watson put it, "It was my experience to witness the evacuation of the town of Bar Harbor, to watch thousands of people leave their homes, to see hundreds of feet of flames envelop homes, and to see my own place of employment, one of the outstanding institutions for the good of humanity in this country and the whole world, go to destruction. Yes, and to watch the struggle back to a normal life again."

For her part, Connie "opened her home as a branch feeding station and not only served food provided by the Red Cross, but went into her own supplies she had stored for winter and used much of them." With

the shifting winds, the fire threatened Hulls Cove on several occasions over three days. Initially, Connie had been baking two squash pies when her neighbor came by and said, "Here you are cooking, and the whole town is about to burn up."

Connie evacuated her dog and one-year-old son, Eugene, to safety off island and then returned to keep up the feeding lines for the fire-fighters. Soldiers from Dow Field bedded down on her brand new rug. Some historic houses in Hulls Cove were destroyed by the fire, but fortunately not the Robbins home. The only death caused by the fire was in a rollover of an Army evacuation truck as a result of an accident, right near her house.

The fire destroyed the Jackson Lab and its precious genetic stock, but the laboratory regrouped temporarily at Watson's Hamilton Station in Salisbury Cove, and the buildings at the main lab were quickly rebuilt. Researchers around the world testified to the importance of the Lab by returning descendants of the specialized strains of mice that had previously been provided by the Jackson Lab.

Once she had served as Noble Grand of her local lodge, Connie had the right to participate in the annual meetings of the Rebekah Assembly of Maine, which she attended regularly for more than thirty years. These October meetings traditionally rotated among Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor. However, in 1965 when Connie was President of the Rebekah Assembly, the meeting was held north of Bangor for the first time, in Houlton, the shiretown of Aroostook County. This was something that she and Watson had been advocating for a long time, and they were pleased to play major roles in investigating and demonstrating its feasibility.

In 1949 Connie and Watson attended the Sovereign Grand Lodge and International Association of Rebekah Assemblies in California. Inez Crosby of Maine was the President of the I.A.R.A. that year, and Connie was chosen to serve as one of her Pages.

Connie's ascent to the Maine Presidency followed the usual route of her being elected Grand Warden in 1962, Vice President in 1963, and President in 1964. The 137 Rebekah lodges were divided into 29 districts, with the President selecting District Deputy Presidents to organize District Meetings for each. The Grand Warden was assigned

nine districts, while the Vice President and President each took ten. The officers made official visits to each of their District Meetings (held March – June), as well as to each of the lodges in those districts. The same districts were assigned year after year to each of the three offices, so that the normal progression meant that one person passing through the offices would have attended EVERY district and lodge in the state. On many official occasions, more than one officer was present. And then of course there were planning meetings, and committee meetings, and other official responsibilities. Attendance at the Rebekah Assembly meetings of nearby States and Provinces was encouraged.

Connie also attended the September meetings of the International Association of Rebekah Assemblies each of the three years, although only Past Presidents could be the one official delegate from the state. These conventions were held in Louisville, Minneapolis, and Chicago, respectively. She had to miss her “normal” term as Grand Representative the following year in Calgary because her son Stephen was sick and Connie had to take over the operation of his restaurant, “The Cove of the Four R’s” in Southwest Harbor. Subsequently she was able to be the official delegate to the International meeting in Pittsburgh.

The following Table presents the number of days or evenings each month that Connie attended Rebekah meetings during her three years in office. (Compiled from “Visitation” sections of her Officer’s Reports.)

Month	Grand Warden 1962-1963	Vice President 1963-1964	President 1964-1965
October (after RA)	4	1	6
November	4	5	14
December	5	3	Hospitalized
January	8	10	8
February	4	12	14
March	7	14	21
April	15	22	19
May	14	12	21
June	7	7	12
July	3	1	4
August	6	7	10
September	6	5	9
October (incl. RA)	4	3	4
Total	89	102	143

What did her husband think of all those absences? Prior to her election, he had already committed to the four-year path leading to Grand Patriarch of the Grand Encampment of Maine. Odd Fellows who had passed through several degrees could optionally join an Encampment and pursue an additional set of Patriarchal Degrees. Becoming Chief Patriarch of a local Encampment made one eligible to attend the Grand Encampment of Maine, which was parallel to, not subordinate to, the Grand Lodge. In his 1964 report as Grand Patriarch he wrote:

To my wife and son, THANK YOU for the cooperation and understanding during the four years I have traveled the road of Encampment Odd Fellowship. I realize, Constance, I have not been much help to you in your work as an Officer of the Rebekah Assembly, but I shall try to account for it next year. We will soon have more time at camp, Eugene, and do the things you enjoy.

Even though there were fewer encampments than Rebekah lodges, the efforts involved were still prodigious. Watson summarized his visitations during 1963-64 (as Grand Patriarch) as follows:

During the year I have made one hundred twenty-three visitations to meetings in all branches of the Order and have traveled 43,125 miles. I have visited thirty-five of the original 46 encampments and was present at eleven of the fourteen district meetings. During the four years I have served as an Officer of the Grand Encampment I have visited all but four of the encampments in the jurisdiction.

I represented the Grand Encampment of Maine at the Annual Sessions of Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and the Department Council, Patriarchs Militant of Connecticut.

The overlap between these two busy schedules can be hard to imagine. Examination of Connie's and Watson's 1964 calendars shows that they could spend many but not all Sundays together, as Odd Fellows events were not generally held on Sundays. Exceptions were statewide meetings of the Odd Fellows Home Board of Trustees, the Youth Committee, and the Planning Committee. Fortunately both Watson and

Connie were members of each of these committees during this period, and could attend together. Also occasionally they could set their complex schedules of official meetings to allow joint travel to related events in the same locale. The summer months of June, July, and August were mostly free, except for jointly attending the North East Odd Fellows Association Conclave in Burlington, Vermont in June, a Sovereign Grand Lodge meeting in Chicago in July, and the Sovereign Grand Lodge/ International Association of Rebekah Assemblies annual meeting in Minneapolis in September. Apparently the flight from Boston to Chicago impressed Connie: "665 miles an hr, 35,000 miles [sic] above sea level by Jet". Watson just logged in 2,500 more miles on his calendar, without comment.

During the busy months of January through May they had 5, 4, 0, 1, and 5 non-Sundays without one or the other or both having an Odd Fellows commitment. Two of these "open" days were tied up with Connie's commitments to the Gray Ladies at the Mount Desert Island Hospital, and one with her service on the Town of Bar Harbor Warrant Committee. In September the pace picked up again for both of them, until the state meetings October 14-18 in Lewiston. After that, Watson was out of office and his schedule was just his usual Saturday lodge meetings in Southwest Harbor.

Connie, however, was now President, with more duties than ever. On Thursday, November 19, after an official visitation to the Asticou 114 Rebekah lodge in Northeast Harbor, comes the ominous notation, "Fell off back steps. Broke 2 vertebrae. Blood clot and injured 1 kidney."

Nevertheless, the next day she checked off that she had attended Southwest Harbor's Rowena 91 Rebekah lodge, where Helen Dodge of Northeast Harbor was making her first official visit as District Deputy President. There is no check, however, by Saturday's "Presidents & Marshals Banquet & Reception", and by Monday it says that Watson went in her place to "Winterport, starting a Rebekah Lodge". Instead of her going to Stonington on Tuesday, the calendar records "Entered Hospital with Broken back". Twenty three days later, December 16th, she came home from the hospital, and her calendar notes the next day that she had to miss the Christmas Party at the Odd Fellows Home in Auburn.

She records relatives coming over at Christmas, and on December 26th wrote, "Stayed in bed 2/3 of day. Washed colored clothes, hung them out, made a dish of apple sauce." Surprisingly, her President's Report shows her already at lodge meetings in Portland on January 2nd, in Auburn on January 12th, and picking up her almost nightly schedule beginning in Bangor on January 19th. In her Report she expresses her disappointment at missing the Christmas Party at the Home "as this year I had chosen the I.O.O.F. Home as my Project, and had so planned on being present." She continued:

We all know that God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform, and I am sure that He felt that I needed a rest, but I am sure that I could have thought of a nicer way to have it.

Past Presidents continue to be called upon for a variety of responsibilities, and have a social organization of their own, which Connie headed in 1968-69. In 1990, when the Unison 107 lodge surrendered its charter, Connie finally transferred her membership to Southwest Harbor. She then attended Rebekah Assemblies representing Rowena 91, at least in 1990 and 1993. Watson died in 1993, and is buried at Mount Height Cemetery in Southwest Harbor, which Connie's Mayo grandfather helped to found. By the end of the decade, Connie had auctioned many of her belongings and moved to Las Vegas to be near her son.

An organizational activist such as Constance Robbins usually is involved in more than one such activity. The lodge sister who nominated her for Grand Warden in 1962, Adelpa McFarland Richardson, mentioned the following activities:

[S]he is a Past Matron of Eastern Star Harmony Chapter #41 of Bar Harbor, [and] a member of the following: Bar Harbor Business Women's Club, Mount Desert Island Hospital Auxiliary, Guild of Church of Our Father – Halls Cove, member of the Congregational Church, Past President of the Willing Workers Club, and is on the Board of Directors of the [Hancock County Chapter of the] American Red Cross. She has served two years on the Warrant Committee of the Town of Bar Harbor,

worked on the Community Santa Claus project for seven years. She is Vice Chairman of the Red Cross Gray Ladies serving at the Mount Desert Island Hospital in a very commendable manner.

Rebekah Pep Songs

furnished by the
International Rebekah

(1)

BATTLE HYMN OF ODD FELLOWS

Tune—"Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Mine eyes have seen the working
Of a vast united throng;
As they march beneath a banner
And they are three millions strong;
They have taken for their motto:
"We will help the world along"—
Odd Fellows, marching on.

Chorus

Glory, glory hallelujah!
Glory, glory hallelujah!
Glory, glory hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

I have seen them in the watchfires
Of a hundred circling camps;
They have gathered in their lodges
In the evening dews and damp,
As they said, "Upon our nation
We will place the Master's stamp."
His day is marching on.

Chorus

The lodge that gets the members
Doesn't sit around and croak,
But they get right out and hustle
In the battle and the smoke;
We can win a glorious vic-to-ry
By one united stroke;
Since God is marching on.

Chorus

—The Ohio Odd Fellow.

(11)

REBEKAH PLEDGE

Tune—"Always"

I'll be a Rebekah always,
With a heart that's true always.
Though some things be planned
I can't understand,
I'll lend a helping hand, always, always,
Days will not be fair always,
Still I shall be there always,
Not for just an hour, not for just a day,
Not for just a week, but always.

(2)

Tune—"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

I'd rather have fingers than toes,
I'd rather have eyes than a nose;
And as for my hair, I am glad it is there,
I'll be sorry as all of it goes.

For beauty I'd not take a prize,
There are others more beautiful far.
My face I don't mind it for I am behind it,
The people in front get the jar.

I'd rather be Mrs. than Miss,
I'm tired of dodging a kiss.
I'm tired of shrugging while others are hugging,
I'd rather be Mrs. than Miss.

(4)

Tune—"Auld Lang Syne"

A smile is quite a funny thing,
It wrinkles up your face,
And when it's gone you'll never find
It's secret hiding place.
But far more wonderful it is
To see what smiles can do,
You smile at one, he smiles at you,
And so one smile, makes two.

(10)

Tune—"Old Black Joe"

Gone are the days when only men can roam,
Gone are the days when women stay at home;
For now we see the women everywhere,
There's not a single line of work
They will not dare.

(Chorus)

The women, the women,
How they love to roam,
You'll find them almost any place
Except at home.
We're coming, we're coming, our time is getting short,
We hear their gentle voices calling,
Old Sweetheart.



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Footnotes:

¹ Howe, Stanley Russell. "A Fair Field and No Favor" - *A Concise History of the Maine State Grange* (Augusta, Maine: The Maine State Grange,

1994), pp. 2-3

² Wright, Mildred L. "Seal Harbor" in *Mount Desert: An Informal History*, edited by Gunnar Hansen. Mount Desert, Maine, 1989.

Photographs:

Page 36: *Masonic and Odd Fellows Halls* on Main Street, Southwest Harbor: postcard belonging to the author; postmarked 1 pm, July 29, 1911, Southwest Harbor. *Knights of Pythias Hall*, West Tremont: undated postcard belonging the author. *Eden Parish Hall*: photograph by the author.

Page 38: *Second Masonic Hall*, Southwest Harbor. Photo by W. H. Ballard. Used by permission of the Southwest Harbor Public Library.

Page 39: *Tremont Lodge*, Southwest Harbor. Photograph by the author. The Odd Fellows/Rebekahs were listed at the bottom of the sign after they gave up their own lodge and before they merged with Ellsworth's.

Page 40: *Ocean Lodge No. 140 Badge*, Northeast Harbor. *Masonic Hall*, Northeast Harbor. Both photos by the author.

Page 41: *Odd Fellows Hall*, Bar Harbor. 1997 photo by the author.

Page 42: *Masonic and Odd Fellows Block*, Southwest Harbor: undated postcard belonging to the author. *Masonic and Odd Fellows Block*, Southwest Harbor: 1997 photograph by the author.

Page 44: *Mt. Cadillac Grange No. 564 Badge*. Photo by author.

Page 45: *Hamor Block*, Bar Harbor. Photograph used by permission of the Bar Harbor Historical Society.

Page 47: *Bernard No. 125 Knights of Pythias Badge*, West Tremont. Photo by author.

Page 51: *Rowena Rebekah Lodge No. 91 - President's Visit March 30, 1961 - "Degree Team"*. Photograph belonging to the author.

Pages 57-58: *Rebekah Pep Songs Furnished by the International Rebekah*, a collection of 25 songs on a double-folded sheet. Undated; in the possession of the author.