

Historical Sketch Thistle Lodge No. 250

(taken from the original history by Earl Harper)

Our name, Thistle Lodge was aptly chosen in 1871 as many of our early members who settled in Embro and the surrounding area originated from the land of the thistle. Thistle Lodge was organized under dispensation from the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Alex Stevenson on the 8th of March 1871. We originally met on Thursdays on or before the full moon of each month, but this was changed to the fourth Thursday of each month for the convenience of the membership.

During our first year of existence the lodge's first master was Very Worshipful Brother John Patterson of Woodstock and he remained in the chair until 1873, his secretary during this period was Brother Henry Adams.

Our first meeting was held on March 13, 1871 in the Rising Sun Temple located next to the present location of the Embro Farm Store (Co-op), the building is no longer here but at one time it was housed Dr. George Duncan's Drug Store and Dr. Green's Medical office.

In 1872 upon completion of his first visit to our newly formed lodge, as yet unwarranted, the District Deputy Grand Master submitted a very gracious report to the Grand Master recommending a warrant be granted – this warrant was granted and was received under the number 250.

Thistle Lodge has occupied several locations over the years, as stated previously, the first lodge was held in the Rising Sun Temple, followed by a brief term in upper storey of the present bank building. From 1913 – 1917 we met in the building that presently houses the machine shop of the Oxford Farmers Co-operative, at the time candles and kerosene lamps were still in use in the lodge room. About 1917 we moved into what is now the Optimist Club Hall and a short time later into our home for next 87 years, two buildings to the north of the present Embro Farm Store (Co-op). Robert Murray and Alexander Brand owned this building built in 1870. The section where the lodge was located on the second floor housed such undertakings as Robert Murray's private bank and the furniture company of C.D. Leader. It was in this building that W. J. Dillane operated as a general merchant during Embro's Old Boy's Reunion of 1909. At one time the Odd fellows Lodge also once occupied the second floor.

In 1915 the building belonged to the James Munro Estate and was vested in William Munro on August 23, 1915. On January 12th 1926 a deed was issued from W.R. Munro to the Embro Masonic Temple Company Limited for two thousand dollars. In 1954, September 30th of that year saw another deed issued from the Embro Masonic Temple Company Limited to the Master, Secretary and Treasurer of Thistle Lodge and their successors in trust.

During the year of 1871 Thistle Lodge was represented at Grand Lodge by Worshipful Master John Patterson and the following year by Junior Warden, Brother Hector Sutherland. In June of 1871 our membership reported to Grand Lodge was seven just and upright men and by the following year it had increased to nineteen and to twenty-six by 1873. In 135 years of service we have seen a gradual and consistent increase in our membership, which now stands presently at 88.

Over the years we have had our share of honours in Wilson District, in May 1929 a lodge of Instruction was held for the District and was well attended. We have also had the honour of having three District Deputy Grand Masters. In 1928 R.W. Bro. James Kennedy, 1939 saw R.W. Bro. Howard Atkinson and 1959 R.W., Bruce McCall were all given the same honour. V.W. Brothers William French and W.W. Brother Osmund Murray were District Secretaries during this time. More recently Thistle has had the honour of V.W. Bro. Ken Ulch and V.W. Bro. Bruce McLeod representing the lodge. In 2005 V.W. Brother Earl Brenneman held the honourable position of Grand Standard Bearer for the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.

Grand Lodge as a token of esteem awarded the Mercer Wilson Medal to Brother D.J. McLeod for his long service as secretary of Thistle Lodge.

In 1931, the year of our 60th Anniversary members and their wives enjoyed a motor trip to St. Williams Reforestation Station.

Thistle Lodge's 100 Anniversary was on March 8, 1971 and it was celebrated by a special banquet on Saturday April 29, 1972 with Worshipful Brother Kenneth Thomas as Master and Worshipful Brother John Hutson as Immediate Past Master.

Since its inception 114 Worshipful Masters have served the lodge of which 56 are still living.

Thistle Lodge has continued to flourish and as we honour the memories of our Brothers and the changes the lodge has undergone over the years let us always appreciate their foresight and efforts.

In 2004 our home in Embro fell under the demolition ball and at the present time we meet as short distance away in the Innerkip Masonic Temple.