

## THE FOUNDING OF ABBOTSFORD LODGE

When the Canadian Pacific Railway decided to construct a branch line from Mission City to the American border six miles away, private investors snapped up land near the right-of-way as it crossed the New Westminster to Yale Wagon road. A small townsite was surveyed in 1890 (and again in 1891) and dubbed “Abbotsford.”

The area slowly built up, spurred by the construction of the Vancouver, Victoria and Eastern (Great Northern) Railway in 1908 and the B.C. Electric Railway in 1910. The town and the railway terminus three miles to the south at Huntingdon both attracted Masons amongst the new settlers, and by 1911, there were enough who were interested in forming a lodge.

Several friendly meetings were held in the offices of the Great Northern Railway, where Bro. W.L. Longfellow was the station agent. A petition was eventually drawn up and signed by about 26 Masons who held certificates of good standing in their Lodges.

On November 24, 1911, the *Abbotsford Post* reported Dr. T.A. Swift had purchased a lot at the corner of Gladys and Pine Streets on which to build a Masonic Temple. The following April, the newspaper mentioned the foundation was being laid, the building would be 30 by 66 feet, two storeys high and cost \$3,000. Grand Lodge held a special communication on Saturday, May 18, 1912, when the Grand Master laid the cornerstone of the new Hall. At this point, there wasn't even a Masonic Lodge in Abbotsford, but the names of the proposed officers were placed inside the stone.



In the meantime, the members of the proposed lodge met at the Orange Hall and rehearsed the ritual. On one occasion, the Grand Secretary and the D.D.G.M. attended. Other times, brothers from New Westminster came on the B.C. Electric Interurban to lend encouragement.

The Hall was ready by September. The first meeting was not a Masonic one. The Oddfellows were given use of the building for their institution on September 11, 1912. Several of the Oddfellows were also Masons.

Finally, on October 5th the Grand Master signed a dispensation to form the lodge. Ten days later, Abbotsford Lodge was instituted by Grand Master J.M. Rudd. For the record, the first officers were:

W. Master	Rev. Charles Fitzgerald Yates
Senior Warden	Eric Scotvold
Junior Warden	Dr. Thomas Alfred Swift
Treasurer	William John Ware
Secretary	Wilbur Leroy Longfellow (pro-tem)
Senior Deacon	John Blair Laird
Junior Deacon	John Angus McLean
Inner Guard	Bion Bernard Smith
Steward	Frank Munroe
Tyler	Robert James Shortreed
Past Master	John Franklin Boyd

The new lodge quickly attracted 16 applicants and conferred the First Degree on 14 before the end of 1912. Due to the good work of the lodge, it was granted a warrant and constituted as No. 70 on July 12, 1913.

The founding and early members came from various walks of life. Charles Yates had been a bookkeeper who turned to the Ministry in the 1890s. He was the rector of the local Anglican church; many parishioners in the early days belonged to St. Matthew's. He arrived in Abbotsford in November 1910 from Golden. He was born in 1849 in Charlottetown, where he joined a Masonic lodge. He was the founding S.W. of Samaritan No. 158 in Chadron, Nebraska in 1887 and in Acacia No. 22 in Vancouver in 1893, all three of which use a form of the American Masonic ceremonies. Thus, Abbotsford Lodge does, too. He left Abbotsford in 1915 and he died in Vancouver in 1935. The church's rector in the 1960s, the Rev. Norman Calland, was also a member of the lodge.

Bros. Scotvold, McLean and Samuel Bedlow were among the members who worked for the Abbotsford Lumber Company, the townsite's main industry, as did Past Masters Frank Boyd and James McGowan. The company was co-owned by Bro. Arthur Tretheway of Ionic No. 19 in Chilliwack. Bro. Scotvold was born in Norway in 1869 and became a Freemason in Nanaimo in 1897. He moved to Seattle and then to Humboldt, California, where he died in 1950.

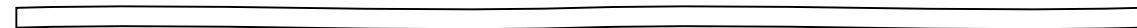
Bro. Swift, a graduate of McGill University, was the town's doctor. There was no hospital then; he treated people at his home on Hazel Street near the Hall. He and several members of the lodge were involved in the founding of the MSA (Cottage) Hospital in April 1922; the lodge even tendered a banquet in honour of the premier and other dignitaries, including Bro. E.D. Barrow, the local MLA, after the opening. Dr. Swift was born in Montreal in 1879 and joined Freemasonry in Yamaska No. 21 in Quebec. He died in Abbotsford in 1927.



Bro. Smith had been an early municipal official in Surrey; he operated one of Abbotsford's general stores. Bro. Laird was employed at the Dominion Land office in New Westminster. Bro. Shortreed opened the first telephone exchange in Abbotsford and homesteaded at what is now 264<sup>th</sup> Street and the Fraser Highway. The little community there was named for him. He also reportedly organised a posse to try to capture train robber Bill Miner.

Bro. Ware was a farmer for whom Ware Road was named. He served on Matsqui Council in the 1920s. Another founding member has a surname familiar today was Richard Peardon. Bro. Frank Munroe was Reeve of Sumas in 1913 and 1914, then appointed provincial road superintendent for the Chilliwack district in 1915. He spelled his name with and without an "e," but it didn't matter as his real name was Francois Sincennes. He later moved to the Weyburn, Saskatchewan area.

Over the years a fair number of Abbotsford Masons served the community as mayors, reeves, aldermen, or MLAs and MPs, including the late Matsqui Mayor Doug Taylor and Reeve George Cruikshank. Bro. M.M. Shore was the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Abbotsford Village; he later owned the Abbotsford Theatre on Railway Avenue. There were also small businessmen/managers among the early membership; many of whom were members of the Abbotsford Board of Trade formed in 1909. Several generations of the Gosling family, which owned a department store on Montrose Street for years, belonged to Abbotsford Lodge.



Today, the lodge membership is a little larger than it was in 1912. The old Hall is still in use. And members still give their time, when possible, to local sports, charitable and community activities.

Incidentally, if you're wondering why the lodge's name is spelled with two "t"s, a possible explanation can be found on a photo of a wooden sign along the old Great Northern rail line approaching the "Abbottsford" station. It is misspelled that way. The station agent was the Secretary of the lodge when it was being organised. It could very well be because his station's name was spelled that way by his American company, he spelled the lodge's name that way on official documents.

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