

Merrimack Lodge History

The close of the Revolutionary War found the people of Haverhill with a heavy burden of debt and taxation. The town supported the struggle for independence through the supply of many men as well as money. Conditions began to improve by around 1790 with the ship building industry leading the way. By 1797, Haverhill was well prospering due largely to the trade and commerce with Europe and the West Indies.

To give some perspective on life in Haverhill prior to 1800, consider the Haverhill to Boston Stage Coach running once per week, then expanding to twice per week. The trip only took 12 hours... (just slightly longer than the present day commute down I-93 on a weekday morning! <grin>)

In June of 1802 a petition was submitted to the Grand Lodge and in June of 1803 Merrimack Lodge was *constituted* with MW Sam Dunn signing the charter.

The meetings were held on the Thursday which came on or before the full moon. The dues of 12.5 cents were paid by each member at each meeting. The meetings were held in Assembly Hall on the North side of Water Street, then moved to a hall above the Merrimack Bank Building in 1814, then 4 years later returned to Assembly Hall until 1836.

Like most lodges, Merrimack Lodge underwent the same trials and hardships following the Morgan Affair and the Anti-Masonic crusade which followed, causing Merrimack Lodge to surrender its charter in 1843. 8 years later, in 1851 with the town of Haverhill regaining its prosperity mostly due to the manufacturing of shoes, a petition to restore the charter of Merrimack Lodge was submitted to Grand Lodge and in November of 1852 Merrimack Lodge was "back in business".

During the following prosperous years, several lodges in the area were established with the support of Merrimack Lodge, namely Grecian Lodge (now Lawrence United Lodge), Charles C. Dame Lodge, St. Matthew's Lodge, Warren Lodge and Saggahew Lodge.

Of special note is the meeting of October 23, 1869, when Moses Wingate, a Past Master of Merrimack Lodge, celebrated his 100th birthday by sitting in the east and witnessing the initiation of his 50 year old son!