

History of the Masonic Lodge of Central City

By LEA S. ROBINSON

The history of Masonry in Colorado and the prospector's cry of "Gold" in 1858 and '59 go hand in hand. On the evening of November 3, 1858, about one year before young John Gregory struck his pick into the fabulously rich gold quartz located between the present location of Central City and Black Hawk, the first known Masonic meeting was held in Brother Allen's cabin in Auraria (now called Denver).

Quoting from Brother J. D. Ramage's letter dated March 21, 1896: "On the evening of November 3, 1858, the first informal meeting of Masons was held in the cabin of Henry Allen, the first seven Masons who ever met in Colorado having in contemplation the application for a charter."

Many of this number scattered to the mountains in the spring of '59,

in answer to the call from "Gregory Diggin's" and were among the swarms of men who appeared overnight in search of gold. Just 45 days after Gregory discovered gold, a Masonic Temple was built in Gregory Gulch. This rough log building in which is now Gilpin County was the first Masonic Temple in Colorado.

"Chivington Lodge" as it was originally named, held its first meeting under Dispensation October 5, 1861, receiving its Charter December 11, 1861; by a petition of its members to the Annual Grand Communication held October 6, 1866, its name was changed to Central Lodge No. 6, A.F.&A.M.

On the 23rd of May, 1864, Brother D. C. Collier, owner of the *Daily Miner's Register* in Central City, con-

structed a building for printing and editing of the paper. He offered to give the use of the walls of this building to the lodge, and allow the Masonic Fraternities to add a third story under the conditions that a proper roof be kept on the building.

Two days later, on the 25th of May, 1864, this offer was accepted by Affiliated Fraternities. A committee was appointed, consisting of six members, three each from the lodge and R.A.M. Chapter. It was their job to raise funds to add the third story and a roof. Funds were raised from donations, dues, bonds at 10 per cent interest, and notes with interest as high as 18 per cent. This construction was completed at a cost of \$10,850, and was occupied the 15th of August, 1865.

The upkeep on the roof and walls became so great that on the 11th of January, 1888, a committee was appointed to look into the matter of selling the third floor, and buying the opera house for use as a hall. The committee found that the D. C. Collier estate was being settled and the two lower floors were purchased from the heirs on the 13th of August, 1890, for \$11,000. This gave ownership of the entire building to the Masonic Bodies thus allowing the space below to be rented, thereby providing money for upkeep of the entire building.

The interior decoration of the Hall was started in the year 1865. Brother George A. Pugh, an architect and cabinet maker, and head of the building committee, constructed the beautiful columns in the west, the doors of the banquet room, the pedestals, the altar, the chairs for the Master, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden, the secretary and treasurer desks, as well as other articles of wood.

The lodge paid Brother Pugh for all his work, although the only bill found was for the Master, Senior, and Junior Warden's Chair, which cost the lodge a total of \$16.40. The 27th of September, 1865, the lodge presented Brother Pugh with a gold

watch, a chain and keystone as a testimonial for his zeal and devotion to the Masonic Order.

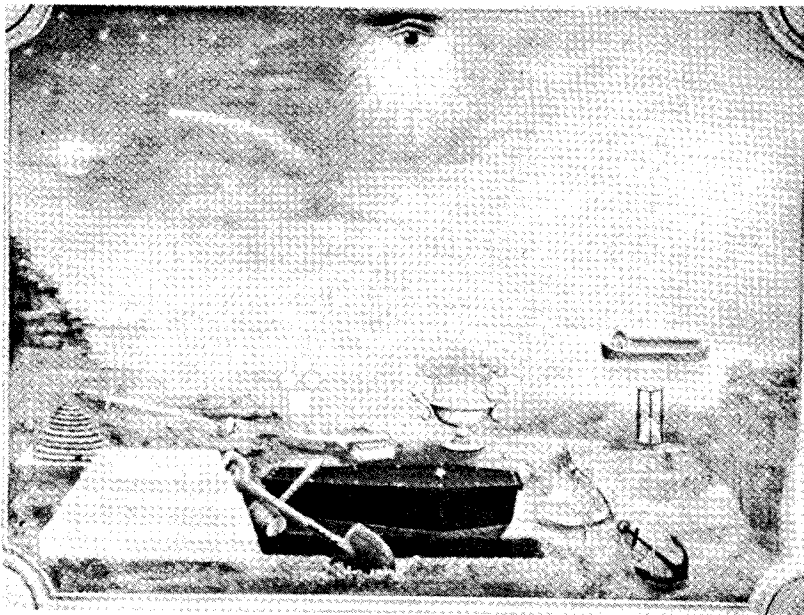
Brother John J. Glendenning was born in Scotland, studied painting and art in Austria, came to the United States in 1857, and settled in Central City in 1862. He engaged in house painting and sign making, and built his home directly back of the Masonic Hall.

Brother John J. Glendenning, under contract to the lodge, was responsible for the main attraction in the Hall today — the painting of George Washington. The two-thirds life size and three dimensional painting depicts George Washington in the costume of his era, standing near a library table with his right hand resting on a book, and his left resting on a sword. The face was painted from one of the best likenesses of George Washington in that day. This famous painting, painted on a linen damask tablecloth, was finished in 1865, and presented to the lodge in 1870. The pigments used were sent over the plains by ox team, and mixed by Brother Glendenning as he painted.

The painting was rolled on a stick and placed in one of the ante-rooms until the year 1895 when it was fitted into the frame made by Brother Perry Kline, a millwright and cabinetmaker. Gold was taken from the area by Brother Kline, rolled by a gold beater, and the gold leaf then applied to the frame. The painting was then hung as you see it today. It has been cleaned only once since it was painted, and has never been retouched.

The marvelous accuracy of detail in the painting with depth of color in the curtains and table coverings, the tessellated floor, and the illusion of the hall with massive columns in the background tell of great creative ability.

These are a few of the points which have caused the many artists who have viewed it to believe that it is the finest painting of George Washington in the world. Its value is problematical, with the only offer of \$5,000 being made in 1901, though today



probably many times that amount could be obtained.

No other lodge in the world has any of the lectures of the degrees of Masonry depicted on their walls. Central City Lodge has all of them, done in pioneer days, by a Master, using candles for light. Brother Glendenning's great artistic ability, together with his Masonic knowledge, enabled him to portray on the walls, all lectures, of all Degrees of Masonry, for our posterity, and the world to enjoy.

The following frescos described are in panels on the walls of the Lodge Hall. The panels are so shaded that they appear to make the articles and objects stand out from the walls.

The first panel on the North Wall, on the right of the Master, is that of one of the Degrees of Masonry, and the several emblems of that Degree are illustrated in detailed accuracy.

The second panel on the north side of the hall is that of winding stairs leading to a Chamber.

At the bottom of the stairs, and to the right, are the five columns representing the Five Principal orders of architecture: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite. These columns are surmounted by capitals characteristic of these orders, all of which are in three dimension and faithful representations. The coloring used enhances the realism of the Degree.

In the West, at either side of the Senior Warden's station are Frescos representing Saint John The Evangelist, and Saint John The Baptist, both patron Saints of Masonry. Due to their dimensional styling, they seem to be standing on pedestals in oval cubicles. The proportions of the figures are computed as to be very life like. Thousands of Masons have examined them to prove to themselves that they are not statues set into the wall.

A Scotch artist came a long distance to see them, and after measuring and studying them said that

they were the most perfect that he had ever seen. He had spent years traveling in Egypt, Greece, Austria, Spain, and Italy and saw none to equal these panels and frescos.

On the South side of the hall the fresco is an altar on which burns a pot of incense. This also is a three dimensional scene from the Chapter.

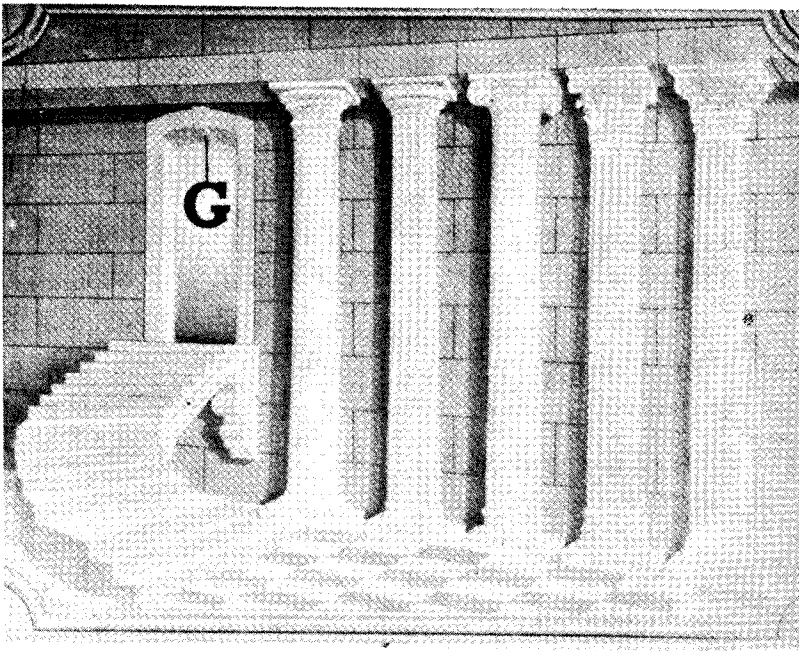
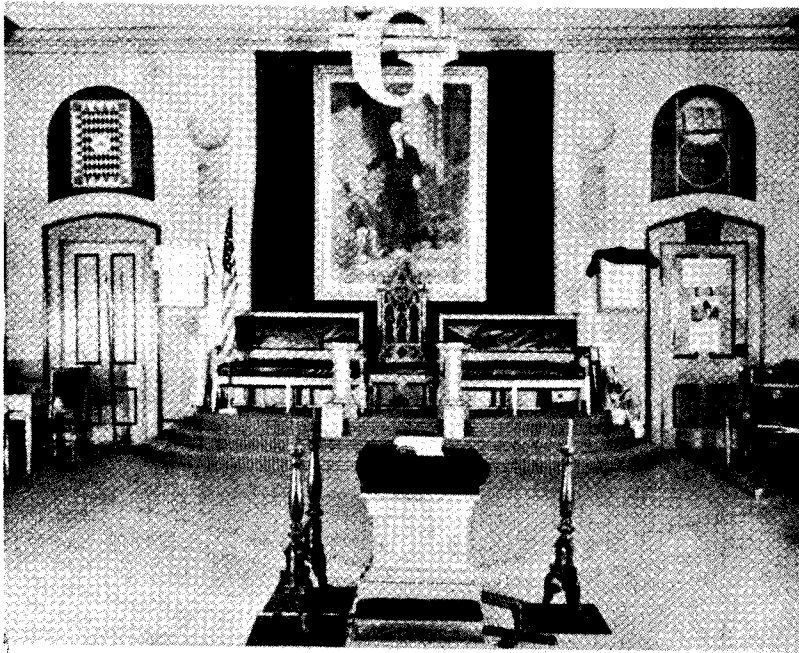
Next to it is a fresco representing the Banner of The Royal Arch Masons. This is beautifully done in colors, and faithfully portrays the allegorical symbols that adorned the ancient Israelite Banner. This is one of the two, two dimensional frescos by Brother Glendenning.

Also on the South Side, another fresco depicts an Altar on which the regular Masonic Emblems are displayed and surrounded by three burning tapers placed in the form of a triangle. This is also in three dimension and attracts a great deal of attention because of the illusions created.

On the south, behind the Junior Warden's chair is a fresco representing a sheaf of wheat hanging near a waterfall. This is a two dimensional scene, and has been classed by artists as one of the best works Brother Glendenning portrayed.

Lastly, on the south side is a scene belonging to the Red Cross Degree of the Knight Templars. When one looks carefully they can see a Phantom Horse on a bridge. The bridge being guarded by three guards with drawn swords. The original intent of Brother Glendenning was to create a knight templar on horseback. This was to be done in three dimension, but the outline of the horse is the only part of the fresco that Brother Glendenning finished before leaving Central City.

All the work in the Hall by Brother Glendenning, including the tremendous painting of George Washington, was done during the period between November, 1864 and October,



1870. The Central City Lodge paid him \$550.00.

Brother Glendenning left the area the 5th of October, 1870. It was later learned that he and his brother-in-law settled in Wyoming, where they founded the town of Evanston.

Since there were several panels at the Central City Hall to fill, and the Knight Templar Fresco to be finished, Brother George W. Brewer was given a contract to finish the work.

Brother Brewer was a two dimension style painter, and since the Knight Templar on Horse Back had been started in three dimension style, he was unable to finish it as started, and so painted over it and created the scene of the guards at the bridge. In the year 1897 the outline of the horse was not visible, however, the paint covering the original fresco became oxidized and slowly scaled off. Thus the Phantom horse became visible as it is seen today.

Brother Brewer did the Beautiful Virgin, The Broken Column and Jacobs Ladder on the south wall. This completed the Frames that had been placed by Brother Glendenning.

Brother Brewer also painted the well executed two dimensional frescos of the Holy Bible above the southeast door; the tessellated pavement over the northeast door; and the seaport scene over the northwest door.

Brother Brewer also painted and grained the woodwork, wainscoating, doors, Altar and pedestals in the Lodge. For all his work he received \$500.00 and a year's dues in the Lodge.

The five point star over the west door is presumed to have been painted by Brother Henderson between 1892 and 1894.

This Hall of Masonry has become famous throughout the world because of its uniqueness and beauty. People have come from all over the world

to see it, and art critics from many places have spent hours analyzing the painting and frescos. They have all been generous in their criticisms.

Mr. George Fuller, Past President of The American Art Institute, spent over three hours studying the painting of George Washington, and expressed that it was the finest likeness of Washington that he had ever seen. He also said that it was probably the largest grouping of three dimensionals in the world.

It is no wonder the Grand Master of The Grand Encampment of the Knight Templars of America, eminent Sir Harry Gilmore Pollard exclaimed, "This is the finest Hall of Masonry for Masons in The Entire World."

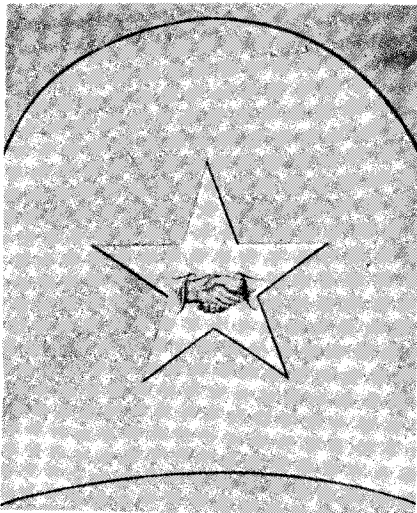
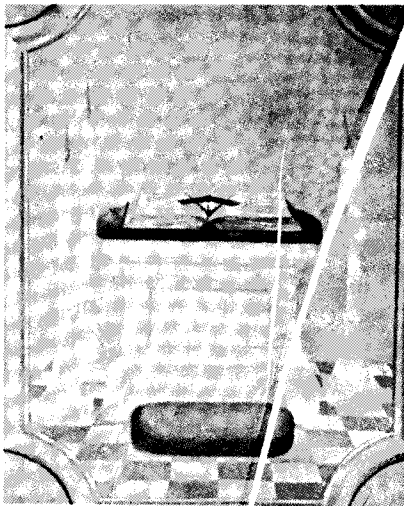
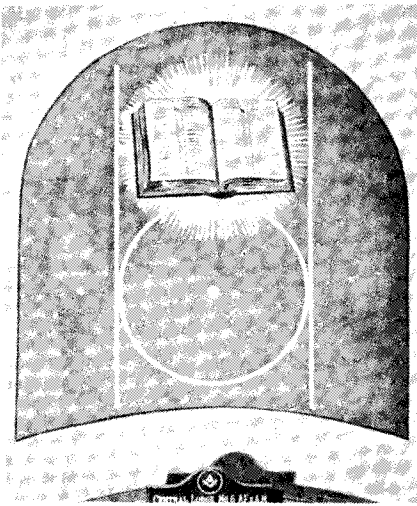
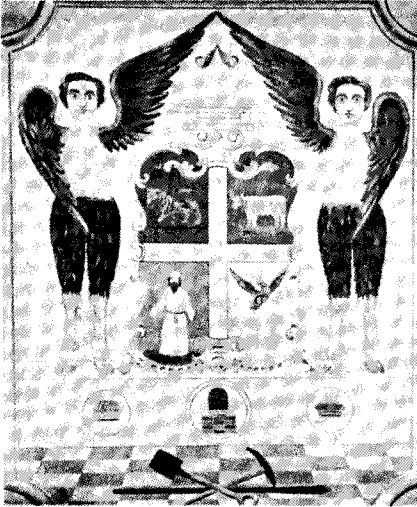
In the year 1875, kerosene lamps replaced the candles used for lighting the Hall. These lamps were made by Hitchcock Lamp Company of Watertown, New York, and had a clock spring mechanism driving a fan which forced air around the bottom of the wick, giving a clear white flame without the use of glass chimneys.

These lamps were used until August, 1889 when electric lights replaced them. Two of the kerosene lamps are kept in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Colorado, not only for their historical value, but also because of their uniqueness. Four of the lamps are still in the Central City Lodge, two near the Senior Warden Chair, and two near the Junior Warden chair.

On the 12th of August, 1889, chandeliers were installed by McFarlane and Company at a cost of \$129.00. The wiring for electricity was done by the L. H. & P. Company at a cost of \$95.00.

On the 5th of November, 1964, Barnett Company installed the present steam heat at a cost of \$1,234.50.

In addition to the furniture, paintings, and frescos, the Lodge has the original Bible used by the Lodge in 1858, the second Bible given to the Lodge in 1863, the historical gavel and the original Jewels of office,



which are made from hand engraved silver and worn by the principal officers of the Lodge today.

The following is taken from the issue of the Daily Miners Register of the 13th of February, 1868: "The senior editor of this paper, D. C. Collier, had the pleasure last night of presenting a gavel to Chivington Lodge No. 6, A. F. & A. M. The head of the gavel is made of cedar from Lebanon brought from Mount Lebanon in Syria last summer by captain C. C. Duncan of New York, commander of the pleasure steamer Quaker City, and given to D. C. Collier with stipulations it be made into a gavel and presented to the Lodge. Captain Joseph Taber of New Bedford, Massachusetts, turned the Cedar and furnished a handle of ebony wood brought by him from Africa. The silver bands mounted around the gavel are inscribed, noting the cedar is from Mount Lebanon and the gavel was presented to Chivington Lodge No. 6, A. F. & A. M. on the 12th of February, 1868.

The gavel was received by B. W. Wisebart, master of the Lodge, on behalf of the members with the assurance to D. C. Collier that it would be properly used and served to keep the donors in constant remembrance.

The gavel had served all the Masonic bodies from the year 1868, until June 1915, when it was necessary to retire it due to much needed repair. The gavel was repaired and is now used for presentation purposes only.

The Central City hall is open to guests and visitations by other Masonic Lodges, Chapters, Commanderies, and Eastern Star who wish to come and do their degree work with their candidates amid these extraordinary surroundings.

(The material for this article was furnished by Brother Warren WM Neudorff, Past Patron of Golden Queen Chapter No. 17. He is now living at 2226 North 6th, #3, Grand Junction, Colorado.)

GOLDEN CIRCLE CHAPTER,

No. 17,

CENTRAL CITY, COLO.

On May 25, 1893, eleven Masonic Brothers and nine ladies met for the purpose of organizing an Eastern Star Chapter. A petition was signed and sent by these people to the Grand Patron of Colorado with the necessary \$10.00. On June 3rd a dispensation was granted by the Grand Chapter of Colorado and the new members were obligated by Brother Ashbrough acting as proxy for the W. G. P. and on June 21, Sister Carrie Reef, W. G.M. installed the officers of Golden Queen No. 17.

In August of 1893 Golden Queen #17 purchased the Star Floor Cloth for \$15.00 and the Officers Badges for \$14.40. On the 22nd of December, 1893 Golden Queen held a special joint meeting for open installation. The unique fact of this meeting was that it was a joint installation with Central City Chapter # 1, Royal Arch Masons.

By August 1899 Golden Queen membership grew to 59. It is of interest to note that the annual dues to the Grand Chapter in 75 years has risen from 25c per member to 1.25, an increase of 500%. The present Secretary and Sentinel are paid the same amount as the first Secretary and Sentinel was paid 75 years ago. Seventy-three Worthy Matrons and twenty-nine Worthy Patrons have served this Chapter. The longest time for a Worthy Patron to serve was seven years. Ten Brothers served a total of 40 years as Worthy Patrons.

Today Worthy Matron Sister Marilyn Mellor and Sister Laura Ress, Secretary, are proud of the work these Sisters and Brothers are doing.

Golden Queen Chapter #17 meets in the historic Masonic Hall in Central City, the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month, September thru June. Because of traffic problems, crowds, etc., they voted some years ago to recess during July and August.

Golden Queen Chapter is a small Chapter, but the members love it.

This is shown by the number of P. Matrons who hold office year after year. When the P. Matrons are escorted to the east to meet the Worthy Grand Matron, most of the Chapter is here.

Their pet projects are the cancer sewing, and the "Bazaar Table". The table helps them to meet some of their OES obligations. Members contribute many useful and pretty articles to be sold in addition to the cards, etc.

The cancer sewing group meets once a month for lunch, for a talk fest and sewing. The talking does not interfere with the sewing as over 1400 articles have been turned into the American Cancer Society to date.

**Officers of Golden Queen Chapter
No. 17**

**Order of The Eastern Star
Central City, 1969-1970**

Worthy Matron.....	Marilyn Mellor
Worthy Patron.....	William Mellor
Associate Matron.....	Sarah Gill
Associate Patron.....	Wilbur Gill
Secretary	Laura Ress
Treasurer	Luella Fritz
Conductress.....	Margaret Davis
Asso. Conductress....	Margaret Wollam
Chaplain	Marion Lewis
Marshal	Velma Starbranch
Organist.....	Viola Laird
Ada.....	Lorraine Adamson
Ruth.....	Jean Jacobson
Esther.....	Delia Johnson
Martha.....	Olive Robins
Electa.....	Emma Eccker
Warder	Marjorie Quiller
Sentinel.....	John Betts

Golden Queen is known as a friendly Chapter and welcome visitors to historic Chapter room in the hall in Central City.