



**Internet Lodge 9659**  
**United Grand Lodge of England**  
**Province of East Lancashire**  
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

**Short Papers Competition 2007**

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**Paper 08/2007**

**Title** **Cataract, a Minnesota Lodge That Moves**  
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Cataract Lodge No. 2, A. F. & A. M. was consecrated in 1852 and was one of the three founding Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota. This Paper gives an insight into the advantages and disadvantages of owning and renting Lodge buildings with emphasis on the last eighty years.

In the 1920's Masonry in Minnesota was booming. Cataract Lodge, after many years in a very old building above commercial space, decided to build and own a new facility. The new structure had commercial space on the ground level and several Lodge rooms as well as the usual kitchen and dining facilities. It was a magnificent structure which today might sell for seven or eight million dollars. Unfortunately Cataract lost the building in the great depression of the 1930's. The present owners respect the Masonic heritage and have saved much of the interior finery. Cataract was able to salvage its Lodge furniture which is still in use today. As a result of the loss the Lodge was forced to move back into the former location as a tenant. The moral of this part of our story is that real estate ownership is a risky business for a Lodge.

In 1960 Cataract was forced to move again because of the demolition of its old facility. Cataract designed and built a new Lodge building in a developing suburb which at that time had neither city water nor sewers. Anticipating these services we installed a water line aimed at a tavern across the street. (Minnesota does not allow alcoholic beverages in a Lodge building). We were accused of planning a beer pipeline to the tavern! We made the building wide enough to allow ten candidates and ten conductors side by side in front of the altar (Minnesota allows ten candidates to participate in the Master Mason degree). We anticipated access problems so the building had ramps and stairs. Cataract remained in this building for many years, having regular pancake breakfasts to raise funds for the tax collector. Eventually the Lodge received an offer it could not refuse and the building was sold. The sale made the Lodge financially independent. The moral of this part of the story is that real estate risks sometimes are worthwhile.

After the sale Cataract shared space with two other Lodges as a tenant. Eventually the other two Lodges merged into Cataract. We were soon forced to move again to allow the construction of a major office complex. The sale of this building, owned jointly by the other two Lodges, made Cataract even more financially independent and eliminated all financial problems except how to choose recipients for charitable contributions. Today Cataract Lodge is a tenant again, with other Masonic bodies sharing space with us. We probably will never again own our Lodge building.

So, dear reader, be careful in owning real estate, avoid unnecessary risks and sell at the top of the market!

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