

Captain Charles L. Wilson
October 27, 1837 – May 20, 1920
Charter Officer – Detroit Lodge No. 7
Pennant No. 596

The following excerpt from “The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922, Volume III” describes the life of Captain Charles L. Wilson

Captain Charles L. Wilson reached the advanced age of eighty-three years and few men retain their vigor and their faculties unimpaired to such an extent as did he. In fact, he remained active in the world’s work until some time after he had passed the allotted promised span of threescore years and ten and notable vitality characterized him to within a few weeks of his demise. Captain Wilson came to America from Denmark. He was born in the city of Copenhagen, October 27, 1837, and his father was a well known Civil Engineer. The family numbered sixteen children, of whom Captain Wilson was the last survivor.

In the acquirement of his education, Captain Wilson attended the public and high schools of his native land, but when he reached the age of fourteen, he left Copenhagen and went to sea. For many years he sailed on salt water, at different times under four flags, visiting various ports in all parts of the globe. At length he came to the United States, landing in New York and for some time he sailed from that city. While in the marine service he traveled around the world, but at length took up his abode in Detroit and served for many years as master of vessels on the Great Lakes, being attached to the United States engineer office in Detroit. Following his retirement from navigation activities, about a decade prior to his demise he continued for a time his connection with the United States engineer office in the capacity of inspector of river improvement work in the Livingstone Channel and elsewhere. At length as he passed on down the hill of life, he gave up active business and his last days were spent in honorable retirement, but he remained alert and vigorous until within five weeks of his demise.

It was on the 10th of December, 1868, that Mr. Wilson was united in marriage to Miss Mary Keal of Greenfield, Michigan, and they became the parents of a daughter: Leah V., who is now Mrs Thomas M. Robson. Captain Wilson was a charter member of Palestine Lodge, F. & A. M., and he was a charter member of Detroit Lodge No. 7, International Shipmasters’ Association. His political allegiance was given to the Republican Party, and while he never sought nor desired political preferment he always kept well informed on questions and issues of the day. His death on May 20, 1920, marked the passing of one of the veteran navigators of the lakes, one who had a wide acquaintance in maritime circles and who was held in the highest esteem wherever he was known.