

The American Masonic Hall Shanghai 1928

The new Hall was consecrated by R. W. Bro. I.V. Gillis according to ancient Masonic Custom on 23 October 1928.

Prior to the demolition of the Masonic Hall on the Bund in 1928 some of the inner doors with frames and two panels from the 'North Room' were used in the construction of the new hall. The ground floor of the new hall was occupied mainly by a banquet room, another large room, cloak room, small offices, stores, kitchen and staff rooms. The upper floor provided space for a lodge room with subsidiary rooms, library and reading room and offices for the General Secretary of the Scottish Rite.

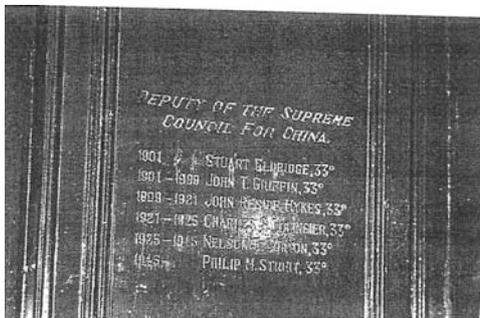
The following Masonic bodies contributed to the cost of the purchase of the site and the building. The Scottish Rite Bodies; Sinim Lodge; Shanghai Lodge; Ancient Landmark Lodge; Keystone R.A. Chapter and the District Grand Lodge MC. The land cost was \$11,500 taels and the building \$22,000 taels making a total of \$33,500 taels. The honour of the first meeting in the new hall fell to Ancient Landmark Lodge on 5 September 1928.

During WW II most non Axis residents were interned in 1942 and freemasonry went into recession until the end of the war. But life in China was chaotic and difficult for many years to come.

Following the Communist control in 1949 many buildings including Masonic Halls were expropriated for other use. The Light of Freemasonry gradually spluttered out in China in the 1950's.

A 2003 Visit to 178 Urumchi Road

In 2003 two brethren from Europe visited Shanghai and stopped outside 178 Urumchi Road. The



sign over the door indicated the building was occupied by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CCPPCC). The two brethren glanced inside and saw an original 33rd Degree honour board above the staircase and a 'United Front' slogan. The information board just inside the door indicated that the



lower floor was used as a CCPPCC Cadre restaurant.

A 2006 Visit to 178 Urumchi Road

In March 2006 Royal Sussex Lodge 501 EC from Hong Kong arranged a visit to Shanghai and the former 1931 Shanghai Masonic Hall at 1623 Beijing West.



On Friday 24 March the group were kindly invited by the brethren of The Shanghai Square and Compass Club to have tea at a building at 178 Urumchi Road.



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Bro. Allen Lai of the Square & Compass Club (above) informed the group that the former American Masonic Hall was originally located at 178 Route Dufour but the name of the road was changed to Dihua S. Road and the current postal address of this building is 178 Urumchi S. Road.



From the exterior of this building and from early photos it appeared to be the former American Masonic Hall. It was a two storey building and the interior wood panelling was of early 1900 Masonic styling. The main rooms had been redecorated with some modern fittings.

The Shanghai Square & Compass Club are mainly members of the Grand Lodge F&AM of China and meet informally at the building for which the occupiers receive an income.



From the originally description of the construction of the 1928 American Masonic Hall compared with the information board below and from the appearance of the building and interior and other photographs and records it became clear to the writer that the building was the former American Masonic Hall. It seems that the building has been modified little.



Conclusion

It was satisfying for all present to know that the old 1928 American Masonic Hall was still standing and survived WW II and a developer's wrecking ball. Equally, freemasons were able to reassemble together since 1950, if only informally, at the former Shanghai 1928 American Masonic Bodies Headquarters.

Bro. Brian L. Coak

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