



**SQUARE CIRCLE PRESS LLC**  
137 Ketcham Road  
Voorheesville, NY 12186  
(518) 432-6657  
[www.squarecirclepress.com](http://www.squarecirclepress.com)  
[bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com](mailto:bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com)

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**NEW BOOK DOCUMENTS HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY IN COOPERSTOWN**  
*212 years of Otsego Lodge detailed in publication honoring village's bicentennial*

One of Cooperstown's most important—but little known—institutions has been revealed in a new book released by Square Circle Press. Compiled and published to commemorate the bicentennial of the incorporation of the village, Otsego Lodge No. 138 F. & A. M.: A Collection of Historical Miscellanea 1795-2007 tells the story of Cooperstown's Masonic lodge and its role in the life of the storied village.

First chartered in 1795, Otsego Lodge was founded soon after newspaper publisher Elihu Phinney was recruited by William Cooper and arrived on the shores of Lake Otsego. Six months later Otsego Lodge was chartered and has existed quietly within the lakeside village ever since. Most citizens have paid scant attention to the lodge over the centuries and few are aware of the many prominent men who have been both members of the lodge and builders of their community. Besides Phinney, the membership roster has included officers of the American Revolution, members of the New York State Assembly, Senate and the U. S. House of Representatives. Culturally noteworthy members have included such names as Erastus Beadle, "the Dime Novel King," and Stephen C. Clark, art collector, philanthropist, and founder of museums such as the National baseball Hall of Fame and the Museum of Modern Art.

Shorter histories of Otsego Lodge have been published in the past but until now were never made widely available to the public. The new edition has been compiled, revised and expanded in a collection that includes original writings, facsimile reprints of previous histories, a list of lodge Masters, transcriptions of lodge charters, local legends, information on noteworthy members, and historical photographs. Featured in the book is a facsimile reprint of Albert T. Van Horne's

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centennial history of Otsego Lodge, published only for the members of the lodge in 1896.

Inside, readers can learn more about the various buildings owned and occupied by Cooperstown's Masons, their public events, celebrations, cornerstone ceremonies, religious observances and funeral processions. The 100-page book is a precursor to a more definitive and detailed history of Otsego Lodge, slated for completion in 2011, the 215<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization.

“Cooperstonians love their history, but few know much about their local Freemasons,” stated Richard Vang, the current historian of Otsego Lodge and the book's editor. “Otsego Lodge has existed at the heart of this community for over two centuries. Most of Cooperstown's citizens have known at least one member of the lodge during their lifetime, but probably didn't know that this same person was a Freemason. The Brothers of Otsego Lodge have made outstanding contributions to the village, the county, the state and the nation, giving of themselves on a daily basis and throughout their lives—and still do today. This is definitely a story that needs to be shared.”

Vang also stated that many people are not aware of the amazing level of Masonic philanthropy. In the U. S., Freemasons contribute nearly two million days each day to charitable causes. In this spirit of philanthropy, proceeds from the sale of this book will go to Otsego Lodge to advance their own charitable works and to help preserve artifacts of historical importance.

Otsego Lodge recently presented some of those important artifacts to the public at their first-ever Open House, conducted in conjunction with the village's bicentennial parade. Besides numerous documents of local historical significance, the lodge holds rare paintings of Masonic symbolism from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, paintings of Masonic themes by local artists, rare textiles, antique ritual paraphernalia, costumes, uniforms and examples of Masonic folk art.

The new history of Otsego Lodge retails for \$16.95 and can be purchased online through the publisher's web site, [www.squarecirclepress.com](http://www.squarecirclepress.com), beginning September 15th, or can be ordered

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through local retail book stores. Retailers are encouraged to contact the publisher for discount information. In addition to other book titles and related merchandise, Square Circle Press is the publisher of My Dad is a Freemason, the first children's book about Freemasonry.

### **PUBLICATION INFORMATION & EDITOR BIOGRAPHY**

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**Editor bio:** Richard Vang is a Past Master, Past Trustee, and the current Historian of Otsego Lodge. He currently serves as a Trustee of The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge (NY), and is a member of the Scottish Rite Valleys of Schenectady (NY) and Santa Fe (NM), the Santa Fe York Rite Bodies and The Philalethes Society. A former Trustee of the Cooperstown Village Library, he holds a B.A. in Literature and Folklore from Binghamton University. The author of numerous articles over the past 15 years, his most recent work is the children's book, My Dad is a Freemason. He and his family live in the Helderberg Mountains near Albany, New York.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Richard Vang  
Square Circle Press LLC  
137 Ketcham Road  
Voorheesville, NY 12186  
(518) 432-6657  
bookinfo@squarecirclepress.com  
www.squarecirclepress.com

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