



THE LODGE GATE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BILTMORE MASONIC LODGE

2026 Lodge Officers Elected and Installed

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page	
2	Past Master's Night
3	Awards Night
4	James Hoban, Architect
5	Albertus Fortune Book Review
6	Southern's Spencer Yard & Freemasonry
7	Possible Origins of the Hiram Legend
8	Joseph Lister & Surgical Sterilization
8	Becoming an Influencer
9	How Do You Eat An Elephant
9-10	Albert Pike Statue
10	Education 2025
11	Veteran's day 2025
12	A Generational View
13	

A publication of news, history, opinion and thoughts.

Magazine Publisher and Editor

Our Annual Election of Officers was held on December 2. We had a good turnout of Biltmore members with two brothers from Black Mountain in attendance. The following Masons were elected to office: Michael Ogus – Master, Frank Bryson – Senior Warden, Tony Rice Junior Warden, Michael Lawrence Treasurer, Larry Dotson, Secretary. The Master Elect appointed the following officers: Eric Willis, Senior Deacon, James Bradley, Junior Deacon, David Anderson Senior Steward, WB Clay Sorrells, Junior Steward, WB Howard Hazelrigg, Tyler, Alex Hanks,

Chaplain. WB Howard Hazelrigg was also added to the Trustee Board.

The Installation was held on Saturday, December 6 starting at noon with a meal followed by the open Installation ceremony led by WB Chris Lee, 2025 Grand Lecturer of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

WB Ogus took to the podium and first thanked everyone for attending. He spoke of the long friendship with WB Lee, even Chris's childhood connection with the Ogus family.

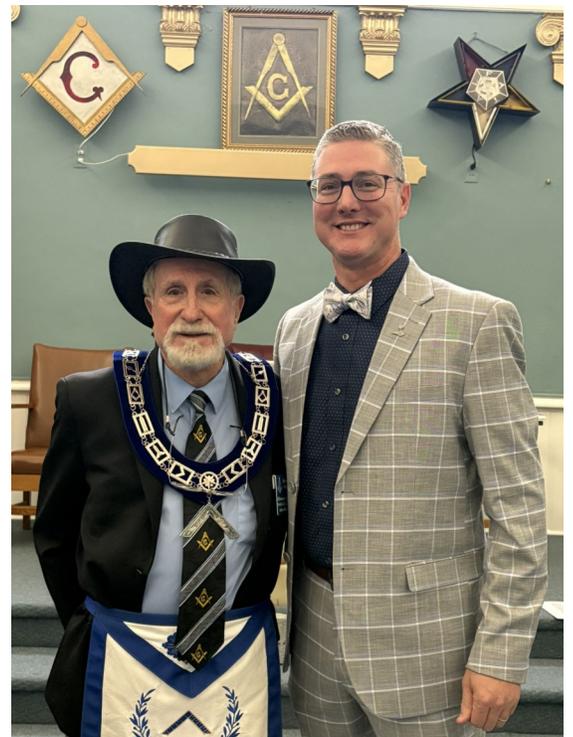
He then went on to speak of his desires to advance the lodge and to makes us more visible in the community.

Left photo front row L- R

Clay Sorrells, Alex Hanks, Michael Ogus, Frank Bryson, Howard Hazelrigg

Back row L-R David Anderson, Chris Lee, Jamie Bradley, Larry Dotson, Eric Willis

Michael Ogus, Chris Lee





Past Master's Night

Our October 14 meeting was dedicated to the recognition of the men who served as Master of our lodge and other lodges represented. The evening began with a fine meal of BBQ. The officer chairs were filled by Past Masters for the meeting with WB Paul Gentry serving as Master. Each Past Master spoke briefly about his time as Master.

operations into, out of, and throughout Antarctica. He provided information and photos about McMurdo Station, an American Antarctic research station on the southern tip of Ross Island and also of the climate and terrain of the continent. The talk concluded with about ten minutes of question from the brethren.



Brother Jason Patla standing at the geographic South Pole displaying the banner of his high school



Picture L-R front row—Jim Beggs, Curtis Hipps, Todd Lancaster, David Hare, Clay Sorrells

Middle—Darrell Slaughter, Aaron Johnson

Top— Jerry Vehaun, Robert Freeman, Joe Rhew, Norman Goering, Paul Gentry



There were 12 Past Masters present and their dates of service ran from 1977 to 2024. After the business of the lodge was concluded the Master called upon Brother Jason Patla to present his talk. His subject was of his visit to the South Pole in November 2014. At the time, Lt. Colonel Patla served as the Headquarters Pacific Air Force's (HQ PACAF) Weather Branch Chief, a position that serves as both the senior Air Force Meteorological and Oceanographic (METOC) Officer theater, and as the METOC lead for Joint Task Force Support Forces Antarctica (JTF-SFA). His mission was weather support to aviation



Awards Night

At the October 21, 2025 meeting the evening began with a fine meal for Brothers, family, and guests. Following the meal the lodge was opened for a short Stated Communication, after which the lodge was closed, visitors were invited upstairs, and our annual Awards Night began.

The 2025 Master Mason of the Year award was presented to Brother Eric Willis. In addition to his contributions to many activities at Biltmore Lodge, Brother Willis spent literally thousands of hours coordinating and executing numerous efforts to provide aid to families all across Western North Carolina

who were ravaged by Helene in September of 2024. He served as liaison for our area with Masons and Shriners from all over the country and continues to manage and provide goods and services and many, many hours of his time. He has represented Biltmore Lodge in a most exemplary manner. Congratulations, Brother Willis!

A special award was presented to Worshipful Brother Curtis Hipps. Worshipful Brother Hipps has been a Master Mason for over 48 years. He has been, and continues to be, someone upon whom we rely for wisdom and guidance in all areas of Masonic knowledge. Many Master

Masons, and definitely the elected officers, know that the job of Secretary is the most demanding position in a lodge, requiring consistent daily work that is essential if the lodge is to operate in an acceptable manner. Worshipful Brother Hipps performed as Secretary for 23 years -- a truly Herculean feat in my humble opinion. He was presented the Secretary's apron -- the one he wore in Biltmore Lodge -- in a beautiful display case. Worshipful Brother Hipps, you are loved and appreciated. Congratulations!

WB Clay Sorrells was awarded Past Master of the Year.

Left Photo—Br. Eric Willis

Right Photo—WB Curtis Hipps





James Hoban, White House Architect

Our first president, George Washington, selected the site for the White House in 1791 and the following year, the cornerstone was laid. For as long as they have existed, cornerstones had a significant construction purpose, that later evolved into a highly symbolic one. Cornerstones, like all large building blocks, are hewn from solid rock. They are particularly smooth, square and accurate. The cornerstone is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All other stones are set in reference to this stone; thus, it determines the position of the entire structure.

Such a stone became symbolic during the building of King Solomon's Temple, completed in 957 BC. It is from the construction of this Temple, that Freemasons take both their "operative" and "speculative" symbolism. Freemasons have a long-standing history of laying cornerstones with much ceremony. Indeed, on October 13th, 1792, President George Washington laid the Cornerstone for the new presidential residence, 'The White House'.

The design for the house was submitted by Irish-born architect James Hoban was chosen. But who was this man, James Hoban?

Hoban was born sometime around 1758 in Callan, County Kilkenny, Ireland. He worked as a carpenter and a wheelwright

until his early twenties. In his early twenties he was given an advanced student place in the Dublin Society's Drawing School. There he was a student of Thomas Ivory, another notable Irish architect. Hoban later apprenticed with Ivory. In 1780, Hoban won the prestigious Duke of Leinster's medal from the Dublin Society.

In 1785, after the American Revolution, Hoban immigrated to the United States. He initially set up his home in Philadelphia, then the capital of the newly formed United States. He tried to make a go of being an architect in Philadelphia and despite taking out ads in the local newspaper; work was slow to come in.

By 1787, Hoban had moved to South Carolina. There he designed several buildings. He designed the Charleston County Courthouse and the South Carolina Statehouse. In 1791, President George Washington toured the south and had a chance to see firsthand Hoban's work. It is unclear whether the two actually met in South Carolina, anecdotal evidence suggests they did. In 1792, Washington summoned Hoban back to Philadelphia.

The month after his return, Hoban entered a competition, at the request of Washington, to design the White House. Hoban was named the winner of the competition. His initial design was very different from

what was finally built; Washington gave him several changes to the design. Hoban also was a supervising architect on the Capitol building as well, although it was not his design.

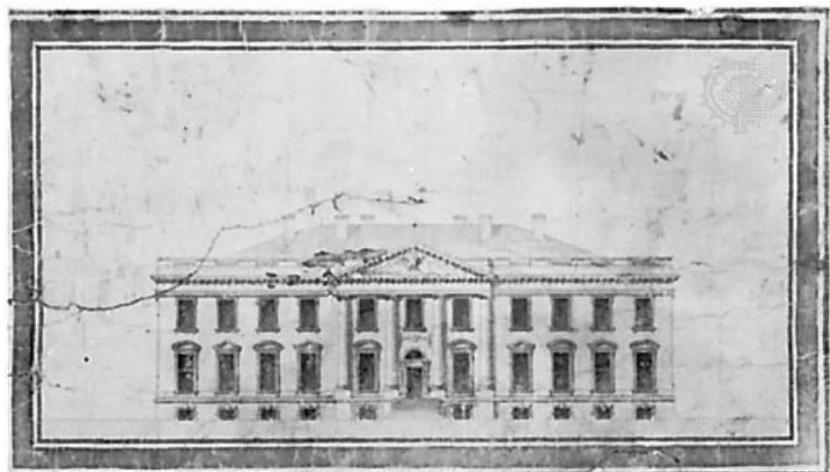
Hoban, who was an Irish Catholic, also designed many of the Catholic institutions around Washington, D.C. This includes Georgetown University and St. Patrick's Parish. Despite living and working in Washington D.C. for the rest of his life, Hoban also designed at least one building back in his native Ireland.

Hoban passed away on December 8th, 1831.

Hoban was a member of Georgetown Lodge No. 9 and was later a founding member of Federal Lodge No. 15. He was also a Royal Arch Mason. Could Masonry have brought Hoban and Washington together in Charleston?

Part of this article is by Brother Eric C. Steele.

Hoban's drawing of the White House





Albertus Fortune

Albertus Burgin Fortune was born in Swannanoa, Buncombe County, North Carolina on March 7, 1845. He attended school at Black Mountain, and at the age of 17 joined the army and served in the Civil War in Company C, 16th Battalion as First Sergeant. His obituary lists him as Captain A.B. Fortune. Whether this rank was achieved during military service, or was accorded as an honorary title is not known.

After the war he attended Colonel Steven Lee's school in Chunn's Cove and boarded in Asheville. He studied law under Judge Bailey and was licensed to practice.

His first work was on the Western North Carolina Railroad at Swannanoa. He was also a contractor on the Asheville and Spartanburg railroad.

On March 10, 1870, he married Leah Adeline "Addie" Burgin of Swannanoa, daughter of John Burgin who was born about 1800.

During his lifetime Albertus Fortune Sr. built several sections of railroad around Asheville, one from Buena Vista to Fletcher, and another from Luther to Turnpike. He then went to Virginia and helped build the railroad from Martinsville to Patrick Court House. He also did contracting work in Georgia for the Seaboard Airline Railroad, and constructed the beltline around Atlanta.

After completing the work in Georgia, he came back to Asheville and went to work in the Buncombe County Treasury Office for E.W. Patton, Treasurer. He was later elected to hold the office of Register of Deeds in

1902. He held that job until his death on December 27, 1906. He was a member of the Mt. Herman Lodge of the Masonic Order in Asheville. He was buried with full Masonic honors in Asheville Cemetery (now Riverside) with services conducted by Dr. R.F. Campbell, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church.



The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.

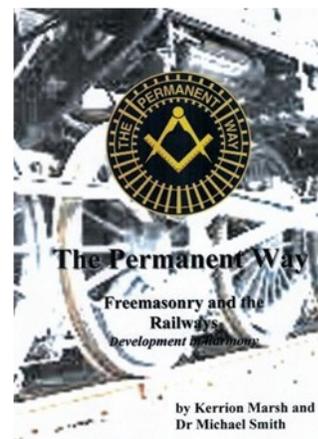
Brother Mark Twain

Book Review

The Permanent Way: Freemasonry and the Railways by Mr Kerrion Roy Marsh

An exploration of the symbiotic relationship between what at first appears to be two dissimilar organizations. The book traces the parallel development of Freemasonry and the railway and their impact on society. It examines how the railway encouraged the growth and democratization of Freemasonry within Great Britain and how the development of the worldwide railway network encouraged the spread of Freemasonry across the globe;

the influences on literature, Freemasonry's impact on Railway Architecture and the Freemasons who were fundamental in shaping the development of the Railways; from Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Sir Daniel Gooch, William Stanier and Sir Edward William Watkin and many others. The book ends with a reflection on the future and how both the Railways and Freemasonry must adapt to changing social and economic needs.





Southern's Spencer Yard & Freemasonry

The N.C. Transportation Museum is located on the site of what was once Southern Railway Company's largest steam locomotive servicing facility. J.P. Morgan, Southern's owner, chose the site because of its location midway between the railroad's major terminal points of Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, Ga. Construction of the Shops began in 1896, and they were named in honor of the first president of Southern Railway, Samuel Spencer.

During its peak, Spencer Shops employed nearly 3,000 people, which directly and indirectly provided most of the jobs for the towns of Spencer, East Spencer and other surrounding Rowan County communities.

With the advent of the diesel locomotive, Spencer Shops went into decline. The repair facility closed in 1960, but the classification (freight) yard remained open until the late 1970s.

In September 1977, Southern Railway donated four acres of the site, including three buildings, to the state of North Carolina. A second donation in 1979 included several additional historic structures and land. The entire site was eventually placed under the administration of the Historic Sites section of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

The first exhibit area opened in 1983. Numerous restoration and exhibit improvements have occurred over the years, resulting in the museum's growth in size and popularity. The museum

broke its annual visitation record in 2001 with 129,597 visitors, surpassing the old mark - set in 1999 - by nearly 15,000 visitors.

There is no doubt that many Freemasons worked at the yard over the years. Just nine years after the yard was constructed Spencer Masonic Lodge No. 543 began operations. Beginning in 2016 the lodge began hosting a Railroad Degree inside the museum to perpetuate the legacy of the association of the railroad and Masonic Lodge. The degrees continue to the current time.

**ROWAN COUNTY MASONIC
RAILROAD
DEGREE**
HOSTED BY:
SPENCER MASONIC LODGE #543

MAY 11, 2024

Dinner at 5pm · Train Ride 6pm · Degree 6:30pm
Held at the North Carolina Transportation Museum
Includes: Meal, Train Ride, & Degree
**Limited Edition Tee Shirts will be On Sale!*
\$40 Per Mason
**Must be a Master Mason in good standing to attend.*





Possible Origins of the Hiramic Legend

As most of you are by now aware my primary interest in our craft is in origins; in today's article I am going to begin a series of explorations regarding the legend of Hiram Abif and how this material became the central focal point of the Master Mason's degree. But first let me begin by reminding us that the 3rd, or MM, degree appears at some point around 1724, roughly seven or eight years after the formation of Grand Lodge. Why did the principle founders feel that a 3rd degree was needed? Was the 3rd degree one of the "innovations" to which the Antients objected? Neither of these issues has been addressed sufficiently by most authorities on Freemasonry, although they have been touched 'round the edges as it were in many discussions. We are simply left to take it at face value that the MM degree was a product of the "revived" Grand Lodge, which leads me to another question....what was being revived? We'll address that, along with other matters, in subsequent articles. So, without further ado, let's take a look at what we know of the appearance of the Hiramic legend. In the 1730's there appeared a publication by one Samuel Prichard called "Masonry Dissected", an obvious attempt to discredit Freemasonry, but which was followed shortly thereafter by a publication by an anonymous author, "Defense of Masonry". In this work the author attempted to compare some Masonic practices, symbols, etc. with simi-

larities from antiquity...note "similarities", not verbatim accounts. I'll give a couple of examples as follows, in the sixth book of the Roman poet Virgil there is the story of Aeneas wanting to visit his deceased father, Anchises, in the realm of the shades but in order to enter that realm he has to have a passport of sorts, a golden bough or shrub, acacia comes to mind. Another story from Virgil is that of King Priam of Troy who sent his son Polydorus to the King of Thrace with a great sum of money but some "ruffians" killed Polydorus for the money and buried his body on a hillside there in Thrace. Again, Aeneas when he had come into Thrace, by accident pulled up a curious looking shrub and found the body of the murdered Polydorus....very similar to the discovery of the body of Hiram Abif. What these similarities reveal are a couple of things to my mind. Whoever of the "revived" Grand Lodge founders, most likely Rev. James Anderson or Rev. Jean Desaguliers, one or both, was responsible for creating the MM degree, and whoever was the author and creator of the MM degree was quite familiar with not only the biblical material regarding the building of Solomon's Temple and the role of Hiram Abif, but was also familiar with the literature of the classical period, both Roman and Greek. The average operative stone mason would not have had such an education, although it is quite possible that

much of this could have circulated among craftsmen in an oral tradition. It is far more likely that the author of the MM degree was an educated member of our craft and that points directly to a member of the clergy, who for that time were the most broadly educated members of English society. That leaves us with a high probability that either Anderson or Desaguliers, or the two as co-authors, wrote the MM degree and the expanded form of the legend of Hiram Abif made its appearance at that time. This is not to say that some version or form of the story was not in circulation prior to this time but if there was such it most likely was in an oral traditional form which was somewhat well known among members of the craft as part of the general lore....the story simply needed an editor to refine it and include it in the ritual of "revived" Grand Lodge Masonry. One last note, an account which runs fairly close to the modern form we have today comes from a confession given by a Freemason who had become subject to the persecution of the Portuguese Inquisition at some point in the 1740's or perhaps a bit earlier. Under duress, this unfortunate Freemason, John Coustos, gave a quite detailed version of the legend of Hiram Abif. This account would appear to be, as far as I know, the most fully expanded form of the legend to appear as we know it today. Keep in mind that this Coustos' account was given at least some fifteen to twenty

years after the appearance of the MM degree (1724), so by the time of Coustos' account the legend of Hiram Abif had been part of Grand Lodge masonry for approximately twenty years....plenty of time for it to have become commonplace among members of the craft. Up until this point in the lore of the craft most of the allusions to Hiram Abif had been largely to explain the name and origin of Hiram Abif in its biblical context, but the stories in the Old Testament regarding the building of Solomon's Temple do not deal with the legend as it is in the MM degree, in fact as I have previously stated, there is no fully expanded version anywhere to be found prior to Grand Lodge and the coming of the MM degree. It is not to be found in any of the earliest of the Old Charges nor even in the later manuscripts of the Charges except as possible additions after the fact. So, brethren, I will close my investigation and argument of this first exploration into the Legend of Hiram Abif by saying that it very much appears that those two prominent members of the founding of Grand Lodge, who remember were educated clergymen, were the prime suspects in the bringing to the fore of our craft the Legend of Hiram Abif. That's my story, and for now, I'm sticking to it....however, this too is subject to further review!

Peace,

Brother Bucky



Joseph Lister and Surgical Sterilization



The following article fits right in with a quote I live by; 'most things I know I learn in route to learning other things'. In early fall 2025 I was walking along listening to a podcast about the 'Victorians' when the name Joseph Lister was mentioned. Ah! I wonder if the famous mouthwash was named for him? Sure enough, a quick Google search proved that to be the case.

Joseph Lister was a British surgeon, medical scientist, experimental pathologist and pioneer of antiseptic surgery and preventive healthcare. Lister revolutionized the craft of surgery by the use of close anatomical observation, in the same manner that John Hunter revolutionized the science of surgery. From a technical viewpoint, Lister was not an exceptional surgeon, but his research into bacteriology and infection in wounds revolutionized surgery throughout the world.

Lister's contributions were four-fold. Firstly, as a surgeon at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, he

introduced carbolic acid (modern-day phenol) as a sterilizer for surgical instruments, patients' skins, sutures, surgeons' hands, and wards, promoting the principle of antiseptics. Secondly, he researched the role of inflammation and tissue perfusion in the healing of wounds. Thirdly, he advanced diagnostic science by analyzing specimens using microscopes. Fourthly, he devised strategies to increase the chances of survival after surgery. His most important contribution, however, was recognizing that putrefaction in wounds is caused by germs, in connection to Louis Pasteur's then-novel germ theory of fermentation.

Lister's work led to a reduction in post-operative infections and made surgery safer for patients, leading to him being distinguished as the "father of modern surgery".

Lister is listed by English Masonic Lodges as being a Freemason though no lodge name or number was found. Joseph Lister Lodge No. 8032, which is

the Lodge of University College Hospital is named after Bro. Joseph Lister.

Listerine is an American brand of antiseptic mouthwash. A solution of thymol, eucalyptol, menthol and alcohol, Listerine was at first thought to be a cure for a host of ailments including bad breath, which it did cure.

Listerine, named for Sir Joseph Lister, founder of the practice of antiseptic medicine, was first formulated in St. Louis, MO in 1879 by Dr. Joseph Lawrence and Jordan Wheat Lambert. Lambert's Pharmacal Co. later merged with the William R. Warner Company. Lambert's son, Gerald Barnes Lambert became Lambert-Warner's president in 1923. In his five years as the head of the firm, Listerine's profits increased 60 times. The success was largely due to Lambert's memorable advertising campaigns, most notably the reinvention of bad breath as the medical condition "halitosis" and the resultant social fears it inspired.

Becoming an Influencer

"You've got to be a thermostat rather than a thermometer. A thermostat shapes the climate of opinion; a thermometer just reflects it." - Cornel West .

Freemasonry proudly states that it 'makes good men better' but better than what? Well, obviously, better than the man we were before becoming a Mason. But this becoming better draws

along with it a calling to be more, to do more.

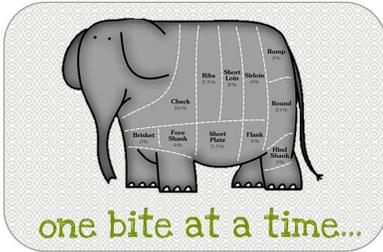
Cornel West highlights the distinction between passively reflecting prevailing opinions and actively influencing them. By being a thermostat, we have the power and obligation to be an influence on other men, younger men, to become better than they are. We should not only reflect

the moralistic teachings of our beloved fraternity but we should shape the opinions of men who know little of our craft and to influence them into seeking membership.

Being a good Mason can both reflect and influence and thus strengthen the appearance of a positive growth potential to non-Masons.



How Do You Eat An Elephant?



One bite at a time.

How many times as a child did we hear adults tell us, 'just be patient'. We were looking forward to Christmas, vacation at the beach or doing some other fun thing. We thought the time would never get there and now, decades into the future we look back in fond remembrance of those days that were fulfilled.

In the instructions of the Third Degree, according to our Masonic ritual, it has been said that time, patience, and perseverance will enable us to accomplish all things, and perhaps at last to find the true Master's Word. The idea is similar to one expressed by the Hermetic philosophers. Thus Pernetty, a French priest and naturalist, tells us (Dictionary of Hermetic Mythology), that the alchemists said: "The work of the philosopher's stone is a work of patience, on account of the length of time and

of labor that is required to conduct it to perfection; and Geber, a 14th century alchemist, says that many adepts have abandoned it in weariness, and others, wishing to precipitate it, have never succeeded." With the alchemists, in their esoteric teaching, the philosopher's stone had the same symbolism as the Word has in Freemasonry.

Confucius, that wise philosopher of the past once said "The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones."

Confucius reiterates the power of perseverance, patience, and gradual progress. Even the most monumental tasks can be achieved by taking small, consistent steps in the right direction. By focusing on the immediate tasks at hand, we can steadily build momentum and work towards our larger objectives. This quote embodies the spirit of determination and resilience. It

suggests that no challenge is insurmountable if we approach it with patience and a tenacious attitude. Just as moving a mountain may seem impossible at first glance, the continuous effort of removing small stones gradually makes the task achievable.

Right now we are in a lull of initiating candidates into Masonry. We lament the downturn of our membership rolls and wonder at the future of our Craft. This has happened several times over modern Freemasonry's existence but eventually the fraternity saw revitalization. We must be patient, persevere and in the fullness of time we may yet see a return of younger men to Masonry. But we as Master Masons are not to sit idly by and expect miracles to restore our numbers. Each of us, by carrying one stone at a time, may yet influence younger men to seek membership.

Albert Pike Statue Restored

From Fox News October 28, 2025

A bronze statue of Confederate Gen. Albert Pike, which was toppled by demonstrators in 2020 following George Floyd's death, was reinstalled this past weekend in Washington, D.C., a result of President Donald Trump's executive orders.

The statue, standing 11 feet tall atop a 16-foot granite pedestal, was pulled down with ropes, spray-painted with graffiti and

set on fire by demonstrators who viewed it as a symbol of systemic racism and the Confederacy.

The vandalism occurred on June 19, 2020, also known as Juneteenth, the day that recognizes the end of slavery in the United States. It came as a wave of protests and riots swept the country after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

The statue had been in storage for five years, but crews were

seen placing it back on the pedestal on Saturday near Judiciary Square. The memorial stands near the corner of 3rd and D Streets NW. The effort to restore the statue stems from President Donald Trump's 2020 executive orders on "Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful" and "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History."

— Continued Next Page —



Pike Statue, continued



The orders directed federal agencies to safeguard and restore historic monuments damaged during 2020 protests. The orders also called for the protection of American monuments, preservation of American history and heritage, and combating the "revisionist movement."

Pike was a Confederate general in the Civil War and also served as an associate justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court. He was one of the most influential figures in the history of American Freemasonry and the statue

itself depicts Pike dressed in Masonic clothing, wearing a double-breasted vest and a long coat. His right arm is extended, and he is holding a book with his left arm, thought to be his work, "Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry."

The statue was funded by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and was erected in 1901 to honor Pike's Masonic scholarship, according to the White House. The National Park Service said the move to restore the monu-

ment complies with federal law and policy.

"The National Park Service announced on Aug. 4, 2025, that it will restore and reinstall the bronze statue of Albert Pike, which was damaged and vandalized during the Black Lives Matter riots in June 2020," the agency said in a statement to Fox News Digital. "The restoration aligns with federal responsibilities under historic-preservation law and recent executive orders to beautify the nation's capital and restore pre-existing statues."

Education 2025

Over the past few years we have embarked on a mission to present a variety of topics as programs at each meeting. Some talks are directly related to Freemasonry but the majority of topics are on subjects of interest outside our Craft. This year we were fortunate to have a program at every meeting and the subjects were all interesting and varied. Here is a list of just a few.

WB Norman Goering presented a three night talk about the murder of North Carolina State Highway Patrol Officer George Penn. He also presented a very interesting talk on the creation and use of Time Zones.

Brother Alex Hanks spoke on the history of the Winter Solstice, Easter and Saint Patrick's Day.

Brother Jason Patla presented a

talk and slide presentation on a visit he made to the South Pole as a US Air Force Weather Officer.

Brother Bob Greaves presented an inspirational talk dedicated to the Veterans of the US Military on November 11.

Brother Tony Rice gave us some great information on Disaster Preparedness and another talk about the problems of patient identification and information given by Emergency Room staff.

Brother David Reynolds spoke about the Masons associated with the Alamo and the fight for Texas secession from Mexico.

WB Curtis Nugent spoke on the life of Brother Kit Carson.

WB Clay Sorrells spoke on the observance of Four Chaplains

Day, Medieval marginalia art and the History of White House Renovations.

These are just a few of the topics presented. We hope that 2026 will again offer a wide variety of topics. A promised series in 2026 will focus on little known facts of the Biltmore Estate.

If you are willing to speak on a subject please get in touch with us and we will arrange a date suitable to your needs. Remember, we will not allow talks centering on partisan politics or one espousing one religion over another.





Veterans Day 2025

Biltmore Lodge met in a Stated Communication on November 11, 2025 but this was no ordinary meeting. The night was dedicated to honoring our military veterans.

November 11 is significant for Veterans Day because it marks the anniversary of the November 11, 1918, armistice that ended World War I. The holiday originated as Armistice Day to commemorate the end of the war, and the date of the armistice was the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month". In 1954, the name was changed to Veterans Day to honor veterans of all U.S. wars.

The evening began with a meal at 6:15 PM followed by a short business meeting. The Master recognized the 8 veterans in attendance. Biltmore Lodge has a long history of veteran Masonic membership. Our first military veterans were from the US Civil War and there have been representatives in our membership from every other engagement.

The evening continued at the close of the lodge where we invited our guests to join us. Brother Robert Greaves, a US Navy Veteran presented a great talk on Brother Audie Murphy.

Audie L. Murphy was born on June 20, 1924 near Farmersville, TX. He ended school at the fifth grade to help his family financially. After the attack on Pearl Harbor he wanted to enlist at age

17, but standing only 5'5" tall and weighing a mere 110 lbs he was turned down. Over the next six months he ate as much food as he could get his hands on and exercised regularly. Murphy was finally accepted into the Army on June 30, 1942.

Murphy was an American soldier, actor, and songwriter. He was widely celebrated as the most decorated American combat soldier of World War II, and has been described as the most highly decorated enlisted soldier in U.S. history. He received every military combat award for valor available from the United States Army, as well as French and Belgian awards for heroism. Murphy received the Medal of Honor for valor that he demonstrated at age 19 for single-handedly holding off a company of German soldiers for an hour at the Colmar Pocket in France in

January 1945, before leading a successful counterattack while wounded.

In 1955 he became a member of North Hollywood Lodge No. 542 F & AM, Grand Lodge of California. He was also a member of the Scottish Rite of Dallas Texas.

We currently have 45 military veterans in our membership. To those of you who were not able to attend we extend our heartfelt thanks for serving your country. Pictured here are the eight US Military Veterans in attendance.

L - R Tim Drake, Jason Patla, Sanford Lewis, Tony Rice, Wade Manning, Robert Greaves, Howard Hazelrigg, James Beggs



2026 BILTMORE LODGE OFFICERS

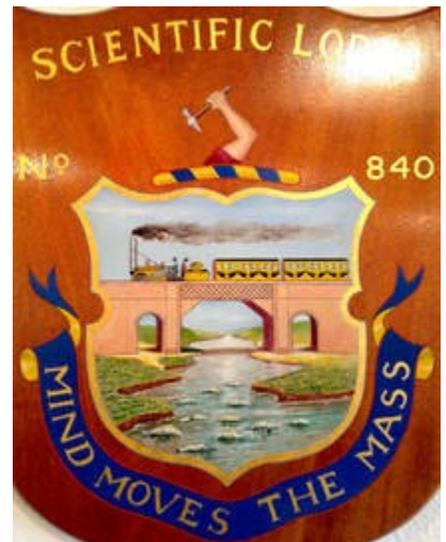


Office	Officer
Master	Michael Oguş
Sr. Warden	Frank Bryson
Jr. Warden	Tony Rice
Treasurer	Michael Lawrence
Secretary	Larry Dotson, PM
Sr. Deacon	Eric Willis
Jr. Deacon	Jamie Bradley
Sr. Steward	David Anderson
Jr. Steward	Some old Past Master
Tyler	Howard Hazelrigg
Chaplain	Alex Hanks

English Railroad Lodge

Location: Buckinghamshire, UK
 Scientific Lodge No 840 was founded in 1860 by engineers and staff of the London & North Western Railway (LNWR), working at that railway's extensive southern division engineering headquarters in Wolverton, Buckinghamshire. The Locomotive Superintendent at Wolverton works from 1847 to 1862 was the LNWR engine designer James McConnell, whose designs include the LNWR "Bloomer" 2-2-2 locomotives and the "Wolverton Express Goods" 0-6-0 freight engines. James McConnell was also the Founding Worshipful Master of Scientific Lodge. The LNWR later became the largest component in the founding of the LMS, one of the "Big Four" British railway companies of 1923. Today the Lodge still meets in Wolverton.

(shield) picture of a railway bridge over a river. However, the train on the bridge differs between the two versions. The one shown here depicts Stephenson's "Rocket" and two yellow coaches; the version used on contemporary lodge summonses shows an early Victorian era locomotive (roughly of the Jenny Lind Single type) hauling two red coaches.



The lodge badge exists in two slightly different forms. Both share the same crest and motto, and the same central