

AW22 Lodge Anecdotes
by
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Why does AW22 receive free housing in the G.W.M.N.M.?

The Alexandria-Washington Lodge, No. 22 has always been housed without cost to the lodge in the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. As the only resident lodge within the memorial, it is therefore the only symbolic lodge in the United States that is directly or indirectly supported by all grand lodges of the United States subscribing to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association.

The reason why Lodge No. 22 has this unique position is set forth in a document adopted by the association and the lodge in 1942 so named *The 1942 Agreement*. In this contract signed February 23, 1942, both parties approved articles number three and four here referenced as follows:

3. The Association covenants to complete, decorate, and furnish at its expense and in accordance with plans and specifications which have been previously prepared, submitted to and approved by the Lodge, a fireproof Lodge Room with suitable anterooms, for the use of the Lodge, on the south side of the main floor of the Memorial Temple, and also to complete, decorate and furnish at its expense a Replica Room, communicating with the said Lodge Room, and said Replica Room shall as far as possible be a replica of the old Lodge Room erected in 1802 and destroyed by fire in 1871, but before construction the plans and specifications of such Replica Room shall be first approved by the parties hereto in writing; the said Association further covenants to provide sufficient heat, light, water and janitor service for the Replica Room and for the said Lodge Room, its ante-room and approaches, and perpetually, properly, and uninterruptedly to maintain and keep the said Replica Room, Lodge Room, ante-rooms and approaches in good repair, all without cost to the Lodge.

The officers and members of the Lodge shall have free access to the Lodge Room and the Replica Room at all times. For this purpose it is agreed that the Worshipful Master of the Lodge shall be furnished with proper keys to the entrance on the south side of the building so that if, for any reason, the main entrance to the Memorial Temple shall be closed, the officers and members of the Lodge, in order to transact any proper function of the Lodge, may enter the building through the said south entrance. The Lodge agrees, upon request of the Association, to grant permission to the Association to use the Lodge Room, or grant its use, on all reasonable occasions, provided that such use does not interfere with the use of the Lodge Room by the Lodge.

4. The Lodge covenants that, upon establishment of said endowment fund, or security, in the amount, manner and form stipulated in section 2 hereof, and upon the completion, decoration and furnishing of the Lodge Room and Replica Room as provided in section 3 hereof, and after notice to the Lodge to that effect from the Association, or its duly authorized Executive Committee, the Lodge, on the request of the Association or its said Executive Committee, will transfer and move its historical relics, portraits and furniture associated with the Masonic career of General George Washington, and other relics of all kinds, now contained in its Lodge Rooms in said City Hall Building, to the said Lodge Room and the Replica Room in said Memorial Temple, where they shall be exhibited to the public without charge.

Simply put, Lodge No. 22 agreed to place on public exhibit within the memorial all its historical artifacts, and more especially the relics of George Washington which it collected over time at

no charge to the public. In exchange, the lodge receives free housing and maintenance of said housing as long as the lodge, the association or the memorial exists.

Although this is the official reason why the lodge is housed free in the memorial, there are several other important historical reasons that should be taken into consideration. First of which is Lodge No. 22 is the mother entity from which the concept of a national Masonic memorial was first conceived. Lodge No. 22 is also the organization from which the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association was born. In fact, the Memorial Association was completely structured under the auspices of Lodge No. 22. This can be reference by the opening speech of William B. McChesney, Grand Master of Virginia at the first organizational meeting held on February 22, 1910. Here, in the Alexandria-Washington Lodge room at the City Hall of Alexandria, Most Worshipful McChesney addresses an audience of eighteen Grand Masters or their representatives from various states interested in participating with the lodge to erect a memorial to Washington, the Mason, and house its collection of historic relics in a fireproof structure. He said in part:

“By the grace of God and the invitation of Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, we are here today to form an organization, which we hope will be as lasting as the memory of him whose birthday we celebrate. In the beginning I wish to state that this is a function entirely of Alexandria-Washington Lodge. I, like the other representatives from other Grand Jurisdictions, am an invited guest. They have conceived this to be something that is due the nation. Having, for their first Master, Worshipful Brother George Washington, they necessarily feel that he is of them and is theirs. They have priceless relics of his life surrounding them, and as they wish to preserve them for the benefit of Masonry in a national sense, propose to make this a national organization. If they desired to erect a building simply as an ornament to their city or for the comfort of their Lodge, the sale of these cherished heirlooms at public auction would yield a sum sufficient to build the finest temple in Virginia, but appreciating their history and believing that the other Grand Jurisdictions feel as deeply interested in Brother Washington as they do, they come before you with this proposition, that the matter may be taken up as a national project.”

After this address, Most Worshipful McChesney proposed a motion to form a committee on permanent organization of the project. These are the names of those that formed this committee: James D. Richardson, Sovereign Grand Commander, Southern Jurisdiction, A. & A. S. R., Chairman; General Thomas. J. Shryock, Grand Master of Maryland; Delmar D. Darrah, Deputy Grand Master of Illinois; Henry Banks, Grand Master of Georgia; Henry H. Ross, Past Grand Master of Vermont; Thomas H. Day, Past Grand Master of Delaware; John H. Cowles, Grand Master of Kentucky; James R. Johnson, Grand Master of South Carolina; and Wm. H. Nichols, representative of the Grand Master of Texas. It is important here to note how various Masonic leaders from all over the nation united with Lodge No. 22 in its project. Thereafter, this committee presented the following resolution to be adopted:

WHEREAS Alexandria, Virginia, was the home town of George Washington, he being a member of its Council, a vestryman in Christ Church, and first Master of Alexandria Lodge, No. 22; Alexandria’s citizens first celebrating his birthday; its soldiers, physicians, ministers and Masons ministering to him in life and death, the Alexandria-Washington Lodge, possessing, as priceless heirlooms, many of the personal effects and Masonic treasures of this man, “whom Heaven left childless that a nation might call him father,” and

WHEREAS, it has been aptly said that “until time shall be no more, will a test of the progress, which our race has made in wisdom and virtue, be derived from the veneration paid to the immortal name of Washington,” now therefore be it

***Resolved*, first that we approve and endorse the proposed erection of a Masonic Temple as a memorial to George Washington, under the auspices of Alexandria-Washington Lodge, No. 22, A. F. & A. M., of Alexandria, Virginia.**

That we pledge our earnest support to this commendable undertaking and that all Grand Masters are earnestly requested to call the same to the attention of the Lodges within their several jurisdictions, and urge upon them their hearty cooperation and assistance.

Done in the city of Alexandria, Virginia, on the twenty-second day of February, A.D. 1910.

This resolution was unanimously adopted and the time appointed for the organization of a permanent memorial temple association was set February 21 and 22, 1911 - the following year. It was therefore on February 22, 1911 after adopting the above preamble to its constitution and by-laws that the association was given the name "George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association". It would not be until 1923, that the Memorial Association would be officially incorporated under the laws of Virginia and diversify (not separate) its status with Lodge No. 22. The reasons for this being a Virginia Masonic lodge could not be or have committees incorporated, therefore, because of the complex fund raising procedures of the Memorial Association, it was felt best to give the association a separate and official identity as regards the laws of Virginia.

In conclusion, we as American Freemasons should never forget the historic, benevolent and intimate relationship between the Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22 – **the initiator**, the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association – **the vehicle** and the George Washington Masonic National Memorial – **the result**. All three entities are inherently entwined and therefore could not continue to function without the other. Thus, members of AW22 should be greatly honored and truly feel at home within the only national Masonic temple supported by all the grand lodges of the United States of America: **The George Washington Masonic National Memorial**.

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