

HISTORY OF WILLCOX LODGE #10
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF ARIZONA
WILLCOX, ARIZONA
1881 - 1991

With the settling of the Sulphur Springs Valley, came the Brethren, searching for sustenance -- much as the cattle of this valley came searching for a waterhole -- as the miners came searching for a mountain, with ore abundant -- as the farmer came searching for a land upon which he might raise his crops, and his family.

They came as Brothers, seeking brotherhood, and the everlasting ties of Masonry -- and they found the ties here perhaps even stronger -- in this harsh and hostile country of the 1890's.

From San Francisco came George Washington Baker; Mark Allen also came from California; Brannick Riggs and Samuel Smith Rogers came from Texas; Nathan Lewis Guthrie and James William Baker migrated from Flagstaff; Thomas Steele from Prescott; Andrew Thomas Wisdom from nearby Deming, New Mexico and Amin Allen Frazer from far away Covington, Kentucky. They were the founders and charter members of this Lodge. These men served as the foundation for the Lodge that was to be organized, and they tied the mystic knot with the rawhide of the cattle country.

Of those mentioned, James William Baker became the first ramrod and Worshipful Master, while Edgar Adelbert Nichols became the first Senior Warden and was Master several times in the next few difficult years. Nichols and George Henry Stratton, who became the first Junior Warden, were not charter members, but received their degrees while the Lodge #10 was under dispensation from the Grand Lodge.

Preliminary organizational meeting for Willcox Lodge #10 was held at the Justice of Peace Office in Willcox in the evening of January 20, 1891. Temporary officers were chosen for "Willcox Lodge" and a petition was prepared to be sent to the Grand Master praying the granting of a Dispensation.

The second preliminary meeting was held May 6th and was attended by the Grand Master George W. Cheyney who accepted the Petition, dimits, recommendations and certificates of qualifications for the issuance of a Dispensation for the establishment of the proposed Lodge. Necessary funds, one hundred and fifty dollars, were raised by four Brothers signing a note for that amount.

The Dispensation to Willcox Lodge #10, F.& A.M. dates as follows:

"Given under my hand and the seal of our Grand Lodge of Arizona, this 20th day of May, A.L. 5891, A.D. 1891."
This signed by Grand Master Cheyney and attested by Grand Secretary George J. Roskruge.

June 1, 1891 marked the first meeting under Dispensation with Grand Master George W. Cheyney having called the meeting to grant the Dispensation. Immediately thereafter, the following

Brethren took their places and stations: Nathan L. Guthrie, Worshipful Master; James W. Baker, Senior Warden; Samuel S. Rogers, Junior Warden; Brannick Riggs, Treasurer; George W. Baker, Secretary; Edward R. Monk, Senior Deacon; Andrew T. Wisdom, Junior Deacon; Benjamin A. Frazer, Jackson P. Richardson, Stewards, and Thomas Steele, Tyler.

At the October 7th meeting a petition was prepared to be presented at the next Grand Lodge meeting, requesting that a Charter be granted to Willcox Lodge #10 and recommendations were made for officers. Brother William Francis Nichols was chosen as Delegate to represent the Lodge.

The Charter was forthcoming, issued by the Grand Lodge meeting in Tucson, Arizona on November 11, 1891, authorizing a regular Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons designated as Willcox Lodge #10. The Charter authorized Worshipful Master James William Baker, Senior Warden Edgar A. Nichols and George H. Stratton, Junior Warden -- along with the Brethren -- to carry on Masonic activity.

The first meeting under Charter was convened November 13, 1891, and the Past Grand Master George W. Cheyney presided with P.M. David Cohn as acting Senior Grand Warden; James W. Baker acted as Junior Grand Warden; George W. Baker acted as Grand Secretary, and T.B. Chattman acted as Grand Marshall. The Lodge of Willcox #10 was then constituted and dedicated and the first regular officers of the Lodge were installed.

In addition to the aforementioned officers, George W. Baker was the first Secretary; William F. Nichols, Senior Deacon; Andrew T. Wisdom, Junior Deacon; and Thomas B. Chattman was first Tyler.

With little money and but a few members -- and no place to call a Lodge home -- these pioneer Masons began the degree work for friends and neighbors who knocked at their door asking for guidance and light.

"Dedicated" seems to be a fitting word for those who amidst the perils and inconveniences of the early 1890's found time and energy to form this Lodge dedicated of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

By 1900 the membership grew to approximately forty with many of these dedicated members becoming Scottish Rite and York Rite Masons.

One such member was a well-known and long-remembered Brother who must have done much to hold the Lodge together during trying times. He was Kaspar Hauser. Brother Hauser served as the Master of the Willcox Lodge #10 for six of the first ten years of the new century and was honored by not a few...(In spite of the fact that many Masons were serving their country) on April 21, 1942, for his completion of 50 years of faithful work in his Lodge. At this time he was 90 years old.

Then Master Wallace Lundquist presented him with his 50-year pin. Hauser also served as local postmaster from 1903 to 1914, "...when the Democrats put me out of business..." he

humorously said.

Since Kaspar Hauser we have several Masons in our Lodge with 50 years of devoted labor -- and more! Willcox Lodge #10 has been blessed with its share of a number of high-caliber Brothers and among them 2 Grand Masters of the State of Arizona, namely, William Francis Nichols and Henry Alfred Morgan.

After moving from "pillow to post" for a number of years, a committee of five was appointed in February, 1916 to investigate the feasibility of a Masonic Temple. Masons were then meeting in the Navajo Hotel building. There was little help from the Grand Lodge at that time, apparently because "Morris Goldwater controlled the money", chuckles old-timer Frank Wootan.

Nevertheless, the plans were made and the contract was let by December of 1916. The contract was with W.F. McClure to build a "modern brick building, faced with white pressed brick (to signify Fraternal Friendship and Helpfulness) with plate glass fronts and modern plumbing". The interior was to be made of plaster and natural wood with the upper story for the Lodge work. This story was to house the Lodge room, banquet room, kitchen, three ante rooms and storage rooms. The building was scheduled to be completed by April 1, 1917, and was to cost \$8,400. By the time it was actually finished, it had cost almost \$12,000.

And now, one day less than 26 years had passed since those hardies on January 20, 1891, had taken preliminary steps to request a Dispensation for Willcox Lodge #10 -- January, 1917 -- the corner stone was to be laid.

Marshal J.W. Ditmars directed a procession to the site. Chaplain E.H. Nicholson invoked the blessing, Grand Master H.A. Morgan conducted ceremonies with the assistance of Master J.C. Wilson. Others participating in the ceremony were Frank Wootan, Frank Rottman, J.W. Angle and Kaspar Hauser.

The principal architect, J.F. McClure, distributed the working tools, spread the cement, and the stone was put into place, squared, leveled and plumbed, and the work pronounced by the Grand Master as having been well and skillfully performed.

With the Masonic Temple completed, it was time to concentrate on increasing activity and work in the Lodge. In September of 1917, the first Master Mason degree in the new Temple was bestowed upon Mark Allen Cook.

During that summer it had been decided that the Lodge would pay off indebtedness accrued in the building the new Lodge at \$25.00 per month. Sixteen dollars of this amount was to come from rental of the hall to the City Council for its meetings.

According to the records of June 9, 1917, the Lodge purchased an electric motor, "Jones System", for lighting the new Hall. The increase in the number of the Board of Trustees from three to five indicated that 1917 was truly a great year for Willcox Lodge #10.

November 14, 1941, the Golden Anniversary of the Willcox Lodge was celebrated in the Temple, with a banquet of turkey and

entertainment by a ladies group calling themselves the "American Legion Auxiliary Trio". Worshipful Master Dana T. Milner held a short informal meeting honoring the founders and charter members and their farsightedness -- having received their Charter on November 11, 1891.

Past Masters began the tradition of conducting outdoor meetings and degree work under the stars September 1, 1959. Masons came from around Arizona to begin the annual tradition -- now held each June with lots of steak and beans in Texas Canyon.

Seventy-five years of Masonry in Willcox were celebrated on November 19, 1966 with Brother Milo Miskovich in charge of planning.

Most Worshipful Grand Master Barry Casey was speaker as 185 Masons and Wives attended the festivities. Fifty year pins were awarded Brothers Ralph Lewis and John Gung'l at that time.

Worshipful Master Bob Ward set forth a major effort in 1970 to acquire pictures of all Past Masters for the south wall of the Lodge room. A few are still Missing, but it has been a major accomplishment.

Also in 1970, Grand Master designate, and Bowie Lodge member Jack Spikes asked if the Willcox Lodge wanted the Grand Lodge held in Willcox the following year. Brother Jack Spikes was voted an honorary member of the Willcox Lodge (with no official standing) for his efforts. Brother Milo Miskovich was appointed general chairman of Grand Lodge to be held "in the vicinity of Bowie" which was in fact held in Willcox because of the availability of facilities.

May 29, 1970, a fire brought some damage to Lodge property, mostly in the barber shop and Austin's Drug Store. Brother Matt Thompson received some serious burns also.

During the early 1970's the local Shrine Club was organized of Master Masons and became a very active part of the Willcox community participating in many local activities and events and bringing other Shriners into Willcox as well.

Some major refurbishing has taken place in the Lodge and the buildings since it was repainted inside in 1973 and had repairs and appearance enhancement in 1978. During 1990 and 1991, after exploring options and planning, Lodge Temple windows and other wood work were completed at a cost of some \$8,000 -- approximately the same amount as the original building cost in 1917.

Lodge year 1986 brought \$25.00 annual dues and Robert Ward to a seat in the East for the third time.

April of 1987 brought a first to Willcox Lodge #10. The Scottish Rite Degree Team, consisting of three Masters to the Scottish Rite and others from several lodges, conducted an Entered Apprentice Degree.

In september of 1987, Mark Allen Cook, the first brother to be raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason in the

current Lodge Room, was presented a 70-year certificate at the local nursing home.

The Lodge and The Eastern Star purchased a new lift chair in 1989 replacing the inoperable one purchased in 1969, when Howard Bethel was Worshipful Master.

Willcox Lodge #10 has had no Thomas Jeffersons, no Andrew Jacksons, no Franklin Roosevelts and no George Washingtons as Lodge members, but men with calibers just as high. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the chartering of this Lodge, it is evident that the same spirit of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man has been present in the group of exemplary Masons who have guided this Lodge in modern times.

Fortunately for all of Masonry, and especially Willcox Lodge #10, we have had and now have outstanding Masons, including: Grant Anderson, Floyd Bethel, Howard Bethel, Lester Bethels (Sr. & Jr.), Don Briggs, Robert Coder, Jr., Mick Easthouse, Adam Elrod, George Erickson, George Grosh, Mike Havens, Tommy Higgins, Harry Hubbell, Clyde Huff, Pete Jensen, Lee Jernigan, Bob Larned, Paul Lee, Wallace Lundquist, Pete McCanne, Ralph Merrick, Milo Miskovich, Wesley Moore, Marmey Page, Alan Ringnell, Bob Spinney, Ed Swanson, Ted Teimer, Robert Ward, Bert Francis -- and you know others.

These, too, are exemplary Masons -- and without whom, there would be no Willcox Lodge #10.

Compiled by Wayman Hopkins -----