

Selected History of Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60

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This has been a very difficult subject to prepare to share with you today. There is just so much that I would love to share with you, but time will not permit a thorough review of 200 years of the history of Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60, so I have selected several important events and tidbits that I hope you will find interesting in this the bicentennial year of Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60. I will tell you that a hard bound book has been written and is at the printer as I speak. Copies will be for sale. If you would like to reserve one, please let me know.

The first record of organized Masonic activity in Albemarle County, Virginia, can be traced to the surrender of Lt. General John Burgoyne's 8000 man British Army at Saratoga, New York, by the Continental forces under the command of General Horatio Gates on October 12, 1777. You may be asking what did that have to do with Freemasonry in Albemarle County, Virginia.

Well, those prisoners captured at Saratoga were marched to Boston for confinement. In late October of 1778, because of the lack quarters, about 4,400 of those prisoners were marched 650 miles south, arriving in Albemarle County in January of 1779. There were about 2,500 British and 1,900 Hessian soldiers, and they were imprisoned at what was called the Barracks, located off of Barracks Road near Ivy Farms, west of Charlottesville.

There were nine English Freemasons included in these troops, complete with an Irish Military Warrant for Minden Lodge No. 63. On January 4, 1780, four candidates were initiated. Among them were Johannes Heinrich Carl Von Bernewitz, an Ensign in the

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Prussian Army. Three more candidates were initiated on February 22, 1780. A Table Lodge was also held that same day. Albemarle County, Virginia, was created in 1744, and in 1789, the Legislature passed an act, vesting one hundred acres of land at a place on the Rivanna River called the Shallows that was later Milton. Milton was the head of navigation on the Rivanna River, and became the shipping port of perhaps three quarters of the county and a large section of the Valley of Virginia. The minutes of Widow's Sons' Lodge record many of the men who founded Milton, and who operated businesses there.

On October 17, 1799, a dispensation was issued by the Grand Lodge of Virginia, authorizing the establishment of a lodge in the town of Milton, by the name of Widow Sons' Lodge, and appointing Edward Moore, Master; David Anderson, Senior Warden; and William Clarkson, Junior Warden. On December 10, 1799, a charter was issued, with thirty-four charter members, and the Lodge was designated Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60. The first by-laws have some interesting tidbits.

- It shall be the duty of the worshipful Master at every meeting when time will admit to give the brethren the benefit of a lecture in which degree the Lodge may be setting.
- Every person who recommends a candidate shall deposit one guinea in the hands of the treasurer or be answerable for the same to the lodge.
- Every member shall pay into the hands of the Treasurer one shilling & six pence at each monthly meeting.
- The fee for initiation and passing shall be 1 4.4, and 1 2.2 for raising.
- Every brother (except in case of emergency) who may wish to be passed or raised, shall produce a certificate to the Lodge signed by one of the officers thereof, testifying his eligibility to seek advancement before it shall take place.

On February 13, 1800, the lodge purchased a Floor cloth. You may be wondering, what is a Floor Cloth? Prior to the initiation of a candidate, one of the tiler's duties in Widow's Sons' Lodge was to "draw the lodge", or trace in chalk, crayon, or charcoal on the floor,

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symbols associated with the degree to be conferred. We use slides today. Tradition tells us that the candidate was obliged to erase all traces of the diagram at the conclusion of the degree.

Just where is that Floor Cloth? It is a priceless piece of early American art (1800-1820) and is presently in the possession of the Southern Museum of Decorated Art in Winston Salem, North Carolina. They purchased it from a pawn shop in Richmond. We have no idea how it got there.

The establishment of a recruiting station at Charlottesville, Virginia, following the outbreak of the War of 1812, added to the importance of the town. With a general suspension of trade at Milton, the majority of the members of Widow's Sons' Lodge had moved from Milton to Charlottesville, and had established residence.

The lodge found it desirable to move to Charlottesville, but there was resistance. Charlottesville Lodge No. 90, which had been established in 1812, did not want the competition, and objected. It wasn't until December 13, 1815, that the Grand Lodge granted the move to Charlottesville. The first meeting of Widow's Sons' Lodge in Charlottesville was held on April 15, 1816, at the general mercantile business of Branham and Jones, located on court square. For whatever reason, Charlottesville Lodge No. 90 ceased to meet and went extinct on March 31, 1821.

A major event in the life of the Lodge occurred on October 6, 1817, when Widow's Sons' Lodge joined Charlottesville Lodge No. 90 in laying the cornerstone of Central College, which is now Pavilion VII on the Lawn, and in 1819 became the University of Virginia. An entire chapter in the Lodge history is devoted to this event.

It has been the custom among the fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, from time immemorial, to assemble for the purpose of laying the cornerstones of churches, public buildings, and monuments, when requested to do so by those in authority. Widow's Sons'

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Lodge has frequently had the privilege of conducting or participating in this most interesting Masonic ceremony by laying of the corner stone of many of the prominent public and religious edifices in Charlottesville. Reference has already been made to the participation of the Lodge in the laying of the cornerstone of Pavilion VII at Central College [University of Virginia]. Among the other occasions in which Widow's Sons' Lodge officiated or participated in the laying of a cornerstone with Masonic Honors were:

Central College, Oct. 6, 1817; Charlottesville Presbyterian Church, April 30, 1856; Charlottesville Methodist Church, Sept, 5, 1860; House of Israel, the first Jewish Synagogue, Oct. 5, 1882;.Christ Episcopal Church, Sept. 27, 1895; Charlottesville Presbyterian Church, June 24, 1897; High Street Baptist Church, July 29, 1901; Beth Israel Congregation, June 18, 1903; First Baptist Church, July 1, 1904; Episcopal Church of Our Savior at Rio, May 14, 1905; The Y.M.C.A. Building, April 6, 1909; The Confederate Soldiers Monument, May 5, 1909; Laurel Hill Baptist Church at Proffit, July 4, 1914; Charlottesville Public Library (McIntire), Nov. 27, 1919; First Methodist Church, Mar, 31, 1924; George W. Wright Memorial Pavilion at the Blue Ridge Sanitarium, July 14, 1926; University Baptist Church, Sept. 5, 1926; Charlottesville Masonic Temple, July 25, 1959; Temple Beth Israel Synagogue, May 13, 1982; The Charlottesville Senior Center, April 6, 1991; Broadus Memorial Baptist Church, June 12, 1993; Congregation Beth Israel Educational Wing, May 12, 1995. Pictures of many of these structures no longer in existence are included in the history book.

The record of the cornerstone laying ceremony has led many to conclude that Thomas Jefferson was a Freemason, after all he granted the Lodges permission and participated in the ceremony. But he was not, and this issue is discussed in detail in the book.

A permanent home for the lodge was a search that lasted over 90 years. Widow's Sons' Lodge first permanent home was purchased in 1892, on the very corner in which the Lodge meets today. This search for a permanent home is covered in detail in the book.

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The Morgan Affair and the anti-Masonic Movement had a tremendous effect on Freemasonry. In the state of New York, there were five hundred lodges in 1829, and three years later there were fifty-two. Widow's Sons' Lodge suffered a three-year suspension of activity during the early years of the 1830's, but it was at one of the few special communications that James A. Leitch was initiated into Lodge. He shed a brilliant luster and revitalized the Lodge. This distinguished Mason was recognized and was elected the first Grand Master from Widow's Sons' Lodge in 1854, and again in 1855.

There have been many interesting and important men who have been associated with Widow's Sons' Lodge, and Benjamin Franklin Ficklin was no exception. He was the mastermind of the Pony Express, and in 1960 the centennial year, he received his measure of credit. An interesting account of this man is included in the history.

Thomas W. Gilmer was a member of Widow's Sons' Lodge. He was a member of Congress from Virginia, Governor of Virginia, and Secretary of the Navy. He was killed by an explosion on the USS Princeton.

S. F. Leake was a member of Congress from Virginia, and Lt. Governor of Virginia.

John Walker was a U. S. Senator from Virginia, and Francis Walker also served in Congress from Virginia.

It is interesting to note the members of Widow's Sons' Lodge who served as Missionaries: E. L. Woodward, China; Claude Marshall Lee, China; Dr. Thomas H. Daniel, Korea; John Mercer Blain, China; and Christopher Scott Martin, Thailand.

The Virginia Legislature declared on April 17, 1861, that the Constitution of the United States of America was no longer binding on any citizen of this state. That assembly was presided over by Valentine Southall, a Past Master of Widow's Sons' Lodge.

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The 19th Virginia Regiment of the Confederate Army, composed of citizens of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, survived ten major battles and numerous skirmishes. The Battle of Gettysburg was to be both its high and low point. The 19th was under the command of General George E. Pickett, who was a member of Petersburg Lodge No. 15. He was supported by two other Virginia Masons, General James L. Kemper, a member of Linn Banks Lodge No. 126 in Madison, and General Lewis A. Armistead a member of Alexandria Washington Lodge No. 22. There were more than 51,000 casualties at Gettysburg, one of which was Robert H. Poore from Widow's Sons' Lodge, who was killed on July 3, 1863.

Another casualty of the War was Mt. Wor. James A. Leitch. He was a physician who volunteered his services, contracted pneumonia at the Battle of Bull Run, and died June 5, 1862. He is buried at Maplewood cemetery with two other Past Grand Masters of Widow's Sons' Lodge.

There is an interesting story that has lived on about Lewis A. Armistead, a Confederate General, and Henry H. Bingham, a Union Captain, and is portrayed in a beautiful monument erected at the Gettysburg battlefield by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Don't miss it if you visit Gettysburg. In fact I would recommend you plan a visit. There is a long list of Widow's Sons' Lodge members who served and distinguished themselves in the Confederate Army, and are listed in the lodge history.

Widow's Sons' Lodge performed the last rites for many confederate soldiers, most dying at the Charlottesville General Hospital. Widow's Sons' Lodge had burial lots at Maplewood Cemetery, which were used to bury its members who were not able to purchase lots. In January of 1863, the lodge purchased additional burial lots at Maplewood, which it still owns today.

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There is very little mentioned in the records of Widow's Sons' Lodge regarding the conflict between the North and the South, until September 1, 1862, when it was reported, *"That the enemy was defeated at Manassas, and the Army was marching on the Capital."* A resolution was adopted on November 1, 1862, to exempt enlisted men serving in the Army from payment of dues. On December 26, 1862, Widow's Sons' Lodge granted use of its Hall to Lee Lodge No. 209, which was attached to General Lee's Division. On April 23, 1864, a large number of visitors were present in Widow's Sons' Lodge. These visitors were attached to General Longstreet's command on their way to re-enforce General Lee.

There is no mention in the recorded minutes of Widow's Sons' Lodge regarding the death of Most Worshipful William H. Harman. He was a Confederate Colonel, and was Grand Master at the time of his death, on March 2, 1865. He was mortally wounded at the Battle of Waynesboro. Colonel Harman had served as a gallant officer not only in the Confederate Army, but also in the War with Mexico. There is also no mention of the surrender of General Lee's Army at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, or the death of President Lincoln on April 14, 1865.

There is a true story that I would like to share with you. General Sheridan's Union Army, under the command of General George A. Custer, arrived in Charlottesville on March 3, 1865. They were met by the Mayor, Mr. C. L. Fowler, and representatives from the University. They surrendered the town, and the protection of property was guaranteed by the Union General. General Merritt and General Custer were also present at the surrender. Some days after the surrender, the Lodge was called on to bury one of its members, Brother John L. Keller. Not wishing to incite an incident by any gathering that might be mistaken by the Federal troops, they sought the advice of the Mayor. The Mayor called on General Merritt, who was in active command of the City, and advised him of the death of Brother Keller, relating to him that Mr. Keller, who was a Mason, and had distinguished himself as a Prussian sergeant at the Battle of Waterloo, and requested permission for the Masons to bury him with Masonic Rites. General Merritt sympathetically offered to have the Masons among his soldiers bury Mr. Keller with Masonic Rites, and

also to detail a guard of honor to fire a salute at his grave. When this courteous gesture was tactfully declined, General Merritt assured the Mayor that the Keller family and the Masons would in no way be disturbed.

The occupation of Charlottesville by Federal troops continued for some time after the actual cessation of hostilities between the North and the South. The brethren of Widow's Sons' Lodge accepted the situation, and went about the task of rebuilding their hopes and their fortunes. The following letter to Widow's Sons' Lodge from Brother A. F. Higgs, the last commandant of the Charlottesville Military District following the Civil War, is an appropriate ending to this part of the history of Widow's Sons' Lodge. It was dated March 7, 1868. (Brother Wertenbaker served as a Colonel in the Confederate Army, and when the war was over, Brother Wertenbaker returned to his job a Postmaster, but when he refused to take allegiance to the United States, he was removed.)

Most Worshipful Master

C. C. Wertenbaker, Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60, Virginia

Sir:

As this will perhaps be the last time I shall meet the members of this Lodge in this Temple, I desire to thank them for the hearty and brotherly welcome extended to me on my advent here, for the continued acts of kindness shown to me by them since my residence in this pleasant city, and to assure them that time can never lessen the gratitude I feel toward the brothers of the Lodge. It has been my pleasure to testify to brother Masons of the North, that the Craft in this section asked neither the nativity or occupation of a brother, but when satisfied that he was worthy and well qualified the right hand of fellowship was extended, and a stranger in a strange land he found himself in the house of his friends a welcome guest. In leaving Charlottesville I take with me to my new station the consciousness of having at all times done my duty as an officer, and on every occasion endeavored to make the people of Albemarle understand that in me they had a friend would never misrepresent them or lose an opportunity to do them a

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service, and that I have done all this I think you believe and in this belief I find my solace in parting with the prayer that the Supreme Architect of the Universe will watch over and protect you as a Lodge and individually as Masons.

I am Fraternally Yours

A. F. Higgs

Lieut. 16th U. S. Infantry

The one hundredth anniversary of Widow's Sons' Lodge was celebrated on the 11th of December, 1899. On this historic occasion a memorial tablet to Brother Frederick W. Hatch, DD, the first Rector of Christ Episcopal Church and the first Chaplain of Widow's Sons' Lodge, was unveiled by the Lodge. The brass tablet is located in the sanctuary, just above the main entrance of Christ Episcopal Church in Charlottesville, and reads as follows:

1799

1899

With devote thanksgiving to Almighty God, Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60, AF&AM, hath on its One Hundredth Anniversary, December 10, 1899, erected this tablet to the memory of Rev. Frederick W. Hatch, D.D., its first Chaplain and the first Rector of this Church

What Widow's Sons' Lodge owes to Brother Hatch is hard to determine now. That it owed much, tradition bears witness. Our brethren in those days generally mingled a great deal of fun with work. Pitchers of toddy appear as rather extraordinary expenditures in the Steward's book, and the Lodge, which today forbids the use of intoxicants at its meetings, would not recognize itself at refreshment then. Those days even the Parson took his glass and felt none the worse it. Also in those days, the Lodge sometimes met on Sunday. Brother Hatch broke this up, not by thundering the terrors of the law at the Brethren, but by going to Lodge, and inviting it at its close to go to the Court House to hear him preach. A few sermons on Sabbath breaking, and Widow's Sons' Lodge never again met on Sunday, except to perform the sad rites over a dead brother.

The 100th anniversary celebration ended with a quotation from Most Worshipful R. T. W. Duke, a past master of WIDOW'S SONS' LODGE, which I believe will profit the Masons who hear them today.

"No event in the history of this Lodge in all its hundred years is—to my mind—of moment like this. We, a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, celebrate our one hundredth anniversary in a manner most befitting the occasion, not with mere festival and rejoicing, but with devout thank, and with Godly humility, perpetuating the memory of a man of God who was our Brother, our first pastor of this Lodge, and the first pastor of this Church.

And now a new century dawns for us. May it be a century of great usefulness, of consecration to the service of God, and of the rigid observance of the tenets of Free Masonry. May the world be better because we have been. May our Brethren a hundred years hence meet here again to celebrate a new century, and see this tablet, and remember the man of God whose name it perpetuates, and bear witness to the fact that, while life is short and the centuries soon gone, 'the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance'."

In the 18th century, when Masonry was still in its infancy, Virginia was a wild and unsettled place. It is difficult for us today to imagine the thoughts and feelings of an eighteenth century Mason stepping into the bitter cold of a winter night after a lodge meeting to pursue his travel homeward. For him, a trip of several miles at night after a lodge meeting was a major undertaking where even that task of finding one's way was formidable. For this reason, many of those early lodges in Virginia adopted the custom of holding their meeting' during the week of the full moon. Hence, these lodges became referred to as "Moon Lodges."

The moon provided a beacon that guided our brethren of yesterday homeward along the dirt roads and beaten pathways of early Albemarle County, Virginia. In 1899, 102 of the 275 lodges in Virginia were "Moon Lodges."

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Moon Lodges are indeed an old English tradition that have survived in the United States. The "Moon Lodge" is slowly but surely disappearing from the American Masonic scene. Sixty years ago there were more than 3,000 Moon Lodges in the United States. Now there are less than 500. A number of Grand Lodges have legislated Moon Lodges out of existence, insisting that all lodges must meet on definite dates. As with so many customs of old, the advent of modern society and its technology has slowly driven the "Moon Lodge" to the status of a quaint anachronism. In 1899, all the lodges in the Charlottesville and Albemarle County area were "Moon Lodges." The only one left is Murray Lodge No. 175, at Fredericks Hall.

The invention of the automobile and street lighting together with the general decline of agriculture made the setting of lodge meetings by the phases of the moon, rather than on a fixed day, a nuisance without purpose. There are only five "Moon Lodges" remaining in Virginia. Hopefully, the few left will not surrender this old custom. They serve as a reminder to modern Masons traveling home by the light of the moon that they are in essence following in the footsteps of their brethren of yesteryear for whom the moon was a real as well as a symbolic light.

For over 150 years, Widow's Sons' Lodge met on or before the full moon, and, in 1962, the Lodge changed its stated communication from a day on or before the full moon to the third Monday in each month. Thus ended a tradition that had its origins in the eighteenth century, when the brethren used the light of the full moon to travel back and forth to lodge meetings.

For many years the Lodge elected officers twice a year, June 24th and December 27th. In the early years, an Entered Apprentice was a member of the Lodge and all business was conducted in the first degree. This was changed in 1850. Widow's Sons' Lodge even had quarterly, semi-annual, and annual members, but, to be one, you had to reside six miles or more from the Lodge, or be one whose age and bodily infirmity prevented his regular attendance. In years gone by, when a brother was sick and it became necessary

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to sit up with him, it was the duty of the secretary to give notice to the members in rotation, as they stood on the roll, calling out two for each night. Any member refusing or neglecting to perform this service, when required, was fined one dollar. If you were a physician or over the age of fifty you were exempt.

The tragic and untimely assassination of Brother William McKinley in September, 1901, cast a shadow of mourning over the entire nation. Less than a week following his death Widow's Sons' Lodge, in special communication, held a memorial service lamenting the loss to the Craft and to the Country, and eulogizing their late President and Brother.

The apron used by President McKinley at the Masonic Ceremonies commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of George Washington at Mount Vernon, December 14, 1899, was presented to Widow's Sons' Lodge by Worshipful William R. Duke, to whom it had been presented by his brother, R. T. W. Duke, Jr., who was then Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, and presided at the ceremonies.

The apron had been purchased by Past Grand Master Woodberry, of Colorado, and given to Grand Master R. T. W. Duke, Jr., to be given the President. It was handed to Brother McKinley on the electric car while he was en route to Mount Vernon, and placed by him in his overcoat pocket. He remarked that "he did not suppose it should be worn until the Procession was formed at Mount Vernon." In the hurry and excitement of an impromptu reception held before the procession formed, the President forgot to put the apron on, and, after the ceremonies were over, finding it in his pocket, handed it to Grand Master Duke with an expression of the oversight, and saying that he would be pleased for him to accept it. Grand Master Duke presented it the same day to his brother, who presented it to Widow's Sons' Lodge.

The apron is of plain, white lambskin and is still in fine state of preservation. Though not actually worn at the centennial exercises, one can still say that it was "used" by the President on that historic occasion.

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After the fall of Fort Sumter, Brother McKinley enlisted in the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He was hospitalized in Virginia for injuries received in battle, and he was greatly impressed with the friendliness of a Union surgeon toward Confederate wounded. He later discovered the men were Masons. He marveled at the bonds which persisted through the war, and made haste to join a Masonic Lodge.

A Confederate Worshipful Master raised Brother McKinley in Hiram Lodge No. 21, Winchester, Virginia, on May 3, 1865. He was given a demit so that he could take his membership back to Ohio, where he affiliated with Canton Lodge No. 60. He became a charter member of Eagle Lodge No. 43, later to be renamed William McKinley Lodge.

On September 6, 1901, while welcoming citizens at the Pan-American exposition in Buffalo, New York, Brother McKinley was mortally wounded by a terrorist, and died on September 14th. Brother McKinley's last words summed up the philosophy he lived, "It is God's way. His will, not ours, be done."

To perpetuate the memory of four members of Widow's Sons' Lodge who served as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, and to evidence the veneration and high esteem in which these distinguished brethren were held, the Lodge presented to the Grand Lodge of Virginia at its annual communication in February, 1948, the portraits of Past Grand Masters James A. Leitch, Peyton S. Coles, R. T. W. Duke, Jr., and James B. Wood. As was observed by one who was in attendance at this communication, the session at which the portraits were presented might well have been designated, "Charlottesville Night at the Grand Lodge." For in thus honoring four of its members who were also eminent citizens of the Charlottesville community, the Lodge had selected to make the presentation on its behalf, four members of the Fraternity prominent in the Charlottesville Area. The portrait of Most Worshipful James A. Leitch was presented by Worshipful L. W. Wood. Brother Leitch was elected Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1854 and again in 1855, the first member of Widow's Sons' Lodge to attain this honored position. Dr. Leitch died in the service of his native State, having contracted pneumonia at the Battle of Bull Run. He

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was buried in Maplewood Cemetery in Charlottesville, and at his grave is a beautiful monument erected and inscribed by the Masons of Virginia.

The portrait of Most Worshipful Peyton S. Coles was presented by Brother Lemuel F. Smith. Widow's Sons' Lodge was for the second time honored in having one of its members elevated to the office of Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. Most Worshipful Peyton S. Coles served the Craft as Grand Master in 1880 and again in 1881. This distinguished Mason also presided in the highest office of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter and in the highest office of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar. In one year—1881—Peyton S. Coles filled the offices of Grand Master, Grand High Priest, and Grand Commander, an honor no other Mason in the Commonwealth of Virginia can claim. During Brother Coles' second term as Grand Master, Widow's Sons' Lodge, in a most interesting ceremony, presented to its distinguished member a silver trowel for his use in laying the cornerstone of the Yorktown Monument, in 1881. Following his tenure as Grand Master, Brother Coles was, in 1883, appointed Grand Lecturer, a position he held until his death in 1887.

Worshipful John S. Battle of Charlottesville Lodge No. 55, and former Governor of Virginia, presented the portrait of Most Worshipful R. T. W. Duke, Jr. In recognition of his outstanding ability and distinguished service to the Masonic Fraternity, R. T. W. Duke, Jr., a Past Master of Widow's Sons' Lodge, was elected to serve as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1898 and for a second term in 1899. He was the third member of Widow's Sons' Lodge called upon to preside over the Grand Lodge of Virginia. At the conclusion of his distinguished career as an able lawyer, accomplished scholar, cultured gentleman, matchless orator, and devoted Mason, he was laid to rest in Maplewood Cemetery near the grave of his predecessor, Past Grand Master James A. Leitch.

Right Worshipful S. F. Hamm, a businessman, presented the portrait of Most Worshipful James B. Wood. Again in 1915 Widow's Sons' Lodge was privileged in having one of its members elected to preside as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. Most Worshipful

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James B. Wood was the fourth member of the Lodge to attain this distinguished position. Evidences of his devoted and untiring service to the Fraternity in general and to Widow's Sons' Lodge in particular over a period of more than half a century fill the minutes, and are remembered in the hearts of those who knew him. Brother Wood was also laid to rest among his Masonic brethren in Maplewood Cemetery. Thus, in Maplewood Cemetery, within a few paces of each other are the graves of three Past Grand Masters of Masons in Virginia, all of whom were eminent and revered members of Widow's Sons' Lodge.

These portraits are displayed in the Grand Lodge Museum with those of other Past Grand Masters. A photographic reproduction of each portrait was made and adorns the walls of Widow's Sons' Lodge. A more detailed biography of each of these distinguished Masons is included in the history book with the other past masters. As part of our Bicentennial celebration, it is planned to place a wreath at the graves of these brothers.

The name of another Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia was associated with Widow's Sons' Lodge. In 1885 and again in 1886 the Grand Lodge of Virginia was presided over by Most Worshipful Francis H. Hill. This distinguished Mason and lawyer from Madison, while not a member of our Lodge at that time, had first seen Masonic light in Widow's Sons' Lodge during 1865.

Membership is of interest to most keepers of statistics. Historically Masonic membership trends somewhat follow the major conditions that existed, such as the Morgan Affair, wars, depressions, and recently the general decline of all mainline churches and fraternal organizations.

The time of the Morgan Affair was a particularly unhappy period in the history of Freemasonry in America, when a violent campaign against Freemasonry was launched in many of the States. It arose out of the death of William Morgan. Mr. Morgan, together with a newspaper man named David Miller, published an exposure of Masonry. He was subsequently reported to have been murdered, and this led to the anti-Masonic campaign

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launched by some irresponsible men for political purposes and based on false accusations that a group of Freemasons had conspired to kill Morgan for his exposure of Masonic secrets. Freemasons were personally attacked in many states and scores of Lodges were closed between 1829 and 1838.

It was sixty-five years, 1864, before Widow's Sons' Lodge had one hundred members. Forty years later, 1906, the membership went over two hundred, and fourteen years later, 1920, the membership had grown to over three hundred. The membership grew ever so slowly during the first fifty years, and then, through the strong leadership and influence of Most Worshipful J. A. Leitch, the membership took an upward turn. The influx of new members pushed the membership over one hundred during the Civil War, and membership remained steady over the next thirty years. Another upward trend developed in 1893, about the time Widow's Sons' Lodge moved into its own Masonic Temple, and rapid growth continued until 1930. The depression of the 1930's caused the membership to decline. During and after World War II, however, membership resumed the rapid growth experienced during the early years of the twentieth century.

The membership reached its peak in 1962, at three hundred eighty-four. A general decline in membership since 1962 reduced the membership at the end of 1989 to 275. The consolidation of Charlottesville Lodge No. 55 and Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60 in 1990 restored the membership to 402. Today, we have 366 members.

In November of 1966, representatives of the eight Widow's Son Lodges in the United States met in Washington, DC, to form an Association of Widow's Son Lodges. The eight Lodges, all east of the Mississippi River, are as follows: Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60, Charlottesville, VA; Widow's Son Lodge No. 66, Branford, CT; Widow's Son Lodge No. 75, Camden, NC; Widow's Son Lodge No. 150, Emporia, VA; Widow's Son Lodge No. 335, Livingston, NY; Widow's Son Lodge No. 519, Roanoke Rapids, NC; Widow's Son Lodge No. 571, Paulding OH; and Widow's Son Lodge No. 610, Sidney, AK.

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Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60, represented by Worshipful T. M. Burruss and Worshipful R. H. Manson, Jr., became charter members of the Association, and invited the Lodges to meet in Charlottesville during the fall of 1968. This Association has offered the brethren of these lodges a tremendous opportunity to meet and enjoy fellowship every two years. The host lodge for the 1998 biennial meeting was Widow's Son Lodge No. 519, Roanoke Rapids, NC.

There has been a long relationship between the Charlottesville Masons and the Jewish Community, and one chapter in the lodge history is devoted to our Jewish Brethren. The first Jew to arrive in Albemarle County, Virginia, was named Isaac. He was born in Frankfort, Germany, about 1760, owned a number of lots in Charlottesville and made his living as a merchant. He was also a Freemason. We do not know in which lodge he was made a Mason, but we do know that he affiliated with Door To Virtue Lodge No. 44, in Charlottesville, Virginia, on November 28, 1795. He later became a member of Widow's Sons' Lodge. He died in 1837, and was buried in the Beth Shalom Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia.

David Isaac traded all kinds of goods from his Main Street shop, the current site of the Williams Corner Bookstore. He earned a foot note in the history of the University of Virginia, by selling Thomas Jefferson's overseer a ball of twine that was used to lay out the first of the University buildings, Pavilion VII, the cornerstone of which was laid by Widow's Sons' Lodge.

The first President of Temple Beth Israel was Aaron Brunn. He was made a Freemason in New York, and affiliated with Widow's Sons' Lodge on November 17, 1866, from Binghamton Lodge No. 177. He was a charter member of Keystone Royal Arch Chapter No. 58, in Charlottesville, and served as High Priest in 1872 and again in 1882. He died November 10, 1883. Brother Brunn's brother Nathan was also a Freemason and a charter member of Keystone Royal Arch Chapter No. 58.

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The mid-19th century saw a significant number of Jews migrating to America, and some of them came to Charlottesville. These Jews were part of a movement of Germans to America that included: A. B. Heller, M. B. Heller, D. H. Stern, Moses Kaufman, Soloman Kaufman, Harry Kaufman, Isadore Kaufman, Rabbi Calisch, Harold Mopsik, and Harry O'Mansky. They were all Freemasons. The current Jewish members of Widow's Sons' Lodge include Harold (Mopsik) Monroe, N. M. "Fred" Hoffman, Theodore Shyan, Kent Schlusssel, Herman B. Gerber, and Irving Forrest.

In a letter to Widow's Sons' Lodge, the President of the Congregation, Phyllis K. Leffler expressed these sentiments: *"It was a privilege for many of us to witness the ancient traditions of the Masons and to learn about the symbolism involved. As an historian, I especially appreciate the fact that Masons have been involved each and every time we have had a cornerstone laying - from the original construction to the moving of the building to the erection of the O'Mansky wing and now to the much larger extension of the Education wing. In our religion, we have a very strong commitment to the maintenance of traditions; combining our traditions with those of a community organization as historic as yours enriches the larger community to which we all belong. I am certain those who were present will never forget the ceremonies."*

Brother William F. Reinhold is the 134th Master Mason to serve as Worshipful Master of Widow's Sons' Lodge in 1999. James A. Leitch, a physician, served eight years; Charles W. Carter, a physician, also served eight years; William Wertenbaker, a lawyer and first librarian at the University, served six years; Valentines W. Southall, a lawyer, served six years; John H. Craven, a farmer, served five years; and Josiah Bigelow, who advanced to become DGM, served four years.

You may find it interesting to know that seventeen Worshipful Masters were businessmen, thirteen were lawyers, seven were merchants, seven were physicians, five were farmers, four were engineers, five were salesmen, and three were dentists.

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Plans have been completed for the Lodge's bicentennial celebration, and I am personally excited about the prospects which this celebration holds for this Lodge and its members. Please mark December 10 and 11 on your calendars now, and plan to be with us.

I want to thank you so much for your attention, and if time permits, I would be delighted to address any questions.