

On January 31, 1910, Grand Patron J.M. Lowndes was asked, by Brother W.D. Townsend of Gillette, for the necessary information to organize a chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star in Gillette. Blanks were sent and on April 17, 1910, Brother Lowndes received a petition for the dispensation to organize a chapter at Gillette, signed by twenty-four petitioners.

He appointed the Grand Matron Estella R. Barnett, his Special Deputy, to institute this new chapter. Sister Barnett did this work on May 7, 1910, appointing M. Nichols of Sundance as Grand Chaplain and W.D. Townsend as acting Grand Secretary. Harry Chassell, a known Master Mason, vouched for each of the petitioners. On that day, "the degrees were conferred at sight upon 21 petitioners". There were also three present who held lawful demits and receipts of dues. As soon as the above became members, a motion was made to elect officers. The following were installed into office: Worthy Matron Minnie Townsend; Worthy Patron Harry J. Chassell; Associate Matron Mary Gibson; Secretary Maude Wakeman.

In the evening, Sister Barnett held a School of Instruction and Brother Lowndes received a very favorable report of the interest shown by these new members of the Order.

The chapter was named for the lovely blue gentian flowers that grew wild on the hills. The second and fourth Friday nights were voted as the regular meeting nights and meetings were held in the Eagles Hall. Rent would be \$2.50 per night when meetings were held. Meeting times were later changed to Saturday nights, then to Wednesday nights. January 10, 1923, the by-laws were amended to "the stated meeting shall be held on the second Thursday of each month", and remains the same today.

At the Grand Chapter Session in Rock Springs on September 8, 1910, our charter was presented. Our dues were \$2.00 in 1910, and initiation fees were \$5.00. In 1944 the dues were set at \$3.00. Refreshments in the first few years (1910-1916) must have always been ice cream or strawberries and cream which was purchased at the local drug store!

The ballot box was purchased in 1913 and a gavel was purchased on September 13, 1916.

In 1918 the meeting place was at the Odd Fellows Hall. A star, honoring Brother George Roe, was placed on the Service Flag at Grand Lodge in December 1918. Brother George Roe became a member in October 1912 and served in World War I.

The Grand Visit on March 6, 1920, lasted until 2 o'clock in the morning!

On July 14, 1920, the first piano was purchased for \$250.00.

On November 9, 1921, the chapter cashed in a \$50.00 Liberty Bond to meet the needs of the chapter. On May 10, 1922, acting upon a suggestion from the Grand Matron, ballots were cast for three trustees, and on the same date the balance on hand was \$57.11.

In 1923 the Secretary received \$12 in salary. The Trustees Report, at the time the bank went defunct and was closed, was \$215.57, including the Liberty Bond and \$165.57 in the checking account. The Flower Committee reported no funds for flowers but the committee had tried to call on the sick.

Letters for donations were mailed and money making projects continued for the Home Fund.

On April 27, 1925, William Dolezal affiliated with Gentian Chapter. He served as Worthy Patron in 1926 and in 1927. He was a member in Gillette until July 12, 1934, when he affiliated with Lewisia Chapter No. 16, Basin. He served as Worthy Grand Patron in 1937-1938.

The first mention of a vote taken to hold a "public" installation is in the minutes dated November 11, 1926. The Secretary was instructed to issue a general invitation to the Masons.

On May 12, 1928, the charter was draped for 30 days in memory of the first Worthy Matron of Gentian Chapter. A new ballot box was purchased this year and is probably still being used today. In 1928 Past Matrons and Past Patrons were called upon to confer the degrees and this practice continued for many years.

July 10, 1930, there was no record of contributing to the Temple Fund. The chapter voted "we pledge 100% of our present membership or \$113 to the fund, to be paid in four equal annual payments of \$28.25 each, the same time we send in the Annual Report each year."

The Worthy Matron in 1931, Sister Olive Ryland, requested no card playing in the chapter room this year.

Big Piney Chapter lost all their belongs in a fire in 1932 and our chapter sent \$5.00 to them.

May 6, 1932, lady officers dressed in colonial dresses in honor of the Bicentennial Year of George Washington's Birthday. Another celebration was a picnic at Devil's Tower with members from Upton, Sundance, Hulett and Newcastle. Rent in 1932 was \$5.00 a month.

The first mention of a Past Matron's Club meeting was in the minutes dated March 14, 1935. Also, in 1935 daylight savings time was to be observed at the June meeting and a school of instruction was given by Worthy Grand Matron Sister Horton. A motion was made in July 1935 that "we have a party following our monthly meetings except when we have extra work." There was discussion on a Kensington Club. It was customary to give bridal showers to "chapter brides".

In December of 1935 there came an "understanding" regarding the heating of the chapter room.

During this meeting the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron-elect were appointed as a committee to exterminate the mice in the kitchen. In April of 1936 the "mouse committee" reports a diminishing supply.

Initiations were held at almost every meeting from 1910-1935. It seemed that proficiency examinations were almost always given one month following initiation.

The first record of the Worthy Grand Matron examining the Secretary Book was February 8, 1940.

February 13, 1941, the Signet Committee had a beautiful "new" signet on display that had been secured on approval. The cost was \$135 plus \$3.00 for crating. This signet could be purchased with a down payment and a year's time on the balance without carrying charge. The signet was dedicated, in loving memory of departed Sisters and Brothers, March 13, 1941. \$10.00 for the seeing-eye-dog fund was presented at the Official Visit. Also, in 1941 the Past Matron's quilt was being quilted and a drawing for the quilt would follow. Our chapter flag was to appear in a flag ceremony at Grand Chapter this year.

Harry Chassell was the first to receive a 50 year pin and certificate. In 1947 it was presented to him by "our own" Lora McCarthy, Past Grand Matron. He was our first Worthy Patron and continued to serve our chapter and served as a Trustee in 1953. Brother Harry passed away in 1960. (The Harry J. Chassell Memorial Award was established and given annually to a high school senior. It is interesting to note that our Sister Betty Duncan, while a senior in High School, received this award!) In 1952-53 our chapter presented the members at Hulett with cords for their badges in a lovely ceremony.

A program honoring four charter members, Rosa Chassell, Harry Chassell, Mary Gibson, and W.R. Gilstrap was held on May 9, 1957. This was quite an honor for the chapter to have them present. Sister Louise Dickey has vivid memories of the old Masonic Hall. She remembers climbing a very steep and long staircase to get up to the chapter room. (We are thankful we don't have to do that today and that those wonderful Masons who planned the new Masonic Hall had enough foresight to make it on ground level!) The old hall consisted of a small fellowship room which was probably about 22 feet by 14 feet and also had storage cupboards at one end for Masonic, Star, and Job's Daughters' paraphernalia plus a few cupboards at the other end where dishes were stored to be used for refreshments! There might have been enough room to set up three long tables for refreshments. There was a small two-burner hot plate to boil coffee and heat water in a dish pan for washing dishes! To have water it was necessary to go to the other end of the chapter room where the bathroom was located and carry the water pitcher-by- pitcher to the fellowship room until you had as much as you needed. The bathroom door was between the piano and the Chaplain's chair! The

Anteroom was very small, probably 8 feet square. This was also where the Jobies got dressed (in shifts) and kept their robes, capes, crowns, etc. for storage. Only so many could go in at a time so needless to say we were always telling each other to hurry, hurry, hurry! Dinners were usually held at one of the larger restaurants in town when the Worthy Grand Matrons and Worthy Grand Patrons made their official visits because our hall was so small.

Plans for a new Masonic Hall were being laid. In November 1965 a motion was made by Sister Vera Ewing to furnish the kitchen for the new hall. "If there isn't enough money to do it we get out and earn it!" (There was a total of \$2,700 available at this time for kitchen items.)

The Ways and Means Committee was established on December 1, 1966. Aggressive and numerous money making projects were pursued. Sister Dorothy True served as Treasurer for the Ways and Means Committee from its beginning date until 1996, at which time the committee was dissolved. Through the efforts of the Ways and Means Committee many items were purchased for the chapter. An astonishing amount of \$7,350 was given, over a period of twenty five years, to the Masons to apply to the note for the building.

Gentian Chapter succeeded in furnishing the kitchen of our new Masonic Hall, including the cabinets, dishes, silverware, stove and refrigerator. Eastern Star members and the Masons worked hard to paint the hall. Sister Mary Alice Logue made the drapes and cornices for the dining hall. The members of Eastern Star were then and still are extremely proud of this "new" building.

The cornerstone of the new Masonic Hall was laid on June 4, 1967. The first Eastern Star meeting held in the new Hall was June 8, 1967: The meeting was conducted by Jeannine Jacobs, Worthy Matron and Don Jacobs, Worthy Patron. Following the installation of Lois Bundy, Worthy Matron, and Mark Bundy, Worthy Patron, a celebration was held in the "new" dining hall where refreshments were served!

Our new Altar was presented to our chapter in 1967 as a memorial gift from Jeannine Jacob's mother, Myrna Donahue, in memory of Jeannine's dad. The lighted glass panels were hand painted by Sister Margaret Bundy. Our chapter cherishes this beautiful Altar for our chapter room.

Our Silver Tea Service was given to the chapter by Sister Polly Ostlund in 1974. The piano that was used in the Masonic Hall was given by Mrs. Mary Hunter. She had it in her home and gave it to the chapter. It is now used in our dining room. The piano in the chapter room was a gift from Sister Florence Wormwood McClelland. The Worthy Matron's chair in the East was donated by Sister Lavern and Brother Cede Cook. It belonged to the late Dr. Hannum, their son-in-law.

In 1977 Worthy Matron Mary Ellen Davis and Worthy Patron Paul True started a project to purchase new pedestals. Worthy Matrons that followed supported this project and through donations and money making projects, we were finally able to purchase the beautiful lighted pedestals. These were dedicated in April 1983. (Ways and Means donated \$1,016.50)

The Gentian Gem's newsletter (named by Brother Paul True) was established when Sister Janette Boden was Worthy Matron in 1979. The newsletter continues to be published two times a year by the current Worthy Matron and is mailed to all chapter members. This also serves as our Christmas letter to out-of-town members.

Sister Harriett Clark was elected our first "Silver Belle" in December 1982 as an outstanding member. The practice of honoring a Silver Belle or Beau (elected by the members) continued for 14 years. Sister Harriett also taught the new members the proficiency for many years.

In the summer of 1983 several of the Eastern Star members painted the dining room, kitchen, hallway, and the front entrance of our Masonic Hall. This was a joint effort with the Masons...they bought the paint..we did the work!

Using funds left from the pedestals and a few more money making projects, we were able to purchase a new Eastern Star rug. On May 10, 1984, a dedication was held for our new rug. New

silverware was also purchased for the kitchen and Betty Crocker Coupons were used to purchase kitchen utensils.

In 1985 our chapter celebrated their 75th Anniversary. We also hosted the Montana/Wyoming Exchange Visit. Sister Sue Hoy was Worthy Matron and Brother Reo Duncan was Worthy Patron. A style show was held following the banquet and various items were auctioned, generating \$1,050.00. Members made a quilt, with Sister Barbara Lahr's guidance, and "donations" were received. The beautiful quilt was won by Worthy Matron Sue Hoy.

A beautiful display case was purchased in July of 1986. Ways and Means paid for half of it and the Past Matron's Club paid the other half.

Our dues in 1988 were raised to \$12.00 with \$4.00 of that going to the special fund. (They have not been raised since that date.) Initiation fees were set at \$15.00.

Our chapter was shocked and saddened with the sudden death of our Secretary Sister Betty Wyninger in March of 1989. Our members bonded and gained strength from the lessons of Martha. We gave each other support so we could continue with the official visit, scheduled for the following week. Brother Roy Wilson hand-crafted a broken column and it was presented to the chapter in September 1989, by the Past Matrons, in memory of our departed Sisters and Brothers. (It has become tradition that the Past Matrons give the memorial service each year.)

In June 1992, a new crown and scepter was presented in memory of Sister Allowayne McKinney by Sisters Linda Wade and Leta Tanner, and Brother Jerry Wade.

In 1996 our chapter hosted the Wyoming/Montana Exchange Visit while Worthy Grand Matron Peggy Loveridge and Worthy Grand Patron Don Heiser made their official visit. Sister Betty and Brother Reo Duncan presided in the East.

Sister Naomi Turner, daughter of our first Worthy Patron, passed away in May 1997. She was a 77 year member.

We hosted Grand Chapter in Gillette in 1979 and 1990. Our Betty Duncan was installed Worthy Grand Matron and Brother Earl Jones was installed Worthy Grand Patron in 1990. Gentian Chapter and Alcyone Chapter No. 27 hosted a lovely reception at the Complex following installation. Sister Betty has continued to distinguish our chapter by serving as the Grand Secretary since 1993.

Our chapter has become involved in many community projects. We have participated in the Fourth of July parades and for several years sold ice cream at this event. We donated a wheelchair to the Public Health Office. We purchased a brick for the Lasting Legacy Park. The summer of 1993 we served supper and breakfast for the Multiple Sclerosis Bike-A-Thon. In 1993 we gave \$100 to the National High School Rodeo Association which was held in Gillette. We have donated money for the purchase of life-lines in Gillette. In 1996 we adopted a flower bed at the Complex and shared first prize with the members of AARP. Locally, our chapter has awarded several scholarships. We have sponsored several Blood Drives, and give food baskets annually to the Council of Community Services. Some of our members have assisted at the Soup Kitchen. Our most recent donation was given to a Gillette polio victim to help her purchase a dog. We continue to support the various projects of the Worthy Grand Matrons and Worthy Grand Patrons.

Gentian Chapter has been honored as fifteen of our members have served as Grand Officers and forty have served as Grand Representatives. We have seen many changes and these have been a source of strength and love for many members.

Gentian Chapter has been fortunate that we have "recycled" only one Worthy Matron (1996-97) in our 87 years of history. Our membership is 166. We are proud of our heritage and give thanks to our members and to our Past Matrons and Past Patrons who have given support to our chapter through the years. May the sparks of the past illuminate the present to ignite our future.

We go forth knowing our work is important and worthy, for as our own Past Grand Matron Sister Betty said in 1991, "the best and most beautiful things in life cannot be seen or touched, they can only be felt with the heart."

2002—Our Chapter continues to strive to make it's name known in the community through it's charitable work. We continue our annual blood drive, and annually volunteering to plant and weed a flower bed at the Cam-Plex. Some of our one-time projects include: finger puppets for children treated at the Emergency Room, donating to the Campbell County Fire Dept. helmet-mounted thermal imaging system (to see through smoke and find victims before it's too late), assisting at the information booth during the Great North American RV Rally (5000 RV's at the Cam-Plex, decorating a tree with the Rockpile Museum for the Festival of Trees, donating to the Campbell County Literacy Volunteers, displaying a wreath at the Heritage Center over the Christmas Holidays, donating to the Campbell County Special Olympic athletes to buy new uniforms, support for the new Gillette Campus by purchasing an engraved brick for the entry way, and we supported the Wyoming Grand Chapter special projects.

Fun times were had also: garage sales, raffles of a quilt make by W.M. Andrea Stamp, basket of handmade/homemade goodies, "Guess Who is coming to dinner" made for a delightful evening of good food and fellowship, secret "daughters" with the Job's Daughters and they, in turn, had secret "Stars", pizza parties with the Jobies and the DeMolay, Christmas caroling with the Masonic Family, making note cards to go in the tote bags at Grand Chapter, and potluck dinners with the Masons. We were honored when our own Sister Louise Dickey was installed Grand Organist in August of 1997, but saddened, that after 60 years, the golden chain of Grand Officers was broken, 3 months later when she was called to serve in the Grand Chapter on High.

Our own Sister Betty Duncan, PGM, served the Grand Chapter as Grand Secretary for 8 years before "retiring" to enjoy family and home. She was accorded the title of Grand Secretary Emeritus. M.W.G.M. Dorothy Dewing honored her with the appointment of Chairman of Registration for the 200-2003 General Grand Chapter Session. Sister Betty also serves in the International Grand Secretaries Association and will be their President in 2009-2012.

Our own Sister Sharon Jennings was Grand Marshal when Gentian Chapter hosted the "2000" Grand Chapter Session at the Cam-Plex. This session was chaired by Sister Peggy Kelsay and was the first time the new Star Point chairs of our Chapter were used.

Two-time ESTARL recipient Jennifer Jo Winegar was sponsored by Gentian Chapter. She is doing Missionary work and we are extremely proud of her. Scholarships were awarded locally.

Some interesting facts about Gentian Chapter: In April of 2001 our A.M. and A.P. announced they were moving to Kentucky. At elections in May, W.M. Andrea Stamp and W.P. Don Dickey were re-elected to the East and to the delight of the Chapter, they accepted. Their "Smiles" installation in June was held in the dining room because it was "raining" in the Chapter Room.

January 2002, Gentian Chapter was especially interested in the Olympic Torch run as our own Sister Cynthia Innes was a torch bearer.