

"T H I S M I N E H O U S E . . . . ."

A Paper Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of

Freemasonry

in British Columbia

March 19, 1859 - March 19, 1959

(The Early Days of the Craft in Vancouver's  
Island and British Columbia, 1858 - 1871)

by

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(St. Andrew's Lodge, No. 49 GRBC)

A Message from the Grand Master.

Many Happy Returns!

To the Brethren of the Grand Jurisdiction.  
Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of British Columbia.

My dear Brethren:

March 19th, 1959. Many Happy Returns of the Day and Greetings from your Grand Master, as we celebrate this, our 100th Birthday, the Centenary of Freemasonry in British Columbia.

One hundred years ago to-day, the Mother Grand Lodge of the World, the Grand Lodge of England, issued a Charter to a small group of petitioners on the Colony of Vancouver's Island and brought into existence our first Lodge - Victoria Lodge A.F. & A.M., No. 1085.

With the concurrence of our Grand Historian, who is preparing a history of our early Freemasonry for distribution at our Annual Communication next June, I have commissioned Bro. B.H.E. Goult, a former newspaperman, and an officer of St. Andrew's Lodge No. 49, to prepare this paper on the early history of our first nine Lodges, up to and including the formation of our Grand Lodge in 1871.

It is the request of your Grand Master that this paper should be read in open Lodge, or at your refreshment hour, at the Regular or Emergent meeting of every Lodge in the Grand Jurisdiction, on or nearest the actual date of our birthday, March 19th, 1959, in commemoration of this historic event, and that the Master of each Lodge should appoint a competent Brother to give a reading of this paper on that occasion.

A cordial invitation is extended to all to be present at our Annual Communication in June when the occasion of our Centenary will be celebrated more fully.

Fraternally,

"Kenneth Reid"

Grand Master.

Victoria, B.C.  
January 31st, 1959.

"..... I will establish this Mine

House to stand firm forever."

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Those who are familiar with the Masonic history of Vancouver Island and British Columbia will notice that I have leaned heavily upon the late Robie L. Reid's "Historical and Biographical Sketches, 1848 - 1935." Other references used in the preparation of this paper follow:

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ROBERTSON, Col. F.A.  
5th B.C. Regiment,  
Canadian Garrison,  
Artillery.

"Early Defenses of the B.C. Coast."

\*SLATER, George Hollis

Unfinished MS comprising notes on the early lodges on Vancouver's Island and in British Columbia, first Grand Lodge &c. - Courtesy of K. Reid, Esq.

SMITH, T. Gordon

"Victoria Columbia Lodge, No. 1. A short History of Our Lodge." (Pamphlet, 1946.)

WADDINGTON, Alfred

"The Fraser Mines Vindicated, or the History of Four Months." (Victoria, V.I., 1859.)

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BRITANNICA, Encyclopaedia, 1948 ed,

BRITISH COLUMBIA: A Centennial Anthology. McClelland & Stewart, 1958.

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\* A member of Victoria Columbia Lodge, No. 1. Tyler of that Lodge for many years, and assistant to the Grand Historian. Now (1958) a resident of Sidney, B.C.

The year 1858 opened in convulsion and terminated in revolution. In India, the Mutiny of native troops which commenced the previous year, continued. The Orsini conspirators plotted, but failed to assassinate Napoleon III and his Empress; the Czar of all the Russias gave grave consideration to the best methods of ameliorating the condition of the serfs; there was civil war in Mexico and Juarez was proclaimed President of that unhappy country; the laying of the Atlantic cable was completed; Ottawa was named capital of Canada; Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, and as Christmas was celebrated, revolution broke out in Haiti.

But this sombre pageant of world affairs went practically unnoticed in Fort Victoria. The northward passage of American pioneers, the dispute over the Oregon boundary, the continuing possibility of Russian attack, and the arrival of recalcitrant Northern Indians were problems enough for Governor James Douglas. The little village of 800 inhabitants, set in a countryside that reminded the sturdy Dr. John Helmcken of "a park with oak trees interspersed" was quiet and peaceful. "There was no noise, no bustle, no gamblers, no speculators or interested parties to preach this or underrate that," wrote a visitor. "(There were) a few, quiet, gentlemanly behaved inhabitants, chiefly Scotsmen, secluded as it were from the entire world."

Suddenly the settlement was startled from its quietude. The discovery of gold in the gravel beds of the Fraser River caused a terrific sensation among the heterogeneous crowds thronging the streets of San Francisco. The California gold rush had subsided and the "Forty-niners" were ready for new fields to conquer. An unprecedented exodus commenced, and so insane was the desire to get to this new El Dorado that valuable corner lots were sold for a pittance in order that their owners might realize sufficient capital to take them to the new gold fields.

Every crazy vessel that could be pressed into commission was packed with the adventurers, and dispatched to the north. Battered, shaky, old hulks, long discarded, were sent again to sea, and brought passengers by the thousand to Fort Victoria. Hundreds were left behind, wild with the desire to follow them.

The first contingent arrived upon April 25th. The little Hudson Bay post grew at a bound from a mere village and farming settlement to a busy town of perhaps 30,000. Tents and rough frame shanties sprang up all along the line of the Inner Harbour, from Ogden Point to Point Ellis, and extended as far afield as Quadra Street. The pastoral prelude of Hudson Bay days had passed forever, to be followed for a time by a strident agitato movement.

Living conditions were primitive. The streets were bogs; there was no light, sewage or proper water supply. Water sold at 40 buckets for a dollar, or 15¢ a glass. But despite such hardships, business flourished, and as summer advanced, consideration was given to the formation of a Masonic lodge.

The Freemasons amongst the newcomers had, for the most part, learned the lessons of the Craft in accordance with American practice in the State of California, but those who had previously settled here wanted a lodge of their own with an English charter. Others familiar with the English work encouraged the idea.

In the July 10, 1858 issue of the Victoria Gazette, the following item appeared:

"The members of the ancient Order of F. & A. Masons in good standing are invited to meet on Monday, July 12th at 7:00 o'clock in Southgate & Mitchell's new store, upstairs. The object of the meeting is to consider matters connected with the permanent interests of the order in Victoria."

The Southgate store was on the corner of Yates and Langley streets and was used extensively for Masonic and other public meetings during the four years that it stood. It was torn down to make room for a more substantial structure.

At the first meeting there were at least seven Freemasons stated to have been J. J. Southgate; George Pearkes, first practising solicitor in the Colony of Vancouver's Island; William Jeffray, first port warden of the City of Victoria; James Nealon Thain and William H. Thain, from St. John, New Brunswick; Roland J. McDonnell, a native of the Shetland Islands, graduate of Sandhurst, and for a time police court clerk in Victoria, and Allen McDonald, a miner, who later went into business at the northern end of Harrison Lake.

No Minutes of the proceedings of that meeting exist, nor is there any account of the subsequent activities of the members of the Craft in the ensuing summer and autumn months. It is evident that a number of informal meetings were held, and at one of these it was decided to draft a petition to the United Grand Lodge of England, praying for a charter for a Masonic Lodge in Victoria. Bro. Southgate was selected for the office of Worshipful Master, and George Pearkes was to be the first Senior Warden.

Later, in anticipation of the arrival of the Charter from London, another meeting was held at which the subordinate officers of the Lodge were appointed. Amor deCosmos, editor and proprietor of The British Colonist, which had recently commenced publication, and whose Mother Lodge was believed to have been in Halifax, N.S., was present, and reported the names of the "office bearers." In addition to Brothers Southgate and Pearkes, these were W. Jeffray, J.W., A. deCosmos, Secretary; J.N. Thain, Treasurer, W.H. Thain, S.D.; R.J. McDonnell, J.D.

Mails were slow in those days, and England far away. Letters to London from Victoria went by way of Cape Horn. Thus, the petitioners were obliged to wait many weary months before a reply was received. The long awaited charter, dated March 19, 1859 eventually was received. An irregularity was discovered, and it had to be returned to England. The correct document finally reached Victoria, March 14, 1860, and the constitution of the Victoria Lodge No. 1085 and the installation of its officers was set for August 20, 1860.

The ceremonies were carried out as scheduled. The installing officers were W. Bro. Henry Aguilar, R.N., Past Master of Good Report Lodge, No. 158, later renumbered 136 of London, who was serving in HM gunboat GRAPPLER, then at Esquimalt, and W. Bro. Robert Burnaby, a commission merchant, past master of Lodge "Royal Somerset House and Inverness No. 4" of London, who had acted upon his arrival in the Colony as Deputy Lands Commissioner, looking after the sale of lots in Queensborough (New Westminster), Hope and Yale. A contemporary wrote of him as active, pleasant and mirthful. His Masonic correspondence shows him to be considerate and diplomatic. After a great work in the interests of the Craft, he became ill, returned to England in 1874, and died four years later aged 49.

To deCosmos we are indebted for a report of the meeting, which appeared in The British Colonist for August 22, 1860. He indicated that the installation of the officers had been delayed in "order to suitably fit up the Lodge Room over Messrs. Hibben & Carswell's Store, Yates St. .... the manner in which it has been done reflects great credit on the Order .... there are few Masonic Halls on the Pacific Coast better furnished, or more in keeping with the ancient landmarks of the Fraternity ....."

The First Masonic Lodge  
in the Colony of B.C.

The capital of the Colony of British Columbia, apart in those days from the Colony of Vancouver's Island, was established at New Westminster. There were many enthusiastic Freemasons in the flourishing new settlement, amongst them Henry Holbrook, a native of Cheshire, England, who had been in business as a contractor in the Crimea, during the Crimean War. He later became a businessman in New Westminster, was mayor of that city for four successive terms, member of the Legislative Council for the Colony of British Columbia, and subsequently Chief Commissioner of Lands under the McCreight government.

Those associated with Holbrook found a lodge room in the Hick's Building on Columbia Street at the corner of Lytton Square. Promoters of the new Lodge came from such various jurisdictions as England, Scotland, California, Canada (which then meant Ontario), New York and Prince Edward Island. It was therefore agreed that it should be called "Union Lodge."

In due course the petition to the Grand Lodge of England was granted, and a warrant issued. The first meeting of the lodge, under the title of Union Lodge, No. 1201, was held June 24, 1861. The installing officer was W. Bro. Burnaby and the officers were Henry Holbrook, WM; Dr. J. Vernon Siddall, R.E., SW; Valentine Hall, JW; George Frye, Secretary; Capt. J. Cooper, Treasurer; Dr. S.A. Crain, SD; R. Dickinson, JD; B.F. Moses, IG., and D.B. Hickey, OG. Brothers attending and assisting from Victoria included Brothers G. Pearkes, T. Harris, R. Lewis, L. Franklin, John Malowanski, S. Driard, and E. Franklin.

The Lodge used the English ritual for some years, but in December, 1877, by permission of the Grand Master, the Lodge adopted "Scotch work".

The Third Lodge and  
The "Scotch" Ritual

With the exception of the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, and a few professional men, most of the newcomers to Victoria came from California. A few came from Puget Sound. Though not all were citizens of the United States, most had learned their Freemasonry there, and all were accustomed to the American work, which had come to be known as "Scotch" work. Dr. A.G. Mackey in his "Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry" refers to:

"The system of work which, under the appropriate name of the American rite (although often improperly called the "York Rite") is practised in the United States."

The newcomers did not see why they should not have the pleasures of Freemasonry in their new home as they had in their old. They were disappointed when they attended meetings of Victoria Lodge for the work was strange to them. Thus, they took steps to form a lodge, working in a ritual which to them was familiar and acceptable, and petitioned the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Washington for dispensation. Much to their surprise, their application caused consternation amongst the brethren. Victoria Lodge expressed itself in no uncertain terms, indicating that the idea of an American Grand Lodge exercising jurisdiction in a territory where the British Grand Lodge had already granted a charter, was un-Masonic, illegal and not to be endured. They warned the applicants that if such a Lodge was established, it would be considered clandestine, and they would have no Masonic communication with its members.

The applicants were at a loss to know what further action to take. Their dilemma was resolved for them by the timely arrival of Dr. Israel Wood Powell, destined, with Burnaby, to be an outstanding member of the Masonic fraternity.

A Canadian by birth, of United Empire descent, he had become a member of Elgin Lodge No. 348 in Montreal while a medical student there. The Lodge operated under a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and thus did a form of "American" work. Dr. Powell came to Victoria in 1862, was appointed Superintendent of Indian affairs in 1872, and later Indian Reserve Commissioner. In 1878, he demitted from Vancouver-Quadra Lodge, and thereafter ceased to be active in Masonic matters. He rejoined his Lodge shortly before his death in 1915, aged 78.

Dr. Powell advised the adherents of the American work to abandon the idea of applying for a charter to the Grand Lodge of Washington, and to apply instead to the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Victoria Lodge cordially responded to this petition, reserving however, "the precedence of the Grand Lodge of England in general Masonic affairs within the Colony .....

The Grand Lodge of Scotland complied with the wishes of the petitioners, and a charter to Vancouver Lodge No. 421 S.C. was duly issued. On October 20, 1862, William Jeffray, Sam Gladstone, J.R. Stewart, A. Scorgie, A. Blackman, T.S. Allatt, Morris Meyers, and R.J. McDonald met in the Hall of Victoria Lodge to organize the new Lodge. William Jeffray acted as WM from October to December, 1862, when he resigned to be succeeded by Dr. Powell. This was Victoria's second lodge and the third in what is now the Province of British Columbia.

#### The First Lodge at Nanaimo

Freemasons in Nanaimo watched the growth of the fraternity in Victoria with interest. Captain William Hales Franklyn, a merchant marine officer, and subsequently stipendiary magistrate in Nanaimo, was a member of Grand Masters' Lodge No.1, London, the premier Lodge of England. It was he who was the leader of the movement to initiate a lodge in Nanaimo. Following meetings in 1865, it was agreed to forward a petition to the Grand Lodge of England. The petition was granted, and a warrant for Nanaimo Lodge, No. 1090 issued.

(The low number is explained by the fact that in 1863, before the petition was forwarded, the Grand Lodge of England renumbered its lodges, and in consequence Victoria Lodge No. 1085 became No. 783, and Union Lodge, originally No. 1201, became No. 889.)

The charter got as far as San Francisco in safety, but was lost in the wreck of the steamer LABOUCHERE. A duplicate was obtained from London, but it was not until 1867 that the warrant arrived.

The first meeting of Nanaimo Lodge was held in a one-storey house located on the south east corner of Hecate and Cavan Streets. The building has since been demolished. A large contingent of Victoria brethren attended. The steamer SIR JAMES DOUGLAS was chartered for the trip, and the band of the volunteer militia accompanied the party.

The lodge was duly constituted by R.V. Bro. Henry Holbrook of Union Lodge, assisted by W. Bro. Richard Lewis of Victoria lodge and others. The following officers were installed: W.H. Franklyn, W.M., William Clark, S.W. William Stewart, JW: Solomon David Levy, Treasurer; James Harvey, Secretary; W.A. Phillips, S.D.; David Frew, JD; James M. Brown, IG and James M. Smith, tyler.

Mark Bate, in succeeding years, sixteen times mayor of Nanaimo by acclamation, although not then a Mason, attended the banquet following the constitution. He subsequently joined the Craft, and became an outstanding member. He was Worshipful Master in 1871-2, and DDGM in 1900.

#### The Lodge at Barkerville

The discovery of rich placer deposits in the Cariboo called forth gold seekers from all parts of the world. The peak of the rush was reached in 1863. It is estimated that on the gold bearing creeks in the vicinity of Barkerville, and in that roaring metropolis were some 30,000 people. By 1866, the Cariboo Road had reached Barkerville, the mines were producing steadily, and it was believed that the settlement would enjoy a comparatively long life.

Freemasons saw no reason why they should not have a Masonic lodge as well as residents of coastal communities, and as a result, Bro. J. Spencer Thompson wrote to Vancouver Lodge, No. 421 at Victoria, asking that Lodge to endorse the opening of a lodge at Williams Creek or Richfield under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Washington Territory. Thompson stated that a similar request had been made to Union Lodge, New Westminster, which had been refused, and that Lodge had advised the Cariboo brethren to apply to the Grand Lodge of England for a charter.

Vancouver Lodge expressed its sympathy, pointed out the irregularity of the proposed proceedings, and presumably recommended that a charter be obtained from the jurisdiction under which it, itself, was operating. Upon receipt of this letter, a meeting was called attended by 13 Freemasons. Jonathan Nutt, one of the leading promoters of the scheme, was chosen chairman, and William Cochrane acted as Secretary. As a result of this, and other meetings, a petition addressed to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for a charter was signed December 8, 1866. The petition was taken personally to Victoria by Nutt, and presented for approval to Vancouver Lodge on January 16, 1867. Approval followed.

R.W. Bro. Wood Powell, Provincial Grand Master issued a dispensation authorizing Cariboo Lodge No. 469 to open and commence business. On December 7, 1867, the Charter was received from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, together with the necessary books carefully labelled "Cariboo Lodge No. 469, Barkerville, Vancouver Island." The Lodge was fully constituted June 24, 1868, St. John the Baptist's Day, by Bro. Nutt presiding as representative of the Provincial Grand Master.

The sponsors of the lodge knew that if they desired a lodge they must build a proper meeting place. This they did at the cost of \$3,300, donating \$100 each. Some paid at once. Others, depending on their circumstances paid at the rate of 50¢ to \$5.00 weekly. The Masonic Hall, completed in June 1867 was destroyed by fire in September 1868. It was rebuilt within eighteen months, and again destroyed by fire December 29, 1936. A third Masonic Hall now occupies the site.

British Columbia  
Lodge, No. 1187, E.R.

The fourth lodge to be established by the English Grand Lodge in this jurisdiction, was British Columbia Lodge No. 1187, in Victoria. The date of its charter was July 26, 1867.

The late Robie L. Reid in his "Historical Notes and Biographical Sketches" finds it difficult to understand why another lodge was really necessary at this time. Seemingly the Scottish Grand Lodge had power to authorize the formation of a Provincial Grand Lodge, intermediate between the Grand Lodge and the Craft generally, even though there was only one lodge in a Masonic jurisdiction. On the other hand, Victoria Lodge wanted to establish a corresponding minor Grand Lodge, known as a District Grand Lodge here. But the Grand Lodge of England would not allow this to be done until such time as there were at least four lodges in the jurisdiction owing allegiance to it. At this time there were but three -- Victoria Lodge, Victoria; Union Lodge, New Westminster, and Nanaimo Lodge.

Since Dr. Powell was Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge (Scottish), Robert Burnaby, pre-eminent amongst English Freemasons was bound to be chosen District Grand Master.

Accordingly the requisite petition was drawn up, and signed by some of the members of Victoria Lodge, (for then, as now, there was no objection to a dual membership). Charter members were W. Bro. T. Harris, first Master of the new Lodge; John Banks, Henry Nathan Jr; George Creighton, A. Finley Main and Eli Harrison. It was forwarded to the Grand Lodge authorities in England, but even before the Lodge could be constituted, the Grand Master of the English Grand Lodge had established a District Grand Lodge in British Columbia with W. Bro. Burnaby as the District Grand Master.

An emergent meeting of the Victoria Lodge was called October 27, 1867, to install the Worshipful Master and officers of British Columbia Lodge. The members went in procession to St. John's - the Iron Church - then standing on the present site of the Hudson's Bay Company store, and returned to the Masonic Hall at Government and View Streets. R.W. Bro. Burnaby installed W. Bro. Harris as Worshipful Master; Bro. A.F. Main, SW; H. Nathan Jr., JW; Paul Medana, treasurer; A. Theakstone, secretary; Eli Harrison, SD; George Creighton, JD; I. Ragazonni, IG, and P. Hall, Tyler.

Caledonia Lodge  
No. 478, S.C.

Nanaimo Lodge, No. 1090, had received its charter from the Grand Lodge of England. Its membership was about equally divided between those who had been members of lodges which used the English ritual, and members of those lodges which used that form known as the American ritual, known in British Columbia as Scotch work. The latter class was uneasy. They were anxious to practise the form of work with which they were familiar, but knew of no way in which they could do so.

When it was ascertained that Vancouver Lodge had been formed in Victoria with a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and that it used the American ritual, devotees of that work saw a way out. They would form a new lodge with a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Amongst them was Bro. William Stewart who had learned the lessons of the Craft in Prince Edward Island in St. John's Lodge, No. 1. He took steps to divide Nanaimo Lodge by taking from it the devotees of the American work. Arrangements were therefore made by which the assets and liabilities should be divided equally.

Petitions went forward to the Scottish Grand Lodge asking for a charter for a new lodge to be called Caledonia Lodge, and the other was directed to RW Bro. Powell asking for a dispensation to carry on while awaiting the charter. Both were granted, though the charter for the Lodge as No. 478, S.C. did not arrive until April 5, 1869, when the lodge was duly constituted.

Bro. Solomon David Levy became WM; Bro. Stewart the first SW; Bro. James Harvey, JW; Bro. Arch. Muir, treasurer, and Bro. Arch. McAllister, secretary.

As a consequence, two lodges existed where one lodge would have flourished. Both lodges found it difficult to carry on. In 1873, soon after the Grand Lodge of British Columbia was established, and as soon as Bro. Stewart had been successful in persuading all brethren to accept the "Scotch" work, the inevitable happened. The two lodges amalgamated under the name of Ashlar Lodge No. 3, and the lodge thus formed has been one of the leading lodges in this jurisdiction.

Mount Hermon Lodge  
No. 491, S.C.

The discovery of gold had been the genesis of Masonic lodges in Victoria and the Cariboo. But another great natural resource, timber, led to the establishment of the eighth lodge on the north shore of Burrard Inlet.

As early as 1863, a sawmill had been established on the north shore of Burrard Inlet. The venture was too much for its promoter, and the property passed in time to an American, Sewell Prescott Moody of Maine. Moody, by May of 1865 was shipping lumber to Sydney, Australia, and the settlement which grew about the sawmill became known as Moodyville.

At that time, New Westminster was the centre of all business in the vicinity, but to get there, a traveller had to cross Burrard Inlet, and then make his way some fourteen miles, through marsh, by Corduroy road. Thus, a visit to Union Lodge, was a rare and time-consuming luxury.

It was therefore decided to establish a Lodge upon Burrard Inlet to be known as Mount Hermon, and that application would be made to the Provincial Grand Lodge for a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, J.C. Hughes was to be the first WM; Coote M. Chambers, the first secretary, while Moody was satisfied to take the minor office of Inner Guard.

As in the case of the brethren at Barkerville, the first essential was to provide a meeting place. To that end, a Masonic Hall was built by those interested near the Mill at their own expense and furnished the same way.

On January 15, 1869, the new Lodge was instituted by R.W.P.G.M. Powell, duly consecrated, and the officers installed. Other than those already named, these were: William O. Allen, SW; Philander W. Swett, JW; James Van Bramer, treasurer; George W. Haynes, SD; Alex McGowan, JD and S.F. Washburn, tyler.

The Ninth of the  
Qld Lodges - Quadra

The last of the nine old lodges to be established was Quadra Lodge No. 508, S.C. in Victoria. The reasons for its formation are not apparent, unless it was thought advisable to have as many lodges as possible under the Scottish Provincial Grand Lodge in order that it might have the last word in the movement for the establishment of an independent Grand Lodge in British Columbia. That step was being seriously discussed at the time, and was particularly popular with the Scottish lodges.

In any event, a petition was sent to the Grand Lodge of Scotland on January 11, 1871. Meanwhile, a dispensation from the Provincial Grand Master had been issued. The year passed, and no charter was received from Scotland. In October, the Grand Lodge of British Columbia was duly formed, with Quadra as one of its constituent lodges. The Scottish charter was no longer of use to it. The delay may be explained by the death of William Alexander Laurie, secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, after a long illness. It is thought that his demise caused disorganization in the Secretary's office.

The first WM was James A. Grahame; George Grant, SW; William Fraser, JW; and H.F. Heisterman, Provincial Grand Secretary, Secretary of the Lodge. Other officers were F.H. Lamb, C. Strouss, and Andrew Astrico.

The Lodge existed only seven years before it was amalgamated with Vancouver Lodge, under the name of Vancouver and Quadra Lodge, No. 2, G.L.B.C. Notwithstanding its short existence, it numbered amongst its members some prominent citizens of Victoria, including R.B. McMicking, one of the pioneers of the first telephone company; Eli Harrison, for many years County Court Judge at Nanaimo; R.P. Rithet, mayor of Victoria, member of the Provincial Legislature, and senior partner of the shipping firm of Welch, Rithet & Co., and F.J. Barnard, the founder of Barnard's Express and member for Yale in the Colonial Legislature.

The Formation of the  
Grand Lodge of British  
Columbia.

In 1871, nine lodges existed in British Columbia, of which five were doing American work and four English.

The existence of two distinct organizations of Freemasons in a country where a bare handful of people were occupying so vast a territory, naturally led to rivalry and jealousy between the two factions. Resident Freemasons deplored such a condition and strove to remedy it, but the existence of different jurisdictions and the adherence by the brethren to differing forms of ritual, made an agreement for union in one Grand Lodge a matter of considerable difficulty. In short, there was a Provincial Grand Lodge under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and a District Grand Lodge under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of England. The nine subordinate lodges represented numerically a brotherhood of about 300 - something less than the membership of one of our larger lodges to-day.

In December, 1868, Vancouver Lodge took the first step towards the establishment of a Grand Lodge in British Columbia, when a resolution favouring the step was forwarded to all Lodges in the Province. R.W. Bro. Robert Burnaby, a member of Victoria Lodge, was cautious and conservative. He felt, quite properly, that he could not support the movement without the approval of the Grand Lodge of England, and in a letter to the Grand Secretary, he intimated that he would be truly glad "if the two jurisdictions could work in concert under one head," though "the insignificance of our numbers and the unimportance of the Colony scarcely justify even the idea of independence." He asked for direction and advice.

The Grand Secretary replied that Burnaby should be able to deal with such an unimportant matter without any help from London, and that the paucity of numbers would make the whole proposition ridiculous. He did not consider the matter of sufficient importance to lay it before the Grand Master.

Dr. Powell, Provincial Grand Master, wrote to the secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, indicating that he could not pursue the matter without endorsement, although he was in favour of it. He received no reply to his communication.

In the end result, in January 1871, it was decided to go ahead and form an independent Grand Lodge, and a convention was duly called to consider the matter on March 18 and 20 of that year. A resolution that the convention proceed to organize a Grand Lodge in British Columbia passed unanimously. It should be noted, however, that the Convention was only attended by representatives of the Scottish lodges - the English lodges refrained, so that the convention represented only 5/9 of the Masons in the Province.

After considerable discussion, and the exchange of many letters between R.W. Bro. Burnaby and Dr. Powell, newly elected Grand Master, a new convention was held on October 21, 1871. Here the Lodges, by vote, endorsed the formation of a Grand Lodge, in and for the Province of British Columbia. The motion, moved by Burnaby, was seconded by Dr. Powell. Grand Lodge officers were then elected - Dr. Powell, Grand Master; R.W. Bro. Burnaby, Past Grand Master; R.W. Bro. J.F. McCreight, DGM; R.W. Bro. Simeon Duck, Senior GW; RW. Bro. Henry Nathan, Junior GW; VW and Rev. Bro. F. Gible, Grand Chaplain; VW Bro. M.W. Waitt, Grand Treasurer, and Bro. Philip J. Hall, Grand Tyler.

Unity had at last been achieved. Our early brethren, guided and sustained by the Great Architect, had established the House of Masonry "to stand firm forever." To the great degree that these pioneers succeeded, the fabric of the institution throughout the Province bears mute but glorious witness.