

## Ninety Years in Seven Minutes

Ill. Walter Downs asked me if I could do “Ninety Years in Seven Minutes.” I asked if that was a new song or perhaps a new dance. He replied that seven minutes was the length of time I would have to give the 90-year history of the Alexandria Valley. He said he needed someone with a strong voice—I interpreted that to mean big mouth.

I will not only tell you about the history of the Valley, but give you historical tidbits from the same years so that you will have a correlation of Valley history and world events.

The year was 1910, Haley’s Comet had returned. The world land speed record was set in the U. S. at 131.7 miles per hour. Mark Twain and Florence Nightingale died. On March 14 of that year the first meeting of the Washington Memorial Lodge of Perfection was held in the home of James M. Duncan. Bro. William Goheen LeHew was elected as the first Venerable Master. Their subsequent meetings were then held at the Masonic Temple in the City Hall of Alexandria.

1911 saw the first Indy 500 race. Greenwich Mean Time became the national standard. The Supreme Council met and issued the charter, dated October 16, 1911 to:

Washington Memorial Lodge of Perfection

Randolph Chapter Knights Rose Croix No. 3

Lafayette Preceptory of Knights of Kadosh No. 2

Virginia Consistory No. 2

Two days later, October 18, 1911, the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, at the request of the Supreme Council, presided over the Cornerstone laying of the new House of the Temple on 16<sup>th</sup> Street—this very building. The silver trowel used by President and Brother George Washington at the laying of the cornerstone of the U. S. Capitol was used in the ceremony.

In 1920, the Valley purchased a building at the corner of Cameron and N. Alfred Streets in Alexandria. This building was to be the home of the full-time secretary, who was paid \$150 per month plus utilities. It also included several bachelor apartments which were rented. Women got the vote and prohibition began.

During 1929, the Valley approved its first set of comprehensive bylaws. In October, Harry Flood Byrd was elected by acclamation to receive the degrees. The Fall Reunion, held Oct. 15-18, was the first conferral of Masonic degrees by any group in the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. The same year saw the awarding of the first Oscar in Hollywood, the first demonstration of color TV and “Black Thursday” which led to the crash of Wall Street.

The depression era had its impact on the Valley and its members. Many members were out of work and couldn't afford to pay their dues. This, plus the fact that fewer candidates were coming forward for degrees, caused the Valley to cut salaries by 20% in 1932. Refreshments following meetings were reported as being a box of cigars passed among those in attendance.

Following World War II the Valley, and all of Freemasonry, saw a large influx in membership as the generation who had put their lives on hold because of the war came home and desired a return to normalcy.

In 1950 the Valley approved new bylaws and created a Building and Equipment Fund. Dues were established at \$8 and the meeting location was changed to the North Room of the GW Memorial. "Peanuts" first appeared in the comic section and the Korean War began.

The Supreme Council session of 1951 conferred the status of Sovereign Grand Inspector General in Virginia on Ill. Robert S. Barrett, an Alexandria member who joined in 1911 after demitting from Mexico. The "I Love Lucy" and "Roy Rogers" shows debuted on television.

In 1961, at the request of the SGIG and the Supreme Council, the names of all four bodies were changed to:

Alexandria Lodge of Perfection

Alexandria Chapter of Rose Croix

Alexandria Council Knights Kadosh

Alexandria Consistory

The first President born in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was inaugurated and the Berlin Wall was erected.

1969 was definitely a banner year for mankind and the Valley. On June 24 the groundbreaking ceremony for the new temple to be built on West Braddock Road was held. On September 27, the cornerstone was laid. Henry Knox Field Lodge was the host lodge with Ill. Charles E. "Ted" Webber, SGIG in Virginia, serving as Worshipful Master Pro Tem. George Washington's silver trowel, mentioned previously, was once again brought into service during this ceremony. Most Worshipful H. Bruce Green, a Valley member, gave an inspiring address.

Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to walk on the moon. The Dow Jones Industrial Average hit \$1,000 and the Boeing 747 made its maiden flight.

In 1979, the Valley's first Scottish Rite Club was founded in the Shenandoah Valley with Bro. (now Ill.) Kenneth Lamp serving as its first President. The

US government bailed out Chrysler, John Wayne died and Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of Great Britain.

1985 saw the Supreme Council elect Ill. C. Fred Kleinknecht as Sovereign Grand Commander and Ill. David Kruger, Sovereign Grand Inspector General in Virginia. Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union.

During the late 1980's the Hall of Honor was created and installed in the Alexandria Temple.

The Valley's second Scottish Rite Club, the Blue Ridge Club, was chartered in 1990 in Culpeper. The House of the Temple Historic Preservation Foundation was established. The Berlin Wall was destroyed.

And sometime during the mid-1990's indoor plumbing was added to the temple building. Okay, so we already had indoor plumbing. I figured by now you needed a little wake up nudge. Actually, through the generosity of our members, the Ladies' room was enlarged, the Men's room was updated and a

gravity flow wastewater line was installed between the Temple and the King Street sewer system. This allowed the valley to get rid of the old “pump type” service, which when it didn’t work right led to not so pleasant aromas. And we installed a covered drive-through portico at one of the building’s entrances.

And in 1999, the Valley was asked to participate in a Statewide Spring Reunion named in Memory of Valley member, Ill. Charles A. Sinclair. This was also the first conferral in the Southern Jurisdiction of the five obligatory degrees using the Revised Pike scripts. Alexandria was accorded the honor of exemplifying the 32° before an audience over 500 candidates and an august body of purple-capped dignitaries. After the conclusion of the degree, those assembled in the auditorium honored the cast with a standing ovation—the only one that day.

And finally, here we are tonight celebrating 90 years of Valley history and 200 years of Supreme Council history. At the Valley’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 1986 it was reported that the Valley had moved from the age of the T Model Ford to the Jet age. We can now say that the Valley has moved from the Jet

Age to the Cyber Age. Check out our web page. Where do we go from here?

That's a question I can't answer tonight. But join me at our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and I'll tell you where we've been.