

Freemasons

built Powell River



Look closely, and you will find signs of Powell River's Masonic history scattered throughout the city. On the 100th anniversary of Triune Masonic Lodge, we are sharing some stories highlighting the ties that bind Freemasonry and the larger Powell River community.

This is part one of a three-part series.

BY KEITH CARLSON

Consider the Dwight Hall. Powell Riverites are rightly proud of the "Grand Old Lady" with its remarkable 5,000 square foot ballroom dance floor with horsehair underlay.

Indeed, when it opened in 1927 there were only three other similar dance floors in all of British Columbia (the others being Vancouver's Commodore Ballroom, Victo-

POWELL RIVER'S BEST KNOWN MASONIC PRESENCE: Is, of course, the Triune Masonic Lodge underneath Dwight Hall in Townsite. The influence of the Freemasons can be felt throughout the region... if you know where to look

photo courtesy of Ron Hutton

ria's Empress Hotel, and the Hotel Vancouver).

Designed and built by Powell River Company planner (and Freemason) John McIntyre, the Dwight Hall has long been a focal point of Powell River's Masonic community.

Freemason's legends of the building of King Solomon's temple describe the significance of the numbers three, five and seven to Masonic architecture, as well as the importance of orientating certain rooms and windows to the cardinal directions. And while no one can say for certain whether McIntyre intentionally worked Masonic principles into the Dwight Hall's overall structure, to those who have been raised to Freemasonry's third degree, the similarities appear more than coincidental.

It is downstairs, however, on the Dwight Hall's lower floor, where there can be no mistaking the influence of Freemasonry in early Powell River.

There visitors will find a specially built "lodge room" that has served as the meeting place of Triune Lodge for nearly a century. And while several frater-

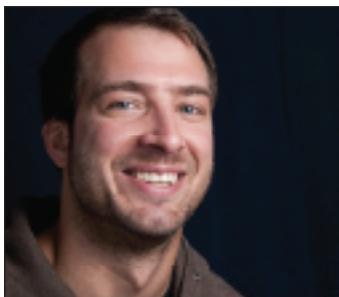
nal organizations have shared the Dwight Hall lodge room over the years, there can be no question that it was specifically designed to conform with Masonic architectural principals.

If the Dwight Hall has explicit Masonic connections, other Powell River buildings reveal their affiliation to Freemasonry primarily through their namesakes.

The old Westview post office (the MacGregor Building), for example, was named after Lt. Col. John MacGregor – the most decorated Canadian soldier of The First World War, and a member of Triune Lodge.

Max Cameron school (and theatre) was likewise named after a prominent Powell River Freemason who as a professor at UBC wrote a report for the provincial government that literally transformed the way education was administered and delivered in British Columbia.

Henderson Elementary School similarly was named after Dr. Andrew Henderson who served as field surgeon for Canadian troops during the Battle of Batoche against Louie Riel in 1885. He established Powell



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Henderson was the first master of Triune Masonic Lodge.

Other Powell River Freemasons played prominent roles in our city's development even if their names have not been immortalized on buildings.

Triune Lodge member Evan Sadler, for example, designed and built the original St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the Townsite, and Freemason Robert Banham was Powell River's postmaster as well as the city's first government magistrate.

During the Great War, Banham served on the home



FREEMASONS AT CITY HALL? Today's Powell River City Hall was once the Westview post office. It's called the MacGregor Building, after Lt. Col. John MacGregor – the most decorated Canadian soldier of The First World War, and a member of the local Triune Lodge. Dr. Andrew Henderson, the city's first doctor and the namesake of both Hendsen House and Henderson School, was once Worshipful Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and the Yukon.

ter members, operated Powell River's earliest coal delivery service and founded City Transfer. Later he played a central role in the development of the village of Cranberry – indeed some old timers still fondly refer to Liebenschel as having been the unofficial mayor of Cranberry prior to amalgamation with the Townsite and Westview.

Not all of Powell River's Freemasons, however, necessarily counted themselves among the community's economic and political movers and shakers.

From time immemorial, the Masonic brotherhood has promoted the philosophy that all men are equal and should be judged only according to the quality of their character.

People from all walks of life, therefore, have had their names entered onto the rolls of Powell River's Triune Lodge, regardless of their financial or social status outside the Lodge.

Thus, in addition to such local luminaries as Sheldon Brooks (the son of Powell River's Company's co-founder), William McBain (the first Mill Manager), and Dr. Andrew Henderson, on the list of Powell River's early Freemasons are found grocery clerks such as William Alexander, truck drivers, including Angus Matheson, plumbers such as William Loukes, loggers such as John Harper, and blacksmiths such as Charles Godfrey.

Many of these men's descendants live in Powell River today, where they benefit from the pioneering work of an earlier generation who helped to make our city what it is today. [PR](#)

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front with the second Canadian Dragoons. After the conflict, he helped numerous soldiers re-adjust to life back at home.

Ernie Liebenschel, another of Triune Lodge's char-

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7pm March 23 at the ABC Community Theatre, 7055 Albers Rd.

This space available to non-profit organizations, courtesy City Transfer

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