



2012 Mark Twain Masonic Awareness Award Submission

St. John's Lodge #1
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Founded in 1736, St. John's Lodge #1 is one of oldest continuously operating Lodges in the Western Hemisphere. We are the largest Lodge in New Hampshire with over 250 members and our membership has grown annually over the last several years - no small feat in today's environment. We have a rich and valued history to which our officers looked for inspiration and guidance as we planned for 2012. With our ongoing commitment to brotherhood, friendship and community, our goal was to strengthen our Lodge for those that would follow us in the years to come while maintaining and respecting the traditions of our past.

Our plan was simple:

- Build on our past successes
- Maintain our traditions and improve on them where possible
- Create a number of new events to:
 - Increase Masonic Awareness
 - Keep our Lodge vibrant and vital for our younger brethren

Our goals were to help our lodge evolve in ways that are respectful of our history while making it relevant to men in the 21st century and to increase our awareness in the community.

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Planning:

We are blessed to have a strong line of officers and past masters who are actively involved in our lodge. Unlike many lodges today which struggle to fill their chairs, we have the luxury of allowing our officers to progress through the chairs in an orderly manner and learn their roles and responsibilities. Our officers learn from those ahead of them and are well prepared to take on the greater responsibilities presented by each new chair.

We are also blessed to have an active and well governed district. Our district officers regularly hold "Masters Classes" for those who are progressing towards the East. We make sure to have our Wardens attend these classes where such diverse topics as Protocol, Planning and Running a Meeting, and Choosing and Developing Officers are discussed. One of the most important classes offered on an annual basis is Planning for Your Year in the East. This class helps each incoming Master to form a framework for the upcoming year. We learn what we *must* plan for, when certain activities *should* take place and suggestions are made regarding things we *might* wish to consider.

By the time a new slate of officers is ready to be installed, they are well prepared. For 2012, we began our formal planning process in the fall of 2011, where we began to layout the calendar of events for the coming year.

In December of 2011, we held an Officer's meeting where we brainstormed other possible events and activities for our Lodge.

One of the first steps we undertook was the development of a Vision Statement for our Lodge which would serve as a guide for 2012 and beyond.

With our Vision Statement as our foundation, we began in earnest to plan and prepare for 2012.

The following is a description of the work we have performed over the last 12 months which we believe has most contributed to enhancing Masonic Awareness in our community.

Please see the Appendix for a copy of our Vision Statement.

Out of Hibernation 5k Road Race: For the past 6 years, our Lodge has sponsored a 5k Road Race to benefit local charities. The race has grown every year and in 2012 we had over 275 registered runners and were able to donate \$7000.00 to our beneficiary, The Seacoast Family Food Pantry.

The Road Race is our biggest event of the year. We enlist our brothers to obtain sponsors for the race as the sponsorships are the major source of the race proceeds. The registration fees paid by the runners primarily cover the fixed cost of the race (t-shirts, police patrols, etc.). Our road race committee is responsible for obtaining the appropriate permits, designing our t-shirt, promoting the race, registering runners, contracting with the timing service, etc. as well as running activities on the day of the actual event.

Not only have we been very successful in making meaningful donations to local charities, the road race has greatly increased our visibility in The City of Portsmouth. The race has developed a loyal following and on the day of the event we open our doors to runners, family and friends. We provide a warm place to prepare for the race or cool down afterwards (as it can sometimes be quite chilly in Mid-April in New Hampshire!). Refreshments are served, awards presented and tours of the Lodge Building Offered to those who are interested.

For more information, please follow this link:

<http://www.portsmouthfreemasons.org/the-2011-out-of-hibernation-5k-road-race/>

Scholarship Program: We annually give approximately 5 (five) \$500 scholarships to Portsmouth High School students based on academic merit, need, and extra-curricular activities. We also have approximately 2 (two) \$500 scholarships available for non-Portsmouth students. Finally we have an Electrical Tradesman Scholarship available for approximately \$500. We annually receive about 100 applications for these scholarships. The recipients are chosen by our Scholarship Committee. The students and their families join us for dinner and are presented their scholarships at one of our Semi-Public Meetings.

Open House - In October, we opened the doors of our Lodge to the public for tours of our building and Lodge room and to answer questions about Freemasonry. Our Masonic Temple building was formerly the residence of Wallace Hackett, a prominent lawyer who served as the Mayor of Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1907-08

and in the State Legislature during 1909-10. His magnificent Neo-Georgian residence known as the Hackett House was purchased in 1920 to become a part of the Masonic Temple serving the Portsmouth Masonic Bodies. This annual open house attracts those interested in the history and architecture of Portsmouth as well as those interested in Freemasonry. Although the event is not designed to promote Freemasonry in and of itself, we receive several petitions annually as a result.

Trestle Board - Our Monthly Trestle Board includes a message from the Master, Secretary, and a Historical Sketch of a prominent past member of St. John's Lodge provided by our Historian, as well as a calendar of events for the upcoming month. The Trestle Board is delivered electronically to all brothers with a valid e-mail address and sent via US Postal Service to the remainder. The Trestle Board is posted on our website as well.

We also make use of the **Call'em All System** for reminders of upcoming special event.

For an example of one our Trestle Boards, please follow this link: <http://www.portsmouthfreemasons.org/st-johns-lodge/march-2011-trestle-board/maytrestleboard/>

A copy of a recent Trestle Board is also attached to this submission.

Game Night - We hosted a "game night" on February 29th, where we invited brothers from around our district as well as men who may have been interested in learning more about Freemasonry. The 3rd floor of our Lodge Building is home to our game room which has a large screen TV, 2 pool tables as well as a card table. We had over 30 guests join us that evening for pizza, friendly competition, and fellowship.

Ghosts on the Banke - One of our most successful new initiatives this year was our participation in the "Ghosts on the Banke" event at Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth.

This year, the brothers of St. John's Lodge offered to set up a haunted house in the Pitt Tavern and to "haunt" the Tavern Rooms as part of the Ghosts on the Banke event. Although this was not a competition, we had one of the most popular and well decorated spaces for the event. The Ghosts on the Banke attracted nearly 4,000 attendees this year, and a majority of them experienced our haunted house and were exposed to an example of what

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Freemasons do for the first time. Although the goal was not necessarily to increase Masonic Awareness, this was certainly a by-product of the event. We are certain that in years to come people will be drawn to this event in part because of the job we did and we will only get better in coming years.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.portsmouthfreemasons.org/2012/10/a-haunted-halloween-hit/>

Please also see the Appendix for information regarding Freemasonry's connection to Strawberry Banke Museum and a copy of an email from the Director of Strawberry Banke thanking us for our participation.

Website - In the early spring of 2011, two of our brothers began a complete redesign and reconstruction of the St. John's Lodge No. 1 Website. The goal was to create a website that would stay updated with important information and a schedule of events relevant to St. Johns. A number of new categories and pages were created which included: a officers directory, an electronic version of the monthly trestle board, a calendar of events, contact information, a history of St. John's, accommodations in the Portsmouth area for visiting brethren, a home page message posting board, a "marketplace" page offering commemorative items from the St. John's 250th and 275th Anniversary, Photo Albums (of Lodge events), St. John's sponsored Scholarship Information, and a Worshipful Masters page. A membership petition can also be downloaded from several different pages on the site.

In addition, Special categories were established in the home page menu bar to include items such as links to numerous on-line Masonic publications, the St. John's annual 5K Road Race, an Introductory to Freemasonry which includes video clips on becoming a mason, biographies of famous Masons, a review movies and television programs that feature Masonry, links to appended bodies, FAQ's, links to numerous Masonic websites and blogs, and a special Masonic events page that lists activities going on in other lodges within an hour's drive of Portsmouth. All pages have connections to social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

Currently the site consists of 16 categories, 61 pages, 83 posts, four video clips and over 170 photographs. Plans are currently in the making to revise and expand the site

incorporating interactive sections for members of Saint John's No. 1 and more animation/video media (especially of lodge events) in the content. St. John's website is designed and maintained utilizing the same web page/ blog software as the Grand Lodge of N.H. - Word Press 4.0.

For more information, please visit us at:

<http://www.portsmouthfreemasons.org/>

St. Johns Sunday - On Tuesday June 24, 1755, the members of St. John's Lodge #1 formed a procession from the Lodge to Queen's Chapel (later to be renamed St. John's Church) where a sermon was preached by The Rev. Arthur Browne and then the Masons returned to the lodge room to feast and enjoy one another in social conversation.

During the last 257 years, there have been years when we did not march, but for the last 96 years that string has been unbroken.

This year was no different. The Grand Lodge under the direction of Most Worshipful Brother Paul M. Leary, along with many other constituent Lodges marched with us to church to celebrate St. John's Sunday. In total, there were 102 masons, Portsmouth Police Honor Guard, band members and Rainbow Girls, who continued this long tradition.

Please see Appendix for more information on St. John's Sunday

Educational Programs - We believe that one of our greatest responsibilities as Officers is to provide an atmosphere where good men can learn the lessons of Freemasonry and how we can incorporate these lessons into our daily lives.

This is known as Masonic Formation and it is the ever continuing process of spiritual and intellectual growth that we must all undergo to improve ourselves in Masonry. It is the process of fitting the rough ashlar of our imperfect being in the perfect ashlar fit for the divine temple.

Towards that end, our goal was to provide an educational program or lecture at as many of our stated meetings in 2012 as possible. Throughout the year we have presentations on such diverse topics as, "The Middle Chamber Lecture", "The Shriners Hospital and Work of Local Shriners", "The History of Masonic Ritual", and "Freemasonry during The Civil War."

General William Whipple Lodge Joint Program- In March, we invited our Brethren from General William Whipple Lodge to assist us in performing the Second Section of the Master Mason Degree. Whipple Lodge is a small historical lodge which only meets occasionally and has very little opportunity to perform degree work. They performed their degree work in their traditional colonial attire and the evening was a great success for the brothers of both lodges.

Toys for Tots - During the Month of December we collect toys for donation to this program. Brother's who bring a toy to one of our meetings are rewarded with a free supper.

Other Programs: Throughout the year, we held an number of other events including:

- Veteran's Program: A Semi-public meeting where we recognize Masons who have been part of our fraternity for significant periods of time.
- Past Master's Night -16 Past Masters joined us for Supper and performed the Section of the Master Mason Degree.
- Special Ladies - Our Special Ladies and their guests were treated to a dinner cruise on New Hampshire's beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee.

Summary:

Like most years, we have been extremely active in 2012. We have not attempted, nor was it our goal, to re-create the wheel. We had a solid foundation on which to build and the high expectations of those who came before us to spur us on.

Those expectations start with our ritual. We strive to be the best the best possible ritualists we can be and that may well be our highest priority. The lessons taught by our ritual inform everything else we do.

Thankfully, we have ample opportunity to practice our ritual. In addition to our Stated Meetings, we have had at least one other Special Communication per month and often more than that. Not only have we raised many new Masons, we have performed degree work for other lodges and invited less active lodges to perform degree work on our candidates.

Our work with other lodges is but one example of how we have increased Masonic Awareness within the Fraternity. The quality of our Trestle Board and our website and our use of the Call'Em All system; as well as our frequent educational programs and social events are all ways that we have strived to improve our methods of communication and the content of that communication. There is not one method that works for every brother so it is incumbent upon us to experiment with different media and to evaluate the success of each by soliciting feedback from the brethren.

Keeping our brethren engaged and active in Freemasonry is but one side of the coin. We must attract new brethren as well and we have done well in that arena as well. Our Lodge has grown consistently over the past several years. Much of our growth has been the result of our activities outside the Lodge such as our 5k Road Race, Scholarship Programs and Open House Events. We have never created an event with the sole goal of attracting new membership, however. Our goals have been to do charitable work and to hold events which are of interest to the brethren. We solicit their feedback and tailor our participation to their wishes. One our most important mantras is, "It's your fraternity." It is the responsibility of each brother to help our Lodge become what they want it to be.

In conclusion, there is much we have done well in the last twelve months. We have attracted new members, retained those who regularly attend lodge, and have lured back a few that had become "rusty" for one reason or another. We have expanded the positive image we have in our community that was built over the years by those who came before us, and have created a few new traditions that those who follow us will maintain in the future.

We are proud to say that Freemasonry is thriving in our Lodge and the Portsmouth area and that we are well positioned for continued growth and success in 2013 and beyond.

APPENDIX

Vision Statement:

The Brethren of St. John's Lodge no. 1, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire remain devoted to the preservation of our rich heritage as the oldest Masonic Lodge in continuous operation in the western hemisphere. We are ever reminded to humble ourselves before God and to practice Charity. We contribute to the relief of the poor and distressed within our reach, but more particularly to Brother Masons, their widows and orphans.

Moreover, we practice financial prudence and responsibility, so that we may continue to provide this and future generations a place to receive fellowship and an exceptional Masonic education.

We welcome Brethren from lodges near and far to join us in fellowship and Brotherly love and we cheerfully sojourn into our community, other Masonic Lodges and Masonic events, especially within our Masonic district, that we may represent St. John's Lodge as good and upright Masons.

Above all, we strive for excellence by improving ourselves in our work as Freemasons, that we may continue to teach the sacred tenets and principles of our Order to all good and moral men that the Grand Architect brings to our doorstep regardless of race, color, creed or political persuasion.

St. John's Lodge and Strawberry Banke Museum:

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a local grass roots effort was launched to rescue a large portion of Portsmouth, NH's historic South end from urban renewal projects that would have brought about the destruction of a number of historic buildings. In 1958, Strawberry Banke Inc. was established with the goal of preserving and restoring two dozen historic homes and buildings in the south end's "Puddle Dock" area. In 1965, the "Banke" officially opened as a museum. Among the "rescued" structures, was the William Pitt Tavern, which in the mid 1760s thru the early 1790s had served as a meeting place for the local Masonic lodge, St. John's Lodge No. 1. In July of 1789 five Masonic representatives met at the tavern to form the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire.

Today, Strawberry Banke maintains a tavern on the first floor of the restored building. The Grand Lodge of New Hampshire maintains a museum on the top two floors, which includes the Masonic lodge room on the third. St. John's Lodge No. 1 and the Grand Lodge of N.H. both commit to holding at least one meeting a year in the historic lodge room.

**Thank you note from Kathleen Turner - Special Events Designer,
Strawberry Banke Museum**

"I just wanted to thank you so much for the absolutely fabulous job the Masons did at Ghosts on the Banke - your haunting of Pitt tavern was a HUGE hit! We certainly hope that you will be willing to participate next year. I was so pleased that you were able to "haunt" without being too scary, just perfectly spooky. This event had almost 4,000 visitors this year - more than we have ever had (so, it was not surprising that we ran out of candy in several locations)!

Again, thank you so much for your participation, the Masons really added a lot to the event!"

St. John's Sunday

The Feast Day of Saint John the Baptist has been celebrated by Masons since the earliest days of the craft. The first public Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of England, was founded on St. John the Baptist Day, June 24, 1717. As a result the Grand Lodge of England regularly scheduled celebrations around St. John the Baptist Day. A second feast day, the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27, was later elevated in importance among Masons and soon shared equal significance with St. John the Baptist Day.

The tradition of celebrating the two Saints John days was also passed on to those American lodges founded during the colonial era, which of course included St. John's Lodge No. 1 in Portsmouth. The celebration tradition was further strengthened amongst these lodges when it became common knowledge that George Washington and Benjamin Franklin always made it a point to attend St. Johns activities at their respective lodges. Today, the Masonic tradition of celebrating the Saints John Feast Days is most commonly found in the United States in the pre-Revolutionary chartered lodges.