



Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia
Grand Council Cryptic Masons in Virginia

The Keystone

April 2025 Vol. 9 No. 3



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A publication of the Grand Chapter and Grand Council in Virginia located at 500 Masonic Lane, Suite C, Henrico, VA 23223-4916.

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MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST/ MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions

Companions All!

I am writing to you about one third the way through my year in the Grand East and I feel it necessary at this time to compliment the craft on the efforts I have seen so far from my District Deputies and the Companions of our ancient and noble craft. The official visits are well underway, and thus far the level of attendance and quality of ritual give me a renewed sense of hope for the state of the Craft in the Commonwealth.

I was fortunate to attend the Annual Grand Sessions of the Grand Chapters of Delaware and The District of Columbia over the past weekends and I was humbled by the courtesies extended to my office by our sister jurisdictions. The meals, sessions, and fellowships were a pleasure to attend, and it is my fondest wish to reciprocate this hospitality to my fellow presiding officers at our Grand Annual Convocation in November.

It is my goal, perhaps a bit too ambitious for my current schedule, to prepare a curated speech for each district visit aligned with and for the members of that district. I think this is a worthy goal; however, it does mean that members of the other 15 districts will not have access to these short talks. As such, I am making available to the membership, through the Keystone currently, and a curated collection at the conclusion of my year in the Grand East, all of my short talks delivered to the many districts in our Grand Jurisdiction. To that end,



I am requesting the editors of The Keystone to publish the short talk that I delivered at my District 8 Official visit titled “*Planting Trees.*” If you find this talk resonates with you, please feel free to present this talk in your chapters.

With respect to communication, I understand the Grand Chapter of Virginia’s Facebook page is progressing nicely, and the Public Relations Committee is receiving pictures of the good work across the state. As you host any events this Capitular year, please take the time to share those pictures with the PR committee so they can add your good works to the collective whole. Further, if you have not already followed the Grand Chapter on Facebook, please consider adding us to your social media lineup.

In closing Companions, keep up the good work. With our collective efforts, let us make 2025 the most successful year in Royal Arch Masonry!

Fraternally,

James

James P. Nunn

Most Excellent Grand High Priest / Most Illustrious Grand Master

GRAND KING'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions!

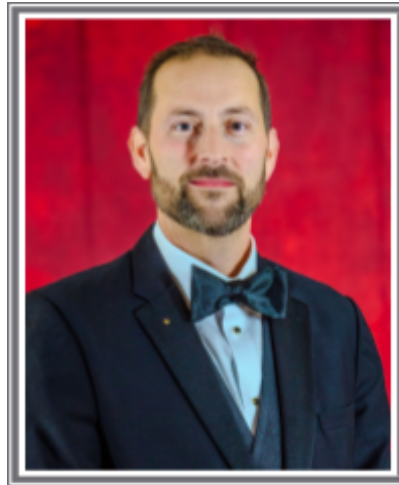
My Companions,

I come to you with a humble and sorrowful heart. My life and the lives of many Masons and Companions have been darkened by the loss of Rt. Ex. William “Billy” Mutter in early February of this year. Rt. Ex. Mutter was a dedicated Mason, Companion, a life-long family friend, a close comrade, a trusted confidant, and my father-in-law. If I am elected to the office of Grand High Priest, Rt. Ex. Billy would have been my Administrative Assistant.

Unexpected change and especially loss, can have a profound impact on us. It often puts things in perspective. It makes you focus on the important things in life. It can encourage you to make changes for the better and perhaps start anew.

I have been thinking about legacy. Leaving a legacy, something to be proud of.

When Billy served as Master of Lake Drummond Lodge in 2015 his theme for the year was “Family the Heart of Freemasonry.” He was a strong believer that Freemasonry was a family and that all of the good our Gentle Craft could do stemmed from the Brotherly Love we showed one another. His theme was also a little play on words, as his youngest Daughter, Stephanie, was a heart transplant recipient. She had to receive another transplant in 2016, and sadly we lost her due to complications in May of that year. Billy was a



passionate advocate for organ donation. He ensured that Stephanie’s legacy lived on long after her. I intend to make sure that Billy’s legacy lives on. I too am a strong advocate for organ donation, but I am also a strong advocate of Brotherly Love and Affection.

In the last few months of Billy’s life, he was insistent on spreading the message of Brotherly Love. How we treat our fellow Brethren.

He often said that in his darkest times after the death of his daughter, Freemasonry – his Brothers – got him through it. He was thankful for the Brotherly Love that is the heart of our great Fraternity.

About a month before he passed, Billy spoke in Churchland Lodge No. 276, and I wanted to share a portion of his talk:

“Brethren, to me, one of the greatest parts of our fraternity is the environment and opportunity to strengthen our bonds of Brotherly Love and Affection with each other. I will go out on a limb and tell you that this bond of Brotherly Love is probably one of the most important things we do. Why? Consider how hard it would be to attend and support your Lodge if you didn’t feel a fraternal connection with your Brethren!

Tonight’s talk is focused on the importance of Brotherly Love, especially when outside the doors of this Lodge Room!

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My hope is that this message will serve as a good reminder of the value of Brotherly Love in our day to day lives, both in and out of the Lodge. By setting the example for others, it too will have a positive influence on the character of those that you have contact or contact with.

Brethren, I challenge you to lead and act with Brotherly Love in mind! Our country is in great need of it and our Craft is dependent upon it for its continued success! Support and relieve each other! Be ready to give as well as receive good counsel from your brothers. Treat everyone with respect and create an environment of enjoyment for all. It really will make a difference on the attendance in this room.

There is no better time than now to remind each other of what our great Fraternity is all about and what Brotherly Love should entail! It is up to each of us, but more especially our Masters and leaders of our Lodges to lead by example and show the true meaning of Brotherly Love within the craft.”

He expressed concern that when we look around our Lodges and Chapters, Brethren were not being welcomed and included as they should. No Companion should ever be sitting alone at dinner or in the Chapter Room. Whether it is his first or 100th time visiting a Lodge or Chapter he should be welcomed with enthusiasm and shown true Brotherly Love and Affection.

Companions, I have seen the great power of Brotherly Love firsthand. Many times, while traveling across the Commonwealth, but most recently in my greatest time of sorrow. Of the

over 700 people that attended the funeral service for Billy, more than 85 were Master Masons. And even more have reached out to me and my family in the days and weeks since Rt. Ex. Billy passed away.

Companions, I’ve been down, and I’ve been low. But among Mark Master Masons, among Companions and Brethren, I have found friends, who have administered relief to my distresses, and comforted my afflictions.

The outpouring from Brethren and Companions has been, in short, breathtaking. I can tell you that Brotherly Love is alive and well in the Commonwealth. But we must be mindful of our impact on others and continue to make great effort in showering our Companions with Brotherly Love. A well-placed visit, phone call, text, or letter may be just what is needed to lift the spirits of a down-trodden Brother or re-engage a Companion and have him come back to Chapter and maybe even bring another.

In closing, I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve you and our Grand Chapter and I want to express to you all how grateful I am for the Brotherly Love shown by our Companions, our subordinate Chapters, Capitular Districts, and our Grand Chapter. May we continue to be humble and lead by example. Let uprightness and integrity attend our steps, justice and mercy mark our conduct, and fervency and zeal stimulate us in the discharge of the various duties’ incumbent upon us.

Holiness to the Lord,

Kyle W. Strickland
Grand King

GRAND SCRIBE'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions!

La Vie Intellectuelle

“A vocation is not fulfilled by vague reading and a few scattered writings.”

A recent book I read was more of a philosophical treatise on how to go from here to there. It was recommended by, of all people, a music teacher. He thought it was an important lesson on learning to play the guitar well. Huh?

Let us go back to 1928 when a Dominican monk A. G. Sertillanges was getting ready to publish his work - *La Vie Intellectuelle*. Dominicans take vows of chastity and poverty, and Sertillanges was teaching about how to learn and lead an intellectual life. He based his thinking on the most famous Dominican of all- Thomas Aquinas.

Aquinas wrote his famous work centuries before, *Sixteen Precepts for Acquiring the Treasure of Knowledge*, teaching *Altiora te ne quaesieris* and *Volo ut per rivulos, non statim, in mare eligas introire*, meaning “do not seek that which is beyond your reach,” and “I want you to decide to go to the sea by the streams, not directly.” What was he trying to teach us? Well, my teacher told me it is summed up in the immortal words of rock guitarist Sammy Hagar who sang- “We’ve got to learn how to listen before we learn how to talk, we’ve got to learn how to crawl before we learn how to walk”



With this, Sertillanges developed his three principles.

First, the what? - Let the man of study be perpetually listening for truth. Pay attention to what you see around you. Try to discern the wheat from the chaff.

Second, the where? - True knowledge lies in depth rather than superficial extent. It is going to take deep reflection and study to be able to know what is true.

Finally, the how? -He was clear that it was through reading that we can find the ultimate means of learning. Of course, that was nearly 100 years ago, and we can supplement reading today with video, coaching, podcasts, classroom lectures, mentoring, or just chilling with that tactile book in hand, late at night, curled up on the sofa or over the dining table.

Before we run, we must crawl- we have to learn our fundamentals: Tim Duncan, Miles Davis, Billy Collins all come to mind as masters who emphasized the fundamentals in their profession. Malcolm Gladwell wrote in his 2008 book, “Outliers” that we need 10,000 hours of practice to become proficient. We have heard that “Practice makes perfect”- No, perfect practice makes perfect. It is deliberate practice.

We need to build on our knowledge and experience, brick by brick, book by book, experience by experience, until we master

our craft. Sertillanges summed it up by writing “Learn constancy by persistent application and by obstinately returning to the interrupted study: a day will come when the recurring fits of weariness will vanish.”

You will have become an accomplished

leader, nurse, educator, ritualist, or... guitar player.

Peace,

Joel
Rt. Ex. Joel T. Bundy, MD
Grand Scribe

“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910

Clear your mind of can't.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

GRAND PROVOST AND/OR COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SERVICE MESSAGE

LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE COURSE COMPLETIONS

The following Companions have recently completed correspondence courses. The Committee on Education and Service applauds your efforts and your successful completion.

Companion Spencer A. Getz,
Orange No. 47, 3/19/2025

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SERVICE MESSAGE

Greetings Companions!

The Saltire of the Intimate Connection

Ancient Craft and Royal Arch Masonry Swords of Officers

Perhaps one of the reasons why you petitioned a Royal Arch Chapter was after hearing how closely related Ancient Craft Masonry and Royal Arch Masonry are in chronology and teachings. Comparing the Craft Lodge Degrees and the degrees leading up to and including this most sublime degree, reveal a completely interwoven story; the Royal Arch degrees fill in between the three Craft degrees. And where else can we look to find additional evidence of this close relationship? The officer swords in both bodies.

If you set out the jewels for a Royal Arch Convocation you will see the differences in swords and should not be too surprised to see the similarities and differences.

The Tiler's jewels are represented by a sword or crossed swords in saltire*.

In most Craft Lodges, the Tiler's jewel is a single, downward pointing sword. The Tiler's jewel in Royal Arch typically is two crossed swords in saltire, pointing upward. Interestingly, how the swords are positioned is an indication of how the swords are used in various military organizations and foreign governments, and depends on the stance of that organization. The US Army Cavalry has two crossed swords in saltire, pointing upward, to denote that they are ready to fight or go into battle. On the other hand, the Knights Templar emblem has two crossed swords in saltire, pointing downward, denoting that the fighting or battle is finished, and the swords are now used for defensive purposes. Typically, Craft Lodge Tiler swords point down; Royal Arch Tiler swords point up.



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Keeping with the swords; the three Grand Masters of Veils all have single, downward pointing swords on their respective jewels, to defensively guard the entrance, which are very similar to the Tyler's jewel.

The Royal Arch Captain's jewel is two crossed, upward pointing swords in saltire. Perhaps the Royal Arch Captain is charged with always being at the ready to be on the offensive. However, the Royal Arch Captain's swords are curved, vice straight swords of the Veils and Tiler. Curved swords denote a higher position in the organization. This seems to be a trend among many organizations.

Between the Grand Masters of Veils and the Royal Arch Captain, we can make a case that they each represent a sentinel guarding their respective "doors". Each has a pass or token. Plus, the three veils describe the path to the Holy Royal Arch and into the Sanctum Sanctorum where, ultimately, the Light resides.

The Junior Deacon shares the same position in the path to the East as the Royal Arch Captain. Both are charged with checking on the Tyler and ensuring the men present are authorized to be present during the meetings. There is no real similarity in the jewels as the Jr. Deacon has a partial moon and the Royal Arch Captain has crossed swords in saltire pointing up.

A further connection lies in St. Andrew himself. If you recall, he was a disciple of John the Baptist and later a disciple of Jesus and friend of John the Evangelist. St. Andrew was crucified on a crux decussata (X-shaped cross) because he did not deem himself to be worthy enough to be crucified like Jesus was. This is where the St. Andrews cross, the Saltire come from.

There is no doubt many more connections between Ancient Craft and Royal Arch Masonry. There may be some deeper, esoteric comparisons that can be made as well, but each jewel and station should be studied first in their respective Masonic bodies as they relate to the particular time in the building of the Temples and in our own spiritual building.

Fraternally,

Dave Strohsahl

Committee on Education and Service

*Saltire is a term for St. Andrew's Cross



GRAND ALMONER MESSAGE

Dear Companions,

I'm thrilled to provide an exciting update on our progress so far in 2025. As of the end of February, we've raised **\$17k** in both realized and promised donations, an incredible milestone that reflects the generosity and dedication of each one of you. This achievement sets us on a strong path toward meeting our goal of **\$100k** in donations for the year and making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's and related conditions.

Promise Garden Pin: An Impressive Start

Our Promise Garden Pin initiative has made an **impressive start** through February, and I am proud to share that we've already raised **\$4k** toward our **\$10k goal**. The response has been overwhelming, with District Deputies and Companions across the state rallying together to promote this important symbol of our mission. If you haven't yet purchased your pin, I encourage you to reach out to your District Deputy or myself soon as quantities are limited and going fast!

A Commitment to Alzheimer's Care

While we celebrate these early successes, it's important to remember why the work we do is important. Our contributions are vital not only for raising awareness but also for supporting organizations that make a difference in the lives of those impacted by Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease is a devastating condition that affects **more than 6 million Americans** today, and that number is expected to grow to **nearly 13 million** by 2050. It's a progressive disease that not only affects the individuals diagnosed but also their families and caregivers. The financial impact is staggering, with the Alzheimer's Association estimating the total cost of care in the U.S. at **\$355 billion** annually.

But the good news is, **we can make a difference**. Through our collective efforts, we are supporting groundbreaking research, care programs, and critical services that provide families with the support they need. Your commitment to these causes is helping to fund that progress and create a future where fewer families have to face the devastation of Alzheimer's.

I encourage each of you to stay engaged and share our mission with your communities. Local events, personal donations, and continued support for Alzheimer's Association, MAHOVA Memory Unit, and Project Lifesaver initiatives will be key as we keep pushing forward.

Stay Connected

Remember, the Alzheimer's Walk Page is a great way to track local events and find new opportunities to get involved. Let's continue to spread awareness, inspire action, and make a difference in the fight against Alzheimer's.

To find activities in your area, visit act.alz.org.

Thank you for your incredible dedication. The progress we've made so far is just the beginning—and with your continued support, we can achieve even greater things in the months ahead.

Fraternally Yours,

Craig Cox

Grand Almoner - Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia

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Early Warning Signs of Alzheimer's and Dementia

Memory loss that disrupts daily life may be a symptom of Alzheimer's or other dementia. Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. There are ten warning signs and symptoms. If you notice any of them, don't ignore them. Schedule an appointment with your doctor.

Memory loss that disrupts daily life (beyond sometimes forgetting names or appointments)

Challenges in planning or solving problems (beyond the occasional error in appointments or finances)

Difficulty in completing familiar tasks (beyond needing occasional help with technology / devices)

Confusion with time or place (beyond briefly mistaking the day before checking calendar)

Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

New problems with words in speaking or writing (beyond some trouble finding the right word.)

Decreased or poor judgement (out of character risks)

Withdrawal from work or social activities or hobbies (beyond occasional lack of interest)

Get checked, early detection matters. If you notice a few symptoms in yourself or others, this may be signs of significant health concerns that should be evaluated by a doctor.

GRAND CHAPTER / GRAND COUNCIL NEWS

The 14th Masonic District York Rite Represented at DLC



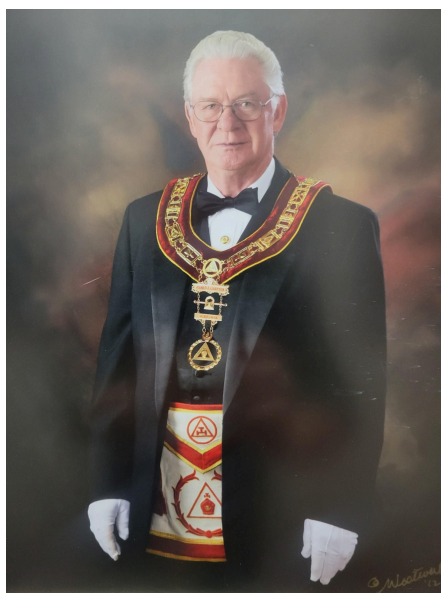
York Rite Masons of the 14th Masonic District attended their Division Leadership Conference in Newport News on 28 February 2025. The York Rite table was managed by RW Steven Urban (14th District Deputy Grand Master), Excellent Brian Dean Joos (Commander, Hampton Commandery No. 17), and Rt. Ex. Joseph Gadea, Grand Royal Arch Captain. At least one petition for the Degrees as conferred in the Royal Arch Chapter is expected. Great work by these Companions.

Dreams don't work unless you do.

The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work.

Proverbs 21:25

Waynesboro Union No. 2 Hosts Festival of Degrees as Conferred in the Royal Arch Chapter



The Most Excellent James A. Fields, Jr. Class of Royal Arch Masons

The Officers and Companions of Waynesboro Union No. 2 are pleased to host a Festival of the Degrees as conferred in the Royal Arch Chapter on June 14, 2025, in honor of James A. Fields, Past Grand High Priest (2013) and Past Grand Commander (2007). This festival will be held at Lee Lodge No. 209, 1600 West Main Street, Waynesboro, VA, 22980. A time of fellowship and refreshments will start at 8:00am and degrees will begin promptly at 8:30am.

Mt. Ex. Russel Snodgrass, Associate Grand Lecturer and PGHP (2002) will coordinate the facility, event and degree team. Please inform all petitioners / candidates and other Masons with an interest in York Rite that this is a convenient opportunity to receive the degrees in a unique facility with an exceptional degree team.

It is the responsibility of each Chapter with a Candidate to notify the Candidate(s) of the time and location of this Festival along with the expectation of a full day event, provide a PHYSICAL COPY of the Chapter Letter at check in, have one Companion in attendance to vouch for each of your Chapter's Candidates at check in, provide a Chapter Penny for each Candidate, and provide a Mark Sheet for each Candidate.

Refreshments and lunch will be provided, suggested donation of \$15 for each Companion; Royal Arch Chapters may elect to pay for their Candidates.

Direct your responses to Mt. Ex. Russel Snodgrass at uchecreek@yahoo.com and Rt. Ex. Stephen Young at S.L.Young@comcast.net.

CHAPTER / COUNCIL NEWS

DDGHP Official Visit to Petersburg Union No. 7



Rt. Ex. James W. Burton, DDGHP of District 4, made his official visit to Petersburg Union RAC No. 7 on Feb. 27. Pictured (left to right) are front row: Donald W. Parr Jr., Herbert G. Turner Jr., D. Patrick Harmon, James W. Burton, Edward P. Oleyar Jr., F. Edward Pearson II, John C. Lundin Jr., and Thomas L. Varner Jr.; and back row: Aaron S. Davis, W. Wilson Miller, J. Thomas Williams Jr., Henry G. Sharber, and Robert D. Baird II.

Planting Trees

James P. Nunn

Most Excellent Grand High Priest
Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Virginia
2025

My Companions All,

Today, I stand before you with a warm heart full of hope and a vision for a brighter future. As we gather here, bound by our fraternal ties, it is imperative that we reflect on our collective journey and the masonic legacy we wish to leave behind.

Let us first contemplate a profound Greek proverb: *“A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit.”* This proverb beautifully encapsulates the essence of foresight and selflessness. It reminds us that true greatness lies not in seeking immediate rewards for our actions, but in investing our time in the present for the well-being of future generations of Masons.

In our Freemasonry, we have always prided ourselves on our commitment to service and community. However, we must challenge ourselves to think beyond the present. We must envision a future where our actions today ensure the longevity of our fraternity for future generations.

This notion of service in support of the future reminds me of a wise Chinese proverb: *“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is today.”* This proverb underscores the urgency of action. At the same time acknowledging that there have been missed opportunities in the past. It also emphasizes that it is never too late to make a positive impact in our fraternity.

Right now, we have the opportunity to be the architects of a new era. Each of us holds the power to plant seeds of change in Masonry, seeds that, if properly cared for, may flourish and bear fruit long after we are gone. Our collective efforts today can create a legacy of growth, resilience, and prosperity and ensure our noble craft remains viable for future generations.

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As members of this time-honored organization, we must lead by example. Let us harness our resources, our talents, and our unwavering dedication to initiate projects that will benefit future generations. Whether it be through masonic education, community projects, or ritualistic excellence, let us commit to planting the metaphorical trees whose shade will provide comfort and solace to those brothers of our great fraternity who come after us.

In the face of challenges and uncertainties, let us remember that our actions today shape what masonry will look like tomorrow. By embodying the principles of these timeless proverbs, we can inspire other brethren and Companions to join us in our mission. Together, we can cultivate a culture of foresight, compassion, and responsibility to the family of freemasonry.

In closing, I urge each of you to reflect on the masonic legacy you wish to leave for future generations. Let us plant the seeds of progress in Lodges, Chapters, and Commanderies, nurture them with continued dedication to our Royal Art, and watch as they grow into a living testament of our shared commitment to the future of the Craft. Be the Light today that guides freemasonry to a successful future.

Thank you, and may our efforts today ensure the continued success of our fraternity.



**Guest
Contributor
Ed Tooma, PHP
Alan Spear, PDDGHP
District 15**



P.T. Barnum and Tom Thumb



Tom Thumb's Apron and Wedding photo

The BIG life of a LITTLE Man

He was born Charles Sherwood Stratton on January 4, 1838 in the town of Bridgeport, Connecticut. He was a singer, dancer, actor and circus entertainer who was better known by his stage name "General Tom Thumb." His illustrious entertainment career began under the big tent when P.T. Barnum introduced him to show biz. Tom was a tiny little fella who suffered from pituitary dwarfism. His height: 3' 4" but you'd never know it when he was on stage performing. He was a giant under the circus lights. His popularity became global in the 19th century when he performed for President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. On February 10, 1863, Tom Thumb married the love of his life, Lavinia Warren at the Grace Episcopal Church in New York. Lavinia was 2' 8" tall. General Tom Thumb had a short life. He passed away July 15, 1883 following a stroke. He was 45 years old. More than 10-thousand people attended his funeral. Among the many accomplishments in his life was becoming a Freemason on October 3, 1862 at the age of 24. His mother Lodge - St. John's No. 3 at Bridgeport, Connecticut. Five days after being Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, young Tom became a Knight Templar in Hamilton Commandery No. 5, also in Bridgeport. To this very day, our Brother's regalia is displayed in the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania's archive room along with other personal possessions. This feature article contributed by PHP Ed Tooma and PDDGHP Alan K. Spear. District 15.