

History of Kyle Lodge No. 422

On June 1, 1871, 24 Master Masons sent a letter to the Most Worshipful John C. Brown, Grand Master of Tennessee, F. & A M., requesting a Dispensation to form a Masonic Lodge in the town of Whitesburg, Hamblen County, Tennessee. These brethren lived 8 to 17 miles from Morristown Lodge No. 231 and were separated from Overton Lodge No. 5 by the Holston River. In their letter, the brethren stated that it was costing them 25 to 40 dollars annually for hotel bills to attend Lodge meetings because of the long travel time. In addition, travel in the winter and spring was often impossible because of bad roads. As a result, they felt the cost for hotel bills along with the annual dues was imposing a tax too heavy to bear. The proposed Lodge was to be named Kyle Lodge and would be located 11 miles from Morristown Lodge No. 231 and 14 miles from Overton Lodge No. 5. Sufficient material was available locally for constructing a Lodge building creditable to the Fraternity.

Most Worshipful John C. Brown issued a Dispensation on June 14, 1871, authorizing a Masonic Lodge in Whitesburg, Hamblen County, TN, to be identified as Kyle Lodge No. 422. He empowered Brothers Pharoah Arthur Cobb to act as Worshipful Master, Dr. A.W. Thompson to act as Senior Warder, and Frederick Pangle to act as Junior Warden and authorized the brethren of Kyle Lodge to Initiate, Pass, and Raise Freemasons according to the Ancient Constitutions of the customs and usages of the Craft, and the Rules and Regulations of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Tennessee. The Dispensation was to continue in force until the next Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge or revoked by authority of the Grand Lodge.

The first recorded meeting of Kyle Lodge was called by Worshipful Master Cobb only seven days after the Charter was received to organize the Lodge, appoint additional Lodge officers, and make arrangements for such items as books, pillows, gavels, chairs, curtains for the Lodge room's windows, lamps, and candles. Worshipful Master Cobb appointed Brethren William Keel, Treasurer; Thomas J. Anderson, Secretary; Reverend John J. Carroll, Senior Deacon; Joseph Russ Mendenhall, Junior Deacon; John H. Boren, Steward and Tiler, and Reverend Philip Mulkey, Chaplain. The Lodge voted that regular communications would be held on the Friday evening, on or before each full moon, on the Festival of St. John the Baptist, the Festival of St. John the Evangelist, and the evening of the Festival of St. John the Baptist for the installation of Lodge officers. It is not known where this meeting took place. In fact, no record exists of any meeting place prior to the present Lodge building.

Nine days later, the Bylaws Committee appointed by Worshipful Master Cobb at the first meeting read their proposed bylaws for the Lodge. After the Lodge adopted the bylaws, the Worshipful Master Cobb appointed a three man Cognizant Committee at this meeting to insure that proper Masonic morality was practiced by the Lodge's brethren. For many years, one of the first acts of each newly elected Worshipful Master was the appointment of a Cognizant Committee.

One month later, Worshipful Master Cobb appointed a Building Committee to meet with the Bent Creek Baptist Church Building Committee to determine the cost of erecting a Masonic Hall in conjunction with the Church. This action was the beginning of a very close association between the Bent Creek Baptist Church, now called the Whitesburg Baptist Church and Kyle Lodge.

Brother Thomas W. Johnson was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on September 22, 1871, and thus became the first member to receive all three degrees in Kyle Lodge. The previous day, District Grand Master T. A. Thomas of Clarksville Lodge No. 89, Clarksville, Tennessee, had visited Kyle Lodge and instructed the brethren on the Entered Apprentice Degree work and lecture.

A Charter was issued to Kyle Lodge No. 422 on November 13, 1871. Only Grand Secretary John R. Frizzell's signature and the date the Charter was issued are readable. All other signatures on the Charter have almost faded. However, it is believed that Grand Master John C. Brown and his elected Grand Officers were the other signers of the Charter.

On November 24, 1871, Brother Pharoah Arthur Cobb was elected as the Charter Worshipful Master for 1871-1872. At that time, the Lodge officers were elected and appointed annually at the June Stated Meeting. The current practice of electing and appointing Lodge officers in December began in 1882. It should be noted that only one brother was appointed to serve as Steward as Tiler in the early years of Kyle Lodge. The current practice of appointing three brothers to serve as Senior Steward, Junior Steward, and Tiler began in 1895. The only exception occurred in 1885 when three brothers were appointed to these offices.

On December 8, 1871, the Lodge voted to build a Masonic Hall in conjunction with the Bent Creek Baptist Church. The Bent Creek Baptist Church was to be on the ground floor and the Masonic Hall on the second floor of the building. The front of the building was to have an open porch. The entry door to the stairway leading up to the Masonic Hall was to be on the left side of the open porch. At the same time, they voted that all funds belonging to and coming into the Lodge from fees and dues should be appropriated towards defraying the expenses of building the Masonic Hall. The only exception was for payment of the necessary expenses of the Lodge. Finally, the Lodge voted that all money belonging to the Lodge after completion of the Masonic Hall should be refunded to each member who subscribed in proportion to the amount he subscribed.

On June 24, 1875, the Lodge formed in a procession and was joined by brethren from Morristown Lodge No. 231, Mossy Creek Lodge No. 353, Overton Lodge No. 5, Midway (now Mosheim) Lodge No. 463, and Greeneville Lodge No. 119 (now No. 3). Brothers Dr. John G. Johnson and R.W. Taylor acted as Marshalls. The procession marched down Main Street to the corner of Cross Street, along the railroad tracks to a vacant lot and on to the schoolhouse where the newly built Kyle Lodge Hall was dedicated and the Lodge officers for 1875-1876 were installed. An address suitable for the occasion was delivered by Brother William A. Bowers of Morristown Lodge No. 231. After the address, the meeting adjourned for dinner and was reconvened afterwards for refreshment.

Earlier that month, the Lodge had ordered Brother William S. Kyle to procure jewels for the Lodge. It wasn't until March 24, 1877, that an explanation was made for this order. The minutes of that date related that a committee had been appointed with Brother William S. Kyle and others relative to the naming of the Lodge. The committee reported of having conferred with Brother William S. Kyle and Past Master Pharoah Arthur Cobb. Brother William S. Kyle advised the committee that he would be happy to have the Lodge named in honor of his family and would do something handsome for the Lodge. With this in mind, Past Master Pharoah Arthur Cobb thought that the Lodge would accept the name. As a result, Brother Kyle agreed to donate \$25.00 or a set of jewels to the Lodge.

On May 2, 1953, the Lodge voted to dig a well to put water in the Lodge Hall. By July of that year,

the well had been dug and cased and the Well Committee was ordered to purchase and install a pump for the well.

On December 3, 1955, a petition was read for a new Lodge to be known as Bulls Gap Lodge. Although Kyle Lodge voted against granting a dispensation to form a Lodge in Bulls Gap, the Grand Lodge of Tennessee voted to grant a Charter to Bulls Gap Lodge No. 764 on March 3, 1957. As a result, a large number of brethren living in Bulls Gap demitted from Kyle Lodge and affiliated with the newly Chartered Bulls Gap Lodge.

Brother Ray Wayland Pearson served as Grand Master of Tennessee in 1980. Brother Pearson had affiliated with Kyle Lodge on December 6, 1947, from Clay Lodge No. 386. In Kyle Lodge, he served as Worshipful Master for the years of 1950 through 1952. On March 27, 1957, he demitted from Kyle Lodge to become a Charter Member of Bulls Gap Lodge No. 764. He later affiliated again with Clay Lodge No. 386, and passed away on October 28, 1999.

On August 17, 1940, the Lodge granted the Whitesburg Baptist Church permission to build an addition to the rear of the building for Sunday School rooms. The only restriction made by the Lodge was that no addition could be made to the sides of the building.

Whitesburg Baptist Church built a new building to the rear of Kyle Lodge and held its first worship service in the new building on December 9, 1984. After Whitesburg Baptist Church sold its interest in the Kyle Lodge building on May 24, 1986, Kyle Lodge relocated its meeting room from the second floor to the first floor of the building. The addition in the rear of the building that was formerly used as a Sunday School by Whitesburg Baptist Church has been converted into a dining room and kitchen. The open porch on the front of the building has been closed and is now the entry hall to the Lodge building.