

THE WANDERINGS OF AN OLD MILITARY LODGE

by R.W. Bro. David Bevan, United Service Lodge No. 24 G.R. B.C.
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Masonry has stood since the formation of the Grand Lodge of England, upon a purely speculative basis since 1717. The first lodges to combine as such took their identities from the taverns in London where they met - the APPLE TREE, the CROWN., the GOOSE AND GRIDIRON, and the RUMMER AND GRAPES.

From this Grand Lodge all other Grand Lodges may be traced directly or indirectly. The Grand Lodge of Ireland at Dublin, formed 1728-29. The Scottish brethren did not follow the example set by England until 1736, with William St. Clair (the Builder of Roslin Chapel) as their Grand Master. His ancestors had been Patrons of the Craft in 1600-1628.

From this trio of Grand Lodges situated in Great Britain and Ireland, have sprung all the thousands of Lodges wherever distributed throughout the wide world. Through their agency, and particularly that of the Military Lodges of the last two centuries, the Craft has been planted far and wide.

There are few Military Lodges around which the memories of the shadowy past cluster more interestingly, than around the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues No. 227 -Irish Registry. The Charter for Lodge No. 227 was granted May 4th, 1752, by Lord Kingsborough, M.W. Grand Master, twenty-three years after the Grand Lodge of Ireland was established. This Lodge was attached to the 46th Regiment of Light Infantry

What Masonic Work was done in Ireland is not known but it was probably insignificant, for a Military Lodge at home would not be able to offer advantages equal to a stationary local Lodge. However the warrant accompanied the regiment to North America, and for nearly a century its meetings were held in many countries throughout the world.

A number of Military Lodges came into Canada with the British and Colonial Forces. In 1756 Meetings of the Lodge were held at Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1760, it held its first meeting in Montreal, Quebec, shortly after the French garrison capitulated to the British troops.

In 1764-1766 the 46th Regiment was in several of the American Colonies, and tradition indicates that it was during this period that Lodge No. 227 became possessed of the "famous Old Bible" (of date 1712) which was used when General George Washington was initiated into freemasonry on November 4th, 1752, in Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4, F. & A.M., Virginia. This tradition seems to have very considerable documentary evidence in its support.

In a few months the Regiment was again on the move, being ordered to return to Ireland in 1767. Here its quarters were frequently changed, Dublin, Kilkenny, Clare Castle, Galway, and Athlone being successively visited, until, serious difficulties having arisen with Colonists in America, the Regiment was once more ordered there, landing at Staten Island, New York in 1776.

In 1777-1778, the 46th was stationed at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and during this period its famous "Bullock Chest with brass mountings", containing the Lodge Warrant, famous Bible, greater lights, regalia, minute books, etc.,

fell into the hands of the American Troops; but it was shortly thereafter returned to the Regiment by Brother General George Washington, under a flag of truce, and escorted by a guard of honour.
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In 1803 while the Regiment was at DOMINICA (one of the Leeward Islands) the "Sacred Old Trunk" was captured by the French Troops, but it was returned to the Regiment by Napoleon I. Though not a mason he appears to have been its friend, for freemasonry everywhere flourished under his rule.

In 1816-1817 the 46th Regiment with its famous Lodge No. 227, arrived at in the colony New South Wales, Australia. As was its wont, wherever the 46th was stationed in the four quarters of the globe No. 227 held meetings and did good work. One result of its work in Australia was that Warrant No. 260, Irish Registry, of date August 12th 1820, was obtained by certain brethren at Sidney for establishing the first Lodge on the continent of Australia, which was called the Australian Social Mother Lodge.

On the memorable occasion of the constitution of No. 260 the famous Bible, the working tools and regalia of the renowned No. 227 were used, and the work was probably done, in most part, by its Officers and members, who had spread the light of freemasonry in so many places throughout the world.

No. 260 Irish Registry, the Premier Lodge of Australia, afterwards became Social Mother Lodge No. 1, Registry of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

In 1846 the 46th Regiment was at Kingston, Canada West and the property of its famous Lodge No. 227 was then given to Brother Sergeant-Major W. Sheppard, of the Royal Artillery, for the purpose of establishing a permanent Military Lodge at Montreal, Canada East.

At this period (1847-1848) The Grand Lodge of Ireland granted a renewal of the Warrant, to replace the original, which, we may imagine, after 95 years of traveling would be somewhat in a state of deterioration.

In 1857, the Lodge transferred its allegiance to the Grand Lodge of Canada, its name being changed to ANTIQUITY. It was the oldest Lodge on that Registry, and it was authorized to wear Gold.

This old Military Lodge united with the Grand Lodge of Quebec in 1874 as Antiquity Lodge No. 1. It is one month and eighteen days the senior of Albion Lodge No. 2, Quebec Registry, in Montreal. This had been another Military Lodge originally attached to the Fourth Battalion, Royal Regiment of Artillery. It was warranted as No. 9 on June 22nd 1752 by the Grand Lodge of England.

Thus ended the wanderings of this famous old military lodge which deserves special recognition in the annals of freemasonry.

References:

History of Freemasonry and Concordant Orders: England: 1898
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