

History of the Grand Chapter of Washington — prepared by Leonard A. Gottner P.G.P.

In his book "The History of the Order of the Eastern Star", Brother Willis D. Engle reported that in December 1869 Brother Robert Macoy, on behalf of the Supreme Grand Chapter, issued a charter for a chapter in Vancouver, Washington — however, there is no record of such a chapter functioning in Washington.

Evergreen #1 at Goldendale was the first Chapter in Washington Territory under the authority of the General Grand Chapter, and was organized on November 12, 1881. After that, seven other Chapters were chartered: Rainbow #2 at Dayton, Chehalis #3 at Chehalis, Washington #4 at Colfax, Silver Spray #5 at Cheney, Lorraine #6 at Seattle, Fern #7 at Tacoma and Henrietta #8 at Sprague. In 1888 these Chapters had a combined membership of 367.

The call for a convention to organize a Grand Chapter in Washington was issued by Fern Chapter #7 on March 9, 1888. The convention was held at Port Townsend on June 11, 1888, during the annual session of the Grand Lodge of Washington F.&A.M., with all eight Chapters represented by a total of 23 delegates. The Constitution & By-laws of the Grand Chapter of Iowa, with some amendments, was adopted. Members of the Grand Chapter were Past Patrons and Past Matrons, and the Grand Patron was its executive head. In 1890 the executive powers were given to the Grand Matron.

As a result of paperwork problems, recognition of the Grand Chapter of Washington by the General Grand Chapter was delayed until March 26, 1889, and then for some reason, the Charter for the new Grand Chapter was not issued for 53 years. In 1942 GGC became aware of this omission, and M.W.G.M. Effie Easton deputized P.M.W.G.M. Emma P. Chadwick to present the Charter to Washington.

In the early years, the Order experienced bitter opposition from some Masons, however many prominent Masonic brothers joined and became active in the new organization. The first four Grand Patrons were, or later became, Grand Masters of Masons of Washington. Over the years, eleven other Past Grand Patrons also served as Grand Masters. The active participation of these and many other prominent Masons, together with the assistance and financial support rendered by the Eastern Star in establishing the Masonic Home of Washington, served to negate the unfounded bias of the Masonic fraternity concerning our Order.

From its beginning, Washington's Grand Chapter enjoyed the privileges and benefits of participating, with the other Grand Chapters, in the exchange of Grand Representatives. However in 1896, following similar action by "the Masonic Grand Bodies" in Washington, a resolution was adopted to abandon the Eastern Star Grand Representative system, and it was not until 1907 that Washington rescinded this action and again began participating in the Grand Representative system.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Grand Chapter of Washington's relations with the General Grand Chapter were not always the best. In those early years Washington, along with some other Grand Chapters, while recognizing that the GCC had authority over the Ritual, believed that each Grand Chapter had supreme and exclusive jurisdiction within their own boundaries, over all other matters pertaining to the Order of the Eastern Star; and strongly felt that the GCC had no authority to levy taxes or dues upon the individual Grand Chapters. The dispute reached its peak in 1902 when Washington declared itself an independent Grand Chapter and not a constituent part of the G.G.C. It operated as such until 1906, when through the efforts of P.G.M. Emma P. Chadwick and others, it rescinded its former action and rejoined the GGC.

In 1952 plans were begun to construct and operate a nursing home to provide "nursing care at reasonable rates for Eastern Star members not eligible for admission to the Masonic Home". After much work by many dedicated members, the "Emma P. Chadwick Memorial Home" was opened in August 1964, on an eight acre site near Bothell donated by Sister Hannah Gillette. In 1985 the name was changed to the "Eastern Star Nursing Home". A second nursing home was opened in Yakima in 1989, but repairs and construction costs required for State certification put a financial strain on both Homes resulting in their sale in 1993. The money realized from the sale was placed in the "Eastern Star Charities Fund of Washington".

In its 111 year history, Washington is proud to have been honored by having two of its Past Grand Matrons also serve as Most Worthy Grand Matrons of the General Grand Chapter: Sister Emma P. Chadwick, Worthy Grand Matron in 1899, who served as M.W.G.M. in 1928 -1931, and Sister Carol Strizek Worthy Grand Matron in 1956, who served as M.W.G.M. in 1982 -1985. Both of these distinguished Sisters, by their actions, brought esteem and honor to our beautiful Order.

From its inception the Grand Chapter of Washington enjoyed a relatively steady growth until the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the debased economy caused a significant decline in membership. However, after World War II, the Order in Washington experienced rapid growth, reaching a high point in 1958 of 60,420 members.