

# Masonic Messenger



Official Publication of the Grand Lodge of Georgia, Free & Accepted Masons

October 2017



*Grand Master Gary H. Leazer and Lady Ruth thank the lodges  
and Brothers who welcomed us into your lodges this year  
and we pray we will see each of you at Grand Lodge.*

## Rabun Gap Masonic Lodge No. 265 Clayton, Georgia 1867-2017

*The following article is a summary of a working draft by Wor. Bro. Larry Lynn, a member of Rabun Gap No. 265.*

Rabun Gap Masonic Lodge No. 265 celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2017. The first meeting of Rabun Gap Lodge was held under dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Georgia on September 3, 1867. The charter was granted on October 31, 1867. The charter was presented by the Deputy Grand Master in January 1868.

It is not known from what lodges the twelve founding members came, perhaps they had been initiated in Military Lodges of the Confederate Army or members of nearby out-of-state lodges such as Blue Ridge No. 92 in Walhalla, SC; Blue Ridge No 135 in Highlands, NC or Junaluska No 145 in Franklin, NC.

The first Worshipful Master was George M. Netherland, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the 25<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Volunteers and a local Clayton attorney. Eight of the original lodge officers served in the Georgia or North Carolina Confederate armies. At the end of the war, military lodges ceased to exist and members were required to join elsewhere; at least nineteen Military Lodges existed in Georgia alone. No records can be found to indicate where these founding members were affiliated prior to the formation of Rabun Gap Lodge, which did not meet in Rabun Gap, but met in the home of a member of Blue Ridge Lodge in Walhalla, South Carolina. Nineteen petitions were submitted in 1867; eight were rejected.

At the first meeting, thirteen new petitions were read. The lodge met at 3:00 P.M. In February 1868, the lodge voted to meet on the Friday before each full moon, unless the full moon fell on a Friday in which case the communication would be held on that day. In 1875, the lodge voted to begin meeting at 10:00 A.M. on the same Friday as before.

Fees were set by the lodge: ten dollars for an EA degree, five dollars for a FC degree and six dollars for the MM degree payable to the secretary before the degree was conferred. Ministers in the actual discharge of his ministerial duties were not required to pay for the degrees.

Dues were fifty cents per quarter. "Extraordinary contributions" could be assessed by the vote of two-thirds of the members present.

In 1870, Rabun Gap Lodge moved to Rabun Gap. A lot was purchased on Main Street in Rabun Gap for \$100. The first floor of the lodge hall was complete enough to allow the first floor to be rented in 1870.

As required by the lodge By-laws, annual Festivals were held in honor of St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist. Members would march to the Baptist Church where



a Masonic lecture was given.

Several Masonic trials were held during this period. In all cases the guilty parties were fined twenty-five cents each for unmasonic conduct.

In 1873, Franklin Alexander Bleckley was elected Worshipful Master, a position he would hold for a total of seventeen (non-consecutive) years. Wor. Bro. Netherland moved to Toccoa where he served as Worshipful Master of Toccoa Lodge. Wor. Bro. Bleckley died in 1902 and was the last founding lodge who remained an active member until his death.

By 1874, membership stood at sixty-five, even though a large number of petitions were rejected.

The finances of the lodge were very fragile in the 1870s; lodge attendance averaged fewer than 20 per regular meeting. The lodge was unable to pay its Grand Lodge assessment in 1878, but made it up the following year. Maintenance on the Masonic Hall was a constant issue. Another problem was the practice of non-Masons writing letters to lodges or traveling around the country claiming to be Freemasons and asking for money from the lodges.

A Lodge of Good Templars formed in Clayton during the 1880s. The Masonic Hall became their meeting place. The records for the period beginning in 1900 are much more detailed than those preceding. Requests from lodges on behalf of their members or widows were usually answered with a one dollar donation. In 1901, a former lodge secretary was found guilty of misappropriation of lodge funds and was excluded from membership. Two years later he requested he be forgiven and readmitted, but his petition was rejected.

Several purchases for the lodge were made in the early 1900s: a bookcase, twelve chairs, and a “respectable” letter “G” for \$2.90. A dozen spittoons (cuspidors) were purchased by the committee on carpeting after the lodge hall had new carpeting laid. A porch was built on the lodge hall; the lodge was insured, and a Bible was purchased. A desk was ordered for the secretary, a pipe organ was purchased for \$60 and swinging lamps for \$8.75.

New By-laws drafted in 1904 relieved members aged 70 years and older with 20 consecutive years as a contributing Mason from paying lodge dues as the Grand Lodge had previously enacted. The tyler’s fees were raised from 75 center per meeting to \$1 per meeting. His duties included provided lights, wood for the stoves and refreshments, to clean the lodge hall and ante-rooms and to serve notices, summons and citations issued by the Master. The chaplain’s position was changed from an elected position to an appointed one.

In 1918, three children of a Brother who had passed were sent to the Masonic Home. Cost to send the children to Macon by train was \$14.48.

On July 28, 1922, Rabun Gap Lodge first used the “Uniform System” to open and close lodge.

In late 1925, the Rabun Gap Lodge Hall was sold for \$2,985.42.

The lodge voted in 1926 to send \$36.50 to the George Washington Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia, which was then under construction. Also in 1926, a “Penny Box” began to be used for donations to help fund the “Masonic Orphans Home.”

The minutes of the lodge meetings from the mid-1920s through the mid-1970s are missing.

In 1956, the Walt Disney Company arrived in Clayton to film the movie, “The Great Locomotive Chase,” starring Fess Parker. Twenty-three California Masons signed their names and sent a certificate to Rabun Gap Lodge thanking the Brothers for courtesies extending to them during the filming.

In 1957, the lodge constructed a new hall at 26 West Savannah Street, where the lodge still meets, at a cost of \$30,000.

Lodge dues were increased to \$8.00 in 1962, to \$12.00 per year in 1972, to \$20.00 in 1981, and to \$30.00 in 1988. Dues were increased to \$40 per year in 2015.

Smoking and chewing tobacco was outlawed in the lodge room in 1988. In 1991, the prohibition was extended to the entire lodge hall. The lodge began presenting lambskin aprons to new initiates in 1989.

The financial situation of Rabun Gap Lodge began to see a positive turn-around in 1990; Christmas fruit baskets were delivered to widows and shut-in Masons about 1990; the scholarship fund continued to grow; the dining hall was carpeted; new officers’ jewels were purchased. The lodge volunteered for the Special Olympics in 1995, a practice

still followed. The kitchen was refurbished in 1998 to include new cabinets and linoleum. A new Georgia State Flag was purchased in 2004. Updates on the lodge have continued since then.



On September 28, 2017, Grand Master Gary Leazer visited the lodge for its 150-year anniversary celebration and dedicated a room to Edgar Allen Campbell, Sr. to be used as an office, library and coaching room.

Brother Edgar Campbell, Sr. conducted his first examination of a candidate on May 26, 1978. Wor. Bro. Campbell is still coaching and conducting examinations in 2017, nearly 40 years later.

After lodge was opened and business conducted, the lodge was put at ease to travel seven miles to the Dillard House to enjoy a fine meal with the Ladies and other guests.

Freemasonry has truly thrived in Rabun County since 1867. Even when finances were lacking, the Brothers found a way to overcome every difficulty. The 112 members of Rabun Gap Lodge No. 265 are committed to continuing this great tradition.



The officers of Rabun Gap Lodge No. 276.