

# History of the Valley Royal Arch School

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This paper, like any other historical report, is filled with much statistical data and very little rhetoric. Its primary purpose is to enlighten the curious Royal Arch Mason with the name of the primary participants and the meeting places of the School. The financial data has been included to indicate the involvement of the Grand Chapter and its support of the School throughout its 87-year history. The Valley Royal Arch School was organized at Elkton, Virginia, on July 9, 1897. The Constitution and By-Laws were adopted and the following officers were elected.

President

Right Excellent Thomas E. Schwartz, Grand Scribe

Vice President

Excellent Ed. S. Conrad, Grand Master 1st Veil

Secretary – Treasurer

Excellent J.H. Morrison

Instructor

Most Excellent Jacob Bumgardner, Grand Lecturer

Assistant Instructor

Excellent William J. Hubbard, Grand Master 3rd Veil

Chaplain

Companion W.H.D. Harper

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The School met under the direction of Excellent William J. Hubbard, Grand Master of the 3rd Veil, Assistant to the Grand Lecturer, who stated in his report to the Grand Lecturer that "some of the companions are now as proficient in the work of the Grand Chapter as you will find anywhere in this Grand Jurisdiction; and certainly there never was a Royal Arch School started under more favorable Circumstances nor with a more enthusiastic set of workers than this. one. I cannot see how this can fail to become a permanent institution, and one destined to work great to the cause of Royal Arch Masonry in Virginia." This Statement proved to be quite prophetic as the School has met in annual session since 1897.

During this first session, all the degrees were conferred on three candidates from Milnes Royal Arch Chapter No. 16.

At the ninetieth Grand Annual convocation of The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, held in Petersburg, Virginia, December 3 and 4, 1897, the following resolution was presented and adopted:

Whereas, The Valley Royal Arch School of Instruction has been organized, and the School feels the importance of being fostered by The Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Virginia, not only by approval, but by financial assistance - Resolved, That this Grand Chapter approve the said School and make an appropriation of \$75.00 to give the necessary assistance, said amount to be paid to the Treasurer of said School out of the fund appropriated by this Grand Chapter for expenses of the Grand Lecturer.

With the adoption of this resolution the Valley Royal Arch school received recognition and sponsorship of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter. The School continued to meet in Elkton in the month of July of each year. In 1988, William J. Hubbard was appointed Grand Lecturer.

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He submitted glowing descriptions of the progress of the School in his reports to the Grand Chapter. In 1901 William J. Hubbard was elected Grand High Priest and continued to serve as Grand Lecturer during his term in the Grand East.

The School lost its first President in the passing of Most Excellent Thomas E. Schwartz on December 11, 1902. Right Excellent Edward S. Conrad was elected President at the 1903 session of the School.

In his 1905 report, Most Excellent William J. Hubbard, Grand Lecturer, commented on the excellent manner in which the Past Master's degree was conferred on candidates from Milnes Royal Arch Chapter No. 16 and "which is so often made a travesty of Masonry by the conduct of those participating."

In 1916 the School's second President passed to his eternal reward. He was succeeded by Most Excellent William B. McChesney, of Staunton, Virginia.

The Grim Reaper was relentless in his pursuit of dedicated Royal Arch Masons and claimed Most Excellent William J. Hubbard, Grand lecturer, on April 20, 1917. Right Excellent John T. Cochran was appointed to the office of Grand Lecturer and humbly began his illustrious service to the Grand Royal Arch Chapter, and the Valley and Southwestern Royal Arch Schools.

At the Annual Convocation in 1921, the Grand Chapter appropriation was increased to \$150.00. However, no reference was made to obtaining the funds from the Grand Lecturer's expense money.

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In 1922 The Valley Royal Arch School moved to the town of Basic, Virginia (now a part of Waynesboro) located at the junction of the C & O and N & W railways. The school met at Fairfax Hall, a young ladies' school which occupied approximately 30 acres of lawn. The first session of the School at its new facilities was attended by 122 companions, plus many ladies and children. This also marked the beginning of the Valley and Southwestern Royal Arch Schools sharing the same accommodations. Beginning in 1922, The Southwestern Royal Arch School would convene at Fairfax Hall after the close of the Valley Royal Arch School.

At the 1923 Annual Convocation of The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Virginia, a resolution was adopted to increase the school appropriations to \$200.00.

The school remained at Fairfax Hall until 1928, which, for reasons unexplained, Fairfax Hall was no longer available. At that time The Valley Royal Arch School met at the Brunswick Inn in Waynesboro, and The Southwestern Royal Arch School moved to VPI.

In 1929 the School met at Manch College, located just outside the corporate limits of Staunton on Valley Pike.

The School's third President Most Excellent William B. McChesney was called to his eternal reward on March 30, 1930. He was succeeded by Right Excellent Delamater Davis of Norfolk, Virginia.

Although the permanent records have not been examined for the period of 1930 through 1932, indications are that the School met in or near Staunton, Virginia during that period. The School moved back to Waynesboro in 1932, but the actual meeting place is unknown.

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In 1933 the school appropriation was cut back to \$100.00 and the School moved back to Fairfax Hall.

Most Excellent E.A. Joachim replaced Right Excellent Delamater Davis as President in 1934. This change was probably due to the fact that Right Excellent Companion Davis was to be elected Grand High Priest in October. Although no funds were appropriated to either school in 1934 and 1935, the Grand Chapter resumed its support in 1936 with a \$150.00 appropriation to each school.

Most Excellent Companion Joachim, the fifth President, died in Charlottesville, Virginia, on July 22, 1941. He was succeeded by Most Excellent W.A. James, who also served as Vice-President until Right Excellent F. J. Schmoele of Norfolk was elected Vice-President in 1942.

In 1944 the School moved to Augusta Military Academy at Fort Defiance, Virginia, under the instruction of Peter M. Shirey, Assistant Grand Lecturer, due to the death of John T. Cochran on June 30, 1944. Most Excellent Companion Shirey was appointed Grand Lecturer at the Annual Convocation of The Grand Royal Arch Chapter in October, 1944.

In 1948 Right Excellent William F. Nimmo was elected President to succeed Right Excellent William A. James who was elected President Emeritus.

At the Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter in 1951, the School appropriation was increased to \$200.00.

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Right Excellent John C. Parker was elected President of the School in 1954.

Right Excellent William A. James, President Emeritus, passed away on March 27, 1955 at Beckley, West Virginia. Right Excellent William F. Nimmo was elected President Emeritus in 1955.

In 1956, the School moved to Madison College, where it still meets every 4th Monday in June.

Right Excellent C.E. Schools was elected President of the School in 1958, to replace Right Excellent John C. Parker who declined the office because of increasing responsibilities in the Grand Line.

On July 25, 1959, Most Excellent Peter M. Shirey, Grand Lecturer, passed away in Front Royal Virginia. At the Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter, Most Excellent John C. Parker, Grand High Priest, assumed the duties of the Grand Lecturer.

In 1961, Right Excellent Archie E. Wilkinson, Jr. was elected President of the School. Prior to the 1965 session of the School Right Excellent William F. Nimmo, President emeritus, was called to his eternal rest.

Most Excellent John C. Parker retired as Grand Lecturer in 1971 and Right Excellent H. Glenn Lewis was appointed to the post at the Grand Annual Convocation.

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In 1972 Right Excellent Thomas A. O'Halloran was elected President to replace Most Excellent Archie E. Wilkerson, Jr. who did not wish to continue in the office.

In 1973 the School appropriation was increased to \$400.00 and to \$500.00 in 1981. It was again increased in 1982 to \$1000.00.

In 1983 Right Excellent E. Earl Waters was elected President to replace Most Excellent Thomas A. O'Halloran who asked to be allowed to step down. Most Excellent Companion O'Halloran was immediately elected President Emeritus.

The information for this report was obtained from the Proceedings of The Grand Chapter from 1897 to 1983. The permanent records of the school through 1953 are in the hands of the Grand Secretary and time did not permit the author to research those records. The author did manage to locate Fairfax Hall in Waynesboro, and as time permits, hopes to locate and photograph as many of the meeting places that still stand. Hopefully, this history can be expanded to include some of the more colorful anecdotes contained in the permanent records, and presented in its full version at some future date.