

A brief history of Unity Lodge No. 479 by R:W: Phillip R. Hurwitz, Secretary of Unity

As its name suggests, Unity #479 is made up of a number of lodges which have consolidated with each other; these lodges are: Etolian 479, Charlotte-Corinthian 1088 (which itself was a merger of Charlotte 1088 and Corinthian 805), and Churchville 667. What follow is a brief history of each Lodge.

#### Etolian 479

Grand Lodge granted dispensation in 1859 to some brothers from Yonnandio 163 (now part of ERAC 154) and Valley 109 (now part of Inspiration 109) to form a lodge in Spencerport. In 1860, that Lodge was chartered as Etolian 479. For roughly forty-five years thereafter, Etolian met first at Temperance Hall, and then Upton Hall, both located on Union Street in Spencerport. During these intervening years, Etolian was instrumental in helping form Churchville 667, in 1867, and Clio 779 in 1877. According to a 1969 Trestle board, Clio Lodge was a tenant of Etolian, until it moved to its own lodge, that same year.

In 1904, the Lodge formed a separate corporation to build its own masonic temple, the cornerstone for which was laid in 1905, by the M:W: William Sutherland. In 1906 the building was completed and formally dedicated by the M:W: Townsend Scudder. The cornerstone is plainly visible at the NE corner of the lodge, just above the sidewalk.

Five years later, the Lodge was nearly destroyed by fire; it was rebuilt. Pictures of the devastation can be viewed in the anteroom leading into the lodge.

Do you remember Bully Hill Wine? In the day, it was a popular wine, due in some part to its iconoclastic owner, Walter Taylor. In 1977 Etolian hosted Mr. Taylor to present a Wine tasting at the lodge. It was co-sponsored by Etolian Chapter 308 (OES)

Etolian Lodge was involved in the affairs of the community. The then Ogden Town Supervisor (where the Village of Spencerport is located), was W: Don Walzer, PM of Etolian. During his watch as supervisor, the Town built a community center. In 1992, the cornerstone to the new center was laid in a masonic ceremony led by the M:W: Sheldon Blank.

1992 was also a time of sad remembrance of a dearly departed brother. Bro. Charles Dyer was very devoted to the lodge, and so very much wanted to become Master. At the time of his death, he was Senior Warden. He made quite an impression on his brothers, so much so that a memorial service was held in his honor at a local church.

In 2004, Etolian merged with Charlotte-Corinthian to become Unity Lodge 479.

## Corinthian 805

Corinthian 805 received its charter from Grand Lodge in 1893. The lodge was formed out of a desire to have a lodge located in the northern part of Rochester (generally Charlotte). A number of the charter members came from Yonnandio 163, Genesee Falls 507 (both now ERAC 154) and Valley 109 (now Inspiration 109). The physical lodge itself was built by a very generous Brother; his name being John Ashton. The lodge was first located at 693 Lake Avenue; which is just south of Glenwood Ave., near Lexington. The Lodge would later move in 1903 to the newly built Masonic Temple on North Clinton Avenue (where the current RTS Depot now stands).

The Lodge in 1928 would relocate again, this time to the newly built Downtown Temple on E. Main Street; there it would remain until its merger with Charlotte 1088 in 1986.

Corinthian was highly regarded for its skill in performing the third degree. There was demand for Corinthian's talents throughout our region.

In 1920, the Lodge was invited to exemplify the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree at Jessee L. Cooley Lodge 966 located in Elmira (now known as General Sullivan 95, located in Horseheads).

It turns out that getting to Lodge was an ordeal. The brothers first had to take a train to Canandaigua, where they then transferred to another train to take them to Elmira. Here is what is contained in the Lodge's historical record: " says Worshipful Brother Claude' E. Van Houten . . . "We left on the 11:15 train on March 8, 1920, for Canandaigua, and transferred to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Because of a train wreck beyond Penn Yan, we were four and one-half hours late upon our arrival at Elmira. Dinners had been saved for us and we ate in a hurry. We began work at nine o'clock, and finished about twelve. We then went to a hotel for the night and returned to Rochester the next morning. "

## Charlotte 1088

Charlotte 1088 was chartered 1n 1928, although amid some controversy regarding jurisdiction. <sup>1</sup> The Charlotte area of Rochester at the time came under the masonic jurisdiction of every lodge within the first Monroe District. This jurisdictional issue was worked out.

Charlotte initially met in the Odd Fellows Hall on Stutson Street (the Hall remains standing today; look for the I.O.O.F rings at the top of the building). Due to the economic depression that gripped the Country, the Lodge was forced by the landlord to vacate the Odd Fellows Hall in 1935. A new building in which to meet was found at the corner of Lake Avenue and Stutson Street. It was not an ideal situation, since there were residential apartments in the building. The records note that the

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, there were over 30 lodges in Monroe County, necessitating that the County be divided into two masonic districts. The two Monroe Districts were merged in the early 1990's

brothers had to navigate wet laundry hanging about while they made their way to the lodge room on the third floor.

In 1944, the lodge instituted a building fund in the hopes that an opportunity might present itself. It's said that luck is merely when preparation meets opportunity . . . and so Charlotte became lucky that same year. Word came out that there was a building located in Charlotte that was no longer needed by its owner. This building, built in 1911, contained electrical transformers that were used to power trolley car lines. Time, along with the advent of alternative transport, made the need for this infrastructure, obsolete. The Lodge purchased this building from the Rochester Transit Company for a "nominal" sum in 1944. Apparently this was a cash transaction because no mortgage was used to secure the purchase of this building.

Converting an industrial building into a masonic lodge took a huge amount of imagination and sweat equity, but the brothers pulled it off. You can see the fruit of their labors in the pictures that hang in the anteroom at Unity Lodge. The Lodge's conversion was completed and dedicated by a contingent from Grand Lodge in 1945.

As of 1961, the Lodge boasted a roster of nearly 500 members. From a 1976 program for the installation of officers . . . came these words: "LET US BE TOLERANT OF THE IDEAS AND WAYS OF OTHERS."

#### Churchville 667

Churchville 667 was chartered in 1868. Both Etolian Lodge and Olive Branch (Leroy NY) Lodges assisted in the formation of Churchville Lodge.

The record is unclear as to where in Churchville (or the town of Riga for that matter) the Lodge initially met. In or around 1924 the Lodge purchased the building that it was meeting in. M.: W.: Arthur Tompkins dedicated the new lodge building. The lodge remained in this building until it was sold, and the lodge later consolidated with Unity Lodge in 2008.

At the time (and to this day) there is a grain mill located within the Village limits. The Mill was a major employer in the village, and counted a number of masons as its employees.

A bit of remarkable history connects Churchville Lodge to the M.:W.: Dewitt Clinton (who in addition, was the Governor of New York and the motivating force behind the development of the Erie Canal). Under Bro. Clinton's hand, Grand Lodge issued a charter in 1813 to Harmony Lodge 212 which met in Riga (the town in which the Village of Churchville is located). The Morgan Affair, and the subsequent Anti-Masonic rage throughout the Northeast which followed, led to the Lodge going dark. According to one historical account, the Lodge surrendered its charter to Grand Lodge. Another account has it that the original charter wasn't surrendered to Grand Lodge, but instead was discovered roughly 100 years after its issuance, in a trunk in someone's attic; that someone being the great-granddaughter (Janet Kelsey) of the Master to whom the Grand Master issued the charter to. Another account quotes Ms. Kelsey telling a local reporter that she would be willing to relinquish control of this charter to the "proper masonic authorities on request. . ."

Another tie that Churchville 667 had to Harmony 212 was found in the minute's book for Harmony. It covered the years 1814 to 1825. For over a century, this book was unaccounted for, when it was discovered in all places, in a college library (Berea College) located in Kentucky. The college returned the Minute Book to Churchville, who in turn turned it over to Grand Lodge

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