

For many years Best was one of the best known names in that section of the country south and east of Omemee. Many will remember a small railway station on the old Grand Trunk line running between Lindsay and Peterborough. It is believed to have been so named because of the fact that there were a number of Best's farmers in the neighborhood. One of the most popular men by the name of Best today is T. Chester Best of Omemee who retired from the farm a number of years ago and became well known as the ground's keeper at Emily Township's City of the Dead, an exacting position he filled for a number of years.

Chester Best, a highly respected resident of Omemee for a number of years, is best known to hundreds of members of the Masonic Order as a Past Deputy-Grand Master of Lorne Lodge. The Masonic Lodge at Omemee is one of the oldest and today is in the limelight as a result of a beautiful new Temple which stands on the east side of the main street and stands as a monument to the loyal and zealous members of Lorne Lodge. When the old Lodge located in the business section of the village was gutted by fire the brethren undertook the task of building a new Temple. A site was secured, plans formulated and by the application of sheer hard volunteer work on the part of the members who donated their skill and talents a new Lorne Lodge Temple was erected.

For a history of this historic Fraternal Order W. Bros. Chester Best relates details as follows:—

Lorne Lodge No. 375 — GRC at Omemee, Ont., was granted a dispensation on February 1, 1879, warranted by Grand Lodge on Sept. 10, 1879 and was in the following districts: Ontario District from 1879 to 1886; Ontario No. 12 from 1886 to 1904; Otonabee District 1904 to 1918; Victoria District No. 20 from 1918 to 1923; Victoria District from 1923 to the present time. The numbers were dropped from all districts in 1923. It is understood that Keene Lodge No. 374 and Lorne Lodge No. 375 received their dispensations the same time.

Charter Members of Lorne Lodge 1879 — Wor Master W. S. Cottingham, Faithful Brethren 77; Sr. Warden George McWilliams, of Peterborough 155; Jr. Warden John Hamilton, — Norwood 233; James Evans, J. B. Hall, Millbrook 145; W. H. Cottingham, King Hiram 89; R. H. Hams, King Hiram 89; John Elliott, Faithful Brethren 77; John Wallace, J. B. Hall — 145; Wm. Brunnett, Faithful Brethren 77.

During the first year there were six initiations and two affiliations, apart from the list of members and when they were initiated, passed and raised from 1879 to 1908, there are no records that we can find. On March 2, 1908 there is a minute in the minutes which reads as follows:—
“Minutes dispensed with owing to the books and records having been destroyed by fire.”

This Lodge room was on the north side of King Street at that time. We have been informed by older members that everything including books and furniture were lost at that time. By 1908, 106 had been made members either by initiation or affiliation. The exact date of fire we do not know, however it must have been early in 1908. In the minutes of March 2, 1908 Wor. Bro. T. A. McPherson, Chairman of a committee, reported that they had interviewed Mr. J. T. Beatty in regard to securing rooms over his new store. Mr. Beatty agreed to put the rooms in order to the satisfaction of the Lodge for a rental of sixty dollars a year, and on motion

of W. Bro. A. Laidley and W. Bro. Josiah Thompson, Mr. Beatty's offer was accepted and the lease was signed. On June 4, 1909 these rooms were dedicated for Masonic purposes by R. Wor. Bro. Long of Port Hope.

Assisting were Wor. Bro. T. F. Matthews, Corinthian 101, Peterborough; Wor. Bro. W. G. Morrow, Corinthian 101; Wor. Bro. H. G. Winch 155, Peterborough; Wor. Bro. Chas. Thorndyke, J. B. Hall, Millbrook; J. W. Wallace, Faithful Brethren 77; Rt. Wor. B. R. A. Mullolland, Port Hope 26; Wor. Bro. Athol Fair, Faithful Brethren.

Wor. Bro. Josiah Thompson was Wor. Master. Up to the time of the second fire on May 2, 1866, the lodge meetings were held in these rooms. The following Brethren have had the honor to have been members of Grand Lodge: Rt. Wor. Bro. W. Millar, Grand Stewart, 1887 DDGM — 1890; Rt. Wor. Bro. C. R. Hart, DDGM 1927 — 28; V. Wor. Bro. W. J. Thorn, Grand Stewart 1928 — 29; Rt. Wor. Bro. Wm. Greig, DDGM, 1939 — 40; V. Wor. Bro. F. S. Magee, Grand Stewart, 1940 — 41; Rt. Wor. Bro. T. C. Best, DDGM, 1951—52; V. Wor. Bro. K. S. Thorn, Grand Stewart, 1952—53; V. Wor. Bro. J. H. Sisson, Grand Stewart, 1951 — 52; Most Stewart, 1951—52; Most Wor. Bro. N. C. Hart, Grand Master 1951—53; V. Wor. Bro. Rev. J. S. Veals, Assistant G. Chaplain; Rt. Wor. Bro. Rev. H. B. Neal, Grand Chaplain 1953—54; V. Wor. Bro. W. E. Ruthven, Grand Stewart; R. Wor. Bro. H. L. Jackson, DDGM, 1964 — 65; Our oldest living member, Walker Magee at 96. Initiated Sept. 5, 1890; received his 60 year button Sept. 1961; V. Wor. Bro. W. B. Shaw Grand Stewart July 1965.

On May 2, 1966 Lorne Lodge had the misfortune to have the Lodge room gutted by fire with the loss of furniture, regalia, jewels etc. The rooms were rented and had been used by the Masons for 58 years. This left them with no place to meet. The Lindsay Masonic Temple Corporation offered the use of their new temple and it was decided to accept their offer and ask for a dispensation to hold the meetings in the new temple. This being granted it was agreed to pay \$25 a month for the use of the temple and this arrangement was carried on until April 1968 when the lodge was granted a dispensation to use our new temple.

During the months after the fire in 1966 several meetings were held in regard to a place where meetings could be held and after much discussion there seemed to be no place suitable and it was decided to build a new temple. Bro. T. J. Pogue offered a site; Bro. Don McQuaid offered a site. Bro. McQuaid's offer was accepted owing to being on King Street and easier access to it. Later it was decided to buy the lot west of it to make more room for parking. About this time we were informed that we would have to form a corporation and Bro. Col. Ivan Moore looked after this and other legal matters.

By this time the summer of 1966 was nearly over and it was decided that the group do nothing more until the spring of 1967, except to prepare plans etc.

The building committee — comprising Bro. Dave Lawson, Alden Bailey, Deane Wellman, Jim Gladding was well chosen. Bro. Lawson spent much time and work in designing this building so that the plans would be accepted by the Grand Lodge committee and in May 1967 the ground was levelled for the new temple and the foundation measured out and built by June and in July the Brethren came about 7 p.m. and worked until dark — the building soon took form. Almost all the labor was given

free by the Brethren. Bro. Bailey gave freely of his time and skill in supervising and organizing the construction of the building. The lodge seemed to have a skilled Brother for every department of the work, and others were happy to assist, and the building slowly but surely took form until the present time, April 1968, it is completed both inside and out, with the necessary furniture for the degree work of the Lodge. There are still four pieces of furniture to come May 15, 1968.

The finance committee of Bro. Harry Boyd, Alex Ruth, H. L. Jackson, E. Lowes, Bill Mahood, Russ Rawlins, B. Shaw, Jim Gladding organized the finances from the Brethren. The hope is that everything will be paid for by the time the building is dedicated this Fall. The Brethren have responded with time and money beyond all expectations. Many donations from non-members and other lodges — a donation of chairs and carpet from Mimico Lodge, Toronto, all were a real help.

Many donations in memory of deceased Brethren, from their wives and families, were received.

The group have the highest praise for those who have worked so hard to erect the lovely temple which graces the village. There have been 399 members initiated or affiliated from 1879 until the present time.

There is more work to do on the parking lot and lawn.