

## **THE HISTORY OF PULPIT ROCK LODGE NO. 103, F&AM PELHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

My paper for this evening will cover the history of Pulpit Rock Lodge from before its Constitution to the present date.

In order to properly document the history of the Lodge, it becomes necessary to go back a good number of years. At least back to 1958 and possibly even earlier. If so it antedates the writer's residence in Pelham.

Pelham has always enjoyed a rather high Masonic population for a town of its size. It should be noted however that this Masonic population is also a rather fluid one since Pelham is what is classed by Community Planners as a "bedroom town". From the fifties on, the town has expanded rapidly with many of the people arriving from our sister jurisdiction to the South. It is believed that another reason for the large Masonic population is that Pelham is also surrounded by Lodges. There are five in Lowell, 1 in Billerica, 1 in Tewksbury, 1 in Methuen, three in Lawrence, one in Salem, one in Derry and two in Nashua. This large number of Lodges is not without its drawbacks however and I will elaborate on that subject a little later on in this paper.

Two common remarks often heard among brothers in those days after meeting and identifying themselves were "Wouldn't it be nice to have a lodge here in Pelham", or "We should have our own lodge in Pelham".

It wasn't until 1960 that one of the first steps in uniting the brethren in Pelham was taken. This first step came about as the result of the untimely passing of Worshipful Brother Clifton E Hunt, presiding Worshipful Master of Spicket Lodge No. 85 in Salem and a resident of Pelham. Numerous phone calls were made in an attempt to have as many brethren as possible attend the funeral service. Needless to say this was haphazard at best with some brothers receiving several phone calls and other brothers receiving none.

It was at this point that Brother Haldeman a Worshipful Brother Donald Pelton of Pelham worked on and prepared a list of Master Masons of the town. This list was then distributed to all whose names appeared on it. This list also contained the brother's street address, his phone number and his home lodge if known. At the same time additional input regarding unlisted brothers or corrections to the information on the list was requested. The writer still maintains this list of names although mail outs have dropped to two or three year intervals as opposed to the yearly list in the early days. The principal reason for the development was to prevent a reoccurrence of what had happened when Worshipful Brother Hunt passed away.

Nothing further was accomplished along these lines until 1968 with the exception of an updating of the list. At that time the "Mother" Lodge of Brother Haldeman, United No. 8 of Brunswick, Maine was holding its final dedication ceremonies for their new Temple. Brother Haldeman invited Worshipful Brother Pelton to attend this ceremony with him. This involved a journey of some two and one half to three hours each way, and it was on this journey that the seed for Pulpit Rock Lodge was planted.

On their return, Brother Haldeman prepared and mailed out a letter to the brethren residing in Pelham informing them that the formation of a lodge in the town was being contemplated. This letter also contained a questionnaire to be filled out by them, and it was on the basis of the responses received that a meeting with the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Carl A. Buswell and the Deputy Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brother Ralph A. Sloan was, held. This meeting took place on January 30, 1969. At the request of the Grand Master, the meeting was kept small and seven interested brothers were invited to attend that meeting.

On April 7, 1969 a meeting was held for the express purpose of apprising the Masters of adjacent lodges of our plans. The Masters of Rising Sun Lodge No. 39, Spicket Lodge No. 85 and Ancient York Lodge No. 89 were all in attendance at that meeting and our plans were greeted enthusiastically by all concerned. While not required by the Grand Constitution, it was mutually agreed that letters explaining our plans and requesting a favorable reply would be sent to the three lodges affected.

Meetings continued with Committees being established for Finance, Building and By-Laws. On June 23, 1969 a meeting was held to act on the By-Laws as proposed. These were approved after several minor changes. Favorable responses wishing us well having been received from the adjacent lodges, a slate of Officers was nominated and unanimously elected. At this same meeting, the name of the lodge was selected. Pulpit Rock was one of seven names under consideration by the brethren, and was obviously chosen for its historical significance to the town of Pelham.

I will digress here for just a moment to say that Pulpit Rock, located in the town on Route 38 was the place where the first sermon was preached in the town. Route 38 in the early days was a wagon trail north to the wilderness. Settlers traveling the road north stopped here on a Saturday to celebrate the Sabbath on the following day. I would at this time like to quote a poem we have used since our inception. This poem was written by Otis Woodbury and was copied from Pelham 200th Anniversary Booklet in 1946.

#### *PULPIT ROCK*

*It is the Sabbath morn,  
The day of all the best,  
A band of Pilgrims here have stayed  
To worship God and rest.*

*No canopy spread o'er their heads  
Save the blue vault of heaven  
While from the Book the Pastor read  
Of the Saviour for sinners given.*

*Would we could lift the veil of years  
And gaze as Pilgrims kneel  
We know not what hopes and fears  
That picture would reveal.*

*Though many years have passed since then  
The place a grandeur wears  
Which through eternity shall last  
And all its impress bears.*

*We'd call it holy ground  
The spot where first they trod  
"Twas here they stood and sang  
Their hymns of praise to God."*

Meetings continued to be held on a bi monthly basis with the elected officers meeting even ore regularly and struggling mightily to learn the New Hampshire ritual. It should be noted that at least four different jurisdictions were represented in the initial line of officers. It was during this period that Right Worshipful Brother Lloyd W. Cracraft, District Deputy Grand Master and Right Worshipful Brother Coleman L. Davis, District Deputy Grand Lecturer of the Second Masonic District endeared themselves to the brethren of Pulpit Rock Lodge. Their patience, understanding and assistance will long be remembered Right Worshipful Brother John C. Marden then Worshipful Brother Marden also spent a great deal of time assisting us in our ritual work.

It was at our meeting on January 26, 1970 that it was announced that a communication had been received from the Deputy Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brother Stanley A. Johnson, granting Pulpit Rock Lodge UD (Under Dispensation) sanctioning it to operate under prescribed Masonic Law until the next Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge. This dispensation became effective on February 6, 1970.

With the granting of this dispensation, Pulpit Rock Lodge U.D. became the first lodge to be formed in New Hampshire in a decade and was accepted as a Masonic entity of the State of New Hampshire.

As a result of this joyous news, rehearsals proceeded at an even greater pace than before. Plans were formulated for the Installation of Officers, and on February 6, 1970 the installation was held at Harris' Pelham Inn. "A Lodge in Pelham" was no longer a dream, it was a reality.

During these formative days and possibly as far along as into our second year, protocol on many occasions suffered a great deal at our hands. This came about not only as the result of our enthusiasm and zeal but our ignorance as well. I am sure that on several occasions we were cause for the wagging of many heads, and at a Grand Lodge level I might add. Just one such incident was when we were preparing for the rededication of Pulpit Rock. In an attempt to demonstrate our brotherly love and friendship, our neighbors to the South were invited to attend. Jurisdictional boundaries had no fears for us. After all many of our own members were originally from Massachusetts lodges. What could be more fitting than to write the Grand Master of Massachusetts direct and invite him to attend? Needless to say that one reverberated for quite a period of time, particularly when our own Grand Master who had not as yet received his invitation, received the apologies of the Grand Master of Massachusetts for not being able to attend due to a previous commitment.

In our first year, lodge membership increased by ten, leaving us with a total of thirty seven members at the end of the year

It was at the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge on May 15, 1971 that the Committee on New Lodges reported on the activities and records of the lodge and recommended that a charter be issued to Pulpit Rock Lodge No. 103. This was indeed a great day for our small group.

Once again committees were formed and plans were made for the consecration of the lodge and receiving our Charter which was to be held on Tuesday evening, October 12, 1971. It was on this date that the opportunity to become a Charter Member of the lodge terminated. At the time of our Consecration, the lodge membership had grown to forty eight members with three additional Honorary Charter Members having been voted by the lodge. These three members were Right Worshipful Lloyd W. Cracraft, Right Worshipful Coleman L. Davis and Worshipful John C. Marden.

The Consecration ceremony took place in the lodge quarters on the second floor of the Pelham Town Hall. The charter was presented to Worshipful Brother Haldeman at that time. Upon the conclusion of the ceremonies, all in attendance traveled to meet with their ladies at Harris' Pelham Inn, where the charter was again presented to the Master for the benefit of the ladies. This was followed by a Roast Beef dinner and an evening of dancing. It was an impressive and happy evening with table favors for the brethren in the form of a "Charter Night" pocket coin and flowers and a pin for each lady present. It was an evening to remember and well we should, particularly when we entailed an \$800.00 deficit for the evening. I think all must agree that we aimed high, and those who were in attendance will probably never forget that evening.

Several important presentations were made to the lodge at that time, the largest of which was the deed to an acre plot of land and with it the hopes of all for our own Temple.

Lodge progress and its activities over the next several years was rather routine. Our growth over the years insofar as our membership is concerned has probably been below normal. If you recall, earlier in this paper I mentioned the large number of lodges surrounding Pelham. This gives us a comparatively small

area from which we can draw our membership. Since our inception we have probably granted waivers of jurisdiction in favor of Massachusetts in an amount double to the number of candidates we have taken into the lodge. Our membership today stands at 50.

Preliminary work such as brush cutting, topographic studies and the installation of a well had progressed slowly but steadily on the lodge land. Shortly after the completion of the well, problems for the lodge began. We ran into problems with the State Water Pollution Board. Percolation tests indicated a drainage problem. To satisfy leach field requirements we would not be able to place the building or parking area as planned. With the change in the location of the building, we were told by the State Traffic Division that we would not be able to put in a circular driveway. These problems continued to mount and it was finally decided to abandon the property. The land was accordingly deeded back to its donor.

Shortly thereafter we were offered a parcel of land across the street of some five and one half acres and at a very attractive price. Neither the Lodge nor the Pelham Square and Compass Club were in a financial position to purchase the land. The Club ultimately made the land purchase with five brothers signing a personal note in the amount of \$5,200.00. Total cost for the land was \$7,000.00. This note was rewritten several times over the next few years and on March 5, 1976 at a Family Night get-together, the mortgage was burned. This action left everyone anxious to get on with the next phase - that of putting up a building.

Clearing of the land in the area where the building was to stand with a great deal of mixed emotions that the great pine trees in fall. Elation at getting started on the project and some sadness any of these large trees. Each tree that was removed right up to has created the same feeling.

On Sunday, October 3, 1976 the Grand Lodge convened in Pelham, and following its attendance at worship services in the Pelham Congregational Church proceeded to our land for the ground breaking ceremony. We had selected a Sunday for this, because in keeping with our ritual, no man should ever undertake any great or important undertaking without invoking the blessing of deity, we felt this most certainly applied in our case. This was also the reason we save to the Grand Master, and he agreed with us completely. The invocation was given by Fr. Leo Shay Pastor of St. Patricks Church, Pelham. The ground breaking was done by Most Worshipful Brother Paul D. Talbert, Grand Master; Worshipful Brother Frank C. Bromley, Master of the Lodge; and Brother Donald W. Rankin, President of the Pelham Square and Compass Club. The ceremonies were followed by an outdoor buffet located in the pine grove behind the Temple site. While the buffet was in progress, a white dove was observed perched in one of the pine trees. Needless to say all in attendance agreed that the lodge could take this as an omen of good luck for its Temple endeavors.

Construction was started immediately upon the Grand Lodge approving the plans for the building. The foundation was poured before winter set in and stopped further activity. It should be noted that in granting its approval to our building, the Grand Lodge limited our borrowing power to \$5,000.00. This was as the result of our size and financial situation. This figure, while it seemed harsh at first, has proven to be extremely accurate and wise, and one that will prevent the Lodge from getting into financial difficulty throughout its building activities.

The summer of 1977 was an extremely busy one for a small hand full of the brethren. Countless evening and weekends were expended in the construction of the building. One of the interesting and varied phases involved in the building was the use our own trees and those from a generous contribution, for all the boarding in the building. A generous brother in Francetown donated almost 10,000 board feet of pine saw timber to the lodge. This entailed one additional step in the process, that of having the logs trucked from Francetown to the sawmill here in Pelham. All dimension lumber used in the building was purchased from a lumber yard.

As summer gave way to fall, the pace became even more frantic in the drive to make the building weather tight. The silent treatment at home for the handful involved in the work became more intense. The roof

was shingled, the exterior covered in building paper and battens, and the window and door openings sealed with plastic. Had the weather held for one additional weekend in November the roof would have been finished in its entirety. Time and tide wait for no man and as a result the only part of the roof not shingled was the west side of the porch, which had to be done in building paper. The workmen had done their work well. Checks made periodically throughout the winter revealed only two small leaks, and these in the area of the west side of the porch.

In 1978, Pulpit Rock Lodge passed yet another milestone in its journey to build a Temple. On Sunday, June 4th, the Most Worshipful Grand Master, Brother David L. Batchelder and the Grand Lodge came to Pelham for the purpose of laying the cornerstone for the Temple. A suitable place in the foundation had been provided in which to locate the stone. This cornerstone is one that the brethren are tremendously proud of and rightfully so. It was prepared and presented to the lodge by a Master operative Mason, Worshipful Brother Joseph Silva of Milford.

Pulpit Rock Lodge and the Grand Lodge were opened in due and ancient form in the lodge hall in the Town Hall. After the opening, all the brethren repaired to the Congregational Church to attend worship services.

Immediately after Church, the Grand Marshal formed a procession and 118 brethren marched the half mile to the Temple site. At the head of the procession was a color guard supplied by the Pelham American Legion Post 100. It was estimated that nearly 300 persons, brethren and their ladies, attended the ceremony. We were even favored by a delegation from our good friends and brothers of Friendship Lodge No. 33 of Southington, Connecticut.

The cornerstone was laid according to Masonic tradition by the Grand Master with the assistance of the Grand Lodge Officers Worshipful Brother Silva and the brethren from Pulpit Rock Lodge, including the Worshipful Master, George C. Malonis and Brother Hubert Mason acting as the architect.

After the ceremonies were concluded, a buffet supplied and prepared by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Pelham Square and Compass Club was served in the pine grove behind the Temple. This was truly a great day.

It should be mentioned at this time that this ladies group has been a tremendous asset to the Square and Compass Club and to the Lodge. Their fund raising activities for the benefit of the Temple building fund can only be classed as outstanding. We are indeed fortunate to have them.

We were also favored by having a representative of the Pelham Council, Knights of Columbus at our ceremony. Another step toward universal brotherhood.

In September, we were again blessed when our brothers in Social-Summit Lodge No. 50 of Canaan presented us with a goodly amount of lodge room furniture.

Work continues on the Temple although at a slower pace, but progress is evident. We have been truly blessed in our efforts through many gifts by lodges as well as individual brothers. These gifts range from labor and money to materials and equipment.

**SURELY OUR CUP RUNNETH OVER.**

Prepared by Paul J Haldeman