

A HISTORY OF EMPIRE LODGE NO. 85 AF & AM

The history of any lodge is a chronicle of memories written for the benefit of those present and for those who follow in our footsteps, but no matter how complete, there will be those who may recall episodes that have eluded the historian.

Empire Lodge was the creation of two men and eight others who became the founders, who were joined by fifty-eight charter members. The original founders were: RW Bro. George Murray and Bro. George Cleveland Derby, who were joined by Bros. A.E. Sayers, H.C.N. Harris, R.T. Perry, T.B. Thomas, A.M. Dustan, J. Warwick, C.G. Dixon and H.E. Baker.

They came from many fields of endeavour, and from many parts of the Empire, and naturally many masonic jurisdictions, but above all, they had one common bond, they were all ex-servicemen of the first world war.

There is always a good reason for the formation of a lodge, and the founding of Empire Lodge was no exception. In 1919 there were great numbers of veterans, unaffiliated members of the Craft in Vancouver.

Bro. George Derby was one of these brethren, and he visited several lodges, particularly in District 13, and as he said at the 50th Anniversary of the lodge in 1969, "to see with which lodge he preferred to affiliate". He was noticed by the IPDDGM, RW Bro. George Murray of Lodge Southern Cross No. 44 and was invited to lunch.

At this meeting of the two brethren, George Derby was asked if he thought there were a sufficient number of unaffiliated brethren who would be interested in forming a new lodge. Bro. Derby agreed that there was, accordingly a meeting was held by the ten members mentioned above. Minutes of the first five meetings have been preserved and are attached to this epistle. The first meeting was held on 23 June 1919, and at this meeting the name Empire Lodge was suggested by RW Bro. George Murray, a logical name in view of the fact that the members assembled were from various parts of the empire and veterans of the empire's armed services. They adopted the Canadian Ritual for their work. On the fifth informal meeting, with the assistance of the DDGM of District 13, and MW Bros. H. H. Watson and Wm. Astley, RW Bro. (later MW Bro.) J. J. Miller of Lodge Southern Cross No. 44, a petition was made for a dispensation to form a new lodge, and signed by 68 brethren on 31 October 1919, granted eight days later on 8 November 1919, and wasting no time, the lodge was instituted on 21 November 1919 by RW Bro. Charles Blaney, DDGM District 13, assisted by five PGMs, and other members of Grand Lodge in the presence of 55 members and 105 visitors.

RW Bro. Geo. Murray, was the first WM, Bro. A.E. Sayers, SW, Bro. Geo. C. Derby, JW, Bro. T. B. Thomas, Treasurer, Bro. J. Warwock, Secty, Sr & Jr Deacons, Bros. Charles Dixon and John Keppell, Director of Ceremonies, RW Bro. A. S. Thompson, Organist Bro. R. J. Perry, Stewards, Eros F. B. Dill and A. M. Farquahar, Inner Guard Bro. C. F. Alston and Tyler Bro. John H. Hughes.

At the first regular communication ten applications for initiation were received, Frederick Field being the first, and there were four emergent communications held between 30 January 1920 and 12 March (6 weeks), inclusive to initiate the ten. The work was impeccably done, establishing a standard that was to be known throughout the years as the yardstick of near perfection. Lodge records show that at each communication, almost without exception, a lecture or address was given by either a guest speaker or a brother of the lodge, on a variety of interesting and entertaining subjects. The support of Lodge Southern Cross No. 44 and Kilwinning Lodge No. 59 did not go unmentioned, as the gratitude of the lodge was duly noted in the minutes on numerous occasions.

On 5 October 1920, Empire Lodge UD became No. 85 when the Constitution and Consecration ceremony was conducted by MW Bro. Wm. Astley, PGM, assisted by many members of Grand Lodge and other distinguished brethren in the presence of 57 members and 188 visitors.

The brethren installed at the constitution ceremony were RW Bro. George Murray WM, Bro. John Warwick SW, Bro. George Derby, JW, Bro. H.C.N. Harris, secretary, and all other brethren as per the institution ceremony. On 21 October 1921, the first election of officers was held and the following were elected:

as Worshipful Master, Bro. George Cleveland Derby, who had been Junior Warden,
as Senior Warden, Bro. Charles Dixon, who had been Senior Deacon,
as Junior Warden, Bro. H. C. N. Harris, who had been Secretary,
as Treasurer, Bro. W. Tulk,
as Secretary, Bro. Frederick Field, who was the first member initiated,
as Tyler, Bro. John H. Hughes, who had always held that position.

A photograph of the first elected officers is in the archives of the lodge, and each print is hand coloured.

The flags of Great Britain, Canada (Red Ensign), New Zealand and Australia were given to the lodge by RW Bro. G. Murray, and, in thanking the IPM, the WM, W Bro. Geo. Derby stated that, "this is only one of the many occasions in which RW Bro. Murray has placed the lodge in his debt."

The first sad occasion in the lodge occurred in November 1923 when Bro. H.C.N. Harris wrote that due to health conditions he had moved to Haney and regretted it was impossible for him to attend lodge in Vancouver. He requested his demit, to join a lodge in that area. A letter expressing the sincere regrets of the lodge members that he was severing his connection with the lodge, and thanking him for his good works and his considerable contribution as a founder member, secretary, junior warden and senior warden.

An event, which was to become one of the traditions of the lodge, was the first Ladies Night Dance, which was held at "The Killarney" in Kitsilano, on Monday, 14 January 1924. Later on in the 1930s a season of Saturday evening dances, were held once a month in the Peter Pan Ballroom, 1600 block West Broadway, from September to March inclusive—fifty cents per person—and raised between \$20 and \$300 per season which was donated to the lodge charity fund, from 1929-1941.

The sum raised was a considerable amount and was put to good use during the Depression. W Bros Walter Butterworth and Frank Curtis are to be commended for their untiring efforts in running these monthly social events. Other lodges copied our format but were never as successful as the Empire Lodge event.

Up until 1926, the minutes of the lodge reveal that our first members were a generation of "night owls" as the records show that the lodge was opened in due form at anytime between 8:15 and 8:35 pm and always closed in "love, peace and harmony" never before 11:10 pm and the latest 12:00 midnight! The BCE No. 1 Inner and Outer Lines ran Hastings, Granville, Broadway, and Main Street rectangle until about 1:00 am but the outlying district were not so fortunate, and there is no record showing how the members got home in time to go to work the next day!

However on the "flip side" a demonstration of the word "brevity" is recorded in the minutes of 1 October 1926 communication, when the DDGM made an official visit. The minutes state:

"The Wor. Master opened the Lodge at 7:35 P.M. in Short Form by declaring the Lodge at Labour in the Master Mason Degree. The D.D.G.M. Rt. Wor. Bro. Charles Taylor was received and introduced, took charge of

the meeting, delivered a short address and declared the Lodge closed at 8:05 P.M.”

The first Empire Night—to become the premier tradition of the Lodge was held on 20 May 1927. This annual event was the brainchild of W Bro. William J. Clark, WM, He presented the lodge with an array of the flags of the Empire members to complete the four given by RW Bro Murray. The chairs were vacated by the officers and filled by the grand representatives and other distinguished guests. The jurisdictions represented by these brethren were: England, Canada, Scotland, Ireland, Tasmania, India, Bermuda, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, West Indies, and Newfoundland. The speaker of the evening was Bro. The Honourable Harry H. Stevens, and his address was “The Empire, Ancient and Modern”, given to an assemblage of 287, (57 members 230 visitors).

Through the years many eminent brethren were guest speakers, including of course most of the Grand Masters, and the topics explored by these eminent brethren invariably held the attention of all present.

The Grand Master (or DDGM in his absence) would take the WM’s chair and represented England, the IPMs chair, Canada, the SW’s Scotland, the JW’s chair, Ireland and so on down the line. The flag team would then execute a variety of routines, and the pipers would give a number of tunes. The most spectacular routine (according to the minutes of 21 May 1937, *ie* a week or so before the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The Union Jack was unfurled by the flag team leader and brought to the east and handed to the master, who with the deacons with wands crossed perambulated around the lodge (picking up the junior warden and senior warden) three times ending in the east where the master returning the Union Jack to the team leader, who placed it in a place of honour in front of the master’s chair and grand honours were given the flag as a token of loyalty to the monarch. The GM, MW Bro. Sam McClure was suitably impressed.

In 1955, the GM being unable to attend, the Empire Night speaker was W Bro. Hubert Banner, a member of Authors Lodge No. 3456 ER, a former British Trade Commissioner in the Malay States and Singapore. His address, entitled “The Bridge that spans the gap” related the close ties the Craft had in working together with the British government in promoting the welfare of the countries that formed the far east. He also related stories of the lodge customs where as many as eight different volumes of the sacred law lay on the altar of the lodge. On such occasions as the installation of officers and Empire Night, the Junior Wardens of Empire Lodge could on occasion have the grandfather of all headaches as attendance could be on the average 200-225 minimum. Bro. Cecil Pulham was JW in 1933. The Board of General Purposes allotted him a budget of \$30 for refreshments for Empire Night. The day arrived and there were 65 members and 389 visitors a total of 424. It is reported that he went over budget that night.

During the Depression years many members fell on hard times, and the remission of dues was a regular course of action for the lodge to take. There were unfortunately a few who would not reply to registered letters and let their membership lapse rather than admit they could not pay their dues, and applied later after the war for reinstatement.

The rent of the lodge room was dropped from \$35 to \$28 in 1931, but returned to \$35 in September 1939, the day war was declared. It was considered by the lodge that the Temple Company decided the Depression was over when the government declared war.

In 1935 RW, Bro. George Derby was installed as Grand Master, the first of three members of the lodge to be so honoured. RW Bro. David Monteith Taylor followed in

1961 and RW Bro. Wallace McRae in 1969. These brethren performed their duties as grand master with the utmost fidelity, bringing credit to the Craft in general and this lodge in particular. In 1970 at grand lodge, MW Bro. George Derby was awarded the first "Order of Meritorious Service", in recognition of his untiring years of devoted service to the Craft. In the 1970s, from 1971 to 1979 with the exception of one year, MW Bro. Dave Taylor was grand secretary, a position which held with great dignity and decorum: no wonder, he was Empire Lodge trained!

SPECIAL EVENTS: 28 October 1935, the lodge received W Bro. Alex Slidders, WM of Empire Lodge No. 127 in Winnipeg, and 35 of his officers and members on a fraternal visit. A representative from Empire Lodge No. 63, in Edmonton, and Empire Lodge 225 Wellington, New Zealand were also in attendance and presentations were made to each other. The visiting ladies from Manitoba were entertained by Empire Lodge No. 85 wives, and tours of the lower mainland were given the visitors by W Bros. Herb Sellers, Hubert Jones and Walter Butterworth.

Family connexions have been a strong bond in the lodge. Several second generation brethren, sons of brethren who were initiated into Empire Lodge in the 1920s and 30s and became master, had sons who also became master. The first of these were W Bro. Daniel Gillies MacKirdy who installed Bro. Thomas Gillies MacKirdy as WM in 1954.

W Bro. T. MacKirdy was the first of the second generation to be initiated, followed by W Bro. Samuel Turkington's son Wilf who was the second to be installed by his father the following year, 1955. They had been preceded in 1952 by W Bro. John Murray, son of the first master, who unfortunately passed on before Bro. John was initiated, as was the case of W Bro. Murdoch Hugh James Rose, WM in 1942 whose son David was installed as master in 1973 by MW Bro. Dave Taylor. Although not a member of the lodge, W Bro. John Moulson of United Service Lodge 24, Victoria participated in all the degrees of his son, Donald Moulson, and installed him as WM in 1961. W Bro. Harry Smith, the son-in-law of Bro. Len Quance was installed as WM in 1966, and W Bro; Ross Porter, the son of Bro. Ralph Porter, and Nephew of RW Bro. Daniel McLellan, MD, was installed in 1986. In 1983 a father and two sons were initiated together, Bros. John Waide and Mark Luciak. W Bro. John Luciak became the WM in 1990 and his son Waide became WM in 1991.

In 1955 there were 16 pairs of fathers and sons in the lodge, so when a father and son made application for initiation, Messrs S. Roy Huggard and Roy Huggard, the WM directed that a Father and Son Night would be in order. Accordingly all the fathers and sons took the chairs and shared the lectures in the Fellow Craft degree. It proved to be an interesting evening. In addition to family connections there was another special group, four WWI veterans who for four years had been in the same battalion, the Thirty-first South Alberta Regiment C.E.F., in the same platoon found that their paths had come together in Empire Lodge when they either affiliated or were initiated, they were W Bros. Wm. (Bill) Wilson, Dan MacKirdy, Wm. (Bill) Jullian and W. J. W. Wilson. 1955-56 was the summit of the lodge in regards to membership, 246, and proportionate attendance, but alas, attrition was soon to take its toll as so many of the first world war veterans passed on to the Grand Lodge Above.

During the second world war many Empire Lodge members were involved on active service in Canada's Armed Services and one in the USA Forces, and others in related wartime appointments. The first casualty was the first member to enlist, Lt. Commander Hubert Shadforth who on the 23 February 1942 was listed as "Lost at Sea" along with his ship, the HMCS *Spikinard*, sunk by enemy submarines. The secretary in 1943 reported that there were 25 sons and daughters of members, plus the wife of one member, 1 deceased member's son and 1 deceased member's daughter and 8 members on active service, a total of 36, by 1945 that total had increased to 47. W Bro. Alfred

Rider reported that his committee was in contact with all participants throughout the hostilities and the master commended W Bro. Rider and his committee on their devotion and diligence in the task of keeping track of all these members and dependants.

Empire Lodge Ladies Nights were the social event of the masonic year in Vancouver. Held in the Hotel Georgia Aztec Ballroom, they were always well attended and invariably sold out, there were always 300 or more who annually heard W Bro. Frank Curtis give the *Toast to the Ladies* commencing with the words "Thou hast no faults, or I no faults can spy; Thou art all beauty, or all blindness, I."¹ Each lady received a beautiful embossed programme, imported from England annually, and the front and insert printed in Old English print with suitable wording. The original cost was \$5 a couple which included a sumptuous dinner, live orchestra, for many years the Gondiliers, but on occasion the Harold Baker Quintet. The cost eventually rose to \$10 and the Ladies Night moved to the Stanley Park Pavilion and ceased when the costs became prohibitive.

The 25th anniversary of the lodge was celebrated with a dinner held at the Hotel Vancouver. W Bro. Dan MacKirdy, the twenty-fifth master, was toastmaster and 87 members of the lodge attended, which was 52.45 % of the membership. Cost of the five course dinner was a total of \$108.75 (\$1.25 each) funded by the lodge. The meal consisted of appetizers, soup, salad, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, dessert, and coffee, followed by House of Lords cigars, courtesy of the master.

NOTABLE MEMBERS

Our lodge has been blessed with many men of note. Reference has already been made of RW Bro. George Murray, MW Bro. George Cleveland Derby and MW Bro. David Monteith Taylor and Bro. John H. Hughes, all of whom were made honorary members of the lodge. Others made honorary members in the 1920s were W Bro. (Col.) A. Markham and W Bro. J. T. Carruthers, chaplain from the beginning until the end of the 1920s. Both were charter members.

The first great loss the lodge suffered occurred on 12 January 1954 when the secretary RW Bro. Jack Shuttlewood suddenly passed away. He affiliated from a lodge in England in 1921 and was made steward in November 1922, was master in 1927-28 and elected secretary in 1929. He was the longest serving officer in the lodge, having been in office continually since November 1922—31 years, 2 months. He was secretary/treasurer of the Vancouver Masonic Service Bureau and representative of the Dominion Regalia Co., Toronto, and a year later (28 March) on behalf of Bro. Ed Armstrong and the brethren of that company, RW Bro. Dave Taylor presented the lodge with a magnificent altar cloth, as a token of their high esteem.

W Bro. Sidney Stanleys' contribution to the lodge will never be forgotten. He was one of the foremost chrysanthemum growers in Vancouver and the lodge room was like a flower show at installation, and his gladiolas were equally as impressive. In 1959 he decided to return to his native Lincolnshire County in England, saying that he would only return when the BC Lions were in the Grey Cup. He sold all his mums and gladiola corms to the lodge members. He returned in a couple of years, Lincolnshire was not the same. He was one of the "Old Contemptibles" in the first world war. His visiting of the ill and distressed of the lodge and the Craft was beyond the call of duty, and he made sure that the widows were never in want. His past master jewel is now worn with pride by RW Bro. Bill Rowlands who has carried on the tradition established by Sid.

¹ Christopher Codrington (1668-1710)—*On Garth's Dispensary*.

On 13 April 1965 the following members were made honorary members: MW Bro. Dave Taylor, RW Bro. Sam Turkington, W Bros. Daniel MacKirdy, Alf Rider, Frank Curtis, Herb Sellers and Bro. George Summerfield. Unfortunately, W Bro. Daniel Gillies MacKirdy was unable to enjoy the honour bestowed on him for on 5 May he suddenly passed away. He had been secretary, the second to die in office. After retiring from the Department of Veteran Affairs, he was administrator of the Vancouver Poppy Fund. The master stated that his passing left a gap that could never be filled in the lodge, and on Empire Night two weeks later MW Bro. James McKergow paid tribute to his lifelong friend and brother, stating that "This brother practiced his Freemasonry in his everyday life out of the lodge to the fullest and in every sense." W Bro. Frank Curtis succeeded as secretary and duly elected the following November, and for the second successive year tragedy occurred when he passed away on 26 September 1966. He served the lodge faithfully in many capacities, and Ladies Night was never the same thereafter, regardless of the eloquence of the proposer of the Toast to the Ladies.

W Bro. Archie Lynn was secretary on two occasions, succeeding RW Bro. Shuttlewood on 12 January 1954 to November 1960 and 6 September 1966 to Nov. 1971. He had a hard act to follow, succeeding two eminent brethren, but was equal to the task. He was the only member to have been secretary twice as well as being master twice.

Another brother of interest was Bro. (Lt. Col.) "Happy" Harry Hearnden. "Happy Harry" as he was known as, had to be the most optimistic member of the lodge. Nothing ever fazed him. This "happy-go-lucky" brother was a past president of the Pacific Command, RC Legion, and would refer to all members when addressing them in lodge as "Brother Comrade". When he ad-libbed a word, or phrase, or sentence, and reminded about it later would reply "Well it made sense to the candidate," or "the candidate wasn't aware that I did it my way." He was elected JW and SW but for reasons of illness wasn't able to continue further. One wonders if the lodge would have survived a year of his being master.

Bro. John McNicol was secretary for three years before being elected SW in 1981, but also for health reason was unable to continue in office. A historian of note, he carried with him the air of a dignified professor. His Scottish background was undeniable, and he had the inquisitiveness of a true Highlander, ready to explore anything, particularly in Kamloops at Grand Lodge in 1980 when he discovered a genuine Italian Pizza Parlour, run by Koreans—all of whom spoke impeccable Italian—this was at 2:00 am in the morning! He was grand lodge librarian and was succeeded by RW Bro. Bob Clark whose first job was "to change every reference index back to English from Gaelic! Our eldest member, W Bro. Alfred Rider, now 98, was master in 1941 and treasurer for 14 years. His sound advice and counsel to many masters and others, when requested, was always well taken, and thus his contribution to the lodge was considerable and cannot go unmentioned. We wish that he could be with us at this time.

RW Bro. George Caird was the first member to see action on land during the second world war, serving in the Italian Theatre, France and Germany. He was master in 1951 and DDGM in 1970-71.

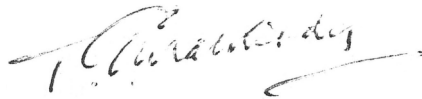
Another social activity was the Annual Children Christmas Tree Party for members' offspring to the age of 12, (there were many older 12 year olds who shaved and wore makeup), and WB Frank Curtis as St. Nick and Mrs. Nina MacKirdy at the piano for the carols that were sung with great gusto. Many members received their first introduction to the lodge at this event, and W Bro. Curtis would take great delight in telling a child that he had given a gift to their mother or father years before. These were happy occasions and remain foremost in the memory of many, even today, as examples of the brotherly love that prevailed in those times.

Membership which had declined from 246 in 1955 eroded in the 1960s to the point where in 1969 there were but 150 members, and continued to drop to 116 by the end of 1974, where it remained to the mid 1980s. By then many more had moved out of the city to the suburbs of Surrey, Delta and other Fraser Valley areas as the cost of real estate in Vancouver became prohibitive, or their public avocations were re-established in those regions. By 1990 there were less than 90 members left.

It became difficult to maintain officers, and few members were being initiated. In May 1991 a notice of motion to amalgamate with Melrose Lodge No. 67 was defeated 12-9. Several other lodges in District 15, namely Kilwinning Lodge No. 59, Plantagenet 65 and Victory Lodge No. 94, obsessed with the same problem—inability to maintain officers and lack of attendance, whether it be from apathy or attrition or other reasons—decided to meet for the purpose of amalgamating. It was decided that each lodge submit the same worded notice of motion at their respective lodges to amalgamate under a new name. Empire Lodge voted at their installation communication on 12 November 1991 and the vote being unanimously in favour, it was resolved to enter into negotiations with the other three lodges whose vote had been the same. RW Bro. Rowlands, VW Bro. TG. MacKirdy, VW Bro. D. Moulson and the master were the lodge representatives at these discussions. These communications being happily effected, an amalgamation under the name of Alliance and to be numbered 193 on the register of Grand Lodge will take place on Saturday, 25 April 1992 at 1:00 pm, in the Vancouver Masonic Hall, 1495 West 8th Avenue Vancouver, BC. The last communication of Empire Lodge will be Tuesday, 14 April 1992. When the lodge was instituted there were 68 members on the roll. Today there are 68 members. The first tyler and charter member was named Hughes, John H. The last master's name is Hughes, Phillip.

We were happy to meet, so very sorry to part but will be happy to meet again as Alliance Lodge No. 193.

VW Bro. Thomas Gillies MacKirdy, PGSoFW
Historian, Empire Lodge No. 85



Transcribed by the Grand Historian, 2023/01/24