

LOOKING BACK

Local Masonic Lodge's history rooted in change

by Jeanne Hopkins

Long before Thornhill's Masonic Lodge, known as Patterson Lodge, was built in 1961, Freemasons had been meeting in the Thornhill area. As early as 1811, Lodge No. 16 was meeting at Richard Lawrence's hotel on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Steeles Avenue.

One of the oldest and largest organizations in the world had grown from the guilds of stoneworkers while building Europe's medieval castles.

At first, these clubs were restricted to stonecutters, known as Freemasons, as they were "free" to move to where there was work.

Meetings were usually held in the buildings where they worked, providing a place for rest and socialization during the day.

When the construction of castles

and cathedrals declined, membership was opened to men of other crafts and the meetings became social occasions. The Grand Lodges of England had been formed in 1717, with its coat of arms bearing the building tools — compass, square and level.

Canada's first Masonic Lodge was formed at Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) by William Jarvis.

After the capital of Upper Canada moved to York, Jarvis established a lodge here, serving as Grand Master until his death in 1817.

York's Ancient Free and Accepted Masons later moved to Alfred Barret's Hotel on Yonge Street, just south of Thornhill.

Thornhill's Patterson Lodge was named for its first Worshipful Master, William C. Patterson, who was granted permission to form a lodge on December 13, 1871.

This lodge's first meeting took place on January 25, 1872 at Butteries' Hotel in Woodbridge.

Later, meetings, held on the Thursdays on or before the full moon, took place in the Thornhill Railway Station at Concord.

Brother William Patterson (1826-1908) had come to Canada with his parents in 1830.

Their Patterson Agricultural Works formed the village and post office where William served as postmaster from 1871 until 1883.

After the company moved to Woodstock, William manufactured stoves — one with several masonic emblems was donated to the Thornhill lodge, where William served as Grand Master until 1875. From 1889 until 1897, he was president of the Richmond Hill Agricultural Society.

When Victoria Hall was built in 1871 on Yonge Street, Patterson Lodge moved into a special room at the rear of the second storey.

When the hall was to be demolished (to make way for a parking lot) the 300-member lodge

hometown history



▲ The Thornhill Masonic Temple is now located at 30 Elgin St.

built their own home. Construction began in September 1960 under the supervision of Brother Harold Loughlin. Since the new building was consecrated on June 16, 1961, it has been the meeting place of many lodges and other organizations.

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