

Freemasonry in Action

DeMolay in British Columbia



On May 7th, our Grand Master, M.W.B Doug Collins, Senior Grand Warden R.W.B Ron Yates, and R.W.B Del Paterson were presented with the cord of the DeMolay Legion of Honour for their service to DeMolay. It is an honorary degree, the highest one a Senior DeMolay (one who is over 21) can receive. It is given for service to the community. M.W.B Doug Collins was a founding member of the DeMolay Chapter in Prince Rupert, R.W.B Ron Yates was a member in Chilliwack and R.W.B Del Paterson was in West Vancouver. Other Senior DeMolays who have received the Legion of Honour are M.W. Bros. Doug Hargrove, Alan Cross and Murray Webster. DeMolay first came to British Columbia almost 80 years ago.

At one time, almost every major city in BC had a DeMolay Chapter. There are now two, one in Vancouver, and another in Victoria, with a new one starting up to serve the Abbotsford-Chilliwack area.

A SHORT HISTORY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA DEMOLAY

Compiled by R.W.B Jim Bennie, Lodge Southern Cross #44, 2012

The Order of DeMolay was founded in Kansas City, Missouri by Dad Frank S. Land with nine young men between the ages of 16 and 21. Winnipeg Chapter made DeMolay international; the Winnipeg Free Press of December 13, 1922 announced that the Chapter was being organised under the sponsorship of the Winnipeg Lodge of Perfection of the Scottish Rite. It was formed on February 24, 1923 with 99 members, initiated by 22 members of Ivanhoe Chapter of Grand Forks who travelled by train from North Dakota for the ceremonies. The first Master Councillor was Russell Lester Wiginton, who later spent his adult years in North Vancouver. Russ was a young man of many accomplishments—the first Speaker of the Manitoba Boys Parliament (1922), an accomplished swimmer, basketball and rugby player, and a Boy Scout decorated by Baron Bing for saving the life of a soldier at Winnipeg Beach. Achieving even greater fame was the Chapter's first Chaplain—the Father of Medicare in Canada, former N.D.P. leader Tommy Douglas.

The next Chapter in Canada was opened in Saskatchewan, either in Weyburn or Estevan, some time before the Depression. Little is known about it and it was short-lived. On May 20, 1936, Roan Williams, a Past Master of St. James Lodge No. 80 in Vancouver, called a meeting at his home on West 14th Avenue in Vancouver to discuss how to bring DeMolay to British Columbia. Five other Masons attended. They, and others, formed the "Provincial Council" to act as a Sponsoring Body, as Masonic Lodges were not permitted by Grand Lodge to sponsor DeMolay Chapters in B.C. until 1993. Over the next number of months, they assembled a list of prospective DeMolays and, finally, Beaver Chapter was instituted on April 8, 1937 at the Oddfellows Hall, 1443 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver with 60 members. Chuckanut Chapter of Bellingham conferred their degrees before the installation. Beaver's first Master Councillor was Robert Knox, Jr., a son of one of the Advisors. Dad Williams was soon named "Active Member" for B.C., the equivalent of an Executive Officer in that era, although a request had been sent to the Grand Council (now the International Supreme Council) in Kansas City to name someone else. Beaver Chapter struggled to maintain an active membership once World War Two began in 1939. Members enlisted; others lived as far away as loco and could not attend meetings regularly. The minute book reveals the Chapter ceased formal operation on June 2, 1941, having moved to the YMCA. The end of the war brought a huge influx of men into Freemasonry and other fraternal groups, and a new group of Masons, together with former Beaver Advisors and members, reinstated the Chapter on April 15, 1947 with Seattle Chapter performing the ceremonies. Ken West was installed as Master Councillor. Dad W.J. Parkins, one of the original Advisors in 1937, was elected Advisory Council Chairman. He died in 1948 and the Chapter's Advisory Council was named in his honour. Beaver's meeting place was the Grandview Masonic Hall at 1st Avenue and Salisbury.

An attempt was begun in summer 1947 to form what was called Haida Chapter in Prince Rupert under an Advisory Council led by George J. Dawes. For reasons unknown, it never came to fruition. Skeena Chapter eventually formed in Prince Rupert in the early 1960s. Beaver Chapter was under the direct authority of the Grand Council, which placed the Chapter under the jurisdiction of Washington State. In 1950, Beaver's Aubrey K. Taylor was elected State Junior Councillor. DeMolay now began its great period of expansion in British Columbia. Beaver attracted members from cities close to Vancouver, and a group of them in New Westminster decided to form their own Chapter. Thus, Simon Fraser Chapter was instituted on January 23, 1951. Another group of Beaver members on the west side of Vancouver felt

they should have their own Chapter closer to home and Point Grey Chapter was instituted on January 11, 1952. Totem Chapter (Courtenay) and Crown Chapter (West Vancouver) both instituted on the same weekend in April 1953. Dad Williams had moved to Courtenay, hence the impetus to form a Chapter there. Later that year, Colin Campbell of Point Grey Chapter was elected State Junior Councillor for Washington and assigned to divide Washington District No. 1 into two groups, one for B.C. and one for Washington. A meeting was called and it was decided that, instead, British Columbia should form its own jurisdiction. Colin resigned as State Junior Councillor, and the first B.C. DeMolay Conclave was held in New Westminster on November 13, 1953. Rod Hostman of Simon Fraser Chapter was elected the first Provincial Master Councillor and Dad Alf Hawker, one of Beaver's original Advisors in 1937, was elected to the honorary position of Provincial Chapter Dad. At the end of Rod's term in February 1955, B.C. boasted nine Chapters. At this time, Gizeh Temple of the Shrine became very interested in DeMolay, especially under Potentate Bob Johnson, whose two sons had been members of Beaver Chapter. Soon, most major cities in British Columbia boasted a DeMolay Chapter, many of them under Shrine Clubs or units, which were not prohibited from sponsorship, as they were not controlled by Grand Lodge. Dad Gordon F. Grant was named Active Member in 1956, replacing Dad Williams who died later this year. He and others in British Columbia pushed for Canadian DeMolay to become independent of the Supreme Council in Kansas City. In 1969, the Canadian Grand Council was formed with Doc Grant elected the first Grand Master, and headquarters at 511 Sixth Avenue in New Westminster in a building owned by Dad J. Ross MacLean, who had taken over as Executive Officer in B.C.

The first All-Canada Conclave was held in Winnipeg for four days beginning March 31, 1970 with many DeMolays from various parts of the province—including Terrace Chapter—taking a memorable train trip to Manitoba's capital. Dad Grant died on July 8, 1971 before the realisation of the dream of a completely autonomous Canadian Supreme Council, finally formed on May 30, 1973. There was soon a clamouring by the pushy British Columbians for a Parliament to allow DeMolays to have a say in their own national affairs and even on the new Supreme Council, to the horror of some Advisors from the Prairies. B.C. was the dominant force in Canadian DeMolay, in 1976 making up half of its Chapters. This was another growth period for the Order, especially in the Lower Mainland. with Onyx Chapter forming in Langley, Nahani in North Delta (under Dad George Windsor), Peace Arch in White Rock and Mt. Cheam re-opening in Chilliwack. All of this happened under the eye of one of the founders of Provincial Chapter, Dad Colin Campbell, who was Executive Officer until stepping down in 1977. DeMolays in the province were funding their operations thanks to an annual car raffle. And the jurisdiction adopted a field ball game called "Floughmenheimer" as its own, though how it came to be known to DeMolay is perhaps only remembered by Dad Campbell. B.C. began its long slide around 1980 and many Chapters closed due to a lack of Advisors and uninterested members. A few re-opened; Lansdowne Chapter, dormant since 1981, was reinstated in 1994 under the sponsorship of Alliance No. 193, the first Masonic Lodge to take on sponsorship of a DeMolay Chapter. But the Canadian Supreme Council reluctantly voted to disband itself in 2002 and a new governing body, DeMolay Canada, Ltd., was formed, with administration handled in the U.S. The same year saw the closure of Beaver Chapter, which had moved to North Vancouver in 1998 where the majority of members lived. Through the 2000s, British Columbia operated with four Chapters. Then Phoenix in Victoria (a third attempt at operating in the provincial capital) closed, followed by Ogoopogo in Kelowna, then by Lansdowne in Richmond. That

left Golden Ears in Maple Ridge the only functioning Chapter as of 2008, and brought Provincial Chapter to an end. The following year, the three Gonzalo brothers, members of Lansdowne, sought to revive DeMolay in Vancouver. They worked diligently to bring in a dedicated class of members and Beaver Chapter was re-formed on November 7, 2009. It became the only active Chapter in B.C. about a year later as Golden Ears, formed from Beaver Chapter in 1969, stopped meeting. However, there remains interest in DeMolay in the province. Langley No. 184 agreed to sponsor a Chapter and the first members for the new Peace Arch Chapter in Langley were initiated in December 2011.

There is interest elsewhere in the Lower Mainland of bringing back closed DeMolay Chapters. We can only hope someone with the organisational skills and drive can assemble a dedicated group to do this so the Order may again begin to flourish in British Columbia. The following is a list of Chapters operating at one time or another in British Columbia. Lower Mainland/Sunshine Coast Beaver, Vancouver (East End) Point Grey, Vancouver (West Side) Maple Leaf, Vancouver (Kerrisdale) Antler, Vancouver (South Vancouver) Regal, North Burnaby Simon Fraser, New Westminster Lansdowne, Richmond Taltan, Ladner Nahani, North Delta Royal Kwantlen, Surrey Peace Arch, White Rock Onyx, Langley Golden Ears, Maple Ridge Abbotsford, Abbotsford Mt. Cheam, Chilliwack Fellowship, North Vancouver (later changed to Russell L. Wiginton) Crown, West Vancouver Mt. Elphinstone, Gibsons Powell River, Powell River Vancouver Island Victoria, Victoria Oak Bay, Victoria Goldstream, Langford Signal Hill, Esquimalt Sooke, Sooke (club only) Sidney, Sidney Mt. Prevost, Duncan Dogwood, Ladysmith Newcastle, Nanaimo Klitsa, Port Alberni Totem, Courtenay Elkhorn, Campbell River Goldstream and Oak Bay later formed Capital City Chapter; following its closure, a new Chapter called Phoenix opened in Victoria. Elsewhere in B.C Skeena, Prince Rupert Terrace, Terrace Chinook, Prince George Caribou, Williams Lake Kamloops, Kamloops Silver Star, Vernon Ogoopogo, Kelowna Penticton/Skaha, Penticton Old Glory, Trail Kokanee, Nelson.



Members of Beaver Chapter, Order of DeMolay, exemplified their degree work at a Recent meeting of Lodge Southern Cross #44. Members of the Chapter are joined by DGW RWB Ron Yates, and RWB Chris Foxon, DDGM (2016) of District 14