

Virginia Lodge Histories

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In 1986, our Grand Master signed a contract to have a book written about the History of Freemasonry in Virginia, not just the Grand Lodge of Virginia. In 1995 the manuscript was received and in 1997 a contract was signed with University Press of America, a publisher of history books. The book was released in November 1998. This book, a product of collaboration and cooperation between two non-masonic historians and the Grand Lodge of Virginia, is an objective, comprehensive study of the History of Freemasonry in Virginia.

This book is the first such comprehensive work to be written on this subject and is the first general work on Freemasonry in Virginia to be published in more than sixty years, the last one being by William Moseley Brown in 1936.

So, you think you are busy! Too busy, in fact, to do some of the work needed by our Lodges and the Grand Lodge. Well did you know that Edmund Randolph was Governor of Virginia and Grand Master from 1786 to 1789? And Thomas Matthews was Speaker of the House of Delegates and Grand Master from 1790 to 1792. How's that for being busy!

Worshipful George W. Dame, a member of Roman Eagle Lodge No 122, served as Worshipful Master from January 1842 until 1869 (26 years?) and again as Worshipful Master in 1876.

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Right Worshipful H. G. Harris of Scottsville Lodge No. 45 served as District Deputy Grand Master of District No. 19 from February 1906 until February 1916.

Charles Yancey was Worshipful Master of George Lodge No. 32 and Grand Master 1822-1823, and Mordecai Cook was Worshipful Master of Portsmouth Naval Lodge No. 100 and Grand Master at the same time, 1824-1826, following Brother Yancey.

So, you say that was a long time ago, a different time and different circumstances. Well, Brother George W. Farley served as the Worshipful Master of Amelia Lodge No. 101, District Deputy Grand Master of Masonic District No. 27, and Grand Junior Deacon of the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 1985.

Did you know that the Marquis de Lafayette was an honorary member of Norfolk Lodge No. 1, Portsmouth Naval Lodge No. 100, and Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19? That John D. Rockefeller was a member of Atlantic Lodge No. 2, and that William McKinley, our 25th President was a member of Winchester Hiram Lodge No. 21?

These are just some of the facts that are documented in the records of our Lodges. You can get an indication from these facts that the historical records of our Lodges are important. The first Masonic Picnic of Fidelity Lodge No. 173 was in 1904. Homemade ice cream and cake was served. Each member was asked to furnish one gallon of sweet milk and two cakes for the picnic.

At Staunton River Lodge No. 155 in 1868 at one of the communications, the Worshipful Master and secretary paid fines of \$0.25 each for spitting on the floor. As an outcome of these disgraceful episodes, one dozen stone spit boxes were ordered purchased.

In 1967, in Urbana Lodge No. 83, smoking was banned in the Lodge hall, not for health reasons but to protect a newly installed carpet.

According to the minutes of Cassia Lodge No. 142,, the business of the Lodge was conducted in the Entered Apprentice Degree in 1827, also motions were seconded. In 1844, it was noted that the Lodge conducted its business in the Master Masons Degree. Most of us know this but are not aware of the dates.

Some Lodges indicated that they had difficulty obtaining members because of their limited jurisdiction - limited by city or county boundaries. In 1975, the Grand Lodge approved a trial period of concurrent jurisdiction until February 1978. Because 1978 was the bicentennial of the Grand Lodge a resolution was voted on in 1977 which approved concurrent jurisdiction.

The truest and most accurate history is found in the biography of men. Thus may the lives of Masons in this state reflect the noblest and best of future history. Wherever Masonry is established it enriches the community's home, church, cultural, and educational life. The character and influence of men responsible for planting the seeds of Masonry will linger with us like the memories of a pleasant dream to guide us in the paths of service to God and to our fellow men.