

MW BRO. ELON EZRA CHIPMAN

The Chipman family is one that has had an honorable record in both Canada and in the United States. The founder of the family in America was John Chipman, who came to the Plymouth Colony in New England from Dorsetshire in England in 1631. It has been said that the family was originally Dutch, and this may be correct, as Dorset, being on the south coast, no doubt traded with Holland, and a Dutch seaman—Schipman or Scheepman—may possibly have settled there. Others suggest that it may be a place-name from Chippenham in Wiltshire, the adjoining county to the north, by a not uncommon inversion in the development of names.

The family grew and prospered in New England. Like other families of the place and time, it became divided by the agitation which ended in the Revolutionary War. Some of the Chipmans favored separation; others opposed it. Those who had taken the losing side, found that after the peace, it was advisable to move to some place outside of the boundaries of the new republic. Some went to New Brunswick or Nova Scotia; others passed into Upper Canada, of which a part settled in what is now the County of Leeds and Grenville in Ontario.

Four brothers, Amos, Jesse, Ami, and Barnabas Chipman, came to Canada after the war. Ami and Barnabas stayed around Brockville for a time and later settled in the Township of Bastard in Leeds County.

The surprising name of this Township has nothing to do with illegitimate children. It was named after an old and well-known family of Ketley, near Plymouth, England. A member of this family, John Pollexfen Bastard was a prominent member of the House of Commons about this time. Abner Everett Chipman was the son of Barnabas. Abner married Elizabeth Mattice, probably a daughter or grand-daughter of Nicholas Mattice, one of the original grantees of the Township. Elon Ezra Chipman was their youngest son, born at Portland, on Rideau Lake, 9 March 1846. It is difficult, at this late date, to follow his wanderings with any detail, up to the time he came to British Columbia, but it has been possible to obtain a few facts about his life during that period. He evidently had no taste for farming, and preferred his books to the plough. By 1868 he had obtained a licence to teach school, and was the master of a country school at Singleton's Corners, now Crosby, near Newboro for six years. While teaching there he became a member of the Craft by joining Simpson Lodge No. 157, Grand Lodge of Canada in Ontario.

Later he went to Waterford in Haldimand County where he assisted a brother, Barnabas Chipman, in the publication of a newspaper. While so employed, he demitted from Simpson Lodge and affiliated with Wilson Lodge No. 113, at that place. In 1872, on the invitation of an uncle, he went to Parkhill in Middlesex County, where he assisted in his store, and varied the monotony of a mercantile career, by publishing the *Parkhill Herald*. He could not keep out of Freemasonry, so he demitted from Wilson Lodge and affiliated with Doric Lodge No. 233. In this lodge he occupied the office of Senior Warden in 1874, Worshipful Master in 1875, and Secretary until he left Parkhill for the West about 1880.

For sixteen years he prospected in Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and British Columbia with varying success, but learning much about practical mining.

In the early 1890s he had drifted north to the Kootenays as far as Ymir, BC. Here he staked the property now known as the Ymir mine. During the year following his staking he failed to do the assessment work required by British Columbia law, though reminded by his friends of the necessity of doing so. At the expiration of the year the claim reverted to the Crown and was restaked by others.

He came to Kaslo in the boom year of 1894, and prospected in the surrounding hills until 1896, with some incursions into Freemasonry by assisting in the formation of Kaslo Lodge. His mineral claims proving to be of little value, he accepted the office of City Clerk in the little city of Kaslo. He held this office continuously until 13 August 1900, when he resigned owing to his appointment by the Provincial Government as Government Agent, Gold Commissioner, Stipendiary Magistrate, and official Administrator for the Kaslo District.

The members of the city council were sorry to lose their experienced and efficient City Clerk, and expressed their regret in a resolution passed by the council at that time:

“ This Council regrets very sincerely that he is leaving the post he has so long filled with credit to himself and honour to the City, and trust that his new departure will reflect credit on himself and be advantageous to the Government of the Province.”

Notwithstanding his leaving the employ of the city, he still remained interested in its work. Regularly, on the election of a new council, he appeared at the city hall and administered the oath of office to the new aldermen, making an interesting and impressive ceremony of what is ordinarily a perfunctory affair.

On 1 April 1913, he took superannuation and retired to private life. Even then he was not allowed to rest, for on 21 October 1913, he was appointed Police Magistrate for the City of Kaslo, an office he held until his death.

The question of the formation of a masonic lodge at Kaslo was being discussed by the Freemasons there when Chipman arrived. The only thing a Freemason of his experience and standing, and with his love for the Craft, could do was to assist the movement in every way possible. Until he was able to affiliate, he acted as secretary *pro tem*.

As soon as he could become a member of the lodge, which he did as soon as possible, he did, and was immediately placed in office as such.

This office he continued to hold until he was elected Grand Master in 1902.

His experience and ability, and his zeal for Freemasonry soon gave him a high standing in the Craft in this jurisdiction, and promotion naturally followed. He was elected Grand Senior Warden of Grand Lodge in 1900, Deputy Grand Master in 1901, Grand Master in 1902.

As Grand Master he issued dispensations for Harmony Lodge at Grand Forks, Columbia Lodge at Windermere¹; and Tuscan Lodge at Trout Lake City.² The first two are still flourishing. The third passed away with the passing of the settlement in which it was established.

As Grand Master he performed the duties of that high office to the satisfaction of all Freemasons within the jurisdiction. The only institution which was the loser by his advancement was Kaslo Lodge, which lost the services of a most efficient secretary. It is a pleasure to go over the minutes as written by him. Everything done in lodge is carefully set down, each matter dealt with in a carefully prepared form which never varied, in handwriting which is a reproach to most of us in these days of careless penmanship. It might be that a photostat of some of his minutes in the proceedings of Kaslo Lodge, circularized among the lodges generally, would assist secretaries to put their minutes in proper shape.

After his term of office as Grand Master expired, he continued to attend, not only Kaslo, but the other lodges in that part of British Columbia, and to advance the interests of Freemasonry wherever possible. He was treasurer of the lodge from 1904 to 1912 inclusive.

A confirmed bachelor, he lived during his later days at the Kaslo Club. As he grew older his health began to fail, but still he kept about. On Sunday, 21 April 1918, he was about town as usual. On Monday, the 22nd, he did not appear, and a search being made, he was found dead in his room. Apparently he had been stricken as he was undressing to go to bed. He was buried at Kaslo, on 16 April 1918, with full masonic honours. His nearest surviving relative was a brother in Leeds County, Ontario, who was duly notified of his demise.

One who knew him well for many years, says of him:

“ He was a most genial man, a friend of everyone, and it was never a trouble for him to go out of his way to give a helping hand to anybody.”

Let us leave him with that epitaph. None better could be given any man.

1. See Hist. of this Lodge, by Bro. B. G. Hamilton, G.L. Rept., 1933, p. 213, *et seq.*
2. See Hist. of this Lodge, G.L. Rept., 1937, p. 161, *et seq.*

Reid, Robie L., “Report of Grand Historian”, *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of British Columbia at the Sixty-ninth Annual Communication held at New Westminster on the 20th and 21st days of June 1940*. Vancouver : Grand Lodge, 1940. pp. 168-170.