

HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF GLENWOOD LODGE FOR SEVENTY-FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY, APRIL 24th, 1959
(G.A. McMorran)

Glenwood Lodge, No. 27 on the Grand Register of Manitoba, held its first meeting on February 4th, 1884. Permission to organize was given by M.W. Bro. James Headley Bell by a dispensation dated December 24th, 1883.

There seems to be no record of an institution ceremony having been held. Ten days after the first meeting, the Grand Lodge of Manitoba, which then held its Annual Communication in mid-winter, granted our charter. It is dated February 14, 1884. And there is no record of a ceremony of constitution.

At the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge in 1885 the Grand Master stated in his address that Glenwood Lodge had been constituted at his request by R.W. Bro. Peter McGregor of the Fifth District, which at that time included only three lodges, Brandon No. 19, Glenwood No. 27 and Carberry No. 29. But in the same 1885 Proceedings, R.W. Bro. McGregor's report simply says that accompanied by several Brandon brethren, he visited Glenwood, was pleased with the work of W. Bro. James Ovas, saw the E.A. degree conferred by Bro. Ovas and the M.M. degree conferred by W. Bros. Dickson and Burns of Brandon. According to our minutes the lodge was opened at 8:30, and closed at 11:40 after conducting the business, including a ballot, and the conferring of the E.A. and M.M. degrees. The ceremony of constitution, if conducted by the District Deputy Grand Master, must have been as speedily conducted as the degree work.

The petition for a charter was signed by Brothers James A. Ovas, A.W. Law, J.C. Stoyte, Wm. Hamilton, Gilbert Wood, James Hopkins, Geo. Waldy, W.A. King, Geo. Johnston and R.B. Kirchhoffer. The officers named in the dispensation were James A. Ovas as Worshipful Master; James C. Stoyte as Senior Warden; and W.A. King as Junior Warden. The officers elected and appointed were R.B. Kirchhoffer, secretary; A.W. Law, treasurer; T.C. Coggs, chaplain; Geo. Waldy, senior deacon; Gilbert Wood, junior deacon; Geo. Johnson, inner guard; and James Hopkins, tyler.

It is interesting to note that the organization of Masonic lodges followed closely upon settlement all over Western Canada; and in most instances the work, or ritual, used or adapted depended upon the country or province from which the settlers had emigrated. This fact accounts for the two recognized works in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and the four works that exist in British Columbia.

The dispensation to organize Glenwood Lodge was signed by the Grand Master just two and a half years after the arrival of the Sowden Colonization party in April, 1881, and three years after the arrival of Bro. Gilbert Wood in the district. At the Grand Lodge Communication in Winnipeg last June M.W. Bro. Wm. Douglas, in his annual historical address, traced most interestingly the life of the first member of the craft, Bro. Chas. Curtis, in what is now Manitoba.

There is at present only one piece of evidence of an earlier member than Bro. Curtis being in the province and that is the carving of the square and compasses on one of the huge stones in the interior of the old Fort Prince of Wales at the mouth of the Churchill River. The fort was built during the years 1734 to 1782 by Scottish masons. Whether the carving

was made by a member of the craft during one of those years or later, of course never will be known. But some one with a knowledge of Freemasonry must have expertly chiselled the well known emblem including the letter "G". Some historians doubt that the letter "G" was so used at the time of the fort construction. The late Bro. Harry Haywood, however, in the fall of 1955 in the Cedar Rapids Masonic Library told the writer that the letter "G" was in use about the middle of the 1700's - or about the time that William Preston was writing his famous lectures on the Fellow Craft degree.

That, of course, has nothing to do with the history of this lodge, except that when first members are mentioned it is interesting to here record that Bro. Gilbert Wood, as a member of Albion Lodge No. 109 in the Grand Lodge of Canada (in Ontario) was the first and only member of the craft in this district during the early fall of 1880. He was then 48 years of age. In 1883 at the age of 51 he was one of those actively associated with Bro. James Ovas, Bro. James Stoyte and Bro. W.A. King, who became the lodge's first principal officers, in the preliminary organization work. He was the first junior deacon of this lodge, and in 1886 was installed as treasurer.

Bro. Gilbert Wood brought his family to the banks of Plum Creek (about a mile west of this lodge room) on August 28, 1880. Bro. Wood, or Capt. Wood as he was called, had left Kingston, Ont. on June 15th with his wife, one son, Grant, in rather indifferent health, and a daughter, Anna, who later became Mrs. W. A. Dolmage and lived ~~to the age of~~ *until 1950 x*

The Wood family wandered over a great deal of what is now Manitoba before deciding to settle at Plum Creek. A few days before their arrival here, while camped at Lang's Valley (south of Wawanesa) they were joined by two young Englishmen who were travelling in a Red River cart. The brothers were Thomas and Edward Hicks. They homesteaded a short distance west of Bro. Gilbert Wood. The location of their shanty is marked on a surveyor's sketch made in the fall of 1880 - and of course the shanty of the Wood family. *RW Bro Herb Hicks is a son of Thomas Hicks.*

Bro. Gilbert Wood and his family spent the winter of 1880 - 81 in a half dug-out and pole shanty on the north bank of Plum Creek, about a mile west of this lodge room. The walls inside were upright poplar poles, the floor of split poplar, and the roof was of poles thatched with prairie grass and sods. There was only one window and one door. The poles outside were plastered with clay and banked up some two feet or more with prairie sod.

Such was the first home here of Brother Gilbert Wood, the first member of the craft to settle in this district, and one of the charter members of this lodge - and its first Junior Deacon.

James Hopkins, the second member of the craft to reach Plum Creek - a couple of months after Bro. Wood - was a member of Hanover Lodge in Ontario. He was 56 years of age and a carpenter. He spent the first winter with the Wood family in their half dug-out, a few yards from where Bro. Hugh Clark resides today. The Hicks brothers had a shack a mile or more farther west. There were only seven white residents in this district during that first winter - four of the Wood family, the Hicks brothers and Jas. Hopkins.

J.Y. Bambridge, a blacksmith, arrived with Bro. Hopkins but does not seem to have remained all that winter.

The district was well settled during the summer of 1881 and the village of Plum Creek as it was then known locally (although it was called Souris in an 1881 edition of the London Times and was never known as Plum Creek by the Post Office Department) came into existence. It is not known when the eight other members of the craft, whose names appear on our charter, arrived in Souris. Some of them may have reached the district in 1881 but most of them likely in 1882.

William King was 47 years of age and a member of Corinthian Lodge No. 101 in Ontario.

Richard Kirchhoffer was 35 years of age and a member of Wellesley Lodge No. 1899 in the Grand Lodge of England.

James Stoyte was a member of Ginsah Lodge No. 234 Grand Lodge of Ireland.

William Hamilton was 28 years of age and a member of Commercial Lodge No. 116, Grand Lodge of Ireland. He was senior deacon of this lodge when he died suddenly about a year after the lodge was organized. He is recorded as steward in the list of our first officers.

George Johnston was 26 years of age and a member of Blythe lodge No. 303, Grand Lodge of Canada.

George Waldy was 22 years of age, the youngest of the ten charter members, and a member of Cumberland Lodge No. 41, Grand Lodge of England.

James A. Ovas, the first Worshipful Master of this lodge - and in years of service (at least) about the most illustrious member of the craft in the history of the Grand Lodge of Manitoba - was 29 years of age and a member of Manitou Lodge No. 90, Collingwood, Ont.

An outline of Glenwood's history would not be complete without a brief reference to his lengthy service to the craft in Manitoba. We do not know the date of his arrival in Souris; but it was probably early in 1883 as he came from Rapid City to become bookkeeper for George Crossthwaite, one of the village's merchants. He must have immediately interested the nine or more other resident members of the craft in the organization of a lodge. He was Master for two years, 1884 and 1885; and was followed by W. Bro. Stoyte for the years 1886, 1887 and 1888. In 1886 Bro. Ovas was elected District Deputy Grand Master of the Fifth District; and in 1888 he took out his dimit when he returned to Rapid City where on affiliating with the lodge there, he gave his occupation as merchant miller.

In 1890, while a member of Corinthian Rapid City No. 15, he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Manitoba. In 1897 he returned to Souris as manager of a lumber yard, and again became a member of Glenwood. In 1900 he was elected Grand Secretary and moved to Winnipeg where he affiliated with Northern Light Lodge No. 10. In 1906 M.W. Bro. Ovas was made an Honorary Member of Glenwood Lodge in recognition of his services and interest in the lodge for

well over 20 years. In 1934, when Glenwood celebrated its 50th anniversary, and while he was still Grand Secretary M.W. Bro. Ovas was able to once more visit the lodge, and to preside during the opening and closing ceremonies at the invitation of the then Master, W. Bro. G.H. Grant. Although not a member of Glenwood when he was Grand Master in 1890, for over half a century he continued to express his interest and love for this lodge that he undoubtedly was instrumental in organizing. He died the following year, 1935, while I was Master and a special memorial service was held in Glenwood, the ritual for the occasion being prepared at my request by M.W. Bro. Wm. Douglas.

It must, therefore, be admitted as I remarked earlier, that it is quite impossible to recall the early history of this lodge and not emphasize the fact that our first Master was very closely associated with the direction of the Grand Lodge of Manitoba for almost the first half century of this lodge's existence.

At this 75th anniversary celebration only a few features of the lodge's activities, taken almost at random from lodge minutes and earlier summaries, can be mentioned. To detail would be lengthy and tiresome.

At the end of the first year, 1884, Glenwood had a membership of 16 - 14 Master Masons and 2 Fellowcrafts. Today the membership is 153. In the 75 years nearly 500 have signed the bylaws.

In 1890 Bro. Jas. Hopkins, who was tyler for many years, presented the lodge with a very handsome copy of the VOTSL, and as far as we know it is still in existence and in spite of its use for almost 70 years, in very presentable condition.

In the minutes of a meeting held in November, 1901, when W. Bro. S. S. Smith was Master there is an interesting entry, and there is no one living today that can give an explanation. The lodge was called from L to R at 8:55 for a space of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The lodge was recalled to L at 11:15, nearly three hours later. Again it was called from L to R at 12:15 a.m. and recalled at 1 a.m. At 1:15 a.m. the Master referred back to the reports of committees. And the lodge was closed in harmony at 3 a.m.

In 1906 the Master, W. Bro. Liston instructed the stewards to make arrangements for the regular lunch but to order no intoxicating beverages.

Members initiated the same year, 1906, included S.H. Forrest, John Pollock, Geo. McLelland and M.J. Marshall. Four years later, in 1910, Bro. Forrest was Master of the lodge. Today he is our senior past master.

In 1914 when W. Bro. C.F. Watson was Master the lodge purchased the carpet, which is still so greatly admired, after moving into the Currie and Mitchell block; and the insurance carried was raised to \$1000. Bro. W.C. McCulloch, who was senior warden was associated with W. Bro. Watson in its purchase.

The membership in 1921 was 112, an increase of only ten in as many years, but they were years when the lodge was active in many ways. Masonic study which was initiated by W. Bro. Croll when he was Master in 1908, gradually grew in importance until it became the feature of the 1930's, the depression years when degree work was at a low ebb. It got a substantial boost

in 1927, when W. Bro. Sewell was Master (which incidentally was the year that I became a member) when M.W. Bro. R. S. Thornton of Deloraine gave a wonderful address on the letter "G", an address that he repeated here in 1928.

Then in 1938, when W. Bro. Coltman was Master, came a tremendous up-surge in membership with twelve initiates.

In 1942 when W. Bro. Clarke was Master the Glenwood Masonic Hall Co. Ltd. was organized with W. Bro. D. J. Fraser as president and this building which had been leased in 1938, was purchased for \$3000 cash. The deal was negotiated with a fraternal organization in Winnipeg by R.W. Bro. Redpath and myself. Since then, as a result of another up-surge of membership during the years that the Souris Air School was in operation, all the shares in the company have been purchased by the lodge and the company dissolved. In 1944 the membership passed the 150 mark. The membership today is 153.

During the last few years there has been a marked decline in the number of petitions for membership which is difficult to account for - or express a reason. But interest by members has not abated. The recent re-decoration of these rooms and improvements to the furniture and regalia are visible evidences of this interest. Also the presentation to the lodge last November by W. Bro. Chris Tredger of the VOTSL - on the altar this evening, a family Bible that had been in the possession of the Tredger family for well over a hundred years.

In writing an historical resume of this lodge covering a period of 75 years it is extremely difficult to decide upon what to include without making it too lengthy. Before the lodge's centennial celebration in 1984 it is to be hoped that some member will undertake the rather huge task of writing a history - not a summary- as every year has had its interesting features and every Master has given this lodge the best of which he was capable.

Even a more or less hurried perusal of the lodge's minutes and its historical register recalls to mind, for instance, the many fine fraternal visits and meetings that the brethren have enjoyed through the years. Time tonight but to mention a few:- the visit of Northern Light Lodge of Winnipeg in 1914 when two Pullman sleepers were needed to bring the visitors from the city; the time in 1913 when the members of Glenwood chartered a special train to Hartney in order to put on a degree; again when Tweed Lodge in Brandon ran a special in order to present this lodge with a travelling square; of another special chartered by Glenwood in order to visit Brandon No. 109; and perhaps we should not forget to include the two International Gatherings, the first here in Souris and the second in Langdon, N.D. in the spring of 1953, when history was made by M.W. Bro. Edward Franta of North Dakota opening in full form a Grand Lodge of North Dakota Communication in Souris and I, as Grand Master of Manitoba, had the unprecedented honor of opening, presiding and closing a Manitoba Grand Lodge Communication in Langdon, North Dakota.

Brethren, I think we can easily believe that our brethren of 75 years ago were mainly interested in associating as Freemasons - the cultivation of brotherhood - and being prepared collectively to give assistance when it was

needed in a pioneer community. In the early minutes we read of the lodge making small grants out of its all too skimpy treasury. But the urge was there and I think it was typical of the pioneer days more than today.

Today we are becoming prone to depending upon social security measures of all kinds; and to a marked extent losing personal interest and responsibility. In a sense the spirit of fraternal assistance, which was practiced by our ancient operative brethren, has been adapted and made compulsory by national legislation. On the other hand, brethren, are we not rapidly losing the freedom which our early brethren prized and fought for? Is there not a danger that we will soon all be employees of governments or corporations, a race of men (and women) afraid and unable (even forbidden) to fashion our own lives? We must never forget that individual freedom to think, worship, and yes, work, is one of the foundation stones of the Craft to which we belong.

In the 75 years since this lodge was organized, the whole world has become a community due to man's discovery of the wonderful (almost unbelievable) wonders that the G A O T U has provided for man's life here - and his comfort. It is to be hoped that scientists have not obtained secrets before the human race is properly prepared.

This world is still in the Fellow Craft stage or degree. Is it well and properly prepared for a higher degree? Is it prepared to accept the vision, the ideal, of the founders of Speculative Freemasonry in 1717 - that of Universal Brotherhood - tolerance and understanding? Unless it is, it is not properly prepared - and ready for advancement.

May I suggest (B) that - as we celebrate 75 years of Freemasonry in Glenwood - the challenge to the Craft is, more than ever, to teach and cultivate the need for Universal Brotherhood. The need is far greater today than when it was so proclaimed as an ideal in 1717.