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Rabun Masonic chapter turns 150

By Tommy Culkin
Staff Writer

DILLARD — Whether man or object, from good can great be built. Freemasons have known this for centuries and, as members of one of America's oldest institutions, have practiced it just as long. Freemasonry has lengthy history in Rabun County as well, with the Rabun Gap Masonic Lodge celebrating its 150th year this month.

Masonic lodges in America originated as groups of builders dedicated to improving the cities they lived in, said Jeff Hunter, the grand master of Rabun County's Masonic Lodge. Over time, the nature of lodges shifted, and they became more about bettering oneself through discipline and morals.

When Rabun's lodge was founded in 1867, it was comprised of 12 members. The charter was officially granted for the lodge on Oct. 31, 1867.

Although known as Rabun Gap Lodge 265, the lodge actually did not meet in Rabun Gap. Meetings were held in Clayton. It's believed that many of the early mem-



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Rabun County's Masonic Lodge turns 150 this year. Pictured, Gary Leazer, Grand Master of Georgia's freemasons, addresses Rabun masons at the Sept. 28 banquet at The Dillard House.

bers lived in Rabun Gap and thought the lodge would later be established there once a building was constructed.

Over the years, Rabun's lodge continued to grow. Today it has hundreds of Masons, Hunter said.

The Masonic Lodge is stays involved in various local community service efforts. This includes supporting the local Boy Scout of America troops, helping to fund the Georgia Child Identification Program, sponsoring nu-

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merous blood drives over the years and working on multiple electrical projects for the Masonic Children's Home in Macon.

On Sept. 28, the lodge celebrated its anniversary with a dinner at the Dillard House. Gary Leazer, the grand master for the state of Georgia was the guest speaker, and he congratulated the lodge's members for sustaining the lodge for so long.

"If you're around for 150 years or 200 years, you're a very unique lodge because 150 years is a long time for most lodges," Leazer said. "The average lodge is maybe 75 years old."

As part of the ceremony, Nathan Bleckley and Douglas Bleckley were honored to commemorate 50 years as Masons.

"They've both meant a lot to this lodge and are both past Grand Masters," Hunter said after the ceremony.

To become a Mason, interested people must first contact a Mason and request entrance. Hunter stressed that the lodge does not ask anybody to join.

"The best way I can describe masonry is, it takes good men and makes them great men," Hunter said.