

*The second in a series of articles of interest provided by our Lodge Historian*

*Masons who contributed from the past, freely taken from any posted article with acknowledgments.*

Dear Brethren

This being October 2017, it is appropriate our Lodge meeting will be held four days (Oct 8<sup>th</sup>) before the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bro Henry Larsen completing his epic west-to-east transit of the Northwest Passage as Captain of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Vessel St. Roch.



Bro. Henry Asbjorn Larsen was born in Norway in 1899, and arrived in Canada in 1926. He became a British citizen in 1927 (Canadian citizen in 1947) and joined the RCMP in 1928, rising through the ranks to Superintendent (1953). Bro. Larsen retired in 1961 with multiple decorations, including the 1935 Jubilee Medal, 1939-45 Star, Bronze Atlantic and Pacific Stars, several RCMP Long Service Medals, The Royal Geographical Society's Polar Medal, and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society's first Massey Medal. He passed to the Grand Lodge Above in 1964.

Bro. Larsen was raised in Mount Newton Lodge No. 89 in 1935. Mount Newton Lodge is one of United Peninsula No 24's predecessor Lodges.

In 1938 the frontiers of Masonry were pushed 1000 miles north of Edmonton at the Anglican Mission at Coppermine on the Coronation Gulf Northwest Territories. Ivanhoe Lodge No. 142 on the Register of the Grand Lodge of Alberta and located in Edmonton initiated a candidate. This was the first Masonic meeting above the Arctic circle with Bro. Larsen acting as Senior Deacon. It is recorded that another brother attending was Bro. 'Wop' May, who started the commercial flying industry in Canada in 1919 .

In 1941 the St Roch was ordered to transit the passage and Larsen's letter of that year, written at Gjoa Haven, states he was in shallow waters; in late August the nights were long and the compass, being so near the Magnetic pole, was useless. (*Gjoa Haven named after Roald Amundsen's vessel in 1903-05's first-ever transit (east-west) of the Northwest Passage*).

Shortly after, the St Roch was driven in by the ice to Pasley Bay for a number of months in temperatures of 50 to 55 below with no fresh meat other than rabbits and ptarmigans . In February of 1942 a member of the crew, Cst. Chartrand, succumbed to a heart attack. Cst. Chartrand was buried under a cairn and, as evidence of Bro. Larsen's compassion, he set off 900 kms to Fort Ross to fetch a priest <sup>A</sup>. A record was left at the cairn, which was not discovered until 1985 during a routine RCMP inspection.

Bro. Larsen illustrates through his letters attributes of Patriotism , Compassion Justice and Fortitude .

<sup>A</sup>Lodge records

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Roger of Saanichton .

*Brother Larsen followed in the snowshoes of Hudson to Nansen all recognized as pathfinders in their day. He , established the boundaries of this country which cannot be claimed by other Polar explorers because of his Polar voyages. The vast areas of " nothingness " created in this Brother, an introspection of the G.A.T.O.U. and the "smallness" of man .*

*Bro. Larsen while he had some recognition, is an unsung hero largely forgotten.*

*For a more complete story on Bro. Larsen, consider reading this RCMP feature:*

<http://www.rcmpveteransvancouver.com/the-more-northerly-route-looking-back-70-years/>