



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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V.WOR. BRO PAUL HEINREICH MATTHIAS FOELSCHE
Past Senior Grand Deacon

Paul Heinrich Matthias FOELSCHE was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1831. In 1849 at the age of 18 years he enlisted in the German Hussar Regiment and served in the German army for a period of seven years.

At the age of 25 years he left the German Army and he migrated to South Australia, in 1856. At that time a large number of German Nationals had migrated to South Australia and settled the wine growing areas. Foelsche then applied for and enlisted in the South Australian Mounted Police Force as a trooper.

He gained rapid promotion in the Police Force and attained the rank of Sergeant. No doubt exercising his previous Hussar skills. In 1869 he was appointed as a 'Sub Inspector of Police' and tasked with setting up a Mounted Police Force in the northern part of South Australia, (Later named the Northern Territory). Foelsche proceeded to Stuart Siding (Now named Alice Springs) he stayed there for a short period and was then confirmed as an Inspector of Police. He proceeded to the small port town of DARWIN and established the first Police presence and Police Force in the northern portion of Australia. This consisted of eight European Troopers and two black trackers.

FOELSCHE performed a wide variety of duties in the Northern Territory such as, Local Magistrate, Coroner, Dentist, Armourer, Photographer and is believed to have been an Artist. Whilst in Darwin he was made one of the first trustees of the Methodist Church.

FOELSCHE continued to perform all of the abovementioned duties until his death on the 31st January, 1914.

MASONIC CAREER:

The exact date that Foelsche joined Freemasonry is not known, however shortly after his arrival in South Australia he joined the Lodge of St. John, No. 1240 of the English Constitution, which was located at Strathalbyn, near the township of Adelaide. This Lodge was later named Lodge of St. John No 15 of the under the United Grand Lodge of South Australia.

His progress is vague, however in 1867 he became the first Senior Warden of that Lodge and in 1868 he was installed as the Master of that Lodge for 12 months, until he was transferred in his Police Service to the Northern Territory.

very little is known of his Masonic 'activities' until early 1896 when it is recorded that he gathered some seventeen Freemasons around him and, sponsored by the Lodge of Friendship No. 1, as the mother Lodge, the first known Masonic Meeting was then held on the 6th May, 1896 in the upstairs lounge of the Victoria Hotel in Port Darwin.

By direction of the Grand Master of South Australia, FOELSCHE was delegated the task of consecrating the first resident lodge being the 'Port Darwin Lodge.'

Freemasonry must have flourished. On the next meeting of the Lodge on the 23rd July, 1896, five new candidates were initiated into the 'Craft'.

On the 25th September, 1896 the freehold title of section 643 was transferred to three persons, being, Charles Edawrd HERBERT, a Solicitor, George MCKEDDIE, a storekeeper and Paul FOELSCHE, an Inspector of Police. These three were to be the trustees of the land for the Port Darwin Lodge.

Around 1901 the first Masonic Temple in the Northern Territory (Port Darwin) was built upon this site and consecrated. The Temple was constructed of galvanised iron sides and roof. One can only imagine the temperature, inside, of that building in the tropical area.

When this temple was completed, the Masonic Guide of South Australia of the year 1901-1902 and recorded that the Port Darwin Lodge now met in the Masonic Hall, Darwin.

In 1898 at the South Australian, April Communication W. Bro Paul FOELSCHE was made a Past Senior Grand Deacon. Foelsche in this capacity represented the Grand Master for many years.

On the 31st January, 1914 Paul FOELSCHE died in Darwin aged 82 years and he was buried in a grave in consecrated land at the rear of the Port Darwin Lodge.

The first serving Grand Lodge Officer from Adelaide to visit the Northern Territory in 1918 and was the Grand Secretary, Rt Wor. Bro C R Glover, P A G M. At that time Rt Wor, Bro Glover was on holidays in the Northern Territory. Whilst he was there he attended the Port Darwin Lodge, obligated and invested the new Master, Brother D A Roberts.

The first official Grand Lodge visit was in 1936. On this occasion the Deputy Grand Master Rt Wor Bro W R Bayly assisted by two other Grand Officers attended and installed the new Master W. Bro Howie.

In February, 1962 a new temple was erected and used to replace the original temple. Port Darwin Lodge had the honor of recommending a petition for the formation of a third 'Craft' Lodge in Darwin. The petition was accepted and later that year in a series of magnificent ceremonies a new Lodge, 'FOELSCHE' was consecrated in honor of Paul Foelsche. This Lodge still exists today.

Some difficulty arose in in obtaining more detailed information for Br Foelsche as the Masonic records were destroyed by cyclone 'Tracey' in 1974.