

# Early History of the Rainier, Oregon Masonic Lodge No. 24

By Brother Enoch W. Conyers

1909

Donated to the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum by **William Harrison, MD, 2019**

J. W. MCMILLAN  
Boston Insurance Company  
218 EAST 2ND ST.  
RAINIER, OREGON

State ment by  
B. E. W. Engstrom

Jan 1909

Early History of Rainier Lodge 24

Clatskanie, Oregon. August, 8<sup>th</sup> 1909.

Mr Robert C. Wright.

Room 604. The Dekum. Portland, Oregon.

Dear Bro Wright.

It has been a good many years since Rainier Lodge No 24 was organized, and having recently lost my wife, it leaves my mind in poor condition for writing up the early history of the Lodge. If I could see and ~~have a talk with you, it would bring to memory many items that would~~ otherwise be lost. However, I will do the best I can under the circumstances. In February or March 1858, eight Master Masons signed a petition and applied to the Grand Lodge of the State of Oregon for a Charter establishing a Lodge of A.F. & A.M. at Rainier, Oregon. I cannot at the present time call to memory the names of all who signed that petition. Those who I remember are, William Strong, then living and practising law at Cathlamet, Wash; William Barlow, a rancher, then living about one mile below Mount Coffin, on the Washington side of the Columbia river; William Riley Strong, then a resident of Rainier; Charles Fox, one of the first settlers of Rainier; John Campbell, a carpenter by trade, who took up a D L Claim, back of Rainier, and about one mile above Hudson, on the Beaver Creek; E.W. Conyers, living at Clatskanie, Oregon; The other two, I am inclined to believe was Dr Ostrander, then living on the Cowlitz river, Washington, and Frank M. Warren, then running a saw-mill at Rainier; Judge William Strong was recommended as our first Master, and William Barlow as SW. and William Riley Strong, as JW. The Grand Lodge in 1858, was held in Astoria, Oregon. E.W. Conyers being the only petitioner in attendance at the Grand Lodge when the Charter was granted for the Rainier Lodge. I made the trip down to Astoria in a White-Hall row boat in company with a Mr Drury, who was an MM. Mr Drury, claiming to be well acquainted with the Blind-Slough channel, undertook to pilot our boat through that channel and thereby save several miles of hard work, bucking against a stiff up-river breeze, as well as an inflowing tide; Brother Drury lost his bearings, took the wrong slough, which we followed until night came on, and the water so shallow we could go no

further, then we concluded to anchor for the night, using the sail for a covering, and having nothing to eat. We made out to obtain an hour or two of sleep during the night. having no desire to try it again. At the break of day, we again started on our way, arriving at Astoria about 8-30. A.M. After obtaining something to satisfy the innerman, we visited the Grand Lodge, held in Temple Lodge. We had no trouble whatever in obtaining our Charter. Our first Lodge meetings were held in a room about 18X26, petitioned off in the west end and on the second floor over the store owned by Poole Minear. This second story was previously used for a storage room. The stairway starting within the store below. The building was on the wharf just a few steps east of Joe Silvers place. We erected a stairway on the outside, at the west end of the building to reach the Lodge. Wm Strong, never qualified as Master nor visited the Lodge. William Riley Strong, was a son-in-law of Thomas Galaway, who took up a D.L.C. about one mile below Coffin-Rock. He died at Rainier soon after our Lodge was instituted. The Grand Master, Benjamin Stark, deputized Bro A.B.Roberts, (a stone mason) living at Portland to come down, institute and install the officers of our Lodge.

William Barlow was installed as our first Master; William Riley Strong SW; and Charles Fox JW; (Note, I am not right positive as to our JW, whether it was Charles Fox or John Campbell, as both frequently occupied the South, but am under the impression that it was Bro Charles Fox.) Supposing that the brethren who attended to the petitioning off our Lodge room, had made everything secure, no inspection of the premises was made for about three months, but when Bro Drury, who accompanied me as a visitor to our Lodge, being a carpenter, he quickly detected some of the defects, and proposed that we make an inspection, to this i readily agreed. We went through Poole Minears store and up the stairway into storage room adjoining our Lodge. Here we found a lot of dry-goods boxes piled one upon the other, against the petition, and the seiling was made of thin House-lining. A person could stand upon these boxes and look through thatthin House-lining right down into our Lodge room, see and

hear everything that was being done in the Lodge. I reported our find to the brethren. Our WM, Bro Barlow seemed quite angry because we made the inspection and gave us to understand that we were a little too fresh and that it was none of our business. I immediately wrote to Brother Amory Holbrook, Dept, Grand Master, at Oregon City and explained the matter to him. He appointed a special meeting for investigation. When Bro Barlow learned there was to be an investigation, he secured a private talk with the two eves-droppers, Poole Minear and John Ingleson, who agreed to join the order and thus settle the matter. When Dept Grand Master arrived, we opened the Lodge as usual, (but not before placing a guard where they could observe the approach of eves-droppers.) I then reported our find, Bro Barlow then made known his conversation with the eves-droppers, and what they had agreed to do. He then presented their petitions for admission into our Lodge. The Dept Grand Master ordered the balot be spread for the election or rejection of Poole Minear. Minear had no redeeming qualities, Utterly imposible to manufacture even a moderately good man out of such exceedingly poor material, let alone a good Mason. while John Ingleson was a fair average good man and citizen, yet like many others, very inquisitive. Therefore I voted a Black ball. when the result was announced, the Dept Grand Master took possession of our Charter and declared the meeting closed. In a conversation with Bro Holbrook on the way to our Hotel he said, "Now, bro Conyers, I am sorry for you, if I take this Charter away, you will be placed in a bad fix, you will be expelled with the rest." I answered, "Bro Holbrook I would rather go down and be expelled with the rest than to cast a vote that would surely bring disgrace upon our order." The next morning, just before I intended starting for home, Bro Holbrook came to me and said, Bro Conyers, it is my candid opinion that you had better reconsider the stand that you have taken and admit those men, then if they should prove unworthy, you can easily expel them, and that would forever end this very unpleasant affair and leave you in good standing." (these may not be his exact words, but as near as I can now remember. that is the substance. I consented. again our Lodge was opened and the Charter returned.

Again the ballot was spread, and both candidates declared elected. We did not wait the required time, but initiated the two candidates immediately. For Pedestals, in the East, West, and South, and also the Alter, we used dry-goods boxes, not quite so beautiful nor costly, yet they answered all purposes. At this initiation, so far as possible I filled the offices of both Deacons and Stewards. Having no C-T, I went down to Poole Minears store and purchased 15 feet of 5/8 inch Manilla rope. on my return to the Lodge I went directly to the preparation room, rope in hand, where I found the C, (Minear) in waiting. I immediately began giving him orders what to do. When all was completed except the C-T and H-W, I took a step directly in front of Minear, at the same time placing the C-T in its proper position. A corpse could never be whiter than Minear was at that moment, trembling as in great fear, his knees knocking together, buck-ague, with all its horrors took full possession of him, I then placed the H-W in position, his fear increased, for at least three minutes it was impossible to induce him to take one single step, when he did, it was with the greatest difficulty. After the initiation was over Minear told me that he felt sure that we intended to hang him. (he knew that he deserved to be hung.) In those days, there was but one steamer, plying on the Columbia river, between Portland and Astoria. and that steamer made but one trip per week, she did a great-deal of towing, therefore, very uncertain. for this reason our usual mode of travel was with a small-boat propelled with oars, and sailing when the wind was favorable. There were no public roads in those days, only a trail made by some settler for his own use. I have frequently pulled a boat from Clatskanie to Rainier, a distance of 25 miles (by water) merely for the purpose of assisting in opening and closing our Lodge, there being no other work. and then pull the 25 miles back home again the same evening, frequently the trip would be made <sup>against a strong tide,</sup> or a stiff breeze, and perhaps both. Our Lodge dragged along for nearly two years, finally, we could get no quorum, and then we failed to meet, Again our Charter was taken from us. Bro Dean Blanchard moved to Rainier about the time our Charter was taken

from us. He being a young Mason and very enthusiastic, he visited me and several of the old members of Rainier Lodge with a petition for the purpose of reorganizing the Lodge. Being interested in Rainier Lodge and knowing that I could put full confidence in him, I assisted him in his endeavors all that I possibly could. with some outside help we succeeded. Minear had moved east of the mountains. Our Lodge took on new life and very soon grew into manhood, loved and respected by outsiders as well as Masons. Brother Blanchard furnished the room over his store, free of charge, for which he justly deserves great praise.

The room was not quite as large, nor was the ceiling quite as high as we might desire, yet it answered the purpose very well, except in one solitary instance alone, "When we made Brother Bill Slaughter a Mason.

I will now turn this work over to Brother Blanchard to finish.

With best wishes for Rainier Lodge

Very Truly and Fraternaly Yours.

*E. W. Langer*