



HISTORIC WESTVILLE

Georgia's 1850's Living History Museum

Masonic Lodge at Westville

History of the Westville Lodge: "Lodge" refers to a local group of members. Therefore, the room itself is not actually the Lodge. The Westville Lodge was first a school house built by the "Poor School Fund" in 1831 in nearby Lumpkin. It later briefly became a school for girls. Cross Lodge #12 was founded on November 8, 1838 as a Blue Lodge (meaning it has three degrees of Masonry). The Lodge purchased the building about 1850 and established its lodge in the second floor where the school master had once lived.

The Lodge fell on hard times during the Civil War and Reconstruction, giving up its charter. It was re-established as Cross Chapter #173 in 1885, when the building was moved from its original location to the courthouse square in Lumpkin. Thus, Westville is actually the building's third location.

Cross Lodge #173 moved the building into Westville in 1973 to allow Westville to show the building's first floor in its first use as the Stewart County Academy. While the members of the lodge built a new building in Lumpkin, the Westville Lodge upstairs remained in use for occasional meetings. The paintings were added in 1975, but are appropriate in appearance to a historic lodge's decoration.

The Masons---also known as "Freemasons"---are a social fraternity based on general religious principles. It is a worldwide organization with no central authority, so there are widely varying practices.

Here in Georgia, the prominent organization is the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Georgia F. & A.M. (Free and Accepted Masons). As a fraternity, the Lodge does have secrets. However, the members are gracious to allow the public to see their traditional meeting room at Westville.

While the wood-sided, hand-planed walls and ceiling of the room are original to the building, the paintings on them were added only in 1975. They are traditional paintings, however, and are appropriate to any Masonic Lodge.

The room is an amazing place to be. The ceiling is a cloud-covered canopy. The floor is a "mosaic pavement" which lay-people might call a black-and-white checkerboard. There are visual references to architectural construction everywhere---squares and compasses. The Bible is prominently displayed in the center of the room. All of these "ornaments" have meanings which refer both to building a structure and a person's character.

Come to the Lodge! Westville's staff and visitors are grateful to the members of Cross Lodge #173 for their support and willingness to present the Lodge.

Free Masonry and the Westville Lodge

Freemasonry is a fraternity which exists throughout the free world, but particularly in English-speaking countries. Masons use architectural terms as metaphors for "building" the human character. A Mason's work helps him "build, become, and make."

Much has been made over the centuries about the symbolism and secrets of Freemasonry. Westville's role here is to provide our visitors and patrons with information about an

important social fraternity in the history of west Georgia during antebellum times. Numerous books and websites have been published about Masonry, and, so, our interpretation provides neither revelations nor original research. In fact, Masons declare that the only secrets they have are within the individual heart.

Historical records of Freemasonry date to the 14th century. However, Masons claim roots dating to the construction of King Solomon's Temple in 988 BC. Quoting from Masonic Manual 1983, "The tabernacle is a pattern of King Solomon's Temple, or which every Lodge is a representation." Modern lodges nevertheless are dedicated to "St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist." Masons indicate that they "were two eminent patrons of Freemasonry."

The oldest independently-confirmed tracings of the fraternity arose among English and Scottish builders of cathedrals in the early Middle Ages. The oldest still-extant lodge (that is, "local group") of Masons is the 1717 English Grand Lodge in London. Lodges sprang up in the next few decades elsewhere in England, as well as Scotland and Ireland. By the end of the 18th century, Masonry existed across Europe and the world. In 1730, the first American lodge, to which Benjamin Franklin belonged, opened in Philadelphia. James Oglethorpe brought Masonry to Georgia in 1733.

Today, the preeminent organization in Georgia is the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Georgia F. & A.M. (Free and Accepted Masons).

Beliefs: Masons don't have a central, controlling authority. So, it's difficult to make sweeping statements about beliefs. One shouldn't be surprised that the Masons in America have differing traditions from those in France or Ireland or Hong Kong.

Still, some generalizations can be made. For example, Freemasonry is not a religion, even though it is clearly religious. Masons believe in a Supreme Being and use a holy book. Christian Masons, therefore, use The Holy Bible, while Moslems use the Holy Koran, Jews use the Torah, and so forth.

Masons uphold "the Three Great Tenets: "Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth."

About the first of those tenets, "Brotherly Love," here is an excerpt from the Masonic Manual 1983: "We are taught to regard the whole human species as one family; the high and the low, the rich and the poor."

On the subject of "Relief," the Manual says: "To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly on Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection."

On "Truth:" "To be good and true is the first lesson we are taught in Freemasonry."

Masons also hold high "four cardinal virtues." These are temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice.

Most Masons rise through three Degrees of Craft: (1) Entered Apprentice, (2) Fellow Craft, and (3) Master Mason (related to the building of King Solomon's Temple).

Symbols: First of all, Operative Masonry refers to "the useful rules of architecture, whereby a structure derives figure, strength, and beauty." Free and Accepted Masons take the extra step of drawing parallels between the tools of Operative Masonry and those of spiritual building.

For example, the working tools of an "Entered Apprentice Mason" are a 24-inch Gauge and a Common Gavel:

1. The Operative Mason uses the 24-inch Gauge to lay out his work. Free and Accepted Masons have an additional use. The 24-inch gauge is likened to the 24 hours of the day. Freemasons dedicate eight hours of the day for the service of God, eight hours for regular work, and eight hours for rest.

2. Likewise, builders use the Gavel to "break off corners of rough stones" so that the stones will fit together better. For Freemasons, that practical purpose of the gavel symbolizes building the self. Freemasons "break off the corners of the rough stones" of their hearts and consciences. In doing so, they rid themselves of all bad and unnecessary attitudes and habits.

Moving to the next level, the Fellowcraft Mason also has tools---plumb, square, and level---representing philosophical strategies for life. Here are some explanations of the operative uses of these tools, as well as their "more noble and glorious purposes" among Free and Accepted Masons. As above, quotations are from Masonic Manual 1983:

1. The Plumb helps Operative Masons "to raise perpendiculars." It "admonishes us to walk uprightly in our several stations before God and man."

2. The Square helps Operative Masons "to square their work." In philosophical terms, the square thus helps us to align "our actions by the Square of Virtue."

3. The Level helps Masons "to lay horizontals." Masons symbolically must keep in mind "that we are traveling upon the Level of Time to that 'Undiscovered Country from whose bourne no traveler returns.'"

Observing the Lodge Room at Westville.

You should be able to find all of the tools mentioned so far in looking around the room. Here are a few additional comments:

You will notice immediately that the ceiling makes you feel outside. This is a "clouded canopy of...heaven, where all good Masons hope at last to arrive by the aid of that theological ladder which Jacob, in his vision, saw ascending from earth to heaven."

The floor is a "Mosaic Pavement" (a black-and-white checkerboard), replicating "the ground floor of King Solomon's Temple." The Mosaic Pavement signifies "human life checkered with good and evil."

In the center of the room is an altar upon which the Holy Bible is placed. Around the altar (also represented on the wall in front of you) are three columns. Each is topped with a flame or candle. One column is Wisdom (for invention), another is Strength (for work), and the third is Beauty.

On the wall in front of you, you will see two long branches of acacia. Acacia represents transplantation, as one might pull up a plant and re-plant it in the soft earth elsewhere. Acacia is linked to burial and re-birth.

In the center of the acacia branches is a beehive and bees. As with a beehive, the members of a lodge are busy workers.

In various locations there are Masonic aprons. An apron is a builder's tool, which protects the worker. If you have ever been to a Masonic funeral, you have seen attendants wearing such aprons. To your right you will notice a framed apron of John Word West. This apron belonged to the man whose idea in 1928 became Westville. On some aprons, you will see an Eye

...thro' darkest night
A vigil ever keeps
A vision of unerring light,
O'er lowly vale, o'er giddy height---
The Eye that never sleeps.

To the left, there are two columns topped with globes. One globe represents the surface of the earth (terrestrial globe), while the other is a projection of the night sky (celestial globe). Aside from their use as maps, the globes are also "invaluable instruments for improving the mind."

Also to the left, a Sun and a Moon is depicted. "The Sun rules over the day, while the Moon presides over the night." Light, in fact, is an important symbol throughout the room. Notice the candles, a source of light.

Most people recognize the Pythagorean Theorem depicted on the wall to the left. It is the "Forty-seventh problem of Euclid." To Masons, it teaches them "to be general lovers of the arts and sciences."

Westville Thanks Cross Chapter #173 of Lumpkin for its cooperation and assistance in this public opening of the lodge chamber.

Many Famous Masons Throughout History

Here is a brief listing of Masons, all names you should recognize, but in no particular order:

Kemal Ataturk	Medger Evers	Arnold Palmer
Louis Armstrong	Ben Franklin	Roy Rogers
Roy Acuff	Gerald Ford	Sugar Ray Robinson
Aaron Burr	Clark Gable	Will Rogers
Johannes Bach	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	Antonio López de Santa Anna
John Brown	Joseph Ignace Guillotin	Arthur Sullivan (Gilbert & Sullivan)
Julian Bond	Richard Gatling	John Philip Sousa
Simón Bolivar	W. S. Gilbert (Gilbert & Sullivan)	Telly Savalas
William "Count" Basie	Alex Haley	Desmond Tutu
William Jennings Bryan	John Hancock	Tecumseh
Casanova	Houdini	Mark Twain
Buffalo Bill Cody	Patrick Henry	Strom Thurmond
Davy Crockett	Jesse Jackson	Voltaire
George M. Cohen	John Paul Jones	Swami Vivekananda
Marc Chagall	Jerome Kern	Booker T. Washington
Cornwallis	Rudyard Kipling	Earl Warren
Roy Clark	Marquis de Lafayette	George Wallace
Winston Churchill	George McGovern	George Washington
Bob Dole	Thurgood Marshall	Oscar Wilde
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	Wolfgang Mozart	Andrew Young
Duke Ellington	Kweisi Mfume	Florenz Ziegfeld
Gustav Eiffel	Sam Nunn	