

HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF
ANCIENT, FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS
OF WYOMING
1874 - 1974

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Published by Order of
The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons
of Wyoming
1975

MALTA LODGE NO. 17

Thermopolis

The city of Thermopolis was founded about 1897 when that area was first settled. It is on the Big Horn River immediately north of the Wind River Canyon somewhat below the point where the Wind River becomes the Big Horn River. It is on the Burlington Railroad extending through Casper and on northward to Billings, Montana. When the town was young and sparsely settled a number of Masonic brethren petitioned the Grand Lodge of Wyoming for a dispensation to form a lodge in this community. The petition was approved and the dispensation granted on December 17, 1900. The first officers of the new Lodge under dispensation were Charles G. Elmore, Worshipful Master; Louis J. Duhig, Senior Warden; William H. Burkholder, Junior Warden; James W. Martin, Treasurer; John A. Thompson, Secretary; John C. Danielson, Senior Deacon; Micajah D. Gregg, Junior Deacon; Caleb R. Hanks, Senior Steward; Charles E. Fogg, Junior Steward; Ira Beals, Tyler.¹

At first the Lodge met in rooms in the McCoy Building on Broadway where it remained for some four or five years until a building more suitable for Masonic purposes could be constructed. The lodge room furniture was made by Brother Thompson and two pillars in the West were quite unique, as they were formed by coating iron rods with the spray from the mineral laden waters in the Thermopolis Hot Springs.

Malta Lodge No. 17 was presented its charter by Grand Master Charles H. Townsend on September 4, 1901, and the Lodge was duly constituted some three weeks later by Special Deputy Charles E. Fogg who also installed the first officers under the charter as: Charles G. Elmore, Worshipful Master, and most of the others who had served under the dispensation. On the charter were inscribed the members who had served in the preparation and organization for the Lodge. These charter members were: Charles G. Elmore, W. H. Burkholder, James W. Martin, Ira Beals, M. D. Gregg, D. C. Bowman, David Picard, R. J. Hueston, Louis J. Duhig, John A. Thompson, C. R.

¹Sources for this historical sketch of Malta Lodge No. 17 were the reports of Brothers: Alfred J. Mokler, Louis J. Duhig, Harley J. Murphy and John H. Hessheider.

Hanks, Charles E. Fogg, Farquhar Gillies and L. C. Thompson.

During its early history the Lodge experienced many of the vicissitudes of a frontier town, but always moved onward. The Jurisdiction was sparsely settled and membership grew slowly, but later as the population grew more rapidly and membership increased until in 1924 the Lodge had grown from the original ten to 182. During the winter of 1904 a building association was formed for the purpose of erecting a Temple for which construction was begun, the cornerstone laid on July 24, 1905, and the structure ready for occupancy the following fall.

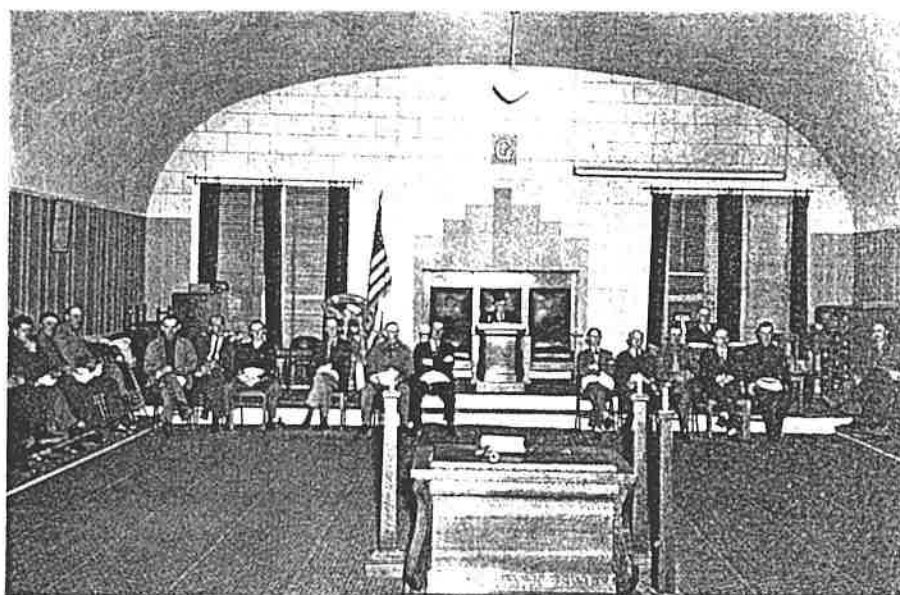
Around Malta Lodge of Master Masons were other branches of the Masonic fraternity, among them Vesper Chapter, Order of Eastern Star; Mount Herman Chapter, Royal Arch Masons; Mount Lebanon Commandery, Knights Templar; and Thermopolis Chapter, Order of DeMolay, all of which prospered and strengthened the parent organization.

The last of the charter members, Brother L. J. Duhig, died on November 23, 1938. Perhaps the last appearance of Brother Duhig was at the session of the Big Horn Masters Club in Thermopolis on March 23, 1938, when he spoke as honor guest at the banquet. Although he had lost his eyesight, his mind was alert and keen and he held his audience spellbound, closing with the lines:

But if I should live to be the last leaf upon the tree
In the Spring,
Let them laugh as I do now, at the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

In later years the lodge room was greatly altered, the interior refinished and changes made in the ceiling and walls that greatly improved the acoustics. All these improvements and the new furniture made a very fitting and comfortable room. The hall was used exclusively by Masons and the affiliated organizations.

The Big Horn Masters Club, in which Malta Lodge No. 17 took an active part from the beginning, has done much to improve Masonry in this area and has set the pattern for numerous similar organizations formed throughout the state. As early as 1913 interested Masonic Brethren began working on the idea of an organization in which all of the Masonic Lodges of the Big Horn Basin would be affiliated. Meetings held over a period of some five or six years resulted in the formation of the Club in 1918. Since that time regular meetings were held with each lodge taking its turn as host. At these meetings the work in all the degrees was exemplified with each lodge taking part. The interesting feature of this portion of the program was that members of the lodges were not informed until the day of the meeting as to what part of what degree they were expected to



LODGE ROOM—MALTA LODGE NO. 17
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exemplify. This form of competition has done more to improve Masonry in the Big Horn Basin than some of the older members anticipated. It was interesting to note the enthusiasm of the individual members and the seriousness with which they approached these sessions. The attendance averaged from 300 to 400 in each meeting.

On several occasions Malta Lodge No. 17 assisted the Grand Lodge of Wyoming in laying cornerstones of public buildings. On June 17, 1932, Grand Master Lewis J. Holliday presided over the cornerstone laying ceremony for the Post Office Building in Thermopolis. At the time Charles M. Hett was Master of the Lodge and also postmaster of the city. The cornerstone of a Thermopolis grade school building was laid by Grand Master Warner B. Jones on April 18, 1938, with Brother L. J. Duhig assisting in the ceremony. It is of interest to note that thirty-five years before Brother Duhig served as Acting Grand Master at the cornerstone laying ceremony of the former grade school building that stood on the hill overlooking the town. On September 20, 1938, Grand Master Lew. M. Gay, assisted by Charles M. Hett, presided over the cornerstone laying for the Hot Springs County Courthouse. On this occasion Brother Paul R. Gréever, then in the United States Congress, delivered the address.

Malta Lodge No. 17 and Signet Lodge No. 18 of Meeteetse, jointly commemorated their Fiftieth Anniversary of the granting of the charters to the two lodges on October 6, 1951. Past Grand Master

Charles H. Townsend, who as Grand Master issued the charter in 1901, was the honored guest on this occasion. Brother Harley G. Murphy was toastmaster, and also in attendance was Brother Frank Blackburn, Past Master of Signet Lodge, as were a number of the older brothers who were present at the earlier ceremonies.

In June, 1964, public installation of officers was conducted by Brother Past Master Clyde I. Davis for the following Officers: John W. Lumley, Worshipful Master; James F. Waldorf, Senior Warden; Harold L. Johnson, Junior Warden; George N. Peterson, Treasurer; Robert L. Brown, P. M., Secretary; Leo B. Dunkin, Jr., Senior Deacon; Jack F. Gourley, Junior Deacon; John W. Bucher, Senior Steward; Gerald G. Cook, Junior Steward; Richard D. Kirkenslager, Chaplain; Fred I. Guynn, Marshal; Jerry L. McGee, Tyler; John H. Hassheider, Historian. After the ceremonies a luncheon was served by the ladies of Vesper Chapter No. 19, Order of Eastern Star.

On September 27, 1964, a joint picnic for the families of Malta Lodge No. 17; Vesper Chapter No. 19, Order of Eastern Star; Signet Lodge No. 18 of Meeteetse; and Adah Chapter No. 48, Order of Eastern Star of Meeteetse was held in the State Park in Thermopolis. It was reported that the affair was well attended and that a good time was had by all. On November 12 of the same year Malta Lodge and Signet Lodge observed an old custom of meeting jointly for the celebration of the Masonic Birthday of Brother George Washington. About this time Bethel No. 14, Job's Daughters, entertained their Masonic "Dads" at a delightful father-daughter banquet during which the daughters rendered instrumental music and humorous readings. This was the first meeting of this nature and proved to be so popular that it became a regular annual feature.

In late 1965 Malta Lodge voted to purchase two acres of ground for a building site for a new Masonic Temple to be located west of the town of Thermopolis.

Brothers who have served Malta Lodge No. 17 as Worshipful Master were: Charles G. Elmore, 1900, 1901; Caleb R. Hanks, 1902; Louis J. Duhig, 1903, 1909; John A. Thompson, 1904; Charles E. Fogg, 1905, 1908; John C. Danielson, 1906; Robert J. Houston, 1907; Fred Wyckoff, 1910, 1915; J. L. Fenner, 1911; Arthur K. Lee, 1912; Lew M. Gay, 1913; Kimel Barnes, 1914; Guy J. Gay, 1916; Fred C. Hanks, 1917; Charles Hoofnagle, 1918; Fred W. Smith, 1919; W. T. Bivin, 1920; A. J. Lowry, 1921; C. E. Stewart, 1922; V. C. Dingman, 1923; Dan C. Woods, 1924; Roger M. Callaway, 1925; Victor A. Mokler, 1926; C. Earl Varney, 1927; Kenneth L. Slagle, 1928; Grant L. Rohr, 1929; Ralph Campbell, 1930; I. M. Jenkins, 1931; Charles M. Hett, 1932; Leiton A. French, 1933; Fred W. Waldorf, 1934; Charles A. McKethen, 1935; Robert W. Otey, 1936; James L. Satterfield, 1937; George E. Fogelsonger, 1938; Lorne A. Fogelsonger, 1939; Granville H. Ogburn, 1940; Henry P. Vogt, 1941; Clyde David, 1942; Harley G. Murphy, 1943; John S. Herrin, 1944; Ansel Mansikka, 1945; Sigurd A. Nelson, 1946; R. Ross Patterson, 1947; Joseph E. Brookshire, 1948; Walter H. Shank, 1949; Nels A. Vicklund, 1950; William M. Nelson, 1951; Leonard T. Jacobs, 1952; Edd D. Sanderlin, 1953; Vern F. Hammond, 1954, 1958; Harold L. Peterson, 1955; Gayle L. Robinson, 1956; Robert L. Brown, 1957; Donnell O. Anderson, 1959; Jack A. Toth, 1960; George W. Odde, 1961; Dick J. Walker, December, 1961 to March, 1963; Norris E. Odde, March, 1963 to June, 1964; John W. Lumley, 1964-65; James F. Waldorf, 1965-66; Harold L. Johnson, 1966-67; Leo B. Dunkin, Jr., 1967-68; Jack F. Gourley, 1968-69; Gerald G. Cook, 1969-70; Lawrence A. Warren, 1970-71; Noel F. Collins, 1971-72; Virgil Beaver, Jr., 1972-73; Samuel M. Havnes, 1973-74; James Quintana, 1974-75.