

PALMER LODGE IS DESCENDANT OF PIONEER  
LODGE OF OLD FORT ERIE

Niagara Falls Evening Review - October 13, 1954

Some interesting sidelights have developed in connection with the recent observance of Palmer Lodge No. 372, A.F. and A.M. of Fort Erie of the 75th anniversary of its inception. Conceived, born and nurtured in an atmosphere of history, Palmer Lodge was chartered in September 1879. But this old village of Fort Erie, the geographic and commercial centre of this part of the Niagara district, had both unorganized and organized Masonry in its vicinity and environs long before that date.

The first Mason of whom there is a record, came to the district in 1794, and instituted what is now known as original Lodge No. 5 of Fort Erie. It was a military Lodge brought out from England under the authority of the Grand Lodge of England, by Colonel Joseph Palmer - the grandsire of Louis Palmer, after whom the existing Lodge is named. Colonel Joseph Palmer and his brother officers were Regular British Army men, and were ordered to Canada with their regiments and stationed at old Fort Erie. They established and organized a lodge which was designated Fort Erie Lodge No. 5 and met at the old fort. Members were: Colonel Joseph Palmer, Colonel ~~Henry~~ Warren Sr., Ben Hardison, Sr., Henry Warren Jr., John Palmer (son), Henry Trout, John Warren, Thomas Baxter and John Baxter (brothers). Descendants of all these men left their mark on the early history of Waterloo and Fort Erie.

As soon as political affairs were settled between Canada and the U.S. and a friendly relation existed, a number of applicants from Buffalo were admitted to membership: Dr. Chapman and Messrs Ramson, Barker, Crow, Webster, Mabee and Johnston.

But the war clouds again darkened the sky and things became impossible, and so the warrant, papers and paraphernalia were concealed by John Palmer in 1812. Bro Palmer removed these documents to his home in Willoughby, that section along the Niagara River called Palmer's Pt to this day, where another pastmaster and another Chapman Dr. Garnet K. Chapman resides. The war clouds and things in general continued very unsettled until the fall of 1815 when Bro. Palmer and a few others gathered at his home and held lodge meetings there. Success crowned their efforts although their members were few and scattered, and Bro. Palmer Sr., was the first Worshipful after their re-organization.

Two years later in 1817, Bro Louis Palmer was made a Mason at the age of 20 years. Among those present on this occasion, one observes some familiar surnames; Andrew Miller, Edward Carr, Dr. Hall, Charles Hibbard, Mathew Haun, Benjamin Hardison, Peter Wintermute, Hohn Miller, Joseph Palmer Jr., Peter Coolever, William Buck, Peter Laur, Peter Edsall, Conrad House, Nicholas House and Jacob Haun.

LEWIS.

In 1822, Louis Palmer, a past master, was installed with his officers: Benj. Hall, Senior Warden; Andrew Miller Jr. Warden; Edward Carr, Treasurer and Charles Hibbard, Secretary. This band encountered many difficulties, topped off by a crushing blow in 1825 when Louis Palmer's house was burned to the ground, with all its

contents, nothing was saved - regalia, charter, books, records, jewels and even the funds of Old Fort Erie Lodge Five were lost.

An attempt was made to resuscitate after the fire, and an application for a new charter was sent to the Deputy at Fort Niagara. The application found its way to the Masonic authorities at Toronto and Montreal, but for some unexplained reason, no response was received. Thus discouraged and scattered, deprived of a charter, a name and a meeting place, Fort Erie Lodge No.5, was compelled to disband.

#### DOMINION LODGE

After this catastrophe, not until 1854 was a lodge reestablished in the area, at Ridgeway. It was the old Dominion Lodge and met in the hall of Former Collector of Customs F.T. Pattison's father there. Mr. Pattison is a former Past Master of Palmer. Brethren went from Fort Erie to Ridgeway to attend meetings in devious ways. On one meeting night records state that some Fort Erie brethren were journeying to Ridgeway on a railway hand car, and on passing the Sexsmith farm stopped to "swipe" some grapes growing close to the tracks. Evidently Mr. Sexsmith was waiting for them, because he let go with a shot gun and tis said some of the brethren received buckshot wounds.

#### PALMER LODGE

For some unknown reason, the first Dominion Lodge surrendered its charter in 1879. That was the year, Palmer came into existence, with the following officers: Worshipful Master, the late Alfred B. Hurrel; Senior Warden, William Thompson; Junior Warden, Robert Thompson, Junior Warden, Robert Moore; Chaplain, J.B. Smith; Treas, R. Grant Warren and Secretary, John Burgess. In 1923 Fort Erie Lodge 613 was formed at the south end, and about the same time Dominion Lodge, Ridgeway No. 615, was re-chartered. First Worshipful Master of Fort Erie 612 was the late William F. Willson, and of Dominion 613, Ridgeway, Major James E. Laur. Thus revitalized, Palmer is the mother of both Fort Erie and Dominion Lodges.