

History of Pilar Lodge No. 15

Pilar Lodge No. 15 is one of the many Lodges in this jurisdiction which have buildings of their own. It has a three-story building constructed on the Lodge's 1,170 square meters of property facing the town park. The ground and second floors are at present occupied by the Imus Elementary School. The third floor is used exclusively by the Lodge. The Lodge also owns a cemetery plot of about 400 square meters, for the exclusive use of its members and their families.

Pilar Lodge is one of the oldest Lodges in the Philippines. Its founder is a Filipino Catholic Priest. The first light in Masonry was brought to Imus, Cavite, by the late Father Severo Buenaventura in 1894, who was then a member of "Bathala Lodge" in Ermita, Manila. Don Cayetano Topacio, then a member of Parawa Lodge in Concepcion, Tarlac, helped in the organization. A regular Lodge No. 203 was established in that year (1894) at Imus, and a charter obtained from the "Gran Oriente Español." The name "Pilar" was named after the town's patron saint "Nuestra Señora del Pilar."

The other organizers of the Lodge were Emilio Aguinaldo (initiated in the house of Don Cayetano Topacio), Baldomero Aguinaldo, Pantaleon Garcia, Juan Castañeda, Sixto Sapiñoso, Ignacio Bella, Agustin Paredes, Canuto Encarnacion, Benedicto Ilano, Jose and Macario Tagle; all of whom took active part in the revolution which broke out two years later. They usually held their meetings in the house of Ignacio Bella on San Juan Street, but had to move on various occasions from one house or camarín to another. Their meetings had to be closely guarded, because

the Spanish Friars and Guardias Civil were then persecuting them.

During the period from the organization of Pilar Lodge in 1894, until the revolution in 1896, hardships were suffered by the members. Masonry in those days was considered a secret society. The Government was under the pressure of the Friars who were the bitter enemies of our Fraternity. Masons were condemned by them and any one who had the misfortune of being discovered as a member, was sure to be persecuted and tortured if not put to death. Only the brave and determined men dared to become members of the Fraternity. So in the revolution of 1896, all the members of Pilar Lodge took arms and became leaders. The liberty, happiness and prosperity which we now enjoy must be recognized as the fruit of the sacrifices of our revolutionists, whose leaders were mostly Masons or Katipuneros. Those persons were nicknamed "Filibusteros" by the enemies of our freedom, the Friars.

Emilio and Baldomero Aguinaldo, Canuto Encarnacion and Benedicto Ilano, being all from Kawit, Cavite and desiring to propagate Masonry in their own town, established a society in the barrio of Binakayan which they called "Triangulo," preparatory to the organization of a regular Lodge, but it was never realized because of the revolution of 1896 which prevented them from continuing their Masonic activities.

After the American regime was established and the Civil Government inaugurated in the province of Cavite, Pilar Lodge was reorganized in the house of General Pantaleon Garcia in 1907; then moved to an old brick house on Tuolong Street

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until it was finally transferred to its present site at Tirona Street, where a temporary building with but a ground floor was used until the present building was constructed in 1914. This Lodge, together with many other lodges previously under the "Gran Oriente Español" joined the Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands in 1917, and our Charter was granted by this body on February 13, 1917. It was just a day after the last stated meeting and annual election of the officers of Pilar Lodge No. 15, of F & A M, which took place on Saturday, December 8, 1941 when the unexpected Pacific War broke out. It was considered a memorable day in the history of this Lodge. Due to the uncertainty of the prevailing conditions at that time, the elected and appointed officers were not duly installed and since then, the activities of the Lodge ceased.

During the perilous and hazardous period of more than three years of Japanese occupation, the work of this Lodge was completely paralyzed. This may be attributed to the undemocratic and imperialistic tendencies of the invading people, whose attitudes were not in communion and in sympathy with the principles and precepts of secret societies, especially of Freemasonry. Practically all the Lodges in the Philippines including the Grand Lodge, immediately stopped their vigorous and progressive movements. It was during this trying period when we can justify once more, without mental reservation, that many outstanding members of our Fraternity have contributed valuable, intelligent and heroic deeds which should never be forgotten and should be written in the golden pages of our fraternal achievements.

The members of Pilar Lodge No. 15, in order to evade the injustices and brutalities of the Japanese, purposely

inhibited themselves in seclusion to the extent of making them unknown to public notice. All the jewels, documents and important paraphernalia of this Lodge, were kept separately in the different houses of the brethren. But the building itself could not escape the eyes of the Japanese soldiers who occupied it from 1942 to the later part of 1944, barely one month before the liberation. It was in the premises of this building, where one fateful day, a few of the young and innocent martyrs of this town suffered the barbarous and fatal punishments in the hands of the inhuman Japanese soldiers.

In May of 1945, three months after the liberation of this province of Cavite, an informal gathering of some members of Pilar Lodge was held in the house of Worshipful Brother Candido Sayoc, the Treasurer of said Lodge. It was during this meeting when the members present decided to resume the activities and pledged to support the Lodge, in consonance with the instructions from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. The first stated meeting was held in the Hall of the Temple for the first time, on Saturday, June 2, 1945 where the brethren met each other once again in full vigor and enthusiasm, and enjoyed the same spirit of comradeship and fraternal relationship under the supreme guidance of the Great Architect of the Universe.

The members at present are faced with the challenge of rebuilding their old dilapidated temple. Out of their own contributions and some contributions from friends and sympathizers, the members tried to accumulate enough funds to enable them to reconstruct a new temple in time to host the 35th Annual Convention.

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Makapangyarihan. Nagkakaita lamang ang kanilang pamamaraan.

Ang mga sina-unang inhinyero at arkitekto na nagsipagtayo ng mataandang palasio, simbahan at templo ay walang iba kundi mga Mason. Ang mga bantayog na kanilang inuukit sa bato, kahoy, tanso't pilak, sa dibuho at sa kagandahan ay hinangaan ng panghabang panahon. Ang kanilang mamumuhunan ay Simbahan. Kaya't ang Masoneriya ay di kalaban ng Simbahan. Mana pa'y tagapagpalaganap ng paniniwala sa Mavkapal.

Ang Masoneriya'y relihioso, nguni't hindi isang relihion. Ito'y lahat ng relihion, lahat ng lahi, lahat ng kulay, lahat ng pulitika. Datapuwa't ang pagtatalo sa loob ng Lohiya tungkol sa relihion at pulitika ay mahigpit na ipinagbabawal upang ang pagtitinginan magkakapatid at ang kapayapaan ay maghari sa Dakilang Kapatiran.

Ang katangian ng Masoneriya'y sa kanyang sinapupunan ay matatagpuan ang mga taong may iba't ibang relihion, at paniniwala sa pulitika. Nguni't boong iginagalang ang opinion ng hawa't isa.

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However, due to the inavailability of help from outside financial sources to complete the amount necessary to construct their new temple, the project had to be postponed.

Inspired, however, by the heritage of the brethren before them who were able to exist despite more unbearable sufferings and hardships, the present members are determined to pursue their goal. With the help of the brethren and sympathizers and with the blessings of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, they hope to raise enough funds to

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as much this year as in previous years.

The Board of Directors of the corporation decided last year to increase the premium in group insurance from P12.00 to P18.00 per year per thousand. The new premium rate took effect on January 1, 1968. The Board hopes that by the end of 1968, the group insurance will not suffer any loss. It is known moreover, that the increased premium is still lower compared to similar policies issued by other insurance companies.

THE FILIPINAS SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSN.

Definitely the Association will be allowed to start operation early this year. The delay in starting the business was due in part to the advice of Central Bank authorities to get as much as P500,000.00 paid up in assets before starting. The advice was good, but investors were watching and waiting until it could operate before adding to their investment. With a paid-up capital of P500,000.00, it would have been allowed to operate as a stock corporation, allowing the general public to buy shares, deposit and borrow from it. With its present paid up contribution of P99,300.00, it will be allowed to operate among its members only. At any time in the course of its operation as an association, when its assets and stock payment reaches P500,000.00 it will be allowed to amend its articles to operate as a stock corporation at which time it can then go public.

In the period of organization, it deposited its collection at PNB and earned P12,322.09 in interest. The papers are being worked on more speedily now and it is hoped that soon announcement will be made on the opening of the activities of the association.

enable them to construct their new temple in the near future. △