

Masonic Sites in Historic Philadelphia

Unknown

So much of Masonry in America had its roots in Philadelphia. This Short Talk Bulletin notes the Masonic connections and heritage of many of these sites, a heritage overlooked or ignored by non-Masons. As you visit this great city with its landmarks in American history, we know you will share our pride in the pervading influence of Freemasonry in the founding of our nation and in the development of its culture. This will help you identify Masonry with historic Philadelphia.

1. Masonic Temple - One North Broad Street

is the home of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania. One of the wonders of the Masonic world, the Temple's symbolic turrets and spires form part of Philadelphia's downtown skyline. The Temple was designed by Brother James H. Windrim, a noted architect and member of Lodge No. 72. The Temple has seven Lodge Halls, the finest examples of Corinthian, Ionic, Italian Renaissance, Norman, Gothic, Oriental and Egyptian styles. The Temple also contains the offices of the Grand Lodge, Grand Chapter and Grand Commandery; committee rooms; banquet rooms; and modern kitchen facilities. The Temple houses the Grand Lodge Museum, with one of the greatest collections of Masonic treasures in the world, and a library of more than 70,000 volumes, many of them rare items. The huge granite cornerstone was laid June 24, 1868. The Temple was dedicated September 26, 1873, in solemn ceremonies. Directly across from the main entrance is a bronze statue of "Benjamin Franklin-Master Craftsman" which the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania presented to the City on June 27, 1981.

2. Scottish rite Cathedral - Broad and Race Streets.

Designed by Brother Horace W. Cantor and completed in 1927, the massive seven-story, gray limestone structure of Greek Doric design, contains exhibits of Masonic significance in its main lobby. The Cathedral contains an auditorium with a seating capacity of 1,960, acoustically one of the finest in the United States. It is the headquarters of the Valley of Philadelphia, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite.

3. City Hall - Broad and Market Streets

is the most prominent landmark in Philadelphia. The tower is 547 feet tall, including the huge statue of William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, at the top. Brother John McArthur, Jr., architect of the Hall, was assisted in its details by Brother Thomas U. Walter. The cornerstone was laid at high twelve, July 4, 1874, by Brother Alfred R. Potter, R.W. Grand Master, in the presence of His Honor the Mayor, Brother W.S. Stokley, Members of Councils, and a large number of citizens, many of whom were members of the Craft. The inscribed cornerstone may be seen in the Northeast corner (inside North Arch).

4. John Wanamaker's Department Store - 13th and Market Streets

was opened in 1876 in the former freight depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The present building was completed in 1910. It is famous for the bronze eagle in the grand court, a popular city meeting place, and for its daily organ concerts. Brother John Wanamaker, merchant prince, was a distinguished Mason, a member of Friendship Lodge No. 400 until his death, December 12, 1927.

5. Liberty Bell - Independence Mall

on Independence Mall directly across from Independence Hall and facing it on Chestnut Street. The "Liberty Bell" was moved from Independence Hall to its new pavilion at one minute past midnight, January 1, 1776. The Bell was ordered from London by the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1751 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of William Penn's Charter of Privileges insuring freedom to the citizens of his province. The original Bell cracked on its first ringing and was recast by Pass and Stow in 1753. It was rung on July 8, 1776, to summon the citizens to the State House yard to hear the Declaration of Independence read by Brother and Colonel John Nixon.

6. Independence Hall - Chestnut Street between 5th and 6th Streets

was originally the State House of Pennsylvania. It was begun in 1732 and completed in 1756, and served as the seat of Pennsylvania's Government until 1799. In the Assembly Room, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. Here in 1787, the Federal Constitutional Convention framed the Constitution of the United States. From 1800 to 1802, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania used the west room on the second floor of Independence Hall.

7. Congress Hall - 6th and Chestnut Streets

is one of two buildings adjoining Independence Hall, the other being Old City Hall on the corner of 5th and Chestnut Streets. Congress Hall had originally been built, 1789-1790, as the Philadelphia County Court House, but was turned over to the Federal Government for the use of Congress and has since been known as Congress Hall. The House of Representatives met on the first floor and the United States Senate on the second floor between 1790 and 1800. Brother George Washington was inaugurated for his second term in this building. Many prominent Masons, members of both legislative bodies, met in Congress Hall. A number of Masonic Lodges have had the honor of meeting here.

8. Old City Hall - 5th and Chestnut Streets

was built between 1789 and 1791. Upon its completion, it was offered to the United States Government for its use, and it was here that the Supreme Court convened, 1791-1800. Brother George Washington, in selecting judges for the Supreme Court, stated that he considered the new judicial system one that would "give dignity and justice to our national character." He named Brother John Jay as first Chief Justice. On April 21, 1779, Jay had written to Washington a letter of Masonic significance. "The dissolution of our governments threw us into a political chaos. Time, Wisdom and Perseverance will reduce it to Form and give it strength, Order and Harmony. In his work you are (in the style of your profession) a Master Builder, and God grant that you may long continue a Free and Accepted one." After the Federal Government moved to Washington, D.C. in 1800, this building reverted to its original purpose and became Philadelphia City Hall until the city government moved to the present City Hall in 1887.

9. Philosophical Hall - 104 South 5th Street

is the home of the American Philosophical Society, which Brother Benjamin Franklin helped to found in 1743. The Hall was built between 1785 and 1789, and contains many Franklin items. Although the building is not open to the public, it is Masonically important because of Franklin and other Masons who were connected with it. It is the oldest society devoted to scientific learning in America. LIBRARY HALL, across 5th Street from Philosophical Hall, is a reconstruction of a building originally erected 1789-1790 for the Library Company of Philadelphia, another of Brother Franklin's institutions. The building today houses the library of the American Philosophical Society. In its collections are about 58,070 of all Franklin documents. The Library may be visited from 9-5, Monday through Friday.

10. Carpenter's Hall - 320 Chestnut Street

was built in 1770 by the Carpenter's Company, a guild of master carpenters, which still owns and maintains it. The First Continental Congress met there in 1774. Among its members were

bricklayers, stonecutters, and various craftsmen, a number of them members of Philadelphia Masonic Lodges. Brother Robert Smith, one of America's most successful "architects," designed Carpenters' Hall, as well as Christ Church steeple and other early buildings, including Brother Benjamin Franklin's house on High (Market) Street.

11. First Bank Of The United States - I 16 South 3rd Street, between Chestnut and Walnut Streets

was erected 1795-1797 and is the oldest bank in the United States. When its charter lapsed in 1811, Brother Stephen Girard, merchant, shipowner and philanthropist, bought it for his private bank in 1812. Brother Girard is well-known in Philadelphia for his acts of charity, including Girard College and the Stephen Girard Charity Fund he established in the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

12. Bishop White House - 309 Walnut Street

was the home of Brother William White, rector of Christ Church and St. Peter's and Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania, 1787-1836. He was Chaplain of the Continental Congress. Many important persons of the period, including Washington, dined at the Bishop's House.

13. Franklin's Court - Orianna Street between 3rd and 4th Streets.

In this little alley is Franklin's Court where Brother Benjamin Franklin built his home in 1765. He lived here until he died in 1790 at the age of 84. Although the house no longer exists, a skeleton structure shows where it once stood. Archaeological diggings on the site have uncovered the foundations and many interesting artifacts. Brother Franklin left his mark in many fields-science, politics, diplomacy, literature, humanities and Freemasonry.

14. Christ Church - 2nd Street north of Market Street

was established as a parish in 1695. Its church building dates from 1727 and is generally regarded as the most historic of Philadelphia's colonial churches. The tower and spire were added in 1754, financed by a lottery of which Brother Benjamin Franklin was one of the organizers. A number of its clergy and parishioners were Masons. Brothers George Washington and Benjamin Franklin had family pews there. While Washington was in Philadelphia in 1778, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania held a procession in honor of St. John's Day (December 27). Some three hundred Brethren marched to Christ Church to ceremonies in which "His Excellency our Illustrious Brother George Washington, Esq." participated. "An excellent and well-adopted sermon was preached by our worthy and revered Brother William Smith, D.D.", Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge.

15. Betsy Ross House - 239 Arch Street

is the home of the seamstress who has been credited with making the first American flag. Brother John Ross, husband of Betsy, was a member of Lodge No. 2, Philadelphia.

16. Christ Church Burial Ground - 5th and Arch Streets

contains the graves of seven signers of the Declaration of Independence. Francis Hopkinson, George Ross, James Wilson, Benjamin Rush and Brothers Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris and Joseph Hewes. The grave of Franklin and his wife Deborah has a bronze plaque upon which is inscribed an epitaph written by Franklin when twenty-two years of age. "The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer, like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out, and stripped of its lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms. But the work shall not be wholly lost; for it will, as he believed, appear once more, in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the Author." Christ Church still maintains this burial ground which has been in existence since 1719.

17. Free Quaker Meeting House - 5th and Arch Streets

was built in 1783, two years after the battle of Yorktown. The Free Quakers, "Fighting Quakers" as they were sometimes referred to, took the oath of allegiance to the new United States and bore arms in its defense. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania met here between 1790-1799.

18. Graff House - 7th and Market Streets.

Here Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's Masonic membership is accepted by some Masonic historians, while others question it.

19. City Tavern - 2nd Street between Walnut and Chestnut Streets

was completed in 1773, and was a favorite gathering place for the businessmen of the period and a center for revolutionary activities. It was also the temporary meeting place of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, 1777-1778, during the British occupation of Philadelphia. City Tavern has been reconstructed and is once again open for food and refreshment.

20. Tun Tavern - Mattis and Spruce Streets

was also known as "Peggy Mullen's Beefsteak House." This famous tavern was razed some years ago and the land it occupied on Water Street between Chestnut and Walnut Streets was incorporated into the Delaware Expressway. The Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation has broken ground at the Spruce and Mattis Streets site for the new Tun Tavern. The historic significance of this building is threefold. It was the birthplace of the United States Marine

Corps, when in 1775 Captain and Brother Samuel Nicholas opened a recruiting office there. The St. Andrew's Society was organized in the Tavern in 1749. On St. John's Day, June 24, 1732, William Allen was elected Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania (Moderns) in Tun Tavern, which also served as the meeting place of St. John's or "First" Lodge and of Tun Tavern Lodge.

21. Powel House - 244 South 3rd Street

is one of the fine Georgian houses in the United States. It was the home of Samuel Powel, often called the "Patriot Mayor" because he headed Philadelphia's City government until 1789. The last mayor under British rule, he was also the first under the free nation. Frequent guests of Powel were Washington, Lafayette and other great Masonic patriots.

22. Philadelphia Contributionship For The Insuring Of Houses From Loss By Fire - 212 South 4th Street

founded by Brother Franklin in 1752, is the oldest fire insurance company in the country. It grew out of the Union Fire Company, Philadelphia's first volunteer fire-fighting organization, which Franklin founded in 1736. The present Contributionship building dates from 1836.

23. Washington Square

bounded north and south by Walnut and Locust Streets and east and west by 6th and 7th Streets is one of the original squares laid out in 1682 by William Penn's surveyor, Thomas Holme. In 1704, Penn designated the area as a potter's field, a burial ground for strangers. Near Washington Square were located the city jail and the State House. During the Revolution, the British used the jail for military prisoners and the State House for a hospital. Hundreds of Continental soldiers who died in these buildings were buried here in common graves. Today, there is a monument to the Unknown Soldier of the American Revolution in Washington Square.

24. Mikveh Israel Burial Ground - Spruce Street east of 9th Street

occupies a small parcel of land on Spruce Street east of 9th Street.

The ground was granted to Rabbi Nathan Levy by the Penn family in 1740. Buried there are many Philadelphians of the Jewish faith, including Brother Haym Solomon, banker and broker, who negotiated all Revolutionary War securities from France and Holland on his own personal security without loss of a cent to America. When Solomon died in 1784, the United States was indebted to him to the extent of \$300,000. This debt has never been repaid. For many, the most

notable grave in Mikveh Israel Cemetery is that of Rebecca Gratz, the inspiration for Rebecca, the heroine in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

25. Pennsylvania Hospital - 8th and Spruce Streets

is the world-renowned institution founded in 1751 by Brother Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond. Pennsylvania Hospital was a pioneer in the treatment of the mentally ill. The hospital still occupies its original site and uses, along with other buildings, the original hospital structure which appears today much as it did more than 200 years ago. Benjamin West's famous painting "Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple" hangs in the lobby of the main building.

26. Library Company Of Philadelphia - 1314 Locust Street

is the oldest subscription library in America, founded in 1731 by Brother Benjamin Franklin. Housed since 1966 in its present building, the library is a treasury of books on American culture, many of them rare editions. Perhaps the most outstanding single collection is the personal library of James Logan. The Library Company also contains paintings, portraits, maps and Franklin's electrical apparatus (Leyden jars). Next door to the Library Company on Locust Street stands

The Historical Society Of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street

Founded in 1824. It is the repository of priceless collections of historical manuscripts, papers, portraits and personal possessions of famous Americans. Among its many rare items is "Liber B," the Secretary's ledger account of members of St. John's Lodge from June 24, 1731 to June 24, 1738.

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