

History of Ashlar Lodge, No. 3, G.R.B.C.

1865- 1921

THE HISTORY OF EARLY MASONRY IN NANAIMO AND AREA FROM 1865 AND PARTICULARLY OF ASHLAR LODGE NO. 3, G.R.B.C.

For the following, we are deeply indebted to the late R.W. Bro. William Stewart, who considered it his duty to record all important events relating to Freemasonry, and it is from his records, notes and letters he wrote to Grand Lodge Officers, that the most of this information was gathered. Valuable items were also gleaned from *Historical Notes and Biographical Sketches 1848 to 1935*, by the late M.W. Bro. Robie L. Reid, K.C., LL.D., Grand Historian for the Grand Lodge of British Columbia.

In the year 1865, eleven years after the arrival of those courageous pioneers who sailed on the "Princess Royal" and landed at Nanaimo, this village was "growing up" both physically and socially, and it was only natural for brother Masons to seek, each other out, and band together to form a Masonic Lodge.

During the year 1865, a meeting was held by members of the Craft at the home of Bro. Alexander Mayer, the room being at the rear of his place of business known as the "Red House." This building was situated on the N.E. corner of Commercial and Bastion Streets, and at the eastern end of this block stood the famed Nanaimo Bastion.

At this meeting it was resolved "that a petition should be drawn up, signed, and sent to the Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England, for a warrant to establish a Masonic Lodge in the town of Nanaimo, Colony of Vancouver Island, to be known as "NANAIMO LODGE." Records do not state who were present at that meeting, but it can be assumed they were those brethren who signed the petition and became Charter members of the first Nanaimo Lodge.

The business of organization was proceeded with, and the Warrant was expected to arrive in the spring of 1866. A newly erected house at the S.W. corner of Cavan and Hecate Streets was rented from Capt. W. H. Franklyn, for \$25.00 per month, and the Brethren made the necessary alterations for it to conform to Lodge purposes. This was at considerable cost to themselves, not to mention the cost of having suitable furniture made. The Brethren met once each week, collected money among themselves to pay the rent, and waited patiently for the Warrant to arrive, but the S.S. "Labouchere," carrying their Warrant, struck Point Reyes Reef, north of San Francisco, at 10:30 p.m., April 14, and sank the following morning at 8:00 a.m. (Information re "Labouchere" supplied by B.C. Archives)

Towards the fall of that year it was deemed advisable to send a cablegram from New York to England, informing the Grand Secretary of the non-arrival of the Warrant, and as this message had to go through California, and thence by Pony Express across the continent, it is no wonder that Bro. Stewart quotes "considerable delay ensued." Finally a letter was received from the Grand Secretary, notifying them that a duplicate Warrant had been issued in the name of "Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090 of the Grand Lodge of England," which same arrived safely.

The Charter Members were listed as:—

William H. Franklyn, Magistrate, as W.M.
Daniel Pender, staff comm'dr. R.N., as S.W.
Edward Beverly Bogg, M.D., R.N. as J.W.

James Stanford Smith, engineer.
 Robert William Carral, M.D.
 Alexander Mayer, merchant.
 David Frew, miner.
 James Miller Brown, farmer.

During the long wait for the Warrant, Bro. William Stewart arrived in Nanaimo to take up his duties as constable.

CEREMONY OF CONSECRATION

The ceremony of consecration was called for May 15th, 1867, and by the preceding evening several visitors from Victoria, accompanied by Haynes Volunteer Militia Band, had arrived on the S.S. "Sir James Douglas." They were:-

VICTORIA LODGE No. 783 E.R.

Richard Lewis	W.M.
Lumley Franklyn	P.M.
William Beck	P.M.
Thomas Harris	P.M.

Bros. R. Plummer; J . Banks; McCrea; McCullough;
 Creighton; Phillips ; Driard; Strachen; and McCreight.

VANCOUVER LODGE No. 421 S.R.

(in Victoria)

R.W. Adam as	R.W.M.
I. W. Powell	P.M.
N. J. Newstead	P.M.

Bros. E. C. Holden; Troller; Seelye; Jackson;
 Theakstone; and Haynes.

UNION LODGE No. 899 E.R.

(New Westminster)

Henry Holbrook, P.M. ; and Bro. J . B. Lovell,
 of Ontario-Union Lodge, Canada.

PROVISIONAL LODGE FORMED

A Provisional Lodge was formed, with the following as officers of the day:—

Henry Holbrook, P.M.	as W.M.
I. W. Powell	P.M.
Richard Lewis	as S.W.
W. R. Clark	as J .W.
L. Franklyn	as Chap.
J. M. McCrea	as Treas.
H. E. Seelye	as Secretary
J. F. McCreight	S.D.
E. C. Holden	J.D.
R. Plummer	I.G.
A. Phillips	Tyler

The Lodge was opened on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd degrees of Masonry, in due and ancient form. The W.M. stated that the meeting had been called for the purpose of consecrating Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090 E.R., and installing the officers; also to attend Divine Service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

The ceremony of consecration was proceeded with, the Warrant read, and the Lodge declared to be properly constituted. The Brethren then proceeded in regalia and procession, to St. Paul's Church. An eloquent sermon was delivered by the Rev. Percival Jenns, taking as his text the first verse of Psalm XC; "Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Procession was then re-formed, and the Lodge called to labor.

Bro. Stewart records the long order of procession, as prescribed, himself bringing up the rear, with drawn sword. What a proud band of Masons they must have been that day, marching along Nanaimo's winding street; nothing the like had been held in Nanaimo before.

The ceremony of installing the officers of the new Lodge followed, according to Ancient usages, with Henry Holbrook, P.M. assisted by I. W. Powell, P.M. :-

William Hales Franklyn, age 50, magistrate	W.M.
W. R. Clarke, age 33 master mariner,	S.W.
William Stewart, age 33, constable	J.W.
Solomon David Levi, age 37 merchant	Treas.
James Harvey, age 26, laborer	Secy.
William Henry Phillips, age 33, M.D.	S.D.
David Frew, age 40, miner	J.D.
James Miller Brown, age 35, farmer	I.G.
James Stanforth Smith, age 35, engineer,	Tyler

W. Bro. Powell, on behalf of Bro. Creighton, presented the Lodge with a complete set of Working Tools, Columns for the Wardens, and a Mosaic Pavement.

A petition for initiation into Masonry was received from Mr. Arthur John Fenny, and referred to a committee.

The By-laws of Victoria Lodge No. 783 were adopted for use until their own By-laws were drawn up and adopted.

After votes of thanks were tendered, the Lodge was closed on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st degrees of Masonry, in due and ancient form.

A Grand Ball was held in the evening, and Stewart was not a happy man in recording certain events, and their aftermath. He, being a temperate man and J.W. of the Lodge, thought the refreshments were greatly overdone. His remarks, in part;— "The Ball was held in the Court House, which was beautifully decorated for the purpose. Tickets of invitation had been sent out to many citizens, and nearly half of the population took advantage of the first Masonic Ball to patronize that auspicious event. The Ball committee was composed solely of profanes appointed by the W.M.; the result was a willful waste; the committee spared no expense to make it a success, with wines, liquor, and beer brought in from Victoria. The cost was over \$600, including fancy badges for the committee." This, plus the rent for the year, furnishings, and making alterations to the Lodge room, made a grave responsibility, borne by the nine members.

Mark Bate, one of the Ball committee, later petitioned Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090, was initiated March 3rd, 1869, and became W.M. of the Lodge in 1873, its last W.M. in fact, as the

amalgamation which resulted in the formation of Ashlar Lodge No. 3 took place in that year. He was appointed D.D.G.M. for District No. 5 in 1900. Born in Birmingham, England, December 11th, 1837, he came to Nanaimo in February, 1857. Elected Nanaimo's first Mayor in 1875, he served in all 16 terms, and is considered the most outstanding citizen to call Nanaimo his home.

Several of the Brethren were accustomed to ritual other than the English, and becoming more dissatisfied with the arrogant manner of the W.M., resolved in the fall of 1867 to petition R.W. Bro. Powell, who that year had been appointed Prov. Grand Master of B.C., by the Grand Master of Scotland, for a dispensation to form and hold a Lodge at Nanaimo, to be called "Caledonia", using the American (York) or "Scotch" Work. On presentation of this petition to Nanaimo Lodge, for their recommendation and approval, it was agreed that "Caledonia" would take over one half of the indebtedness of Nanaimo Lodge, and pay half of the expenses of alteration to the building, etc., they being entitled to use the furniture of the Lodge.

All preliminaries having been amicably arranged, the dispensation was duly granted. Caledonia Lodge was opened U.D. from R.W. Bro. I. W. Powell, Prov. G.M., on the 18th November 1867, with the following officers:—

Solomon David Levi as R.W.M.; Wm. Stewart as W.S.W.; James Harvey as W.J.W.; Archibald Muir as Treasurer; Archibald McAlister as Secretary; James Miller Brown as S.D.; and David Frew as J.D. Eight visitors are also listed as present.

To this period Nanaimo Lodge had accepted 4 affiliates, and initiated 21, making a total membership of 34. The indebtedness had been reduced, making each Lodge's share \$198.71. A new Hall was under consideration.

Approval of the dispensation was received from the Grand Reporter of Scotland on the 25th of June 1868, and the Charter of Caledonia Lodge No. 478 R.S. was received April 5th, 1869, and was read in open Lodge.

The building at the corner of Cavan and Hecate Streets was found unsuitable for Masonic purposes, and at a joint meeting of the Lodges on April 12th, 1868, it was decided to lease the Gordon Building on Commercial Street for a period of five years, at \$10.00 per month, starting May 1st, 1868. This building was on the site of the present Royal Bank of Canada. Bro. Fenny's carpenter shop occupied the ground floor of the old 1 1/2 storey building, which left much to be desired as a Masonic Hall, but it may be noted that the Brethren had very little choice, this being the only building in town of more than one storey. The cost of alterations was over \$700.00, and added to this was the expense of replacing partitions etc. in the former Lodge room. .

Consecration of the Lodge room was held on January 19th, 1869, and dedication ceremonies were performed by R.W. Bro. R. Burnaby, Dist. Grand Master, E.R., on the same day.

A Ball was held that night, with the Brethren in Masonic clothing, and many of the Town's citizens attended.

During the year 1869 there was a growing movement to form a Grand Lodge of British Columbia. There were 4 Lodges under English Register, and 5 under Registry of Scotland; dues were payable to both Grand Lodges, as well as to the two District Grand Lodges, and this situation could not be allowed to continue indefinitely.

The long drawn-out struggle to form the Grand Lodge of British Columbia is amply recorded by M.W. Bro. R. L. Reid; Grand Historian, in 34 pages of closely packed words. The first attempt was at Victoria, December 6th, 1869, and there, as well as at later conventions, the

controversies, both written and spoken, raged on. Decisive action was delayed by the bitter contention as to whether the English or Scotch constitution and ritual should form the basis of the proposed Grand Lodge. A most remarkable letter on the subject; dated June 28th, 1871, .written.by W. Bro. Stewart to the Pro tem Secretary, is noted.

At a formation meeting held in Victoria October 21st, 1871, a compromise was affected between R.W. Bro. R. Burnaby, District G.M., E.R., and R.W. Bro. I. W. Powell, Provincial G.M., R.S.; and from the magnanimous gesture of these two gentlemen, the Grand Lodge of British Columbia came into being. After several preliminary motions leading up to the main issue, the Formative motion was moved by W. Bro. Solomon David Levi, of Caledonia Lodge No. 478 R.S., and seconded by W. Bro. M.W. Waitt of Vancouver Lodge No. 421 R.S. (Victoria), on vote, the Grand Lodge became an accomplished fact. Other complementary motions followed, and the English Constitution was adopted. Officers for the new Grand Lodge were then elected, with M.W. Bro. L W. Powell as Grand Master, and R.W. Bro. R. Burnaby constituted a permanent member, with the title of Past Grand Master.

All the Lodges in British Columbia were represented at that convention, with the exception of Union Lodge No. 899 E.R., which, under the guidance of R.W. Bro. Henry Holbrook, D.D.G.M. for the English Lodges, would have nothing to do with the business.

Both Nanaimo Lodges also were cautious, and stood aloof from giving full support to the newly formed Grand Lodge, the preservation of their respective rituals being the chief matter of contention. As usual, the stalwart Stewart was in the thick of the fray, demanding that both ritual and regalia be retained by Caledonia Lodge.

On January 3rd, 1872, a letter from M.W. Bro. Powell, G.M., granting permission to use the English ritual as long as they so desired, was read in Nanaimo Lodge, and a motion to enter the Grand Lodge of B.C. was carried unanimously. Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090 ER. Surrendered its Warrant to the United Grand Lodge of England, and received an Interim Charter from the Grand Lodge of B.C. on the 3rd of January 1872, which was followed by the regular Charter to Nanaimo Lodge No. 3, G.R.B.C., on March 4th, 1873. Caledonia Lodge received Warrant No. 6, G.R. B.C. on the 10.th of January, 1872, but no action was taken as to its reception, the matter of ritual and regalia not having been made clear enough. At a meeting held January 23rd 1872 the reading of a letter from the Grand Secretary, stating that all the Lodges could continue to use their respective ritual as long as they wished, removed the only contentious point; a vote was taken which strongly favored reception of the Charter, and "Caledonia Lodge No. 6, G.R.B.C." appeared for the first time on the minutes. Warrant No. 478 R.S. was surrendered to the M.W.G. Lodge of Scotland.

Recent research has brought to light the fact that this Warrant, No. 478 R. S., was cancelled, as such, and re-issued as No. 6 G.R.B.C.

At the amalgamation of Nanaimo Lodge No 3, and Caledonia Lodge No; 6, to form Ashlar Lodge, No. 3. G.R.B.C., it was supposed to have been surrendered to Grand Lodge, and in the course of time became forgotten.

In 1901, W. Bro. John Renwick, the last W.M. of Caledonia Lodge No. 6, G.R.B.C., discovered it in his home, among some old papers. He gave it into the custody of R. W. Bro. Wm. Stewart, who took it to the Grand Lodge held at Nelson, B. C., that year, had it cancelled by the Grand Secretary, W. Bro. W. J. Quinlan, and on his return presented it to Ashlar Lodge.

Nothing further is heard of it, in fact its very existence seems to be denied, until the above information was revealed by a study of the old Minute Book. A diligent search resulted in its resurrection (it being truly buried in the rubbish of the Temple) and it at last received its honorable position in the Archives of Ashlar Lodge.

The Gordon Building being found unsatisfactory, the lease was not renewed, and the Grand Master gave his permission to re-occupy the room at the rear of Bro. Mayer's place of business, and residence, at the corner of Bastion and Commercial Streets. This room was used for Masonic purposes from the 6th of May 1873, until the dedication of the new Masonic Hall, on the 21st of October 1874.

At a joint meeting on the 7th of April 1873 it was decided to acquire a suitable piece of property on which to erect a Masonic Hall. A lot 30 by 58 feet on the N.W. corner of Commercial and Skinner Streets was purchased for \$325.00, this is the site of the present Temple.

A joint meeting was held to devise ways and means of financing and building a structure. A share book was opened and 100 shares at \$25.00 each were taken by the Brethren, and \$800.00 was borrowed to make up the amount required to complete the building and secure furnishings. It is stated that the shares were bought up in a few years' time, the loan repaid, and the Lodge owned the property.

On October 15th, 1873 Brethren met at the Court House, having opened, then formed procession and proceeded to the site of the new Hall for the ceremony of laying the cornerstone, donated by Bro. Geo. Bevilockway. This was well and truly laid with full Masonic honors by W. Bro. J. F. McCreight Acting Grand Master. Several visiting Brethren are listed as being present, among whom was M.W. Bro. R. Burnaby, as D.G.M. The Nanaimo Brass Band played several selections during the ceremonies.

The Lodges appear to be getting into difficulties during this period, and a union of the two was being proposed. A joint meeting was held in Bro. Mayer's room for the purpose of arriving at agreeable terms of amalgamation, Sept. 4th, 1873. It was resolved "that in the best interests of the Craft, there should be a union of Nanaimo and Caledonia Lodges, the united Lodge to take the name of ASHLAR, and that permission be asked to retain the number 3 of Nanaimo Lodge; that the ritual work of Caledonia Lodge be used, and that the jewels, regalia, and funds of both Lodges revert to the United Lodge."

The report of the Committee was adopted by both Lodges, and a joint Committee, appointed for the purpose of amalgamation was composed of six members, with R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart as Chairman. The total number of members of Nanaimo Lodge to that date was 37, while that of Caledonia was 35.

On St. John's day in the Winter, 1873, the Lodges met in Bro. Mayer's room; Nanaimo Lodge was opened in regular form, the minutes read and adopted; there being no further business, the Lodge was closed. Caledonia Lodge No. 6 then opened, pursued a similar course, and closed. R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart, as Senior Past Master then took the Chair, and opened ASHLAR LODGE No. 3, G.R.B.C. for the first time, and so was born the great Lodge that Ashlar became through the following years.

R.W. Bro. Stewart then installed the officers, who had been elected previously, viz:—

James Miller Brown	W.M.
Archibald Muir	S.W.

George Bevilockway	J.W.
Alexander Mayer	Treas.
Charles Newton Young	Secy.
Alexander Esson	S.D.
Andrew McKinnell	J.D.
John Sabiston	I.G.
Samuel Drake	Steward
William Home	Steward
Arthur John Fenny	Tyler

Past Master's jewels were then presented to W. Bro. Mark Bate of Nanaimo Lodge, and W. Bro. Renwick of Caledonia Lodge. The first initiate into Ashlar Lodge No. 3, was John Neil, January 21st, 1874. The consecration and dedication of the new Hall took place on October 21st 1874, the solemn ceremony being performed by M.W. Bro. I. W. Powell, and although this is called a Special Communication of Grand Lodge, it does not appear that Grand Lodge was opened at all. The Grand Master opened Ashlar Lodge and performed the ceremonies, after which he surrendered the gavel to the W. M. of Ashlar Lodge who initiated a candidate. When this had been done the Lodge was called to refreshment, to partake of the inevitable banquet, after which labor was resumed and the Lodge drank the healths of the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Grand Master, and of anyone else whose name happened to occur to them. At this meeting, whether one of Grand Lodge or Ashlar Lodge, the announcement was made that the Grand Lodge of England had extended recognition to the new Grand Lodge. The following were the Worshipful Masters of the late Lodges:

Nanaimo No. 1090 E. R.	
H. Franklyn	May 15 1867
W. R. Clark	1868-69
C. A. Alport.....	1870-71
Nanaimo as No. 3, B.C.R.	
W. R. Clark	1872
Mark Bate	1873
Caledonia, No. 478 R.S.	
S. D. Levi.....	Nov. 18 1867-68-69
Wm. Stewart	1870-71
Caledonia as No. 6 B. c. R.	
John Renwick.....	1872-73

In the years 1886-87 the Benevolent and Charity Funds of Grand Lodge were due for overhauling. At Grand Lodge held in Nanaimo in 1887, R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart and W. Bro. M. Bate took an active part in drafting new laws and regulations governing the Benevolent Fund. and setting it on a sound basis.

On the 29th of January 1889 it was decided to purchase, for \$3500,00, the Old Methodist Church property on Front St., consisting of a building and 3 lots. An order was drawn on the Treasurer for \$500.00 to close the deal. This property was re-sold at a later date.

In 1889 the new District No. 5 or Nanaimo District was created, with R.W. Bro. Andrew Haslam, of Ashlar Lodge No. 3 being appointed .the first D.D.G.M.

At the Grand Lodge held at Kamloops, Friday, June 19th, 1891. W. Bro. Marcus Wolfe of Ashlar No 3 was elected and installed as Grand Master of British Columbia.

On the 22nd of June 1891 M.W. Bro. Wolfe laid the corner stone of St. Alban's Church (then fronting Nicol St.) Nanaimo, with Masonic Honors, assisted by members of Ashlar Lodge, and other visiting Brethren. He also laid the corner stone of St. Peter's Church, Courtenay, July 22, 1891.

Now follows Stewart's account of why Ashlar No. 3 wears Royal Blue.-At the regular meeting on January 6th, 1892, M.W. Bro Wolfe ordered the Lodge to change the color of their Masonic clothing to light or sky blue, and at the following regular communication he enquired why his orders had not been obeyed. Stewart replied "that the Lodge, while a Scotch Lodge, had adopted Royal Blue as their color, which was allowed by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, as all Lodges under that jurisdiction chose their own color; and which, with their ritual, was guaranteed them on entering the Grand Lodge of B.C.; the only way that clothing could be changed was by a unanimous vote of all the members of the Lodge, after having been duly summoned." The Grand Master allowed the question to remain. over until the communication of Grand Lodge to be held at Nanaimo in June of that year. At the communication of Grand Lodge, June 1892 at Nanaimo, M.W. Bro. Wolfe, G.M., spoke strongly in his address on the subject of the color of Ashlar's clothing, being fortified with the favorable opinions of several American Grand Masters. After some discussion, the question was put to Grand Lodge for vote, and it was decided by a large majority that Ashlar Lodge he permitted to retain its Royal Blue clothing, The regalia of Ashlar Lodge No. 3 was patterned after that of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2 R.S. The fact that M.W. Bro. Wolfe was elected W.M. of Ashlar again in 1894, speaks well for the lack of any animosity on the part of its members. On June 1st, 1892, a petition was presented by several members of Ashlar Lodge, asking for the Lodge's approval and recommendation to Grand Lodge, to form a new Lodge in Nanaimo, to be known as Doric Lodge. The principal Officers were listed as:— Bro. R. Craig, P .M. as W.M.; Bro. S. B. Yuill, P .M. as S.W.; and Bro. A. Haslam, P.M. as J.W. The request was granted at a regular communication of the Lodge July 27th, 1892.

M.W. Bro. Wm. Downie, G.M. granted a dispensation to Doric Lodge, and the first regular meeting was held July 27th, 1892. At the Grand Lodge held at Victoria, June, 1893, the Charter was granted, and Doric Lodge No. 18, B.C.R was constituted July 17th, 1893, by M.W. Bro. Sibree Clarke, Grand Master.

On July 18th, 1893, M.W. Bro. Clarke had the honor of laying the corner stone of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at Nanaimo.

During the term 1892-93, R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart resigned his commission as D.D.G.M. No. 5 District, over the issue of rejected applicants. At the communication of Grand Lodge at Victoria, June 1893, M.W. Bro. Downie stated that he had received an application to form a Lodge at Wellington; all the petitioners, except one, being members of Ashlar Lodge, he stated that he had declined to issue a dispensation to form a Lodge, due to the fact that Ashlar Lodge was only five miles away, and also that Doric Lodge was working under dispensation. The three principal officers of the proposed new Lodge were: R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart as W.M.; W. Bro. John Frame as S.W.; and W. Bro. C. N. Westwood as J.W. A lengthy debate ensued, and we quote from Page 179, *Historical Notes & Sketches* by M.W. Bro. Reid, P.G.M.: "Grand Master Downie was a comparative newcomer, and apparently did not comprehend the fighting ability of that grand old Scot, R.W. Bro. Stewart, and Ashlar Lodge backed him up."

Stewart's arguments were sound, and well stated, and he also had a petition to present, signed by 50 Freemasons. They appealed to Grand Lodge on the following grounds: —

"That it was decidedly inconvenient for the Brethren at Wellington to attend meetings of Ashlar Lodge at Nanaimo without incurring the expense of travelling, and the loss of time from work."

"That Wellington is a large and rapidly growing town, situated about six miles from Nanaimo, with a population of about 6,000 people, which is steadily increasing. The Brethren there have already secured a commodious hall for Masonic purposes only. It would, in our opinion, be greatly beneficial to the Craft in this locality to form a Lodge at Wellington."

It must be remembered that the choice of method of travel was, in those days, very limited, the most usual being afoot, in heavy boots, on a very rough trail.

At the Grand Lodge held at New Westminster June 21st, 1894, M.W. Bro. Sibree Clarke, G.M. granted the dispensation, with Bro. George Thompson of Ashlar No. 3 substituted for Westwood as J.W. The new Lodge appeared on the register as St. John's Lodge No. 21, Wellington. With the closing of the mines at Wellington, and the opening of new mines at Ladysmith, a large number of members moved there, and the Lodge followed its members in 1901, and there flourishes, a credit to its founders.

Hiram Lodge No. 14 at Comox was sponsored by Ashlar No. 3, October 3rd, 1890. The first meeting was held January 7th, 1891. The Charter was issued by G.M. Marcus Wolfe, June 1891.

Cumberland Lodge No. 26 was instituted December 18th, 1895, by R.W. Bro. John W. Coburn, D.D.G.M. for District No. 5. (Coburn was initiated into Ashlar Lodge No. 3 April 3rd, 1886). Five of the charter Members were from Ashlar, including the first W.M., Wm. B. Ferguson.

Frederick McBain Young affiliated with Ashlar No. 3 on December 2nd, 1891. He was a Charter member of Doric No. 18, became D.D.G. M, of District No. 5 in 1896-97 and was elected Grand Master of B.C. in 1901. He laid the Corner Stone of Victoria High School October 3rd. 1902.

Uniformity of Ritual was a controversial subject from the first days of Grand Lodge. In 1893 a special Committee of Grand Lodge recommended that all the new Lodges pattern their Work after one of the following:-

"THE ENGLISH", as practiced by Victoria Columbia Lodge No. 1.

"THE SCOTCH", as practiced by Ashlar Lodge No. 3.

"THE CANADIAN", as practiced by Cascade Lodge No. 12.

There has been considerable discussion; in the intervening years, concerning these "Pattern Lodges" due to the fact that the recommendation was not put into practice. This in turn leads to the belief that there are no pattern Lodges, but a perusal of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia brings forth the information that they were in truth accepted as "Pattern Lodges". The resolution was never enforced and even today "uniformity of ritual" as a topic of discussion will bring forth opinions from all sides, the resolution of June, 1909 notwithstanding.

The Corner Stone of the Methodist Church at Wellington was "well .and truly laid" by M.W. Bro. David Wilson, Grand Master of B.C. December 14th, 1895.

Temple Lodge No. 33 at Duncan was instituted by R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart, D.D.G.M. District No. 5, on December 10th, 1899. Five of the Charter members were from Ashlar No. 3, including W. Bro. John Frame, the first W.M. of Temple Lodge. The Lodge was Constituted by W. Bro. F. McB. Young, Deputy Grand Master, July 21st, 1900.

It is worth noting that many of the early Freemasons in Nanaimo were of the Jewish Faith, including M.W. Bro. Wolfe of Ashlar No. 3, who became Grand Master of B.C. in 1891. The Grand Historian records that the Brethren of Victoria Lodges held a special Ceremony to lay the Corner Stone of the Synagogue Congregational Emanuel at Victoria, June 2nd, 1863.

The following members of .Ashlar Lodge No. 3 were interviewed by W. Bro. Wm, Barraclough during September, 1956 to gather information relating to the early history of Masonry in Nanaimo. It will be noted that they have all now passed their 55th year in Masonry:—

R.W. Bro. Wm, Lewis, initiated February 11th 1891, at the age of 27. A gentleman possessing a keen memory, he speaks of R.W. Bro. Stewart in the highest terms, as being a man with a strong sense of duty, and demanding perfection in all Lodge work.

Bro. James Cowie, initiated October 11th, 1893, at the age 21. He is a son of Bro. Archibald Cowie, who affiliated with Ashlar Lodge No. 3, July, 1st, 1876.

R.W. Bro. Herbert Stewart, initiated July 7th, 1897, at the age of 23. He is the son of the late R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart. He has been most generous in supplying historical information that was recorded by his father, as well as other items of Masonic interest. It was with extreme regret that we learned of his passing, January 2nd, 1957.

Bro. Wm. B. Rumming, initiated July 22nd, 1899, at the age of 29. R.W. Bro. Wm. McGirr, initiated January 25th 1900, at the age of 27.

Bro. Parker Williams, initiated, at the age of 27. May 17th, 1900.

Bro. J. E. L. Muir, initiated, October, 8th, 1901, at the age of 26. His father, Brother Archibald Muir, was initiated into Nanaimo Lodge No. 1090 E.R., July 3rd, 1867, having arrived at Nanaimo in 1849, from Scotland by way of Cape Horn, in the Schooner "Harpooner."

The following complete the list of our Brethren who were brought to Masonic Light over 50 years ago:

Bro. Harry N. Freeman, initiated October 22nd, 1903.

Bro. Wm. Ferguson affiliated, February 3rd, 1904.

Bro. W. C. Stearman initiated, June 9th, 1905.

Bro. Fred Rowbottom, initiated January, 3rd, 1906.

Bro. Herbert Rowbottom, initiated, July, 19th, 1906.

Bro. Francis Rowbottom, initiated, July 19th, 1906.

R.W. Bro. Wm. Adam, initiated, November, 18th, 1905, affiliated February 1908.

Bro. Magnus J, Robertson, affiliated, July 3rd, 1901.

Bro. John Whyte.

It will be noted from the above list that Ashlar Lodge No. 3 is indeed fortunate in having on its roster no less than 15 Brethren who were brought to Masonic Light 50 or more years ago,

some of whom are still regular attenders at both Regular, and Emergent Communications, and it is in no small measure due to them that Ashlar Lodge still maintains that high standard and dignity of presenting the Work, that caused the Lodge to be chosen as the Pattern Lodge for "Scotch" Work at the Grand Lodge held in 1893.

At an Emergent Communication of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, September 19th, 1913, we find among those present the following: Mark Bate, last W.M. of Nanaimo Lodge, No. 3, B.C.R., John Renwick, last W.M. of Caledonia Lodge, No. 6 B.C.R., and James Miller Brown, first W. M. of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, R.C.R., all Past Masters of 40 years. This unique event was brought to our attention through the remarkable memory of R.W. Bro. Wm. Lewis, and a search of the minute book proved him to be correct in every detail. These three Worshipful Brethren were spared for some years after this meeting, their circle remaining unbroken until the death of W. Bro. Renwick, March 20th 1920.

The following is a list of Worshipful Masters of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, to the fiftieth year of Grand Lodge, and their year, or years, of office: James Miller Brown, 1874 and 1875; William Stewart, 1876-1879-1890. Samuel Drake, 1877-1878-1884; E. B. McKay 1880 and 1881; John Frame 1882; Alexander Esson 1883; Ralph Craig, 1885; C. N. Westwood 1886; Marcus Wolfe 1887-1888 1894; A. E. Lees 1889; James Abrams 1891; W. K. Leighton 1892; J. W. Coburn 1893; Joseph M. Brown 1895; George Thompson 1896-1897; P. M. Land 1898; R. A. Bosanquet 1899; Thomas W. Jones 1900; William Lewis 1901-190; William Manson 1903; John Warwick 1904; John Shaw 1905-1906; O. T. H. Randle 1907; D. Stephenson 1908; Wm. McGirr 1909; A. Warwick 1910; A. E. Mainwaring 1911; A. Gibbons 1912; John Rowan 1913; Wm. Adam 1914; W. E. Thompson 1915; R. Patterson 1916; A. McRae 1917; J. L. Ward 1918; W. Baxter 1919; Robert Malone 1920; Menry McRae 1921.

Here Brethren, at the completion of fifty years under the Grand Registry of British Columbia, we conclude this necessarily brief sketch. From the original organization of nine members has grown our present virile and respected Lodge. Let us hope that our future will be guided by men actuated by the same true Masonic spirit, and inspired by the same high ideals, as those who led our Mother Lodge through her first half century.

The newel post of the stairway to the organ loft of our present Temple is truly a monument to their memory, and a tie with the past, being formed from the North East corner post of the Temple used through the most of the time recorded in this period.

"May Brotherly Love prevail, and every moral and social virtue cement us, now, henceforth, and forever."

Committee on History:

R.W. Bro. William Adam, Chairman

W. Bro. William Barraclough, Research.

Bro. Douglas M. Greer, Editor.

Bro. George J. Knight, Editor.



R. W. Bro. WILLIAM STEWART

Few Masons in British Columbia have left such a personal impact on the Craft in general as the late R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart.

The late M.W. Bro. Robie L. Reid, K.C., LL. D.; Grand Historian for the Grand Lodge of B.C., 1930 to 1945, in his voluminous work "Historical Notes and Biographical Sketches 1848-1935", constantly refers to the workings of Stewart, and quotes his letters, opinions, actions and debates more than any other single source of information.

From Stewart's arrival in British Columbia, all through the controversy of organization of Grand Lodge; the formation of early Craft Lodges in this area; and continuing until his demise in 1904, Stewart was a dominant figure in most affairs connected with Masonry. Records of Grand Lodge list him as serving on nearly every committee on Articles of Constitution, and his opinions were much sought after and respected. It is from his letters and notes that much of the early history of Masonry in British Columbia has been preserved.

William Stewart (afterward R. W. Bro.) was born in Halifax, Yorkshire, England of Scottish parents. His father was in military service, and upon his discharge, emigrated with his family, settling on Prince Edward Island, then part of Nova Scotia.

In 1858 William Stewart became a member of St. John's Lodge No. 562 E.R., in Nova Scotia. This Lodge was established in 1797, and is now numbered 1, on the Grand Registry of Prince Edward Island. Stewart came to the Pacific coast with the Sappers, to do construction work in the Fraser River area. Obtaining his discharge, he worked his way into the Cariboo country. As the Gold Rush was at its height at that time, it would be the most natural thing for him to follow in the search of gold, and he must have eventually arrived at Barkerville, the very center of gold activities. Here it appears Stewart contacted several members of the Masonic fraternity, as in the formation of Union Lodge, No. 1201, E.R., at New Westminster; Nanaimo

Lodge No. 1090 E.R. at Nanaimo; and Caledonia Lodge No. 478 R.S. at Nanaimo, we find Stewart working very closely, organizing Lodges, with Brethren who came from Baskerville.

He was appointed Police Constable at New Westminster in 1860, and became a Charter Member of Union Lodge, No. 1201 E.R., December 16th, 1861. In 1864 he was appointed Keeper of the Provincial Jail at Nanaimo, in which service he held the rank of Chief until his death.

The Nanaimo Free Press of May 18th, 1904 reports his passing at length; it states: "At the Provincial Court House, Chief William Stewart of the Provincial Police, passed away while actually on duty at his post today." The hour was High Twelve. The Free Press goes on to state that Stewart was instrumental in saving the Bastion from destruction, also in saving the two small cannon (now set by the lower door) from the scrap pile. Stewart fired these cannon every 24th of May, until the death of Queen Victoria, after which he would not allow them to be fired.

Stewart was a faithful member of St. Paul's Anglican Church, a temperance advocate, and beloved by the whole community. R.W. Bro. Wm. Lewis, now in his 94th year, is a living witness as to Stewart's upright character, and his devotion to the Craft. R.W. Bro. Wm. Stewart's Masonic record is as follows:

Initiated 1858 into St. John's Lodge No. 562 E. R., on Prince Edward Island.

Charter Member of Union Lodge, No. 1201 E.R., New Westminster, December 16th 1861. (now No. 9 B.C.R.).

Installed Junior Warden at the Consecration of Nanaimo Lodge, No. 1090 E.R., May 15th, 1867.

Worshipful Master of Caledonia Lodge, No. 478 R. S., at Nanaimo in 1870 and 1871.

Acted as Junior Warden at the first special meeting held at Victoria, May 20th, 1871, for the purpose of attempting to organize Grand Lodge of B.C, At the establishment of Grand Lodge, October 21st, 1871, at Victoria, he was W. M. of Caledonia Lodge No. 478 R.S., and was represented by W. Bro. Eli Harrison as proxy. Stewart's official duties prevented him from attending.

W.M. of Ashlar Lodge, No. 3 G.R.B.C. in the years 1876, 1879 and 1890.

Elected Junior Grand Warden of British Columbia in 1886.

Appointed D.D.G.M., District No. 5 in 1892 and 1899.

Organized, and became the first W.M. of St. John's Lodge, No. 21, G.R.B.C., at Wellington, 1894.

This Lodge is now situated at Ladysmith.

The Grand Historian, recording events around the turn of the Century, refers to the R.W. Bro. as; "That Grand Old Man from Nanaimo." Stewart is also given credit for assisting in re-writing the history of Union Lodge No. 1201, E.R., New Westminster, from 1861, the early records having been lost.

Two sons of R.W. Bro. Stewart became prominent in Masonry.

Herbert, was initiated into Ashlar Lodge, No. 3, G.R.B.C., July 7th, 1897, at the age of 23. He served as D.D.G.M. of the Grand Registry of Alberta. Much of the material recorded by his father, remained in his possession, and so came to our use. He died January 2nd, 1957, just as this history is being completed.

Vernon William, for many years Fire Chief of Victoria, was initiated into Vancouver and Quadra Lodge, No. 2, G.R.B.C., August 24th, 1910, passed October 12th, and raised November 8th of the same year. He became Grand First Principal, Royal Arch Masons for B.C. in 1923. Became W. M. of Vancouver and Quadra Lodge in 1929. In his later years he retired in Nanaimo, where he died, January 5th, 1954.