

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LODGES IN WEST KOOTENAY DISTRICT 6 AND BOUNDARY DISTRICT 7

May 14th, 1987

Apparently, the first time a petition was received by Grand Lodge from what are now Districts 6 and 7, was in 1891, when such a petition came to the Grand Master supported by Kootenay Lodge at Revelstoke for a lodge at Ainsworth, BC, situated on the western shore of Kootenay Lake. The Grand Master declined to grant it, but placed it before Grand Lodge who referred it back to the Grand Master, who was to use his discretion. He came to Nelson, but was unable to meet any of the brethren who had sent in the petition, so the matter was dropped.

In 1892 a meeting to discuss the question of forming a lodge in Nelson was held. A petition was drawn up, the penmanship was exquisite, but the document was not dated. It was signed and sent to the Grand Master and dispensation was issued on 22 October 1893. The lodge was organized and a warrant ordered by Grand Lodge in June 1894. Many of the brethren of this lodge were from Ontario and Québec, so the ritual used was Canadian. Nelson No. 23 has been instrumental in starting many of the other lodges in Kootenay District and continues to support by visiting. This lodge celebrated its 75th Anniversary on 25 October 1968 and will soon be looking forward to its centennial. The masonic hall was completed in 1923. They have 117 members.

Kaslo Lodge No. 25 was granted a petition on August 22, 1894 and the charter was granted by Grand Lodge on June 24, 1895. The original members of this lodge came from different locations. Five were from Ontario, five from the USA, four from what was then the Grand Lodge of Manitoba, two from Scotland and one from Nova Scotia. This probably was a good representation of the people of the Kootenays at that time. Kaslo Lodge adopted the Ancient or American Ritual. The members have met in the same building for many years and it is indeed a historical marker in Freemasonry in the Kootenays and the town of Kaslo.

A lodge of instruction operated for some years at the town of Riondel. It was named Bluebell Lodge of Instruction and operated under sanction of Kaslo Lodge No. 25, pursuant to Section 138 of the *Book of Constitutions*. It was started in 1954 and had some interesting times, including an invasion of rats, and vandalism, but survived for some fifteen years and contributed much to Freemasonry. Some members of Kaslo Lodge still come from Riondel. They have 57 members.

Corinthian Lodge No. 27 of Rossland, BC—meetings were held in September of 1895 and a committee appointed to see if suitable accommodations could be found for masonic purposes: As no place could be found, at a meeting on 2 October, instruction was given to proceed at once with the erection of a hall. On 5 December 1895 a petition was drawn up, signed and approved by Nelson Lodge No. 23. A first meeting was held in the new

hall on 26 January 1896. In the short period of three months, a masonic hall was built and ready for occupancy. An old, undated page from the minute book of that period, seeming to have been used as a register, has the names of members of Corinthian Lodge and visitors from far and near—Oregon, Washington, Montana, North Dakota, Illinois, California, Michigan, Ohio, Colorado, Ontario, The Northwest Territories, Alberta, and from BC — Chilliwack, Victoria, Vancouver and New Westminster. The warrant was granted by Grand Lodge on 19 June 1896 and the lodge was duly constituted on 19 November 1896. On 9 June 1899 the masonic building burned down and it was rebuilt. In 1901, they assisted in instituting King Edward Lodge of Phoenix. In June of 1904, the annual communication of Grand Lodge was held in Rossland. Membership in 1904 was 125. Corinthian Lodge has had several members become Grand Masters. In 1916 MW Bro. William A. Astley, a life member of Corinthian Lodge was Grand. In 1930 MW Bro. Dr. Donald E. Kerr, a demitted member of Corinthian was Grand Master. A great deal of time and effort was spent to maintain the original character of the building, but on 2 June 1976 disaster again struck when the masonic building burned down. Corinthian Lodge presently meets in the Oddfellows Hall. It has not had many new members in the last several years, but is otherwise doing well, with 74 members on the roll. It practices the Ancient working.

The next lodge in our district was at Greenwood, BC. On 17 November 1898 a petition was granted. The warrant was granted on 24 June 1899 to Greenwood Lodge No. 28 and it was duly constituted on 10 November 1899. The lodge uses the Ancient working. An application for dispensation for King Edward Lodge No. 36 at Phoenix, BC was made in the spring of 1901, but the Grand Master declined to act until further information was received, and ordered an investigation and report to Grand Lodge. Another application for a lodge at Mother Lode, a short distance from Greenwood, was turned down at this time by the Grand Master because of its location. The report to Grand Lodge of the Phoenix application was favourable and dispensation was issued on 26 June 1901. The lodge was instituted on 23 July, and a warrant was ordered by Grand Lodge on 19 June 1903. This lodge prospered for many years, but during the first world war the mines closed and most of the town's inhabitants left. Then on 19 June 1920 the lodge was ordered to amalgamate with Greenwood Lodge as King Edward Lodge No. 28. On 11-13 October of 1974 King Edward No. 28, Ymir No. 31 and Fidelity No. 32 had a joint 75th anniversary celebration. This lodge has had a renewal of interest in the past, with a number of new members. It presently has some 47 members. In 1960 MW Bro. C. Gordon McMyn from King Edward Lodge was Grand Master.

Slocan Lodge No. 29 has been a part of the history of one of our fascinating localities in British Columbia, the silvery Slocan. Nestled back in the mountains at the head of Carpenter Creek are the remains of that once thriving town called Sandon. It boasted many hotels, bars and other features that seem to spring up wherever men gathered together to glean what they could from the silver-rich ore that originally seemed as if it would never run out. There, freemasons started a lodge in 1899 called Alta Lodge No. 29 and elected W Bro. Ian Bernard as Worshipful Master. W Bro. James Greer, who

I think is 99, still attends lodge in New Denver and was Worshipful Master in 1931 and 1932 of Alta Lodge. Sandon was gradually nearing its end and after James Greer's two years in office, W Bro. Towgood held the office of Worshipful Master continually from 1933 to 1938. Slocan Lodge No. 71 was commenced in 1913 and by 1938 it amalgamated with Alta Lodge to make Slocan Lodge No. 29 which is still going strong in New Denver under the able leadership of W Bro. Fred Pearce. It has not been easy to keep No. 29 operating and the conditions with which the members had to contend makes one wonder why the lodge exists at all. Much credit is due those freemasons who have had the tenacity to hang on with that hope always in front of them, that the town would regain its prominence and the lodge regain its once excellent status. The period when the Japanese were moved from the coast to the interior gave the Slocan a much-needed boost. Membership increased and social events put on by the freemasons attracted many new members. Star of the West Lodge No. 61 in Nakusp has been very helpful in coöperating with Slocan No. 29 in having dual installations and dual degree work. Members of Sentinel No. 146 in Castlegar, and also from Kaslo No. 25, have affiliated and increased the membership. Some of the members have the feeling that there may be another revival. Mining companies have been developing a huge low-grade gold deposit. The spending has been in the millions and if they start producing, Freemasonry in New Denver will get another start. There is a strong determination on the part of the members. They are enthusiastic and positive and if this continuously is applied, it will indeed make a difference. They presently have 35 members.

Ymir Lodge No. 31 came into being through the influx of people into the Ymir District for gold about the same time as the boom in Rossland. By 1896 a number of freemasons had come to the district and discussions about the formation of a lodge took place, but nothing concrete was done until 1898, when a request to Grand Lodge for dispensation sponsored by Nelson Lodge No. 23 was made. This was granted after four attempts, on 21 July 1899 at a cost of \$35. On 4 August 1899 the first meeting of Ymir Lodge under dispensation was held at Ymir with fourteen members present. The first Master was a Past Master of Spitze Lodge No. 25 under the Grand Lodge of Manitoba in Pincher Creek, Alberta.

The Grand Secretary, VW Bro. Walter J. Quinlan, who then lived in Nelson, installed the officers. The warrant was granted in June of 1900. The Grand Master visited the Lodge in October 1900 and expressed his fear that because Ymir was such a small place, he had grave doubts about it being able to support a lodge. The lodge, however, succeeded in carrying on in Ymir until 1935 when it was moved to the more active town of Salmo.

VW Bro. Brother Chris Hansen, who is still an active member of our lodge, presided over the last meeting in Ymir on 4 October 1935 and the first meeting in Salmo, on 1 November 1935. On 15 May 1954 the Grand Master, MW Bro. William A. Curran of Trail, laid the cornerstone of a masonic building in a most colourful ceremony attended by about 200 brethren. Having served as Secretary for ten years, I would be remiss if I didn't mention RW Bro. Sandy Bell who served as Worshipful Master, District Deputy

Grand Master and was Secretary for some 39 years. 1965 was of special interest when four of the lodge offices were held by four brothers: Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden and Treasurer. Furnishings for the lodge are a result of the thoughtfulness and skills of many brethren—the working tools by RW Bro. Gordon Webb of Nelson and RW Bro. Gordon Moir made most of the rest of the furniture in our lodge room. The active support of Nelson No. 23, Fidelity No. 32, Corinthian No. 27, and Friendship No. 144 have also been instrumental in keeping this lodge going over the years. We have some 64 members and do Ancient working.

The next lodge was Fidelity No. 32 of Trail, where the old Dewdney Trail crossed the Columbia River. A petition was drawn up endorsed by Corinthian Lodge at Rossland, and dispensation was issued on 14 September 1899. The lodge was called Fidelity, possibly because the first Senior Warden of the lodge, James H. Schofield, was from Fidelity Lodge in Suma, Washington. The lodge adopted the Ancient or American working. The first meeting place, the McPhee Hall, or the Dolan Hall as it was later called, was the only one in town and it was shared by several fraternal orders. A long history of joint installations with Corinthian Lodge began on 6 December 1900. Throughout most of its history, Fidelity has been in good financial health. However, in 1906, a crisis arose when a brother who had been elected Treasurer took off with all the books and the money. The lodge was left in the most stringent financial circumstances, but rapid collection of dues, plus loans from several brethren permitted them to stay solvent. Fidelity continued to meet in the Dolan Hall until 1924. One of the last two brethren to be raised in that hall, RW Bro. Ernie Mason, is still very active in Fidelity. W Bro. James Schofield became the Grand Master in 1906. A second member of Fidelity to become Grand Master was MW Bro. B. A. Stimmel, in 1941. Though often talked about, no action was taken to build a masonic hall until the institution of Emulation Lodge No. 12 in 1936.

Their cornerstone was laid by MW Bro. Dr. J. S. Henderson, Grand Master, at one of the most interesting and dignified services ever witnessed in Trail. As mentioned, Emulation Lodge No. 125 came into being in Trail, BC in 1936, the dispensation being granted in March of that year. On 14 September 1936 the Grand Master, at an emergent communication of Grand Lodge, constituted and consecrated the lodge. The lodge took its name from the masonic word, which implies the act of attempting to equal or excel.

The furnishings of the lodge were made entirely by local artisans. Emulation flourished for some years. In 1953 MW Bro. William Curran of this lodge was elected Grand Master. As the 1980s approached, though, the interest of the members declined and in 1982, Emulation No. 125 and Fidelity No. 32 consolidated and carried on as Fidelity No. 32.

When the creation of a lodge in the Grand Forks area was first talked about, the brethren in charge of the movement were astonished to discover there were some 40 freemasons about. They came from every corner of the continent and many had not attended a lodge for up to 25 years. Application was made in the spring of 1902 but dispensation wasn't granted until 26 October 1903, the Grand Master having some

doubts about the permanence of the town. It was instituted on 19 November 1902 and the warrant granted on 20 June 1903. It was named Harmony and this has been their watchword ever since. The lodge has met in various places in the town and in 1972, after 70 years of moving and renting, the brethren decided to purchase the I.O.O.F. hall as a permanent home for the lodge.

After extensive renovations, it has been used for that purpose. It presently has some 60 members and uses the Ancient work. My successor as District Deputy Grand Master will be Worshipful Brother Gordon Reed of this Lodge.

During the ten years from 1883 to 1903, ten lodges were instituted in these two districts. Nelson No. 23 was first in 1893, Kaslo No. 25 came next in 1894, to be followed by Corinthian Lodge No. 27 in Rossland in 1894, Greenwood No. 28 in 1898, Alta No. 29 in Sandon in 1898, Ymir Lodge No. 31 in July 1899, Fidelity No. 32 in Trail in September 1899, King Edward No. 36 in Phoenix in 1901 and Harmony No. 37 in Grand Forks in 1902. Of these, of course eight are still operating, eighty some years later, so that is quite a good record, I suggest.

Tuscan Lodge No. 39 was established at Trout Lake, situated on the lake of that name between the Columbia River and Kootenay Lake north of Kaslo. Dispensation was granted on 25 March 1903 and instituted on 13 April 1903. The Grand Master visited the lodge on January 21, 1904-. and the warrant was granted on 23 June 1904. The town died and the lodge also amalgamated with Arrow Lodge No. 47 at Arrow Head on 24 June 1923, which lodge itself passed out of existence surrendering its warrant in 1941.

Star of the West Lodge No. 61 in Nakusp, BC—in 1909 a meeting was held to discuss the formation of a lodge in Nakusp. The Grand Master gave permission to hold a Lodge of Instruction under the supervision of Arrow Lodge No. 47. This continued until the official dispensation for Star of the West Lodge No. 61 was issued by Grand Lodge in August of 1911. Officers were installed on 5 October, 1911 with visitors from Nelson No. 23 and Kootenay No. 15 from Revelstoke present. The warrant was received on 28 August 1912. Travel was mostly by steam paddle-wheelers, launch or train. It has been related that a few freemasons wanting to visit Alta Lodge at Sandon and not wanting to walk, helped themselves to a CPR train. A few were fired over this incident. Occasionally hand cars were used as transport. In 1922 it was decided to build a masonic hall. This proved to be a great effort—there were expert carpenters among the brethren, employed by the shipyards who contributed much time and some of the members lent money without interest, as well a mortgage had to be obtained. Some of the costs prove interesting: 3 lots \$250 / 1 sack of cement \$1.65 / plumbing roughed in for \$20. In 1982 this building was renovated and a simulated cornerstone laying under the leadership of MW Bro. Douglas Philips took place on 13 March 1983 with 150 freemasons, 20 invited guests and a number of citizens who were attracted by the parade. This Lodge presently has 64 members, as well as three candidates being processed, so is doing well.

In 1951 the Grand Master in person instituted another lodge in Trail. It operated under dispensation until 19 June 1952 when Grand Lodge ordered a warrant for

Friendship Lodge No. 144 at Trail. The Grand Master, on 30 September 1952 duly constituted the lodge in the Masonic Temple; the lodge adopting the Canadian working for its rituals. The name Friendship was chosen from a number of names submitted and it has proven to be very appropriate over the years. In 1975 MW Bro. Tom McLaughlin from Friendship was our Grand Master. They have over 100 members and is the only lodge in District 7 using the Canadian working.

On 20 August 1947 a meeting was held in Castlegar with a view to forming a masonic lodge but little progress was made until 16 October 1950 when an organization meeting was held. On 27 March 1951 the Grand Master confirmed the action taken by Emulation Lodge No. 125 in giving its sanction as set out in Section 138 of the *Book of Constitutions* to hold under its warrant a Lodge of Instruction in Castlegar. A dispensation was ordered and Sentinel Lodge was instituted by the Senior Grand Warden on 16 February 1952. On 18 June 1953, Grand Lodge approved the warrant. On 19 September 1953, in the Freemasons' Hall in Trail, the Grand Master constituted Sentinel Lodge No. 146. The name is taken from Sentinel Mountain on the outskirts of Castlegar. It is a flourishing lodge with many new members and has been doing very well, so Sentinel will be celebrating its 34th year. It, presently has 71 members. This lodge was in District 7 until 1976.

The last lodge to secure a dispensation from the Grand Master was Granite Lodge No. 154 of Nelson, BC on 21 April 1953. On 29 April the Grand Master personally instituted this lodge. This was the first institution of a masonic lodge in District 6 in approximately 41 years. On 19 June 1954 the warrant was granted. On 5 September 1954 the Grand Master constituted the lodge. The name Granite was chosen from some 25 suggestions. This lodge chose the Ancient or American working. It presently has 81 members.

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