

## Bay View Lodge No. 109, I.O.O.F

Bay View Lodge No. 109, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Redwood City, California will on October 4, 1962 celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Bay View Lodge is the oldest fraternal organization in Redwood City and as far as can be ascertained the oldest fraternal organization duly chartered in all of San Mateo County. Odd Fellowship came to the state of California shortly after the discovery of gold in 1849 and some of our oldest lodges are still in existence today throughout the Mother Lode country of California. Just as many Odd Fellows Lodges were off shoots of another lodge, so it was with Bay View Lodge. All of the charter members were members of California Lodge No. 1 of the Odd Fellows located in San Francisco. Dues were set at \$1 per month and that stayed until the late 1950's.

It is against this background that six Odd Fellows banded together in Redwood City to form a new lodge of Odd Fellows to be known as Bay View Lodge. The charter members were Charles N. Fox, James. W. Turner, Solomon H. Snyder, Andrew Teague, Thomas W. Lathrop and Joseph S. Keith. It was on October 4, 1862 that Bay View Lodge was instituted in Concert Hall, the then upper story of the Court House in Redwood City. According to early day records there were over 150 people present for the institution ceremonies.

The first Noble Grand of the new lodge was Charles N. Fox. Mr. Fox was a lawyer and he was to become prominent in Odd Fellowship. He later became Grand master of the Grand Lodge of the Odd Fellows in

California. His father and two brothers also were Odd Fellows and the Fox family was prominent in the civic and cultural affairs of Redwood City and San Mateo County.

The teachings of Odd Fellowship are to "visit the sick, relieve the distressed, to bury the dead and educate the orphan." The early day brothers believed fervently in these teachings. As a result of their dedication to the teachings of Odd Fellowship, the lodge prospered and within ten years had well over 100 members; which in itself was remarkable considering the population of Redwood City at that time.

For some 20 years the lodge met in rented quarters on Main Street opposite the present Odd Fellow Hall. The brothers decided in 1882 to purchase suitable property so that eventually they could build their own hall. In 1895 a new building was erected and on June 15 1895 dedication ceremonies were held. From that time forward Bay View Lodge continued to grow and initiated hundreds of new members during the next 30 years or so. Along about this time George H. Buck was an active member of the lodge and helped guide its destiny for many years. Brother Buck became a judge for San Mateo County and became rather prominent in the practice of law and it is to men such as George Buck that Bay View Lodge owes so much.

The lodge decided in 1863 to purchase a plot of ground in Union Cemetery. This was done although the number of

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plots was not specifically stated. The legal description of the ground stated so many feet and to such a point. Over the years many Odd Fellows were buried there. The late Judge George Buck is buried there and his headstone is in excellent condition today.

Since building our own hall in 1895, we have rented to countless other fraternal organizations. Many of them now have their own buildings. Among some of them was the local lodge of the Masons as well as the Order of Eastern Star. The Fraternal Order of Eagles met in our hall for years. Eventually they became strong enough financially and they finally built their own building. Unions, and even churches have used our hall. Also there were many public school graduations held in our hall.

With Bay View Lodge growing by leaps and bounds the brothers decided to form a Rebekah Degree Lodge. On November 13, 1878 a committee was appointed to investigate the "propriety of starting a Rebekah Degree Lodge in Redwood City." After discussion by the lodge Olive Branch Rebekah Lodge no. 48 came into being. It was instituted March 4, 1879.

The period from 1883 was busy ones for the lodge. The lodge was initiating members very consistently and of interest to you may be that many of the degrees were not conferred on Wednesday night. The lodge had what they called a degree lodge and during the week the degree lodge met and conferred the degrees.

From its inception to this time and to a later date Bay View Lodge paid sick benefits - sometimes \$5 a week and mostly \$10 a week. The amounts varied. Often when a brother was destitute or unable to work the lodge voted to give him \$25 or as high as \$50 a month as long as he was in need. The records of the lodge then showed it was given for charitable purposes. Such was Odd Fellowship in those days.

My brothers and sisters, I am well aware that anyone who endeavors to bring to you a history of Bay View Lodge has his work cut out for him. Much more could be said about our history ... however we do feel that Bay View Lodge has been instrumental in shaping Redwood City into the position it is today and that we are definitely a part of that history. We confidently look forward to the next 100 years.

Please forgive me if I have not mentioned events and people that I should have. And with this I bid you goodnight. Thank you for your patience.

*Information compiled and written by Trustee Kenneth G. Smith. Read on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary 1962.*

*Re-typed and edited 2012 by Gerry Williams, Past Noble Grand.*