**Rob Morris**

Masonic Teacher, Writer, and Founder of the
Order of the Eastern Star

by

Katharine Curzon Lowman, P. M.

Having received so many requests for material for a "ROB MORRIS NIGHT" and believing that we, the members of the order which he founded should know more about him, I have written the following which may be given under the Order of Business "The Good of the Order". If it is not permissible in your state to give it then, this may be presented after the closing of the chapter in which event the Worthy Matron will instruct the officers to remain in their stations or to "resume their stations" for the presentation of a program honoring Rob Morris, founder of our Order.

Balloons (blue, yellow, white, green, and red) may be released by the officers at the time specified in the last speech by the Worthy Matron, IF YOU CAN GET GAS FILLED BALLCONS WHICH WILL ASCEND WHEN RELEASED.

The Worthy Matron opens this addendum by arising and speaking as follows:

**WORTHY MATRON:**

Sisters and brothers: Just as there is danger that children uninstructed in the truth about Christmas may think that it begins and ends with the legendary person "Santa Claus"; so we, the members of the largest female organization in the world, must not remain in ignorance of our origin, our founder, and the struggles of the beginning. We should also realize the work that we are accomplishing.

Because of this, we shall devote a short period of time to the honor of Rob Morris, the Founder of Our Order.

Since "Questionaires" seem to be a popular form of entertainment over our radios - and I believe many of us find them instructive as well as entertaining - we shall conduct a kind of "school of instruction". I shall be the inquisitor for the evening. (Worthy Matron sits.)

(For some of the facts in the speeches of the Worthy Patron, Associate Matron, and Associate Patron, I am indebted to "A Brief History of the Order" by W. J. Duncan. If you are interested in a complete history of the order, I recommend the purchase of Rev. Willis D. Engle's "History of the Order of the Eastern Star". This book may be purchased from the W. D. Engle Company, Indianapolis, Ind.)

**WORTHY MATRON:**

Worthy Patron: (He stands) Who was the founder of the Order of the Eastern Star and what do you know about him?

**WORTHY PATRON:**
Worthy Matron, Rob Morris is generally esteemed as the founder of the Eastern Star.

He was born August 31, 1818, near Boston, Massachusetts where his family was spending the summer.

Upon his maturity he became a school teacher. He taught in several schools eventually locating as principal of Mount Sylvan Academy at Oxford, Mississippi where, at the age of twenty-three, he married Miss Charlotte Mendenhall. Several children were born to this union.

Not only was Rob Morris a public school teacher but he was also known as the greatest Masonic teacher and the most prolific writer of his time.

He is known chiefly as a writer of Masonic poetry although he wrote upon a variety of subjects and has twenty books to his credit. He wrote history biography, jurisprudence, poetry, ritual, monitors, fiction, and Sunday School literature as well as his printed addresses and extensive contributions to the Masonic Press of his day.

In 1846, while living in Mississippi, he was made a Mason. The following year (1847) he, with his wife, received the so-called 'side' or unsystematized Masonic degree called 'The Heroine of Jerico'. This greatly interested him and from that time he began to entertain the desire of introducing the female relatives of Masons into closer relationship with the fraternity.

In February 1850, while confined to his bed with illness, he devised the Order of the Eastern Star. He said he hesitated for a theme on which to build such an order. The name “Eastern Star” was first settled upon. Then he meditated a long time over the selection of the five-point star and pentagon as its chief emblem - distinctly proper to Adoptive Masonry.

After every detail had been worked out, he invited a Masonic friend and his wife to join with his own, and to them he communicated the first Eastern Star degrees.

In 1855, he arranged the degrees calling the bodies “Constellations”. The first Constellation was organized at Lodge, Kentucky, Its name is Purity No. 1.

The ritual of the "Constellations" was called “The Mosaic Book”. It was very complicated, demanding more dramatic skill than was available in many places and this, together with bitter opposition from certain dignitaries in the Masonic fraternity, led to its failure.

In 1859 he prepared another ritual named "Families of the Eastern Star". This ritual was very simple in arrangement and was free from the complicated dramatic element.
This ended his work and he said that he would never do any more with it except confer it in an informal manner, as at first. But Robert MaCoy, an illustrious Freemason and publisher of Masonic rituals and histories, encouraged him and the plan for Eastern Star CHAPTERS.

In 1868 when Rob Morris had publicly announced his intentions of spending the remainder of his life in Holy Land investigations, Robert MaCoy prevailed upon him to turn the work over for ritualizing and making suitable for chapter work. So the work was turned over to Brother Macoy, and Rob Morris had him installed as Supreme Grand Patron of the Adoptive Rite - Eastern Star. Robert Macoy then brought out the ritual and became the originator of a third and more successful system which brings the order to its present form.

From organization of the Rite into "Families" to the time Rob Morris left the United States and even until the introduction of the "Chapter" system, very little was done with it, except to communicate, in lecture form, the objects, ceremonies, and passwords.

When Robert Macoy entered upon the work, the task required much thought, much careful study, and a vast amount of actual labor. To him, along with Rob Morris, we extend credit and honor. (Sits)

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Associate Matron: (She stands) What can you add about the life and works of our Founder?

ASSOCIATE MATRON:

Worthy Matron, may I add the following?

Beside being a writer, Rob Morris was a traveler, historian, numismatist (nu-mis'-ma-tist) which is: "a specialist in the science of coins and medals", and an antiquarian (an-ti-gua'-ri-an) which is: "a student of old times through relics etc. of ancient times.

He went to the Holy Land in 1868 in search of Masonic records and relics. Upon his return, with the assistance of Robert Macoy, compilations were made of many things.

The latter part of Rob Morris' life was spent in Kentucky where he moved with his family. He became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of Kentucky in 1858.

In 1859, he located in LaGrange, Kentucky where he resided with his family until his death.

He was offered and accepted the chair of Ancient and Modern history in the Masonic college at LaGrange, from which he received the honorary degree of LL.D. After teaching a few years, Dr. Morris became the president of the college.
In 1884, he was crowned poet-laureate of Freemasonry in New York City.

His most famous poem is “The Level and the Square”.

His most famous hymn - "Memories of Galilee".

He passed away at LaGrange, Kentucky, July 31, 1888, at the age of 70 years.

The Grand Chapter of Kentucky has restored his home to its original condition.

WORTHY MATRON:

Brother Associate Patron: What can you add to our oral biography? (He stands when addressed.)

ASSOCIATE PATRON:

Worthy Matron. To the fact that the Order of Eastern Star is the largest female organization in the world, I should like to add that it is also the second largest fraternal organization in the world; the Masonic fraternity is the largest.

Like Masonry, the origin of the Eastern Star will doubtless always be surrounded in mystery, but we are told that the Adoptive Rite or Female Masonry was established in Europe in the 17th century under the patronage of Queen Henrietta Maria, daughter of King Henry IV of France and wife of King Charles I of England. After, the execution of her husband, she escaped to France where she introduced the Rite in 1730. The fraternal societies were organized in order that the wives, daughters, mothers, widows, and sisters of Master Masons might make themselves known among the brothers for protection. That was deemed very essential at the time.

Masonic histories state that the order was introduced into the colonies in New York in 1778 by, it is supposed, French officers.

In the system of 1774 the emblem of France was a five pointed star presumably copied from the Masonic emblem, called the blazing star.

From an old ritual it is evident that certain members, on May 18, 1793, in Boston, Massachusetts, met and formulated a ritual. This work also states that Lafayette was interested in the Order.

Our order is doing a grand work for humanity throughout the world, and there is quite a contrast between the place it holds in the esteem of the Masonic fraternity today and that which it had in the beginning when some Masonic dignitaries offered stiff opposition to it and called it "Petticoat Masonery" and "Hairpin Masonry".

Today "Man's loyalty to the Masonic fraternity makes him a
particular champion of the Eastern Star because he honestly believes it to be the strongest pillar of strength to that greatest of all orders". A man of high rank in the Masonic fraternity refers to the Eastern Star as "Not a woman's order but a Mason's Family Order", because only Master Masons, their wives, daughters, mothers, widows, and sisters are eligible to membership. This membership extends like a golden chain throughout the civilized world. I, for one, am happy and proud to be even a very small link in this great, grand chain. (He sits).

**WORTHY MATRON:**

Because we can imagine that something in the character or life of Rob Morris corresponds with the particular virtue which is taught at each of the star points. I shall ask the Star Point officers to stand, (They rise simultaneously and stand by the side of their stations.)

Sister Adah: What can you say relative to the place "Fidelity" had in the life of Rob Morris?

**ADAH:**

Worthy Matron. It is not necessary to have known him, personally, to believe that "fidelity to family and friends" as well as "to convictions of right and duty", formed a component part of his character.

It is easy to believe that had he, like Jephthah, made a vow unto the Lord, he would have kept it as religiously.

**WORTHY MATRON:**

Sister Ruth: Because you teach the lesson of "faithful obedience to the demands of honor and justice" as well as "the rewards of patient industry", what place do you think these virtues may have had in the life of Rob Morris?

**RUTH:**

Worthy Matron. I think the very nature of his disposition caused him to write the lesson given at the second point of our star.

From him the Aged would have received reaped because he would give "faithful obedience to the demands of honor and justice".

One who accomplished so much had to be a believer in patient industry. Although, he received rewards, he often gave away his last dollar through the generosity of his nature,

**WORTHY MATRON:**

Sister Esther:
Tell us what you have discerned;
From Esther's story, what have you learned?

**ESTHER:**
Worthy Matron. We are not told much about Mrs. Morris except that she was a loving, faithful wife in sympathy with her husband's work.

We know that because "respect for woman's good name, her merits, and her virtue" stood foremost in Masonic teachings, Rob Morris conceived, founded, and organized the Order of the Eastern Star to enforce these views and admiration.

In common with the crown at Esther's station, Rob Morris also received one, being crowned poet-laureate of Freemasonry in New York, December 17, 1884. He received this honor after having written more than 300 Masonic lyrics and receiving the sanction and approval of 1,000 distinguished Masons in all parts of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Martha: What does the broken column and the lecture at your station reveal?

MARTHA:

Worthy Matron. It reveals the deep "Faith in immortality" which our founder possessed. To the sorrowing, he wished to impart that faith. He, too, like Martha was a firm believer, because he firmly believed in the ancient origins of Freemasonry. He was an interpreter of the philosophy and teaching of Freemasonry. His writings were inspired by the highest motives.

From Martha's station, he wished to bring to the initiate and to the members, not only faith but hope as expressed in the following poem which he wrote.

HOPE
( By Rob Morris )

To life's worst labyrinth there is a clue,
A thread of silk that leads the traveler
Through losses, crosses, sickness, and deaths,
And gives him entrance to the central place.
'Tis hope, the anchor of the soul.
'Tis hope, Steadfast and sure, a very gift of heaven.
How could our temple ever be complete,
So great the work, so feeble we who would build,
But for this aid? - The six days work so long,
The summer's heat so strong, the toil so great!

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Electa:
What does the cup, and bright red ray,
Of him, and of his life convey?

ELECTA:
Worthy Matron. The cup which our Saviour prayed might pass from him - referred to a bitter experience. By symbol of an overflowing cup, we express the joys of hospitality; by an empty cup the depths of woe or sorrow.

Who better than a mother can know the overflowing joys and the empty sorrows which come to us in Life's cup? This symbol is ideal for a mother's degree.

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Associate Conductress: (She stands.) What is a poet-laureate?

ASSOCIATE CONDUCTRESS:

An ancient custom of English universities of presenting a laurel leaf to graduates in rhetoric and versification accounts for the word laureate, and hence poet-laureate.

The Masonic poet-laureates have been Robert Burns, Rob Morris, and Fay Hempstead.

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Conductress: (She stands.) Do you know of any parallel between the lives of Robert Burns and Rob Morris?

CONDUCTRESS:

Yes, worthy Matron, "Like his predecessor, Robert Burns, Rob Morris grew to manhood without claim of special merit and wanted the environment of wealth or family influence to advance the powers which lay hidden like the statue in the uncut marble of the quarry".

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Chaplain: (She stands.) Measured by the yardstick of Christianity, how big do you find Rob Morris?

CHAPLAIN:

Worthy Matron. We find him to be both big and noble. "He came to earth from humble and retiring parentage. He possessed gifts as rare, and patience as enduring, as are ever bestowed upon mortal man". He did not become weary in well doing, and the order which he founded will continue to stand through the ages as a monument to the zeal and patient industry of a great pioneer Mason.

WORTHY MATRON:

Sister Treasurer: (She stands.) Can you say that the Order of the Eastern Star is obeying the command to "lay up treasures in heaven"?

TREASURER:
Yes, Worthy Matron, in every jurisprudence, the O. E. S. is contributing liberally to organized benevolences. Homes for the aged, orphanages, hospitals, and educational funds are some of the things which are being promoted or maintained by the Eastern Star either alone or in co-operation with the Masonic brotherhood. It is indeed laying up for itself treasures in heaven; and on earth it is demonstrating that its members are obeying the admonition that "We love one another".

WORTHY MATRON:

In honor of Rob Morris, founder of the Order of the Eastern Star, and his close friend and co-worker, Robert MaCoy, originator of the "Chapter system" of our order, may the truth taught, the lessons unfolded, and the opportunities which we find in our order for a wider service to our fellowmen, cause us to continue to spread abroad in the world the finer ideals and noble principles which they have given us to maintain by a high standard of womanhood.

May the BLUE RAY of true friendship, the GOLDEN GLOW of kind and friendly deeds, the WHITE BEAM of sincere loyalty, the shining GREEN LIGHT of trustful faith and hope, and the bright RED RAY of cheer and love be spread abroad (ALL RELEASE BALLOONS, as a symbol of these rays going out into the world; IF YOU HAVE GAS FILLED BALLOONS: THEY WILL ASCEND ) to increase human happiness and to justify us in acclaiming ours the most beautiful Order to which women are eligible for membership.

The addendum may be ended by singing "My Old Kentucky Home".

This addendum may be given with practically no practice; but the officers should have their parts long enough to become quite familiar with them so they can read them with ease, if they think the speeches too long to be given from memory.