

October – Celebrating Founders Month in Virginia

Each October is designated as a time for brethren to recall important events in the life of Masonry in Virginia; the establishment of our Grand Lodge, and our Masonic Home. From recorded history we know that our Grand Lodge was established on October 30, 1778. There were nine chartered Lodges known to have been invited to participate in the organization of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Four Lodges responded to the call for a convention on October 13th, and on the second vote Right Worshipful John Blair, Jr., Past Master of Williamsburg Lodge, was unanimously elected as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. The installation of Grand Lodge Officers occurred on October 30, 1778, at which time there was reported to be a good attendance of Brethren from the several subordinate Lodges.

The series of events that led to the founding of the Masonic Home of Virginia brings into focus the story of two men, one with a burning desire for action, the other with property and a purse. In an effort to establish a 'home for orphans' Dr. George Potts, a member of Astrea Lodge No. 85 in Canterbury England, made several appeals to committee members and to Grand Lodge, but without success. In December 1889, Dr. Potts made one more very eloquent plea to Masons assembled in Grand Lodge. Moved by the reasoning and passion of Dr. Potts' speech, Captain A.G. Babcock offered a gift of \$5,000 in cash and a conditional pledge of further assistance if the home were established. In response to the Committee report and the pending gift, a groundswell of support emerged among the delegates to Grand Lodge and a resolution was adopted, authorizing the establishment of a Home for orphans of Virginia Master Masons. A petition to the Virginia General Assembly resulted in a charter issued on January 7, 1890.

In February of that year, Captain Babcock donated real estate consisting of 44 ½ acres of excellent farming land on Nine Mile Road. This property made up the bulk of what is today the campus of the Masonic Home. Additional parcels from Captain Babcock and others were added over the years brought the total campus size to over 90 acres.

We gather here to honor the Founders of our Fraternity. Our Founders, if they came back today, would be overjoyed to see the Masonic Home. Nothing could honor their memory more than seeing the result of their work as symbolized in the Masonic Home, the primary charity of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. After all, Masonry, like all of the best things in life, is more about doing for others than it is about gaining for one's self. The best of what we get out of Freemasonry is what we give to others.

If you have ever wondered how you, as a part of Grand Lodge, live up to your obligations as a Mason, how you personally carry on the tradition of our Founders, and how we as a Fraternity "practice what we preach," you need look no further than the Masonic Home. Just as Founder's Month recognizes men who made a difference in our Fraternity, the Home stands as a monument to honor ALL Virginia Masons, because they cared enough to do something with what Freemasonry taught them.

May God continue to grant us the strength to help others through the Masonic Home of Virginia, as we carry forward the attitude of service shown to us by our Founders. Nothing is more consistent with our obligation as a Master Mason. I will just place in your mind, and hopefully on your heart, the continued need for your support. Just know that any donations you make will help ensure the future of your Masonic home, the crown jewel of Masonry in Virginia.