

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

R. W. BRO. DEWOLF SMITH

on the Occasion of the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Introduction of Freemasonry into the Province of British Columbia.

VICTORIA, B. C.

14th DECEMBER, 1909.

Most Worshipful Grand Master and Brethren:—

In giving a short account of the progress of Freemasonry in British Columbia I have not thought it necessary to deal with the history of the mother Grand Lodges—those of England and Scotland. That is, I have no doubt, sufficiently familiar to all of you.

Just how Freemasonry was introduced into the Province it is not easy to say. Leaving out of account the visits of the earlier explorers and discoverers, the first permanent settlement appears to have been that of Victoria, which was founded in 1843, when it was considered advisable by the Hudson's Bay Company to establish a headquarters on what would probably be British territory—the fixing of the boundary between the United States and the British possessions being a burning question about that time.

Early in the year mentioned, then, we find that Chief Factor Douglas with a number of employes of the Hudson's Bay Company left Fort Vancouver, Washington—or Oregon—and located at Victoria, erecting there a fort and other necessary buildings. His company numbered about fifty, and it is possible that some of them were Freemasons, having been made either in Great Britain or in the eastern States or Canada. Shortly afterwards, too, (in 1843) we began to arrive at Victoria from England, no doubt bringing occasional additions to the colony, and in 1850 a party of eighty immigrants arrived. Among all these there were probably some Freemasons, but the first public mention of the Craft that I have been able to find is in "The British Colonist" of the 24th of June, 1859, when mention is made of the fact that the Grand Lodge of Oregon, which had been organized in 1851, had held its annual communication on the 11th of that month at Eugene.

No further mention of Freemasonry is found in the public journals until the 3rd of August in the same year, when it is stated that the Grand Lodge of Scotland had extended recognition to the newly formed Grand Lodge of Canada.

The editor of "The British Colonist" was Amor DeCosmos, who was already a Freemason, which would account for the appearance of these items.