

A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
OSSIPEE VALLEY LODGE #74
CENTER OSSIPEE, NH

CHARTERED JUNE 14, 1985

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OCTOBER 13, 1996

A dispensation was issued on October 27, 1864, by the then Most Worshipful Grand Master, Brother Jonathan E. Sargent, to thirteen Brethren at Center Ossipee to form Ossipee Valley Lodge. Many of these Brethren were members of Charter Oak Lodge in Effingham. The thirteen Brethren petitioning for a new lodge were Brothers Sanborn L. Carter, John C. Bickford, John F. Roberts, Edward P. Hodsdon, Lewman G. Moulton, Frank K. Hobbs, Dearborn Lougee, Alvah Moulton, Humphrey Scammon, John W. Merrow, Joseph Hodsdon, Charles S. Conner, and Woodbury B. Sceggel.

On June 14, 1865, the Grand Master, Brother Jonathan E. Sargent, reported his action in his address to Grand Lodge, the necessary papers went to the Committee on Lodges, from which a favorable report was presented recommending that the Charter be granted. This was subsequently approved by the Gang Lodge on the same date. The Charter is dated June 14, 1865.

On June 13, 1866, the same Grand Master, Brother Jonathan E. Sargent, stated that on July 20, 1865, Ossipee Valley Lodge had been constituted, consecrated, its Hall dedicated and its Officers installed. This Hall may have been located over what is presently known as the Hitching Post on Old Route 16, beside the Parish Hall of the First Congregational Church of Ossipee.

On June 10, 1869, there was before the Grand Lodge a petition, signed by John C. Bickford and twenty-six others, seeking permission to move the Lodge to West Ossipee, about five miles distance. This petition was given to the Committee on Lodges, their recommendation that it be approved was reported to Grand Lodge, and the Grand Lodge thereon gave its approval on the same date. However, entries in a history of Carroll County, dated January 5 and June 1, 1869, stated that although such preparatory actions indeed took place, an actual change of meeting place to West Ossipee never occurred. The proceedings of the Grand Lodge would seem to indicate that this was very possible.

A report to the Grand Lodge, dated May 18, 1870, one year later, by the District Deputy Grand Master stated that the Lodge had been moved "to Moultonville, in the same town". There is a thought expressed by one of our members that possibly this location was over John W. Merrow's store which was situated on the right hand side of Moultonville Road near the Mill Pond.

It is believed that there is a history of Ossipee Valley Lodge in existence, covering either the initial fifty, or possibly the initial seventy-five years of activities of that Lodge.

Subsequent search has not produced such a History, although a Program Booklet was reviewed, detailing what took place on June 14, 1915, the date the Lodge observed its Fiftieth Anniversary. There was an Orchestra; a Prayer by the Reverend and Brother Andrew J. Small; a Cornet Solo by Brother to-be Philip R. Sinclair (Raised, November 3, 1919); a Historical Address by Judge and Brother Sewall W. Abbott; a Song by William Whittle; and the closing Benediction by the Reverend and Brother Herbert A. Cooper. At this time the Program listed one hundred and thirty-five Brothers who had signed the By-laws of Ossipee Valley Lodge during its first fifty years--ot that number forty-one were living as of April 15, 1915.

Further clouding a History is the fact that some of the minutes as prepared by the Lodge Secretary, Brother Olin A. Knox, who performed said duties for fifty years (1927-1977), as well as other minutes by those preceding him, were destroyed by a fire at his residence. Ossipee Valley Lodge observed its one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary in 1990.

In 1909, the Lodge was registered for the first time as being located in Mountainview (the name of the former Railroad Station in Center Ossipee). There is no record of permission being given to move the Lodge, probably none was necessary. Again, there is the expressed thought, though not verified, that this move marked the occupancy of our most recent apartments over Brocky's Store, which had been formerly the location of Huckins' Lumber Company, and was the last Lodge Meeting Hall prior to the present building where we are now seated.

In 1946, the registration changed to Center Ossipee. There is question as to whether this represented a change in the physical location of the Lodge, more likely it was done only to assume the true name of the Town in which it was located.

For many years there had been varying conversations about building a new Masonic Temple in Ossipee. Various sites were considered and it seems only fitting in retrospect that Brother Harry Charles Merrow, the grandson of Brother Harry Preston Smart who was a seventy-five year member, would offer tracks of land to the Lodge for their choice of selection on which to erect such a structure. A choice was made, and a decision to build followed in March of 1988. Grand Lodge, then under the leadership of Brother Paul N. Ricker, Most Worshipful. Grand Master, added their approval in April of the same year; and one month later an eviction notice from the quarters over what was known as Rocky's Store, at the corner of Moultonville Road and Dore Street, was read at the stated communication of the Lodge.

Our present building, constructed during the summer of 1988, was dedicated on September 7 of the same year. The first stated communication was held on September 14, 1988 with sixty-five members in attendance. Theater seats along the sidelines were removed from a movie theater in Laconia, NH. They were reupholstered and installed by members of the Ossipee Valley Lodge. Some have been sold and dedicated to past and present Masonic members. As of October 13, 1996, the current membership of the Ossipee Valley Lodge is one hundred and twenty-one.

Ossipee Valley Lodge has been privileged to have two seventy-five year members. The first being Brother Harry Preston Smart, who served the Lodge as Master for six terms during his first fifteen years in Ossipee Valley Lodge, which at that time (1905-1919) had a membership of thirty-five to sixty. As before mentioned, this Lodge site is dedicated in his name. The second seventy-five year member was Brother Walter Gordon White, who served and attended the Lodge dutifully. Among his many experiences, a favorite was his recollection of the night he was raised which included a cold winter's sleigh ride from West Ossipee to Center Ossipee.

Brother Carroll M. Fogg, a dual member of Ossipee Valley Lodge and Carroll Lodge in Freedom, was the 97th Most Worshipful Grand Master of our Grand Lodge serving in 1980 and 1981. He also served as Secretary of the Grand Lodge for several years and is responsible for compiling most of this brief history.