

UNIQUE EVENT

Just preceding the Grand Annual Communication, on the evening of February 8, 1909, a special communication of Richmond Randolph Lodge, No. 19, A. F. and A. M. (which Lodge has continuous records from 1787 to date), was held in the "Masons' Hall," Richmond, Va., the oldest Masonic building in America and the first erected for purely Masonic purposes.

This communication was held for the purpose of tendering a reception to Worshipful Leonard G. Roberts, Master of St. John's Lodge, Boston, Mass., the oldest Masonic Lodge in America, chartered in 1733.

The sentiment inspiring the event was intensified by the fact that on April 2, 1865, in the midst of the excitement of the evacuation of the city and the great fire, when thousands of negro slaves had been set free in a moment, all law and order annihilated, hoodlums, deserters, spies and criminals, crawling from their hiding places to burn and pillage, and one-third of the city—its business section—in flames, a Federal colonel halted the column of United States troops and put a guard, composed of Masons, over the building, and thus preserved this historic building and these priceless records.

The sentiment was also intensified because St. John's Lodge, Boston, had, in October, 1908, entertained at their 175th anniversary the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, together with the Grand Masters of the old thirteen States, Maine, Vermont and Nova Scotia, except the Grand Master of Georgia, who could not be present. Worshipful Brother Roberts and his wife were in Richmond as the invited guests of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. He was escorted to the Lodge by Grand Master Joseph W. Eggleston, Grand Junior Warden William L. Andrews and Grand Senior Deacon Philip K. Dauman. When introduced to the Lodge, he found wood fires burning in the two great fire-places (the first time for nearly fifty years), the room lighted both by candles and electric lights, thus linking the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, and fifteen of the officers and members in colonial costumes, impersonating John Blair, Governor of Virginia and Grand Master; James Mercer, Chief Justice of Virginia (who wrote Mary Washington's will) and Grand Master; Edmund Randolph, Governor of Virginia and Grand Master; Alexander Montgomery, Grand Master; Thomas Matthews, Grand Master; John Mar-

shall, Chief Justice United States and Grand Master; Robert Brooke, Governor of Virginia and Grand Master; Benjamin Day, Grand Master; William Austin, Grand Master; William W. Hening, Grand Master; John H. Foushee, Grand Master; Solomon Jacobs, Grand Master; D. W. Patterson, Grand Master; Robert G. Scott, Grand Master; William H. Fitzwhylson, Grand Master.

There were more than two hundred present in this old hall, for many years the meeting place of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. The old records were on exhibition, beginning in 1787 and including the reception given Lafayette there in 1824, with his and his escorts' signatures. There were also many records of bygone days displayed, among them a sabre left in the ante-room by one of the many United States soldiers, who met there, voluntarily, to devise means of relief of the sufferings of the families of Confederate soldiers still fighting their way to Appomattox.

The ceremonies were elaborate, and reflect credit on the Worshipful Master, C. P. Eldridge, and the other officers and members of this historic Lodge. Brother Roberts was presented with a large, framed picture of the building exterior, Lodge room and Chapter room. He was also presented with a portrait of His Excellency, Governor Randolph, who signed the charter and after whom the Lodge was named; a complete set of working tools, fashioned from the timbers of the building, including a trowel hammered out of nails. The portrait of Edmund Randolph was presented by Right Worshipful Ben. P. Owen on behalf of Manchester Lodge, No. 14. A roasted "possum," with an apple in its mouth, was brought in on a platter and formally presented by Right Worshipful Brother Owen on behalf of the same Lodge, which has had a "possum feast" annually for more than a hundred years. The feast which followed was in imitation of those of the eighteenth century, and consisted in part of the "possum" and included the bowl of punch, which our fathers thought indispensable.

Thus were the oldest Lodge and the oldest building linked together.