



Grand Master Pulkkinen in Full Regalia

Thomas PULKKINEN

BY PAULETTE OBOYSKI

Photos by Phillip Nowlan & Victor Oboyski

Thomas E. Pulkkinen (Tom) is the 98th Grand Master of Masons in Maine. He has been a Mason since 1989. His many life experiences: educational, professional, and Masonic, qualify him for this Grand Lodge position. He was elected in May 2016, and installed by his brother, George, who served as Grand Master of Maine in 1992-1994.

The Grand Master position is a full-time job. He is the leader of Maine Freemasonry, which will be celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2020, with 18,000 Masons and 185 Lodges. Over a 2-year period, the Grand Master will attend 48 district meetings, which covers the entire state, from Kittery to Fort Kent. Next year, he will travel to London to represent the Grand Lodge of Maine for the 300th Anniversary of the United Grand Lodge of England (1717 – 2017).

“As Grand Master, my biggest emphasis is to ensure that all the men joining Freemasonry today understand the meaning of our centuries-old rituals and symbolism; how these lessons might better us as men, husbands, fathers and members of society.” Pulkkinen continues, “Besides being a brotherhood of men from many walks of life, nationalities, religions, economic and educational backgrounds, we find value in Masonry in how we grow as individuals and as friends, and how we help thousands of people from across this state every year.”



Past Junior Grand Warden C. Herbert Annis



Brother George Presents Jewels to Brother Tom



Sharon and Tom Pulkkinen



Deputy Grand Master Mark Rustin

Early life and Family

Pulkkinen was born in Lewiston, Maine on April 4, 1945 and was raised in Auburn for 18 years. He moved to Boston for college and remained there during his professional career. He bought a retirement home in East Boothbay 25 years ago and retired there in 2009.

Freemasonry is a family affair within the Pulkkinen family. His father, Peter Emil Pulkkinen, who was a member of Tranquil Lodge #29 in Auburn, was born in Greenwood, Maine. Pulkkinen's mother, Winona Estelle Davis was born in Lewiston, Maine. Pulkkinen has two siblings. His sister, Faye Tiffany, is the oldest and she is a member of the Eastern Star while her husband Bob, is a member of the Masonic Lodge in Alton, NH. Pulkkinen's older brother, George, has been a Mason in Maine since 1962 and is a member of York Lodge #22, located in Kennebunk.

Pulkkinen graduated from Edward Little High School in Auburn,

Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts and Stonier Graduate School of Banking in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston employed him for 40 years in a variety of analytical and managerial positions. Senior positions were in the Internal Audit function and in Bank Supervision and Regulation where he evaluated the safety and soundness of banks and insurance underwriters.

Sharon Pulkkinen, Tom's wife, says, "My basic thought about Tom is: I married a 19 year-old boy and I just admire the man he has grown to be. He has always been a worker from the day I met him. Whatever project he works on, he always gives it his everything – 100%. He was a Selectman for 9 years when we lived in West Newbury. He gave the town everything, including senior and family housing and the expansion of the library. When his career ended, he did not skip a beat; he jumped into Masonry with both feet."

Former Grand Master Jim Ross





Grand Master Pulkkinen and Master Stuart Smith



Annis Masonic Family
Photo by Joseph Corrado

“Tom is a forward and a modern thinker. His views and ideas for Masonry are right along with the current needs of today’s society.”

Tom Pulkkinen states, “Sharon and I have celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary this June. Our daughter, Dr. Wendy Pulkkinen Loomis, has been a microbiologist at the University of Washington in Seattle since completing her post-doctoral studies at Harvard Medical School. Our son Mark passed as a young boy.”

George Pulkkinen is Tom’s older brother by six years. He presently serves on the Maine Mason Magazine Editorial Board. He declares, “Tom is an outstanding man and an outstanding brother. He has the ability to inspire men around him and his enthusiasm about

everything is infectious. He sees the big and little picture and builds them into a grand picture.”

George continued, “My brother and I are Scottish on my mother’s side. I belong to the Kilwinning Club, established in 1928, in Massachusetts. The original Kilwinning Lodge dates back to the 11th Century in Scotland. When my brother, Tom, was recently installed as Grand Master of Maine, 20 members of the Kilwinning Club, all in Scottish Tartans, came from Massachusetts and escorted Tom during his installation. All sang, “Auld Lang Syne” which was written by the famous Scottish poet, Robert Burns, who was also a Mason.”

Grand Master Tom Pulkkinen

Tom Pulkkinen re-counts when he first joined the Freemasons: “My Dad died in 1988, shortly after his 25th Masonic birthday. I decided at that time to become a Freemason, and joined the Lodge in Newburyport, Massachusetts where Auburn’s Edward Little had served as Master for six years in the early 1800s. I

Maine Freemasonry is a Family Affair

There are many families whose members become Freemasons in Maine. C. Herbert Annis Jr. (Herb) became a Freemason in St. Paul’s Lodge #82 in 1958. He is also a member of Amity Lodge #6 and Island Lodge #89.

Herb related that, “In earlier years, before television and the Internet —when a man reached adulthood—he generally did two things; got married and became a Mason. These were rites of passage in those days. It was more than just a fraternal order. All the important people in town were Masons: selectmen, school principals, doctors, lawyers and many others. Being a Mason helped you get ahead. Quite often there were lodge meetings every week and, before today’s media outlets, that was how they found out the local news – by word of mouth at the meetings. The Masons were also insurance for many people – if a needy member was ill, the Lodge paid the medical bills, or if a member died and the family did not have the means to pay – the Lodge would pay for the burial.”

Since the 1800’s there have been 73 Freemasons in Maine with the surname of Annis. Their total number of years in Freemasonry is 1,820. Here are the names of some of C. Herbert Annis Jr.’s Masonic relatives.

They are listed by name, their affiliated Masonic Lodge, when they became a member, and their relation to Herb.

- William Annis - Amity Lodge #6 (1823) -2X Great Uncle
- Thomas Annis – Amity Lodge #6 (1824) – 3X Great Uncle
- John Annis – Amity Lodge #6 (1824) – Great-Great Grandfather
- Samuel Annis – Amity Lodge #6 (1854) – 2X Great Uncle
- Cecil Herbert Annis Sr. – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1917) - Father
- Guy Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1920) – Uncle
- Sidney Annis – United Lodge #81 (1933) – Grandfather’s Cousin
- Walter L. Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1942) – Oldest Brother
- John H. Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1944) – 1st Cousin
- William H. Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1951) – Brother
- John Annis Jr. – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1960) – 1st Cousin (1X removed)
- James E. Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1964) – 1st Cousin (1X removed)
- Keryn Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (1976) - Nephew
- Matthew Annis – St. Paul’s lodge #82 (1986) - Son
- Robert B. Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (2010) – 5th Cousin
- Aaron Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (2015) - Great Nephew
- Zachery Annis – St. Paul’s Lodge #82 (2015) - Grandson

In 2020, both the State of Maine and the Maine Freemasons will *celebrate their 200th birthday*.

While Masons come from all walks of life, there have been hundreds of noteworthy Freemasons —including past presidents.

immediately became involved in that Lodge and soon afterwards in the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, in areas such as, education, membership, leadership development, and held several leadership positions. When we retired to Maine, I became more active back here and held a variety of positions in Bay View Lodge and with Grand Lodge.”

Mark Rustin, the current Deputy Grand Master of Maine, has been a Mason since 1985 and was Grand Secretary for 4 years. As Deputy Grand Master, he assists the Grand Master in implementing his agenda. The Deputy Grand Master is the presumptive next Grand Master. Rustin declares, “I’ve known Tom for 5 years. He is an individual who is defined by Freemasonry. For Tom, Freemasonry is his bliss. He has a great love not only of the philosophy of Freemasonry, but of the actions that craft accomplishes. He is as dedicated to his task as any person I have met.”



Cabbage Island Clambake



GM Tom Pulkkinen and Brother Victor Oboyski

Former Grand Master, James Ross, joined the Maine Masons at age 21 and has been in the Masons for 27 years. He says, “Tom is a forward and a modern thinker. His views and ideas for Masonry are right along with the current needs of today’s society. He tries to align the goals of Masonry with the needs of today so that the men who make up the ranks of Masonry will know their place in life and will have the tools necessary that are provided to help them accomplish their personal and professional goals.”

Bay View Lodge #196 is located in East Boothbay. Stuart Smith is the Master of the Lodge. He has known Tom for over 8 years and met him through the lodge. He states, “Tom is a Past Master of Bay View Lodge. It is an honor

to have him as a member. He is also involved with many of the Appendant Masonic bodies of our organization. He is a very giving person, has a good heart and is always willing to help with programs – especially with youth. Tom initiated the Bikes for Books reading program in our lodge, which offers 40 to 60 bikes each year to the Boothbay peninsula schoolchildren as an incentive to read. Tom is the perfect person to be Grand Master because of his nature and all that he has given to the community and state.”

Cabbage Island Clambake

Over 15 years ago, Bay View Lodge started the “Clambake at Cabbage Island” boat trip for Masonic brethren, their families and guests, to have a good time together. The Moore family privately owns Cabbage Island, located off the coast of Boothbay Harbor. Multiple generations of the Moore family run these quintessential Maine clambakes daily. They especially love the Masons. The menu is chock full of steamed lobsters, clams, corn, chowder, and more. It

became obvious that a lot of people wanted to join in that activity, so the lodge opened it up as a fundraiser as well. About 185 people attend every year. People come from Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Delaware.

Ancient Free and Accepted Freemasons in Maine

In 1762, the Provincial Grand Master for North America (in Massachusetts) issued a Charter for a Masonic Lodge in Falmouth (in what is now Portland). When Maine became an independent State in 1820, the Lodges, thirty-one in number (including two Lodges chartered by Massachusetts Grand Master Paul Revere) formed the Grand Lodge of Maine. The Maine Lodges then elected Maine’s first governor, Freemason William King, as the first Grand Master of Masons in Maine.

In 2020, both the State of Maine and the Maine Freemasons will celebrate their 200th birthday. While Masons come from all walks of life, there have been hundreds of noteworthy Freemasons including past presidents, governors, U.S. and state senators, U.S. and state representatives, mayors, judges, leaders of business, and industry.

Some of the more notable Maine Freemasons are:

- Maine’s first Governor, William King
- Major General Joshua Chamberlain, a member of United Lodge #8 in Brunswick and a hero of the battle of Little Round Top at Gettysburg
- Leon Leonwood Bean, a Past Master of Freeport Lodge #23 and founder of that great emporium we know as L.L.Bean
- Philanthropist, Harold Alfond, founder of Dexter Shoes
- Legendary Maine Black Bear baseball coach, John Winkin Jr.



Grand Lodge of Maine 2016



Grand Master with Kilwinning Club Members

The Grand Lodge of Maine's website www.mainemason.org states, "Freemasonry is the world's oldest and largest fraternity. It has no regard for differences in race, color, creed, religion or station in life. Using traditions and implements of antiquity, it seeks to inspire its members to live by the tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth."

Tom Pulkkinen declares, "The new brochure says it best: 'Maine Freemasonry... enriching lives through education, charity and spiritual growth.' The key prerequisite of becoming a Mason is having a belief in a Supreme Being, and we bring together men of many religions. But when we speak of enriching lives, we extend our vision beyond our members, to the people in Maine, especially kids throughout our state. That is why so much of our energy and resources go to inspiring and helping kids."

The basic units in the Masonic organization are called "Blue Lodges" and that denotes lodges that confer the first three symbolic Masonic degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. Interestingly, there are still eight "Moon" lodges in the state, which hold meetings on, before or just after the full moon. This

tradition dates back to a time when members traveled with horse and buggy and there were no streetlights. The full moon would light their way to the lodge.

In order to become a Maine Freemason, the basic membership requirements are:

- A man of good character
- Age 18 or over
- Maine resident for one year
- Belief in a Supreme Being

Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation

The Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation, www.masoniccharitablefoundation.org, started in 1820, and incorporated in 1993 as a 501c3 nonprofit. It is the relief arm of the Grand Lodge. Between investments, bequests and fundraising the foundation board of trustees has built up the base upon which they work. They use dividends and interest to spend approximately ½ million dollars a year for charitable purposes across the State of Maine.

"Freemasonry doesn't have a corner on virtuous living, but to me, *being a Mason comes with an expectation* that I, and all Masons, will live a just and upright life, *even when no one else is looking.*"

Pulkkinen relates, "The Grand Master is not only the Chief Executive Officer of Grand Lodge business operations, but is also the President of the Masonic Charitable Foundation. Part of that is making sure that all of our resources – our people and our dollars – are being used in a way that complements the vision of helping people through education, charity and spiritual growth. In that regard, we have tried to refocus the Charitable Foundation to ensure that the resources are being spent in a way to help the local lodges be active in their communities."

Various programs include: Masonic Bikes for Books, Youth Activities Matching Grants, Community Betterment Matching Grants, Masonic Relief Program, Maine's Veteran's Home Support, Masonic Library and Museum, and the Maine Masonic College.

More than \$100,000 is spent each year to fund the Bikes for Books and Summer Literacy program in schools and libraries throughout Maine. Through this program, each year, students earn opportunities to receive one of around 2,500 new bikes and helmets for reading books. Maine Department of Education statistics show a marked rise in percentage of students who scored either "Proficient" or "Proficient with Distinction" in schools such as Madison Junior High School, which participated in the initial Bikes for Books program. Madison's scores rose from 54.92% in 2009-10 to 78.77% in 2013-2014.

Making a Positive Difference in People's Lives

When you look at the history of Freemasonry, they have made a tremendous difference in society. Grand Master Tom Pulkkinen recaps, "Freemasonry doesn't have a corner on virtuous living, but to me, being a Mason comes with an expectation that I, and all



Tom Pulkkinen at Cabbage Island Clambake

Masons, will live a just and upright life, even when no one else is looking. It's about making a positive difference in people's lives; going out of my way to help all people, not only Masons, any way I can. There are so many opportunities for Freemasons, for Mainers of all ages, to volunteer and make a difference in their communities and in the lives of others by doing all kinds of things. Just find something that you enjoy – and engage yourself in helping people. That's what Freemasonry is all about."

MSM