

## A SHORT HISTORY OF BLUE HILL LODGE, A.F. & A.M. CANTON, MASSACHUSETTS

*By Worshipful Ralph W. Staples*

On the tenth day of March, 1863, the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Massachusetts granted dispensation to a group of Masons from the Stoughton/Canton area to organize a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Canton, Massachusetts. The first meeting of the new Lodge was held in the office of the Kinsley Iron and Machine Company on Revere Street. The first Masonic Candidate was William H. Little who was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of May 1863. There is no record to tell us of the struggles and hopes and aspirations of these ancient brethren.

The records of that first year, and indeed for several years are meager in detail, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 1864, five days after the Dispensation had completed its year, Blue Hill Lodge was formally constituted, and the hall consecrated and dedicated was held and the officers duly installed.

In October of 1864, Blue Hill Lodge members participated in the ceremonies incident to the laying of the cornerstone of the new Masonic Temple in Boston, Massachusetts. Meetings were held on the Wednesday on or before the full of the moon and in October 1865 this was changed to the Tuesday of the same lunar relation. (*Meetings were held on the full of the moon so the members could see better going to and returning from Lodge.*)

On the Forth of February, 1868 an assessment of nine dollars (\$9.00) per member was levied on members of Blue Hill Lodge for building of the Grand Lodge in Boston, Massachusetts. The records show that practically every member of Blue Hill Lodge promptly paid this assessment.

In September 1869, the Lodge had outgrown its quarters. It was decided to hire a hall on Church Street directly opposite the Baptist Church, this hall was later the headquarters of the Revere #94 G.A.R.(Grand Army of the Republic).

At the Regular Communication in December, 1863, George Washington Capen was installed as Senior Deacon by Proxy (*a common enough proceeding in those days*), and a few days later while walking the railroad track to Canton Junction in the face of a blinding snow storm, Brother Capen was killed by a locomotive, and thus never occupied the chair into which he had been inducted by proxy.

In 1892, at the November meeting the inconvenient custom of holding meetings with reference to the phases of the moon was abandoned, and the Lodge voted that the Regular Meetings of Blue Hill Lodge would be the First Tuesday of the month, excluding July and August which could be omitted by vote of the Lodge.

Blue Hill Members had always nursed the laudable ambition of having a building of its own. In 1923 an opportunity of realizing that ambition was presented and the Blue Hill Masonic Association was formed and incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to secure and hold the so-called Tucker Block in the center of town. A competent architect prepared suitable plans but the project had to be abandoned.

Again in 1930 it looked as if we might be able to attain our desires. The Baptist Church property was available and negotiations were started for its acquisition, but nothing came of it at that time. In 1937 the Baptist Church was again offered at such an attractive price that the Blue Hill Masonic Association purchased it. The steeple was removed in the 1950's to prevent it from falling. That upper apartments had to be completely refurbished at that time.

The ceiling the Lodge room was badly damaged by water in the winter of 1996 and in 1997. The Blue Hill Masonic Association voted to have it completely covered with blue board and a new plaster ceiling was installed at that time along with an upgrade on the electrical wiring for the Lodge room.

In 1993, Hyde Park Lodge had a fire and their Lodge and it was condemned; Hyde Park Lodge then merged with Eliot Lodge in Westwood and a new Lodge was then built in Westwood called Eliot-Hyde Park Lodge. A series of beautiful paintings depicting the Second Degree Lecture could no longer be used by them so they were offered to Blue Hill Lodge. Through many hours of tedious labor, Worshipful Leo V. Hand, Jr., and his daughter Catherine who was an expert on restoring paintings, restored four of these old paintings to their original condition to be displayed in Blue Hill Lodge..

At a Regular Communication of Blue Hill Lodge in March of 1998, these paintings were dedicated and Certificates of Appreciation were presented to representatives from Hyde-Park Lodge and Leo V. Hand and his daughter Catherine Hand.

In 1997 the Blue Hill Masonic Association voted to lease the banquet hall, kitchen and adjoining rooms to Family-A-Fare Catering for not less than 5 years to operate a catering kitchen. At the same time, the hall was refurbished, the parking lot fenced in, the new kitchen and bathroom downstairs was re-plumbed by Bro. William H. Dickie, a member of Blue Hill Lodge. Family-A-Fare operated their catering business out of the kitchen for 5 years.

In 2002 because of a poor economy, Family-A-Fare Catering moved out, the Blue Hill Lodge Masonic Association voted to completely do-over the kitchen and operate it for Blue Hill Lodge. This major project was undertaken by Brother John Armando, Worshipful Dan Petrescu, Brother David Perry and a Kitchen Committee was formed. During the Masonic Year 2002-2003 the Kitchen Committee provided meals at all Lodge meetings.

In 1998 Blue Hill Lodge was the first Lodge in the Hyde Park 25<sup>th</sup> Masonic District to have a Masonic Website which was operated by the Bellan Brothers, Simon and George. This web site was updated nearly every month with information about Blue Hill Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts is also the first Grand Lodge in the United States to have a Grand Lodge web site. Bro. Paul Ciccotelli, a member of Blue Hill Lodge was Grand Lodge Webmaster for many years.

Blue Hill Lodge has taken part in the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts **MY CHIP** Program where thousands of children are fingerprinted, video's are made of each child and ToothPrints taken, then a DNA swab is taken of the inside of the mouth of each child and the total package is given to the parents to take home at no charge.

In the year 2002-2003 under the direction of Worshipful Leo V. Hand, Jr., 5 Schools in Sharon took advantage of this program which was run by Blue Hill Lodge under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. It is planned to run this program in the Canton School System in the near future.

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts recently reorganized its Masonic Districts and Blue Hill Lodge is now in the 7<sup>th</sup> Masonic District which includes Azure Lodge, Walpole, Blue Hill Lodge, Canton, Cosmopolitan Lodge, Stoughton, J. Philip Berquist Lodge, Foxborough, Gate of the Temple Lodge, Stoughton, Rising Star Lodge, Stoughton and St. Alban's Lodge, Foxborough.

Blue Hill Lodge is presently looking for men of good character 18 years of age or older that would be interested in joining our worldwide fraternity.

For information on how to join Blue Hill Lodge contact Ralph W. Staples, *Secretary* -- (781) 828-4088 – e-mail **Ralph.Staples3@verizon.net** – or write to Ralph W. Staples, 28 Wardwell Road, Canton, Massachusetts 02021-3422.

