

M.W. Edward P. Burnham

Key contributor to the Town of Saco, Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution & Saco Lodge

*by Brother Carl Marsano
Secretary, Saco Lodge #9*

I first became interested in MW Edward Payson Burnham while researching the history of Saco Lodge, to prepare for my term as Master, which was our bicentennial. I came across his name in the "Portrait Gallery of Prominent Freemasons throughout the United States" by John C. Yorston. He was one of only two Masons from Maine in the book. The other was MW Josiah Drummond. This book outlined 75 masons who were important to Masonry. He was raised in 1852, at a time where lodges were finally recovering from the Morgan Affair and the founding fathers of Maine Masonry (Dunlap, King, Greenleaf, Swan) were dying off. Into this, a new generation for brethren had to take the lead and along with Josiah Drummond, Edward Burnham was one of them.

According to the New England Genealogical Society "he was an easy and interesting speaker, and gave many valuable talks on local and family histories. His wide range of information made him a first class conversationalist, and he delighted to give as well as to receive information."

He was born in Kennebunk on December 3, 1827. His parents were the Reverend Bro. Owen Burnham and Elizabeth Smith Burnham. He went to Bridgton Academy where his father preached. When his father died in June of 1836, he began to work for his uncle for 4 years, and then studied law under William Sewall and Hon. Edward Bourne. He was admitted to the Bar in April, 1849. In 1851 he became Deputy Collector of Customs in Kennebunk for two years, until he found his life's work being elected Secretary and Treasurer of Saco Biddeford Savings Institution and the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Saco.

For 32 years (1853 to 1885) he served in that position, at that time a position equivalent to Chief Executive Officer. During this time with Saco Biddeford, he helped

it grow into a much larger and successful bank (which continues today). He resigned his positions in 1885 to move to Roxbury, Mass. He returned three years later and was elected President of Saco Biddeford Savings until 1901.

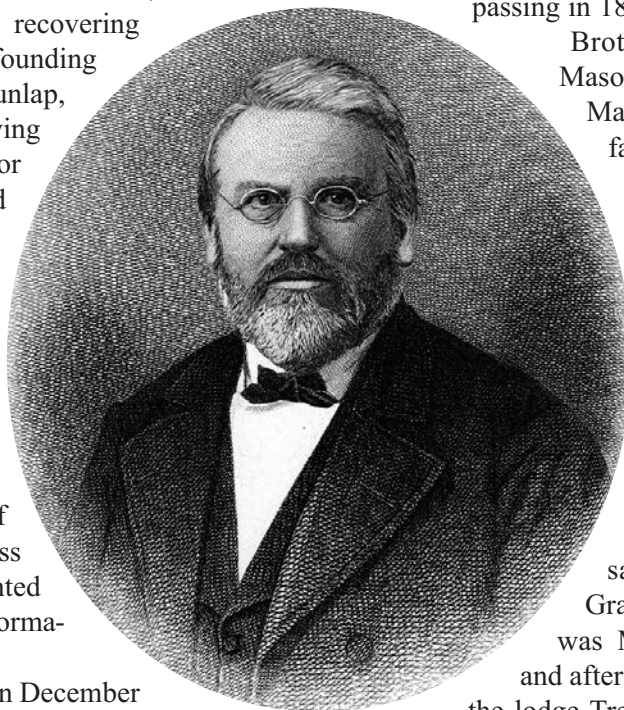
Not only was Bro. Burnham active in Masonry but also within the community of Saco. Bro. Burnham was chosen Mayor of Saco in 1872 and 1873, and was an alderman for five years.

He was married to Mary Osborne of Kennebunk in 1854. They remained a devoted couple until her passing in 1897. They had no children.

Brother Burnham was made a Mason in York Lodge, Kennebunk, Maine on July 26, 1852 where his father had been a member, and his grandfather, Seth Burnham, was a founding member and three time Master. Wor. Seth was also one of the first candidates being raised to a Master Mason in Saco Lodge in 1803.

In August 1853 after his move to Saco, he affiliated with Saco Lodge No. 9, and in 1856 became its Master. That same year he was appointed Grand Junior Deacon. Before he was Master, he served as Secretary and after his term as Master, he served as the lodge Treasurer from 1871 to 1885. He was District Deputy Grand Master in 1860 to 1862. He would continuously hold various Grand Lodge positions until his death in 1902, including 30 years on the Charitable Foundation Board, 1870 to 1900.

When Saco Lodge lost its charter in a fire in 1854, it was Bro. Burnham who was at the center of renewing our charter. From the 1855 Grand Lodge proceedings we first see his name: "On motion of Bro. Burnham, the petition of Saco Lodge for the renewal of charter was taken from the table and referred to the Committee on Dispensations and Charters."



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He would go on to serve as Senior Grand Warden for three years before progressing to Deputy Grand Master, and finally Grand Master from 1877 to 1878. Up until 1874, Grand Masters served three years, the same for DGM & SGW. After 1874, the constitution and bylaws changed so Grand Wardens could only serve a one-year term, Making Edward Burnham the last Senior Grand Warden to serve three consecutive years.

He was also a member of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar starting in 1857, and after serving as a subordinate officer for fourteen years, became Grand Commander in 1881 and 1882. He was a delegate to the Grand Encampment in 1859 and 1880 at Chicago.

In May, 1858, he was created a Sovereign Grand Inspector General 33° and elected an Honorary Member of the Supreme Council of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States in Boston, May 22, 1862. On September 27, 1883, he became an Active Member.

In May, 1861, he was among the petitioners for the charter of Maine Consistory at Portland.

Due to ill health, Brother Burnham moved to Somersworth, NH to be with relatives, and passed to the Celestial Lodge above on May 12, 1902. He is buried in Kennebunk at Hope Cemetery.

From the 1903

Grand Lodge Proceedings:

"We remember that at the last communication of this Grand Lodge one was absent who had not been absent before during a long course of years. Past Grand Master BURNHAM was not here. We remember also that at the last Proceedings of the May session of that communication, upon the motion of Past Grand Master DRUMMOND we stood up, unanimously desiring to send some friendly word to the brother that was ill.

How much has he accomplished for human institutions who has lived a long life actively, honestly, intelligently! Brother BURNHAM did the day's work manfully and for many days, and as we recount the external events of his life and the positions of trust that he held, we shall find them clearly marked sign posts in a long course of honorable action. Honor to his memory."

MW Edward Burnham Award

To honor MW Edward Burnham and spur interest in his memory, Saco Lodge presented its first of what will be an annual MW Edward Burnham Award for Lifetime Achievement to Masonry.

This award will be issued to a member of Saco Lodge. And unlike the lodge's Mason of the Year or Table Lodge honoree awards, a brother will be eligible to win it only once.

At the lodge's Annual Lobster Stew and Awards Night in December, Saco Lodge had the pleasure to award this to RW Richard Clark, a 50-year member, twice Past Master, DER and DDGM/18, an officer of Saco Lodge for 18 years, and a key contributor to the fraternity.



Wor. Brother Greg Maxwell shown here with Burnham Award honoree, RW Brother Clark.