



The Trestle Board

The Voice of Franklin's Masonic Bodies



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Freemasonry During the Civil War: "The Rebellion Came on Like a Cyclone," by Michael A. Halleran, 32°

At the initiation of the American Civil War hostilities in 1861, local Masonic lodges were torn apart, leaving empty chairs in the lodge halls. [...] The fraternity continued to thrive and preserve at least a semblance of brotherhood despite the conflict. Many Freemasons in the same regiments organized traveling "Military Lodges" that held regular meetings, initiated new members, and provided for the wants of less fortunate soldiers and civilians, whether masons or not. In those regiments where traveling lodges were not permitted, Masons messed together, and, the evidence shows, maintained close associations within the military organization.

Although the war unquestionably killed thousands of members and disrupted normal operations at the home lodges, not only of Masons but of other fraternal societies as well, it also brought to the forefront a unique facet of the fraternal organization: its informal system of mutual aid. These brotherhoods—the Masons and the Odd Fellows in particular—had long-established procedures from aiding fellow members away from home. Originally intended for use by stranded travelers or a fraternity brother beset by highwaymen, these procedures—consisting of secret phrases or specific gestures taught within the lodges—could be used to summon assistance from a brother nearby. Although such communications were almost certainly never intended for a conflict on such a vast scale as the American Civil War, soldiers and sailors on both sides "requisitioned" Freemasonry when the occasion required it.

These Masonic ties were invoked in camp, in the field, in prison, and in battle. One example of how Masonry was a factor in the field occurred at the Battle of Gettysburg (1-3 July 1863). A private, Anson Miller, of Co. J., 151st Pennsylvania, was shot four times near Lutheran Seminary. Left behind by his retreating comrades, he was set upon by a group of rebel troops who stole his clothing, blankets and food until the wounded soldier made a Masonic appeal:

[H]e used those words which a Master Mason hears and heeds, even in the din of battle. Immediately there stepped out from among the Rebel soldiers one who remember[ed] his duty to a need[y] brother. He was a Tennessean—Menturn by name. He declared that he had never robbed a wounded foe, and that he would not permit the same to be done by others.

Incredibly, Anson's property was restored, he was evacuated and despite dim prospects, he survived the battle. [...]

[...] Although it is easy to dismiss the role of the Masonic fraternity during the war as just another social club with grandiloquent titles and preposterous costumes, that assumption is false. A study of the Civil War illustrates the particular ways in which individual Freemasons translated their Masonic experience from a peacetime social function to an indispensable resource in war. Masonic aid took many forms. In some cases, it preserved property from the usurping hand of war by guarding a fellow Mason's house, safeguarding his personal possessions from looters or thieves, or protecting a Masonic lodge in a captured town. In other instances, Masons cared for the wounded—often un-asked, but many times in response to a call for aid. Masonic prisoners were beneficiaries of fraternal kindness, receiving food, clothing and medicines from their warders who were also members of the Craft. In startling examples of Masonic interventions during actual combat, Masons more than once saved the lives of their brethren along the front lines. Despite the indecision and oftentimes powerlessness of the Grand Lodges in ameliorating the suffering and hardship of war, individual Masons took it upon themselves to inject the concept of brotherhood into the war with remarkable results.

[This article is an abridgement of Halleran, Michael A., "The Rebellion Came on Like a Cyclone," *Scottish Rite Journal* (March/April 2010): 7-9. To read more, see Bro. Michael A. Halleran's new book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Freemasonry in the American Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), from which the published extract is taken.]

Lodge Dates

Mar 22 6:00pm Fundraising
Committee Meeting

Mar 24-25

Grand Lodge, Nashville, TN

Mar 30 6:00pm Dinner
7:00pm MM Degree

Apr 19 6:00pm Dinner
7:00pm Stated Meeting

Apr 22 6:00pm Dinner
6:45pm MM Degree

Combined Bodies Events

Apr 3 5:00 pm Widow's Easter
Observance & Dinner—See
2nd page for more details

York Rite Dates

Mar 22 Grand Chapter Events at
Grand Lodge

Mar 23 Grand Council Events at
Grand Lodge

Apr 12 6:00pm Stated Meeting

Williamson County Shrine Club

Mar 18 6:00 pm Dinner & Meeting

Apr 3 10:00am Easter Egg Hunt
Al Menah Shrine Center

Apr 15 6:00 pm Dinner & Meeting

OES Dates

Mar 20 4:00 pm Installation

Apr 13 6:30pm Refreshments
7:30pm Stated Meeting

Hiram Lodge No. 7 F. & A.M.
115 2nd Ave. S.
Franklin, TN 37064

Upcoming Combined Bodies Events

Saturday, April 3: Easter Observance/Widows' Dinner at 5:00 PM
Widows, members, and families are all invited. Volunteers are needed to bring and serve food. OES will provide desserts. Contact Bro. Jesse Riggs (jesseriggs@bellsouth.net) or Bro. Russ Warton (russ@chapline-wharton.com) for more information.

Friday-Saturday, April 23-24: FRANKLIN MAIN STREET FESTIVAL
Hiram Lodge and the Williamson County Shrine Club will share a booth at the festival, and tours of the lodge will be provided to the public. Look for more information about the festival and how you can help in next month's newsletter.



York Rite News

Eastern Star News

Franklin Chapter #449 will have an open Installation of Officers on Saturday, March 20th at 4pm. There will be a reception following the Installation in our Dining Hall.

Eastern Star members will be providing desserts for the Widow's Dinner on Saturday, April 3rd. Please plan on having desserts at the Dining Hall by 4:30 pm.

