DISTRICT 11 MASONIC HISTORY

District 11 of the Free and Accepted Masons of Washington is situated on the Olympic Peninsula in Jefferson and Clallam Counties. District 11 consists of these five lodges: Port Townsend No. 6, Port Angeles No. 69, Jefferson-Quilcene No. 107, Sequim No. 213 and Forks Lodge No.298.

History:

Although several explorers sailed along the shores of the Olympic Peninsula and into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the most thorough work was accomplished in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver (1758-1798) of the British Navy who commanded an expedition into Puget Sound. Captain Vancouver charted and named many natural features: bodies of water, capes, headlands, inlets, and mountain peaks. His predecessor, Captain John Mears, a British mariner searching for the Northwest Passage, named the highest peak on the peninsula, Mount Olympus (7965 feet), after the mythical home of the Greek gods, on July 4, 1788. Captain Vancouver followed precedent and wrote the name "Olympic Mountains" on his charts. Eventually, the "Olympic" designation was extended to the peninsula itself.

Port Townsend , Jefferson County:

White settlers came to the north Olympic Peninsula in the mid-1800s but the rugged interior remained unexplored. Like the Indians, the settlers chose town sites along the waterways and were mainly occupied with logging, fishing, and farming. The first permanent American settlement on the peninsula was Port Townsend, founded on April 24, 1851. Port Townsend was perfectly situated for sailing ships. At a time when commerce and travel in the Pacific Northwest were almost entirely waterborne, it was the first safe harbor encountered on Puget Sound. In 1854, the Treasury Department moved Washington Territory's Port of Entry into the United States, from Olympia to Port Townsend. Sailing ships usually stopped for a least a few hours, both entering and leaving Puget Sound, to clear customs and await favorable winds and tides for continuing their voyage. Port Townsend residents believed their city was destined to become the San Francisco of the Pacific Northwest.

In 1853, Andrew J. Pope and Captain William C. Talbot, two experienced and well-financed Maine lumbermen, formed a partnership and sailed from San Francisco to Puget Sound, seeking a site for a sawmill. Pope and Talbot stopped first at Discovery Bay, west of Port Townsend, then at Port Ludlow. Finding Port Ludlow already equipped with a mill, they set up operations in Port Gamble on the Kitsap Peninsula. Timber and shipbuilding opportunities drew men to these areas and soon after the establishment of the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Washington in 1858, Franklin Lodge No. 5, at what is now called Port Gamble, and Port Townsend Lodge No. 6 in Port Townsend were chartered on Sept 5, 1859.

Port Angeles, Clallam County:

The first American settlers in the future Clallam County staked claims at New Dungeness, west of the Dungeness River on the harbor created by Dungeness Spit. They raised potatoes in the fertile soil and cut trees to make cedar shakes, ship masts, and pilings. Within a year or two, some moved five miles south to the extensive prairie where the city of Sequim is now located. When Washington Territory was separated from Oregon in 1853, all of the northern Olympic Peninsula was part of Jefferson County. An 1885 army reconnaissance expedition, started from Port Angeles, was the first well documented exploration of the Olympics. Other expeditions followed and explorers called for preserving the interior of the range as a national park. Port Angeles received an unlikely boost in the late 1880s when it was chosen as the site of the Puget Sound Cooperative Colony, the first of a number of utopian communities that sprang up in Washington over the next 30 years. Hundreds of colonists arrived in 1887, swelling Port Angeles's population. The Puget Sound Cooperative Colony did not last long. But it attracted many settlers to Port Angeles. Colonists built the area's first sawmill, first office building, homes, schools, churches, and the ornate Opera House, long-time center of civic life.

A year after statehood, in 1890, residents of Port Angeles and Port Crescent, two booming towns that expected railroads to arrive at any moment, engineered an election to move the county seat from New Dungeness. Port Angeles won and has been the county seat and commercial center since 1890. Soon after, in 1891, Port Angeles Lodge No. 69 was established there.

Port Hadlock, Jefferson County:

Port Hadlock, located five-and-a-half miles from Port Townsend was founded in 1870. In 1884, the Western Mill and Lumber Company built a large saw mill there. In 1886, the operation was sold to the Washington Mill Company of San Francisco. The mill employed about 125 sawyers and 30 stevedores to load the ships. It produced most of the lumber used to build Fort Flagler, Fort Worden, and Fort Casey on Whidbey Island. Irondale, just north of Port Hadlock, was so named because a large iron ore smelter was built there in 1879. The plant employed some 400 men and produced high-quality iron, which was shipped primarily to San Francisco. The plant closed in 1889, but was reopened several years later as the Western Steel Company. This area was a growing timber, shipbuilding and mining community and in 1896, Jefferson Lodge No 107 was established at Hadlock.

Quilcene, Jefferson County:

In 1902, the Tubal Cain Mining Company claimed that Quilcene would become the center for the smelting of gold, iron, copper, and manganese they expected to find in the Olympic Mountains. This mining activity brought men from Irondale, Seattle, and elsewhere to man the mine which was in the mountains above Quilcene. Quilcene Lodge No. 184 was established ther in 1911. Mining exploration continued until the 1920s, but little ore was ever discovered. Today, Quilcene is primarily a residential community, in relatively close proximity to Bremerton, the U.S. Navy Trident Submarine Base at Bangor, and other population centers. Quilcene and Jefferson Lodges merged in 2002 and the Lodge at Hadlock was closed.

Sequim, Clallam County:

Farming was established in the Sequim Prairie by settlers as early as the late 1850s. They raised potatoes in the fertile soil and cut trees to make cedar shakes, ship masts, and pilings. Dungeness was the first County seat. Growth spurted when pioneer farmers established one of the state's early irrigation areas in the dry rain shadow of the Olympics. The first irrigation ditch brought Dungeness River water to the prairie in 1896. Eight more followed, making Sequim a major dairy and agriculture center. In the early 1900s, shortly before American entry into the First World War, Sequim Lodge No. 213 was charted in 1916.

Forks, Clallam County:

During the late 1800's a scattering of interior settlements joined Forks, but the formidable heart of the Olympic Range remained wilderness. American entry into World War I in 1917 and the arrival of the U.S. Army Spruce Production Division further fueled Clallam County's growth. Light, strong, and resilient, spruce was an essential component of early airplanes. Spruce Division soldiers built the "Spruce Road" rail line to the vast spruce reserves north of Forks. The war ended before the railroad was used or the spruce mill in Port Angeles was completed, but both were important in later timber operations. Forks was officially incorporated on August 28, 1945. For many years, the city's economy was fueled by the local timber industry. The Forks Lodge No. 298 was chartered in 1954.