



**HISTORY
OF
MOUNT WASHINGTON LODGE #87
Free and Accepted Masons**

The First Fifty Years
1869-1919

BY
Wor. James L. Gibson
June 16th, 1919

MOUNT WASHINGTON LODGE #87

Foreword

This is a History of the First Fifty Years of Masonry in Mount Washington Valley. As you read it you will notice the names of many men and women who have help make the Mount Washington Valley what it is today, such as Harvey Dow Gibson (son of James L. Gibson) who is responsible for bringing skiing to the valley.

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During 1868, the subject of organizing a Masonic Lodge in North Conway had been discussed a number of times by Master Masons who lived here. As members of Carroll Lodge in Freedom, they complained that the twenty-two mile trip made it difficult to attend many Masonic functions, especially during the winter months.

The first informal meeting of which there is a record, for the purpose of taking definite action in regard to starting a Masonic Lodge in North Conway, was held at the "Washington House", a small hotel located in the lower part of the village on the spot where the residence of Mr. Simeon Savard now stands. This hotel was built by my grandfather (James M. Gibson), largely to accommodate Vermont farmers on their trips to and from Portland, Me., with loads of farm produce to be exchanged for salt fish, tea, coffee, tobacco and New England Rum, which in those days was one of the principal articles of commerce and considered a necessity.

The records of this meeting read as follows: "The subject of organizing a Masonic Lodge in North Conway having been discussed informally by master Masons residing in this town, it was deemed advisable that a meeting should take place at which the matter could be more fully considered. Agreeable to appointment, a number of brethren assembled at the office of the Washington House on the

evening of the 24th of November, 1868, where they were welcomed by Brother James M. Gibson, then an Entered Apprentice. There were present the following brethren of the Masonic fraternity: Brothers William C. Eastman, Augustus Eastman, J. Cummings Eastman, Haskett D. Eastman, John C. Davis, Edwin C. Stokes, Nathaniel Faxon and Albert Barnes of Carroll Lodge, No. 57: Thomas B. Newby, Chaplain of Adelpic Lodge, No. 348 of New York City: and Brother James M. Gibson, Entered Apprentice of Carroll Lodge, No. 57. Brother William C. Eastman was elected chairman and T.B. Newby, secretary. After discussion, it having been stated that the lodge to which the brethren present belonged being twenty-two miles distant, it was practically impossible for them to attend its meetings and enjoy the privileges of the order, the following vote was passed: 'That it is desirable, in the opinion of the brethren present, that a Masonic Lodge should be formed in this place and that we should proceed at once to obtain a dispensation to enable us to work in accordance with the principles of our order, under the Grand Lodge of the State of New Hampshire' A committee was chosen to apply for the same and make other necessary arrangements.

"The selection of a name for the proposed new lodge was taken up and discussed. The first proposed was "*Pequawket*" the ancient Indian name for this region, but it was not adopted. Brother Newby then proposed that the new Lodge should be called '**Mount Washington Lodge**' and proceeded to speak substantially as follows:

"I propose this name, brethren, for two reasons, both of which I think will appeal to you. First, Mount Washington, one of the greatest natural curiosities in the world and second only to one other mountain in height this side of the great chain of the Rocky Mountains, is in full view from our town and is visited annually by thousands of people from all parts of our country and Europe. It has formed a subject of interest to the poet and artist for many years and is intimately connected with some of the most interesting events in the private history of many of us. It is an object of which the inhabitants of this place may justly feel proud and as it has honored us, let us honor it.

"Secondly, I find upon investigation that General George Washington, America's noblest patriot, was made a mason in Lodge 227 of the registry of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, which was held in the distinguished 46th British Regiment, while on duty in this country. For these two reasons, then brethren, and in order that we may jointly honor one of nature's fairest works and one of her noblest sons, I move that the new Lodge to be established in North Conway be called 'Mt. Washington Lodge'".

This motion was unanimously carried. The meeting then adjourned."

A dispensation on June of 1869 was granted. The formal presentation of the charter was read by Brother Newby on June 23, 1869. Arrangements were made to meet in Room Number 7 at the Washington House for the winter and the first meeting was held on January 27th, 1869, when the following officers were elected: Nathaniel Faxon, Master; Thomas B. Newby, Senior Warden; William C. Eastman, Junior Warden; Bennett P. Strout, Treasurer; James M. Gibson, Secretary; Augustus Eastman, Senior Deacon; Edwin C. Stokes, Junior Deacon; Albert Barnes, Steward; George W. Barbour, Chaplain; J. Cummings Eastman, Tyler. There were present ten brethren. Seven applications were received, the first being that of Isaac E. Merrill, then owner and proprietor of the Merrill House at Kearsarge Village, now of the Russell Cottages; the others being Laomi B. Dame, one of the most skillful and beloved physicians the Saco Valley has ever known; Samuel D. Thompson of the Kearsarge Hotel; Ezra R. Eastman, a mechanic; Oren Seavey, a farmer; James T. Randall, a merchant; and George F. Boston, a harness maker. Nothing of importance was done at this meeting, except to fix the annual dues at \$1.00 which continued until 1883, when they were made \$2.00, the sum now being collected. The first meeting at which work was done was held on February 24th, 1869, when four candidates were initiated, the first being Brother Loami B. Dame and the second Brother Isaac E. Merrill. They were raised in the same order and we find also that they were the first two members of the lodge to cross the great divide; Brother Dame died on January 30th, 1870 and Brother Merrill a few months later.

Meetings were held regularly at the Washington House up to June 1869, when a lease of Academy Hall was obtained and the Lodge moved there for the June meeting. Up to this time eleven applications had been received. The first meeting held in the new hall was the first under the new Charter, which was dated June 10th, 1869, fifty years ago the present month. The Charter Members were Nathaniel Faxon, Thomas B. Newby, William C. Eastman, Augustus Eastman, John C. Davis, Isaac E. Merrill and Laomi B. Dame. Meetings were held in the Academy Hall for about three years when the Lodge was moved to a room over the harness shop of Brother Geo. F. Boston, which was their meeting place until the new building was ready for occupancy.

The Lodge was consecrated on Dec. 16th, 1869, the following Grand Officers being present: Bro. A. Doe, Deputy Grand Master; Bro. J. W. Dearborn, D.D.G.M.; A. M. Drake, G.S.W.; F. W. Barker, G.J.W.; A. M. Rummery, G. Treas.; J. L. Drake, Gr. Sec.; C. K. Moore, G. Chap.; After the consecration ceremony the officers elect were installed and a banquet served.

At a meeting held on Mar. 16th, 1870, a copy of the Holy Bible for use on the altar of the Lodge was presented by fourteen ladies, wives of members, with a letter reading as follows:

"Worshipful Master and members of Mt. Washington Lodge. Please accept from us, this Holy Bible, as a slight token of our regard. Value it as a gift from those who have a just regard for your cause and whose best wishes you will always have. Though denied admission within the secret portals of Masonry, we have no desire for the knowledge of your mystic band and as long as we are assured that you acknowledge God as the Great Master of us all and accept the Bible as your guide, we will not question the motive that bars us from participation in your meetings. May you be faithful to that great master, so that, when summoned from earth, as has recently been one of your number, you may meet the approval of him in whose presence is fullness of joy and at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Signed; Mrs. J. Cummings Eastman, Mrs. James M. Gibson, Mrs. William C. Eastman, Mrs. Samuel D. Thompson, Mrs. Moses Chandler, Mrs. J. T. Randall, Mrs. M.A. Dame, Mrs. E. C. Stokes, Mrs. Isaac E. Merrill, Mrs. Albert Barnes, Mrs. Ezra R. Eastman, Mrs. I. M. Chase and Mrs. S. C. Eastman.

At a meeting held on October 25th, 1871 the advisability of building a hall was brought up and a committee appointed to consider the matter. After the committee reported, discussion was held regarding the proposition at several meetings between that time and April 17th, 1872, when it was decided to erect a building with a hall on the second floor, and a committee was appointed consisting of Bro.'s W. H. Bragdon, Ausustus Eastman, G. F. Boston, Albert Barnes, H. H. Dow and A. L. Meserve to take the matter in hand.

[Inset here deed information]

The struggle then began and it is doubtful if the brethren now in the harness will ever realize how hard their predecessors worked to keep above board and pay the debt contracted in building, until 1886 when the debt was paid, and the mortgage burned with rejoicing. Great credit is due the ladies for the interest shown and assistance rendered in producing this result. Up to this time the lodge met in what is now the Citizen's Hall the upper floor being unfinished.

In 1887 it was voted to put a mansard roof on the building and finish a hall, dining room and kitchen on the third floor, which was done at an expense of about three thousand five hundred dollars. The work was finished in September and the hall dedicated on Nov. 17th, 1887, by Wor. Geo. W. Currier, G.M., assisted by a suite of seven Grand Officers. After the dedication a banquet was served to about one hundred masons and an orchestra furnished music for dancing in the Citizen's Hall until the small hours of the morning.

On April 30th, 1879, at a stated communication of the Lodge, we find record of an event, which is safe to say, seldom, if ever,

happened before. Past Master Lycurgus Pitman, assisted by four brothers and a brother-in-law, made a Mason of his father, G.W.M. Pitman at the age of 60 years.

During the winter of 1885 a course of lectures was given under the auspices of the Lodge by Bros. S. G. Norcross, H. M. Sawtelle, J.A. Seits, W. H. Bragdon which were very successful and greatly enjoyed by the citizens of the village.

On Aug. 28TH, 1885, A Special Meeting was called to attend the funeral of Bro. Daniel Eastman, said to be the oldest Mason in the State. He was made a mason in Pythagorean Lodge at Fryeburg, Me. on January 11th, 1816 and joined Mount Washington Lodge by demit Sept. 1st, 1881. He was 92 years of age and had been a Mason nearly seventy years.

On January 4th, 1886, the officers were publicly installed and heard an able address on Masonry delivered by Bro. L.F. McKinney of Manchester.

On Nov. 11, 1886, a piano was presented to the Lodge with the following communication:

"To the Worshipful Master, Wardens, and Brethren of Mount Washington Lodge: The Ladies of North Conway and vicinity take pleasure in presenting you with a piano, which is now in your hall, with the suggestion that it become a permanent fixture and that the citizens who have contributed so liberally towards its purchase should have the free use of the same."

Signed: Mrs. L.W. Brock, Mrs A. C. Braggdon, Mrs. L. Pitman, Mrs. H.E. Dinsmore and Mrs. J. L. Gibson.

On June 6th, 1889, the one hundredth anniversary of Masonry in the State was celebrated by a public meeting in the Citizen's Hall. An address was delivered by Bro. E. P. Eastman, with music and readings.

In June, 1890 the lodge received an invitation to participate in a monster parade, clam bake, etc., to be held in Portland, ME. the 24th of June of that year. This invitation was accepted and the lodge turned out over fifty members, who took a band with them. This affair was one of the red letter days of the Lodge and a great success.

On October 12th, 1894, Bro. Geo. A. Wagg presented the Lodge with a gavel made from one of the original timbers from Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

On Dec. 30th, 1897, the officers were installed publicly by D. D. G. M. Chas. B. Hoyt, followed by an address by Wor. Bro. J. W.

Dearborn, who was present when the Lodge was instituted, and a banquet was served to 150 ladies and invited guests.

At the annual meeting in 1904, the standing committee reported that the last dollar of debt had again been paid, leaving a substantial balance in the treasury, but this condition was not to continue many years. On April 2nd, 1909, after the Lodge had enjoyed another five years of prosperity, it was voted to enlarge the building at an expense of four thousand dollars, mainly for the improvement of the Citizen's Hall and enlarging the dining room and kitchen on the third floor. The debt contracted by this action has been reduced practically one half.

On April 24th, 1906, a memorial service was held in the Citizens Hall in memory of Bro. John Paul Jones, founder of the American Navy. An address was given by Bro. E. P. Eastman. From the record of this meeting, I take the following: "Bro. Jones was made a Mason in St. Bernard's Lodge in Scotland, in the autumn of 1777, visited St. John's Lodge in Boston on August 16th, 1779, affiliated with the lodge *Les Neuf Socurs* in Paris in the spring of 1780 when Bro. Benj. Franklin was master, and was received with great rejoicing." The remains of Bro. Jones were recently discovered in Paris and brought to America and on this day April 24, 1906 were buried with proper ceremony at Annapolis, Md. by the United States Government, President Roosevelt and his Cabinet being present."

The records show that Mt. Washington Lodge contributed liberally to the relief of Brethren and families suffering from the affects of the Yellow Fever Scourge in Jacksonville, the Johnstown flood, the San Francisco earthquake and fire and other great calamities.

Mt. Washington Lodge has had four Past Master's nights. The first was held on January 30, 1907. The offices were filled as follows: P. M. J. L. Gibson, Master; P.M. C. J. Poole, SW; P.M. E. E. Hodgdon, JW ; Bro. G. F. Wolcott, Treas.; PM A. D. Davis, Sec.; PM C. E. Poole, SD; PM W. R. Carter, JD; PM C. F. Waterhouse, SS; PM D. G. Dolloff, JS' PM H. B. Fifield, Chap.; Bro. D. E. Gibson, Mar.; Bro. F. R. Eastman, Tyler. Harvey Dow Gibson, son of PM J. L. Gibson was the candidate. Music was furnished by a quartet consisting of Bros. Snyder, Dow, Barnes and Nash. After the work a banquet was served and remarks made by several visiting brethren.

At the stated meeting held on Sept. 25th, 1909 PM E. E. Hodgdon made a Mason of his son, Harry I. Hodgdon

The second was held on April 30th, 1914, PM W.R. Carter acting as Master. All the other offices were filled by Past Masters. The candidate was Donald W. Carter son of PM W. R. Carter, now with the army of occupation. At the close of the work refreshments were served, followed by a social hour.

On May 9th, 1918, the Third Past Masters Night was held. PM J. L. Gibson was in the chair and all other offices were filled by Past Masters in the order of their service. Two sessions were held, four Fellow Crafts raised and a banquet was served to over eighty brethren.

The fourth Past Master's Night was held on April 10, 1919, PM W. R. Carter acting as master, who made a Mason of his second son. The work in this case was also followed by a banquet and social hour.

Mount Washington Lodge has had twenty-five masters, whose names and terms of office follow: Nathaniel Faxon 1869-70; Augustus Eastman 1871-72; William C. Eastman 1873-74; George F. Boston 1875-76; Lycurgus Pitman 1877-78-79; Ephraim E. Hodgdon 1880-81-94; Joseph H. Pitman 1882-83; William H. Bragdon 1884; James L. Gibson 1885-91; David G. Dolloff 1892-93; George S. Paine 1895; H. Boardman Fifield 1896; George S. Staples 1897; Charles F. Waterhouse 1898-99; Arthur R. Jefferson 1900-01; Charles J. Poole 1902-03; Charles E. Poole 1904-05; William R. Carter 1906-07; Andrew D. Davis 1900-09; Arthur W. Chandler 1910-11; Everett S. Whittemore 1912-13; Albert B. Dow 1914-15; Harry A. Thompson 1916; Dennis W. Barnes 1917 and Bennett C. Snyder 1918-19

Three members have been Grand Lodge Officers, Bros. Lycurgus Pitman and Arthur R. Jefferson having served as D.D.G.L. and D.D.G.M. consecutively and Bro. William R. Carter as D.D.G.L.

Ten members of Mount Washington Lodge volunteered for service in the war with Germany, seven of whom held officers commissions.

Brother Mahlon L. Mason is the oldest member of the Lodge, having been made a Mason on July 2nd 1869 at the age of 23 years. Brother Chase B. Perkins comes next, having been made a Mason in 1871.

Very little has transpired in later years of public interest. The records show a large amount of work and a good attendance. Bro. Snyder has taken great interest in the affairs of the lodge and the year and one half that he has presided as Worshipful Master has been a period of unusual prosperity.

To sum up the history of these first fifty years briefly: the lodge was started in 1869 with seven charter members, all of whom are square on the books; 360 Masons have been made, property has been accumulated valued at from \$12,000.00 to \$14,000.00 and the Lodge is nearly out of debt again. Every year has been a prosperous one. Peace and harmony have prevailed among the brethren with practically no interruption and the record of this past half century of its existence is one of which ever Brother, who helped make it, can justly feel proud.

Addendum

Prepared by Wor. Deni D. DuFault, Master
1995

On February 8th, 1929, a tragic fire claimed the lodge building and all of its contents. Other lodges were quick to offer the use of their buildings so that the Masonic work of Mount Washington Lodge might continue. A year and a half later the new building was completed and, on June 23rd, 1931, the Dedication was conducted by the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire.

The costs of construction did not allow for the purchase of furnishings, but the brethren quickly dealt with the situation. Each member was asked to donate an item of furniture as a memorial to the lodge, and did so in the spirit of Freemasonry.



The murals which adorn the walls of the lodge room were originally designed by Arvid Asplund, an itinerant artist who was in the area during the 1930's. The passage of time made its mark on the artwork and, in 1961, artist Dick Packer was hired to repair the water damage on the original work and to paint two additional murals. Repairs were done on the murals again in 1989.

This year (1995) marks the 125th anniversary of Mount Washington Lodge. From the efforts of a small group of men to the present membership of nearly two hundred, through triumph and tragedy, our lodge has remained an historic fixture within the Mount Washington Valley: the building, the good will and most important, the brotherhood of its members.