

Tuckahoe Lodge

History of Tuckahoe Lodge No. 347, A.F. & A.M.

Richmond, Virginia



The early years...

Tuckahoe Lodge had its beginning when twenty-nine brethren petitioned the Grand Lodge of Virginia, and were granted a dispensation on January 3, 1923. The charter for a new lodge, in the Tuckahoe District of Richmond, was issued February 14, 1923. March 2nd of that year we were constituted by a Provisional Lodge, and given the name Tuckahoe Lodge No.347.

The provisional lodge then installed our first slate of officers: Wor. J.O. Harris, a Past Master of Westhampton Lodge was the first Master, Wor. L.E. Dunsmore, a Past Master of Lodge 207, the Sr. Warden, Bro. A.N. Revere was installed as the Jr. Warden, and two other Past Masters served as our Treasurer and Secretary; C.H. Thompson and R.L. Jennings, respectively. Bro. W.F. Martin was the Senior Deacon, and Bro. P.L. Ruermund, Jr. Deacon. Following the installation of the officers, a delegation of visiting brethren from Richmond lodge #10 presented an altar Bible to the members of Tuckahoe. Rt. Wor L.H. Walton, the chaplain, accepted the Bible for the lodge. That Bible rested on the altar for our Stated Communication on the night of our 75th Anniversary celebration.

At the first stated communication of the lodge, while under dispensation, the dues were announced as a dollar a month, and the fee for conferring the degrees was set at the princely sum of \$50. The first meeting was held in the Westhampton Lodge building, and that night there were 6 petitions and 5 applications read for the first time.

At the March stated communication the trustees were instructed to acquire the old Westhampton School building on Maple Avenue, near West View. This former Catholic school property was purchased for \$2000, and an additional \$2000 was paid to Bro. Jack Duval, a contractor, for extensive alterations and repairs to the building.

The first by-laws of the lodge were adopted in April of 1923. The lodge minutes note that appreciation was extended to Bro. J.E. Dicks for the warden's columns he handcrafted for the stations in the South and West, and to Bro. W.D. Strasser for the Masonic light fixture placed on the front of the temple.

At the September 1923 stated meeting the delegation from the Lodge of Strict Observance #207 presented our lodge with “The wages of a worthy brother Fellowcraft”...and they’re still in use today. On November 1st 1923, seven of our brethren represented Tuckahoe at the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone of the George Washington National Masonic memorial in Alexandria.

The first year went by quickly, and at the end of the year the lodge had a surplus balance of \$38.26 in the treasury. From reviewing the minutes of the lodge we find that in January of 1924, Amity Lodge #76 presented the rough and perfect marble ashlar to the lodge. Later that same year St. Johns Lodge #36 presented us with six past master’s jewels.

The officers and brethren were proud to take part in setting the cornerstone into a firm foundation for three significant West End buildings. Masonic ceremonies were held to lay the corner stones of St. Stephens Episcopal Church on May 14, 1927, Westhampton Methodist church on March 18th of 1939, and St. Giles Presbyterian on December 19th, 1940. During the construction of its edifice, the congregation of Westhampton Methodist Church held their services in our temple, and several of the brethren of the lodge were named in the church’s original charter.

A quarter century milestone...

Shortly after the beginning of WWII, the brethren voted to invest all surplus funds of the lodge in War Bonds. The lodge financial records from 1944 indicate that the lodge held \$1500 in government bonds at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. In 1948 the members voted to remodel the interior of the lodge. Wor. Bro. James E. Kirk was the Master during the 25th anniversary celebration year. The front of our old Maple Avenue building and the Masonic emblem above the door were designed by Wor. Bro. Kirk.

The November 12th 1948 edition of the Richmond newspaper reported that fire extensively damaged the Grand Lodge building at Adams & Broad Streets the previous night. Tuckahoe quickly extended an invitation to Lodges that met there to use our temple until repairs could be made. Amity Lodge met here until mid way through 1949. Westgate #352 (now merged into Richmond Lodge #10) also came and shared our home until the early 1990’s. Over the years the building was also been home to the Tuckahoe Eastern Star Chapter and a Jobs Daughters Bethel as well. Some of the original furniture of the Lodge is now in a room at the Masonic Home, serving as the furnishings for a Masonic ritual class that meets there weekly.

In 1964 a mortgage burning ceremony was held at the lodge. The members voted to continue paying the trustees \$100 a month to build up the Lodge’s investment funds, thus helping to assure the financial stability of Tuckahoe in the future.

Celebrating 50 years of Masonic service...

1973 was our 50th anniversary year. Wor. Phillip Drake (P.D.) Lawrence was Master, and was celebrating his 49th year as a Mason. The lodge celebration took place on March 2nd, exactly 50 years to the day from the first stated meeting after the chartering of the Lodge. Three of the original charter members of the Lodge were present that evening, Wor. M.H. Dicks, Wor. A.N. Revere, and Bro. F.D. Gatewood. Wor. Bro. Revere, the master in 1925, presented a brief history of the first 50 years. Our special guest that night was another distinguished Mason, Mt. Wor. William C. Vaughn, Grand Master in 1973.



Tuckahoe Officers at the 50th Anniversary Celebration – 1973

First Row: George Paul (SW), P.D. Lawrence (WM), William C. Vaughn (Grand Master in Virginia -1973)
Bob Nelson(JW), Herbert Clevinger (JS)

Second Row: Clarence Hamilton (Tyler), Bill Roper (SD), Jack Wolf (JD), Wade McClintock (Acting SS)

Third Row: Bill Lovern (Treasurer), James Kirk (Secretary), Jim Gary (Chaplain), Ed Oakley (Marshal)

75 years: Tuckahoe leaves its mark on Freemasonry...

February of 1998 saw the arrival of another milestone in Tuckahoe's life, our 75th birthday celebration. Wor. Robert S. Lanier served as Master and we held a celebration at our February stated communication. Special commemorative mugs and other mementos were distributed, and a detailed history of our first 75 years was presented.

In our first 75 years many individual brethren and Lodges helped furnish and embellish the lodge room. In addition to the gifts already mentioned, the canopies over the stations in the East, West, and South were originally used in Lewis Ginter Lodge. Those canopies are today part of the fixtures of Westhampton Lodge on Three Chopt Road. A ceramic bust of Mt. Wor. Bro. George Washington was donated to the Loge by the Principal of the Bainbridge Middle School. The Principal had mentioned to Rt. Wor. Bro. Bill Roper III, that the school was to be closed soon, and "George" would have no place to go. Bro. Bill said he knew a perfect place where "George" could stay, and he's been with us ever since.

A very talented local artist, and member of Tuckahoe, Alan A. Wenger, formally presented five beautiful paintings to the Lodge in the early 1980's. His depiction of "The Creation", "Jacobs Ladder", and three smaller works showing the symbols and emblems of the first three degrees of Masonry now adorn the walls of the Lodge room. A sixth painting, his majestic rendering of George Washington in full Masonic regalia, was one of Allen's favorite works and received critical acclaim. It was the subject of a wonderful article about the artist and Tuckahoe Lodge in the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

This talented artist and devoted Mason was called to the Celestial Lodge in July of 2002. All 6 of his original paintings now occupy places of honor in our new lodge room, a fitting memorial to Bro. Wenger.

Who we are, and what we have done...

Over the years the membership grew from the original 29 members to a peak of just over 440 in early 1980's, and now (2012) stands at 218 We have been lead by 82 different Worshipful Masters, six of whom have served two times in the East; J.O. Harris (1923-24), Chuck Hilgenhold (1993 & 1997), Jack Cooke (2002-03), Rob Eades (1977 & 2004), Herbert Eades (2006-07), and Barry Faison (2009-10). Tuckahoe presently has fifteen fathers and sons who are members of our Lodge. Four sets of those fathers & sons have served as Worshipful Master; the Roper's, the Woolard's, the Carpenter's, and Wor. J.C. Lewitt, and Wor. Wade McClintock. Mt. Worshipful John T. Quinley (a member of Tuckahoe Lodge) served as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 2005, while his son, J. Todd Quinley, occupied the East in Tuckahoe. In addition, brothers from two families have served as Worshipful Master; Robert and Herbert Eades, and Marshall and Douglas Messimer.

We point with pride to the fact that 11 of our Past Masters have gone on to serve as District Deputy Grand Master. Two of the brethren have served multiple terms as the District Educational Officer (DEO) for Masonic District 15-C, and one brother served three years as the Division IX Provost for Education. Several members currently serve as appointed Grand Lodge Committeemen. We have earned the coveted James Noah Hillman Award 23 times, the Grand Lodge Education and Leadership Award of Merit in 2005, and regularly receive the Seymour Jonas Levy Award, an award based on the number of units of blood that are donated and credited to our Lodge throughout the year.

Tuckahoe supports the Eastern Star and Masonic Youth programs, and generously contributes annually to the Masonic Home of Virginia. Our members continue to donate many gallons of "life" to the Richmond Metropolitan Blood Service and sponsor blood drives held three times each year in the Lodge. Our first blood drive each year is held in memory of M.W. Albert Hugh Tignor, Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, who was a member of Tuckahoe Lodge and a dedicated supporter of Masonic blood drives. We have conducted child I.D. clinics at various locations in the community, and strongly support the efforts of the Richmond Scottish Rite Childhood Language Center.



Masonic Education...

Tuckahoe has developed and refined the presentation of a beautiful, and very moving, lodge memorial service, first presented in 1974. The service was later rewritten and has been presented annually since 1981. In 2009 the program was re-written to include the widows of Lodge members and their families for a public presentation of the memorial service.

Two well-received Masonic education programs were developed and written by Wor. Doug Messimer. A special degree team performed "The Rusty Nail Degree" in 1981 in our Lodge, and in South Hill No. 297. Later it was presented in Richmond No.10, Fredericksburg No.4, Charlottesville No. 60, and the Area Leadership Conference. The "degree" has been presented about every five years since then as a multi-district educational program. An interactive education program called "Masonic Jeopardy" was

written and presented twice during 1997, first in our lodge and then at the Division Leadership Conference. A special agreement was negotiated with Merv Griffin Productions in Los Angeles to use the copyrighted name “Jeopardy” for our program. This same Masonic Education program was presented in lodges in Akron, Ohio, and Los Angeles, California in 1998, with acknowledgement to Tuckahoe Lodge, and Wor. Bro. Messimer.

Moving on...

During the past 30 years the members of Tuckahoe have considered moving to another location a number of times. In 1999 a committee of Past Masters and brethren was formed to again investigate the possibility of moving to a different facility. The Lodge was presented with numerous detailed reports and was offered various options over the next 12 months.

In 2001 we voted to put our Maple Avenue facility up for sale and seek out a new home for Tuckahoe Lodge. About that same time the Bethlehem Road Masonic Temple Corporation, home to several Masonic Lodges, decided to sell their building. After several months of negotiation the sale of the Maple Avenue site was completed, and the Bethlehem Road property was purchased. Tuckahoe moved into our new home in February of 2002. Extensive renovation was begun immediately including installation of a new air conditioning system, major roof repairs, new kitchen facilities, interior painting and ceiling tile replacement, construction of an outdoor storage area, a covered picnic pavilion, and various “fix-up” projects that were undertaken by the members of the Lodge.



Mt. Wor. Frederick G. Martin, III (center) Grand Lodge and Tuckahoe officers at the dedication ceremony, June 14, 2003.

Most Worshipful Frederick G. Martin, III, Grand Master of Masons in Virginia (2003), a member of Tuckahoe Lodge, along with the Grand Lodge Officers, brethren of the Masonic fraternity and citizens from the surrounding community gathered to celebrate the dedication of our Lodge building at Bethlehem & Dickens Roads during a very successful and well-attended community-wide celebration on June 14, 2003.

Lodge furnishings with deep historical and Masonic significance from the two Lodges that previously owned the facility (Richmond Lodge No.10, and St. Johns Lodge No.36) have been retained by Tuckahoe for use as our regular Lodge room furniture. Additionally, a desk, officer's station chairs, deacon's staffs and other furnishings from our Maple Avenue facility were donated to the brethren of Richmond Lodge No. 65, PHA (Prince Hall Affiliate) to be used as their primary lodge furniture.

Making history...

In May of 2004, following the adoption of a visitation compact between the Grand Lodge of Virginia and Virginia Prince Hall Masons, three members of Tuckahoe Lodge were among the first Masons in Virginia to sit in open lodge with the brethren of Richmond Lodge No. 65, PHA. Fraternal greetings from the two Grand Lodges were exchanged, as well as mementos of this historic occasion. The visiting delegation from Tuckahoe was formally received and very warmly welcomed by our Prince Hall brethren as a new chapter in the history of Tuckahoe Lodge and Virginia Masonry was being written. An article, authored by one of our brethren, detailing this historic visitation appeared in the Virginia Masonic Herald.

February of 2008 marked the 85th anniversary of our Lodge. Tuckahoe was one of ten Lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Virginia on February 14th, 1923. The seven Lodges still in existence are:

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| Twin Rivers No. 338 | Clarksville, VA |
| South Norfolk No. 339 | Chesapeake, VA |
| Catawba No. 342 | Fincastle, VA |
| St. Paul No. 343 | St. Paul, VA |
| Washington and Henry No. 344 | Mechanicsville, VA |
| Woodland Heights No. 345 | Richmond, VA |
| Tuckahoe No. 347 | Richmond, VA |

At the February Stated Communication a brief retrospective of our first 85 years was presented that included notable events that took place in the life of our country on February 14th. Wor. Marshall Messimer, Jr. presented each member and visitor with a beautiful custom Masonic token proudly noting our anniversary. The first token was presented to R.W. J. Ned Culler for his significant contributions to our Lodge over the last three decades, and his personal support and guidance afforded the Worshipful Master during his Masonic career and his journey to the East.



During 2008 a special projects team was formed and began the laborious job of refurbishing the current Lodge furnishings (candle pedestals, officer's station chairs, and altar). The pedestals have been refinished and rewired, and are now a stunning and very historical addition to the simple, yet beautiful interior of our Lodge room. The altar and the officer station chairs are the next fixtures that will be carefully refurbished.

A new home for our 200 volume Masonic library was installed in the Tyler's anteroom and placed in service in early 2009. The beautiful custom woodwork and lighting were handcrafted and installed by members of the Lodge. As of early 2012 the library collection has grown to over 325 volumes of Masonic literature and memorabilia, donated by friends and members of the Lodge.



***We are Freemasons...
Our principles make a difference.***