

OUR LOST LODGES

Our newest lodge is Tsawwassen No. 185. Yet there are only 173 lodges in our jurisdiction. What became of the other twelve? For the record, the missing numbers are 5, 6, 8, 30, 36, 39, 47, 62, 71, 111, 140, and 157. However, I propose to review them, not in that order, but in the order of their disappearance.

The first to go were three of the original lodges which formed our Grand Lodge in 1871. At that time, there were only 9 lodges in the province. They were all very small, and were divided into 4 English and 5 Scottish lodges. Eight of them were the founding members of our Grand Lodge, with Union No. 899 ER remaining independent until 1872.

Two years after Grand Lodge was formed, the two lodges in Nanaimo, being Nanaimo No. 3 and Caledonia No. 6 (both formed in 1867), obtained the approval of Grand Lodge to merge, under the name of Ashlar No. 3. Nanaimo Lodge was formerly No. 1090, ER, and Caledonia was No. 478, SC. These two lodges, led by a fiery Scot from Prince Edward Island, W Bro. William Stewart, were keen advocates of an independent Grand Lodge. After W Bro. Stewart had persuaded all the members to continue with the "Scotch" work, the amalgamation took place. The new lodge retained all the regalia that it had adopted in imitation of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2, in Edinburgh. About a year later, MW Bro. Dr. I.W. Powell, Grand Master, wrote:

"In October last (1874) I had the pleasure of responding to the request of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, to consecrate the beautiful hall. As you are aware, the brethren of Nanaimo Lodge No. 3 and Caledonia Lodge No. 6, with a view to reconciling conflicting interests, adopted the sensible plan of uniting under the name of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, and I am happy to add, no lodge in the province has brighter or happier prospects. Through the unity of action thus brought about, the brethren have been enabled to build a superb and capacious hall."

Happily, the names "Nanaimo" and "Caledonia" were restored to our register with the formation of lodges 110 and 136 respectively.

In the month of March 1877, two further amalgamations took place. The first saw the end of Quadra No. 8 (formerly No. 508 SC), when it merged with Vancouver No. 2 (formerly No. 421, SC), to form Vancouver and Quadra No. 2. The other was the merger of Victoria No. 1 (formerly No. 1085, ER) and British Columbia No. 5 (formerly No. 1187, ER), under the name of Victoria-Columbia No. 1. The effect of this was to reduce the number of lodges in Victoria from four to two, and left only six lodges, with a total membership of under 300, in the Province. At the Grand Lodge Annual Communication held in Victoria on February 16, 1878, the Grand Master, MW Bro. Frederick Williams, reported:

"It gives me great pleasure that I am again permitted to congratulate you upon the general harmony and prosperity of the Craft in this Province, and especially in this city, since the amalgamation of the four lodges into two, which the brethren of these lodges consummated after careful and mature deliberation, in which I concurred, as I thought it would be for the good of the Order in reconciling conflicting interests. "

Incidentally, the names "Columbia" and "Vancouver" were later revived with Lodges 38 and 68 respectively.

The next lodge to disappear came to a very different end. Arrowsmith No. 62 was formed in Alberni in 1911, and constituted a year later. However, in less than seven years, the Grand

Master called an Emergent Communication of Grand Lodge, which was held in Vancouver in January, 1919.

Apparently, serious trouble among the brethren of Arrowsmith Lodge had developed a year earlier. All attempts to make peace had failed, and the matter was referred in 1918 to a committee of Grand Lodge. A report was made to Grand Lodge that year sustaining the action of the Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Dr. Douglas Crossan, who had suspended Arrowsmith's charter. The Emergent Communication was called by MW Bro. John Shaw (of Nanaimo), as Grand Master, for the purpose of disposing of the case of this lodge. After due deliberation, the matter was referred to the Annual Communication in June, 1919. At that time, the Grand Master called upon the Worshipful Master to show cause why the warrant of the lodge should not be revoked. The brethren in Grand Lodge heard the Worshipful Master, as well as several other brethren, including Past Grand Masters, and on 15 June 1919, ordered that the warrant of Arrowsmith No. 62 be revoked, and its name erased from the roll of the Grand Lodge.

It is only fitting to add that, in the following year, the brethren of Port Alberni formed a new lodge, now Barclay No. 90.

A year after the Alberni incident had passed, another amalgamation took place. Greenwood No. 28 had been established at Greenwood in 1898, and King Edward No. 36 at Phoenix in 1901. However, because of the great loss of population at Phoenix during World War I, and the closing of the mines, the city of Phoenix became a ghost town.

The city's demise was evident, and a special Act of the Legislature was passed to "disincorporate" it. The lodge could not carry on, so it amalgamated with Greenwood No. 28, under the present name of King Edward No. 28, on 20 June 1920.

Another amalgamation followed in June 1923, when Tuscan No. 39, which had been formed at Trout Lake in 1903, merged with Arrow No. 47, formed at Arrowhead in 1907. The new lodge took the name of the former and the number of the latter, and became "Tuscan No. 47." At the time of this merger, both lodges were in a decline, but by joining, they managed to survive for nearly twenty years more.

Our story now reverts to Vancouver, and the revocation of the warrant of Gothic No. 111, which took place in June, 1928. The lodge had only been formed in 1924, and was constituted in June, 1925. Its membership at the end of 1926 was 59, with 15 more added in 1927. The DDGM, RW Bro. John Warwick, visited the lodge on October 6, 1927. Some of the brethren wanted to move the lodge from Central Park to Grandview, but the Grand Master, MW Bro. Frank S. McKee, would not agree. A month later, in November, the DDGM reported on the "satisfactory conferring of the EA degree." However, he was back again, within three months, when "by order of the Grand Master, I removed the Warrant and prohibited them from meeting, until the Grand Lodge meets."

At the Grand Lodge Annual Communication in June, the Worshipful Master, W Bro. J.W. Hogg, was admitted to Grand Lodge, and said that he knew of no reason why the warrant should be revoked. After he retired, the question of revocation was put to a vote, and was carried unanimously. An Emergent Communication of the Grand Lodge was held the following spring, in May, 1929, with MW Bro. Robert Baird, Grand Master, presiding. A Trial Commission had met, to deal with the charges against some of the brethren of Gothic No. 111, and now made its report. No names are given, nor are the charges explicit enough to determine what actually happened to cause this lodge to collapse.

However, some of it can be pieced together. Seven brethren were reprimanded upon pleas or findings of guilt to charges of unmasonic conduct, and were reinstated to Freemasonry. Their offences included repeating a rumour in the lodge room, speaking disrespectfully of a Grand Lodge officer, charging other brethren with having been responsible for the black ball, and attending two meetings in November, 1927, called by the Worshipful Master, at the first of which the attitude of certain members towards an applicant was discussed.

Another brother admitted discussing the use of the black ball with several brethren, in January, 1928, and also admitted having removed sheets from the minute book, although he stated he had reported the matter to the lodge before the minutes were read. He was expelled from Freemasonry. The report also indicates that a "Worshipful Brother" was expelled. He is the only one of the nine who is referred to other than as "Brother," leading one to the inference that he may have been the Worshipful Master at the time the lodge was erased.

Another amalgamation took place in June 1939. The old lodge at Sandon, named Alta No. 29, was formed in 1898, when that town was at the height of its mining boom. A younger lodge, Slocan No. 7 1, was established in New Denver in 1913. The latter lodge was never a large one, and several times, amalgamation with Alta No. 29 was mooted, as it too was declining. As a result of the merger, the new lodge became Slocan No. 29, and is now located in New Denver.

The first outright surrender of a charter occurred in 1941, when Tuscan No. 47 (which I have dealt with earlier) finally expired, after becoming dormant the previous year. I hope that a personal note here will not be amiss. When I entered Freemasonry in Nechako No. 86, I saw two beautiful pillars within the entrance of the lodge. Many years later, in writing the history of my own lodge, I discovered that these pillars had been bought, in January 1940, from Tuscan No. 47 for \$50. In RW Bro. John Marshall's "History of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia," these pillars may be seen in a photograph on page 202, when they were the property of Tuscan No. 39.

Incidentally, the name "Tuscan" was later revived in New Westminster with the formation of Lodge No. 138.

The losses in population and membership in World War II brought about another amalgamation in June 1944. North Star No. 30 began in Fort Steele in 1899, followed by Cranbrook No. 34, at Cranbrook, in 1900. The latter town grew, while Fort Steele faded away. Finally, the old lodge at Fort Steele could no longer continue, and merger took place. The new lodge continued to be known as Cranbrook No. 34. The name "North Star" reappeared in North Surrey, in 1956, when Lodge No. 167 was formed.

The last two lodges to vanish were in towns where the principal industry had collapsed, and no other lodge was nearby to enable a merger to take place.

Mount Caro Marion No. 140 was formed at Ocean Falls in 1950, but in December, 1972, the charter was surrendered, notwithstanding the optimism of RW Bro. Norval Douglas, DDGM, who wrote:

"No doubt Masons will have the lodge reconstituted when Ocean Falls is in full operation."

Northern Lights No. 157 was established at Mayo, in 1953, but in 1981, the Grand Master, MW Bro. Edward A. Clarke, had to recall the warrant and suspend the lodge, when it appeared to have become dormant.

Thus our rolls have been diminished during the past 113 years, and gaps have arisen in the numbers of our constituent lodges. I am sure, however, that the end is not in sight, and that more such losses face us in the future. However, I think we should always remember that these lodges, while they flourished, were the masonic homes of a number of brethren, and in them many men were first brought to masonic light, and enjoyed happy hours of friendly companionship with their brethren. It is thus that we should remember these lodges today.

George W. Baldwin PM, Nechako No. 86 20 March 1984

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Since writing this, another merger is taking place in Vancouver. Prince Arthur No. 82 decided this year that it could not continue, and agreed with Mount Moriah No. 102, to merge with it. Further details on this merger should be forthcoming shortly.

On the other side of the ledger, it should be noted that a new lodge has been added to the roll, namely, Mackenzie UD, meeting at the town of Mackenzie.

GWB, 19 October 1984