

**THE INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ISLAND LOAFERS IS FORMED** by Leslie Korenko

*The year, 1862, was the year that an 'institution' was officially born on the Island. Originally, the island store did not have a name; it was simply called the Store across from the*



*hay scales, the Store on the Corner, or the Fat Man's store. However, with the birth of the Independent Order of Island Loafers, the Store became their meeting place; their 'Lodge.'*

*Gradually, the store itself became known as The Lodge. The general store was the logical place for the island men to meet. It housed the Post Office and it was the first building at the top of the steamboat dock. This assured that*

*any news arrived here first. But not content to just meet and talk, the group had to have a name and the Independent Order of Island Loafers (IOofIL) became the stuff of which legends are made.*

*The name was originally put forward as a joke in an article in the Islander under the heading "Have we a Secret Society among us?" The editors investigated the notice, made difficult by suspicions and possible conspiracies, and revealed that "the mysterious initials IOofIL mean neither more nor less than 'Independent Order of Island Loafers.'... It is no secret society. It is evidently open to all. We found them enjoying full membership..."*

*The Lodge became the source of all information on the Island, the bane of many wives, the clearinghouse for rumors, and the general meeting place for the men. Stories about The Lodge were told for many years and while the name started as a joke, the IOofIL became a tradition of long standing. Long after The Lodge disbanded, the succeeding owners of the store*

*on the corner, Joseph Matso and later Russ and Bea Matso, honored its history by calling their bar/restaurant Matso's Place-The Lodge.*



*With grapes assuming a more prominent place in the business of the Island, it would only be expected that the methods of tending a vineyard would be discussed and evaluated at the Lodge. This regularly led to spirited discussions*

*of the best way to accomplish any given project. But then, the boys at the store would argue anything, as can be seen in this discussion.*

*The editor of the Islander went to the Lodge and found full attendance "and ideas and opinions 'as plenty as blackberries.' The subject under consideration was underdraining. Six or seven were talking loud and earnest and all at a time advocating different ways so that they should be dry; N and South, others east and west. Some thought them best with the descent of the land, some the reverse, and some thought that they ought to be run diagonal. All could give successful examples confirming his theory satisfactory to himself. We, of course, put in our voice as loud as any one but apparently no more convincing than the others, they paying no more deference to an editor's opinion than to their own, so we concluded that it would be unwise to risk our reputation by writing upon the subject. The only conclusion that a novice in ditching could arrive at, would be that either way was better than none and the more that was done, the better the crops would be."*

“The rules of the Lodge are few and simple:

Rule First – Fill the tobacco box when you find it empty... There is a box nailed upon the post too high to look into but right to feel over into, labeled ‘Tobacco, Take a Smoke Free.’ It usually has pipes sticking out. If a member wishes to smoke and most all do, he reaches over into the box for tobacco to fill a pipe. If he finds tobacco there, he fills his pipe and takes a smoke free. But if he ‘feels’ and it ain’t there, he is expected to invest about 20¢ in tobacco and put it in the box, under the pains and penalty for not doing so, of being considered a low, mean, penurious, low lived, miserable, unworthy member.

Rule second – Go to the Lake and get a pail of water when you get to the water pail and find it empty. Explanation. Smoking creates thirst in the worthy members. To satisfy which, there stands a water pail in the back room, supposed always to have water in it. But, if it is found empty, which is often the case, the one so finding it is the lucky one to go to the Lake and get a pail full.

There is no penalty to be paid to the Lodge for non-attendance, as the delinquent is considered the greatest loser and he only is to be pitied for his loss.

The Lodge is the place where all great measures of a public character are concocted. If a steamboat is to be built or purchased, a wine company to be organized, then all the stock is subscribed, the money paid, the vote... determined, the price of grapes and wine and Brandy established. If a subscription is wanted for charitable purposes, here is the place to go.

If the minister’s salary is short of the mark of his high calling, a goat from the Lodge is sent out milking. At the Lodge is held the great board of trade. They do not bet on stone and grain so much as most boards of trade do, but bet more on church members... Nothing is done in the Lodge by halves. It is either the sublime or the ridiculous, no wavy blending of one into the other. Here is the source of Great Thoughts. With Bible or Dictionary, the minister may get his text and basis for a sermon, or a roll of Brimstone. Here the Doctor can get the most sublime and fanciful diagnosis of a spent match or the half of a pair of scissors.

Go to the Lodge and get wisdom but be careful or you will soon be convinced that you are not only a fool, but every body else is.” [www.KelleysIslandStory.com](http://www.KelleysIslandStory.com)