

Blackmer Buzz

October – December 2005

Volume 2, Issue 4

From the “Hot Seat”

Only one more meeting to go in 2005 and Blackmer has been buzzing all year long! Our degree work has carried over into 2005 as a result of fifteen petitions in 2004, two petitions in 2005, and the passing of two of our members. We have made repairs to our building: painting, new HVAC

system, etc., and we have sponsored a successful blood drive.

We have elected a new slate of officers for 2006, and they are preparing for pending degree work. Some of our new members have accepted appointments for the coming year, which means we will continue to

grow. Our Master elect is well qualified to fill that “hot seat”, and I am sure our lodge will continue to buzz under his leadership!

As Christmas approaches let us not forget the reason for the season, and be thankful. Fraternally yours...

- Ken Fritts, Master

Experience: A Valuable Teacher

“A man with experience owes nothing to a man with an opinion.” I have always loved this quote. I am not even sure who said it, but for some reason, it has always stuck with me. I think of it each time I experience something new or meet a new person.

I have met a lot of different people in my life and experienced a lot of different things. Some of which have changed my life in ways that I could have never imagined. This past year I was introduced to a new experience, an experience that has taught me more about myself than I care to learn, an experience that has introduced me to some extraordinary people.

This past January I was introduced to Freemasonry. As with anything new, I admit, I was skeptical. I questioned many aspects of this organization. I research-

ed various sources looking for “Pros” and “Cons”, I asked Masons and non-Masons alike, trying to find answers to my questions. Finally, after compiling facts and myths, and trying to distinguish between the two, I decided that all of my work had been in vain. The only true way to find out about what Freemasonry had to offer me was to join. So I did.

Upon my joining the lodge, I began to see many positive aspects of becoming a Mason. First of all, I began to notice some of the men that were Masons. Some of whom I had known my whole life, men of great character and honor, men respected by their peer, men who stood for the things most sacred in this world. After my 1st Degree, I was astonished to know that I was now a part of this elite group of men.

Another positive aspect of becoming a Mason is what Freemasonry can teach a person about themselves, such as: the moral aspects of how one should live and love, and the consequences of one’s actions. Freemasonry teaches some of the very same qualities exemplified and taught by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the perfect example of how one should love his neighbor and live his life. Freemasonry affirms what God’s Word reveals. By this I mean that it is, for lack of a better word, a mirror. By looking into it, we see the reflection of ourselves, a reflection that reveals to us who and what we have become. It does not allow us to hide behind a mask of self-denial. If we cannot see ourselves, then we cannot know ourselves. By this I mean that if we

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Special Events:

- January 3, 2006 – Open Installation of Officers
- April, 2006 - Blackmer Lodge will host another Fun Shoot. Details will be forth coming.

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Experience *continued from page 1*

never take the time to look at our moral fiber, character, and integrity, how then, do we know that we have them. It is this aspect of Freemasonry that is the most beneficial to the individual.

“A man with experience owes nothing to a man with an opinion.” This quote has resonated even deeper within

my soul since becoming a Mason. I have met many people who oppose what Freemasonry has to offer. These are the very same people who reject the experience and dwell in the opinions. I have been a Mason for almost a year now, and I have not regretted it a single day. I

know that I am relatively young in Masonry and have not had the opportunity to experience all that it has to offer, but I can attest to the fact that it has been one of the greatest experiences of my life.

- Casey Harris



The Delaware Crossing

“After long hours of planning it was decided that the American Army would do something they had not done before - they would attack!”

Delivery upon the Delaware

In the winter of 1776 the United States had been a nation for six months. The U.S. Congress had fled Philadelphia to the safety of Baltimore. The fledgling Continental Army, under the command of Brother George Washington, had been defeated, and retreated time and time again across New York and New Jersey. Facing annihilation at the hands of the 20,000 man British and Hessian force, the Americans seized or destroyed all river worthy boats along a 60 mile stretch of the Delaware River and escaped to Pennsylvania.

Eighteenth century “civilized” warfare was normally discontinued in the winter months. The British Commander, Lord William Howe, had been empowered to end the revolt by political as well as military means. He hoped to entice the Americans back into the British Empire.

The 2,400 men under Brother Washington were sick, ill-equipped, ill-fed, and at the end of the year many of their enlistments would expire. “Writing off” the Americans, the British

established a base camp at Trenton, NJ, staffed with 1,500 hired mercenaries (Hessians) to “keep an eye” on Washington until the commencement of the spring campaign to “finish them off.” After long hours of planning it was decided that the American Army would do something they had not done before - they would attack!

On Wednesday, Christmas night 1776, Brothers Washington, Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, Hugh Mercer, and John Glover would lead the Americans back across the Delaware River. Encountering pelting snow, sleet, and rain, Glover’s Marblehead fishermen ferried our troops, cannon and horses across the ice-choked river in open boats. Wet, cold, ill-clothed and tired, the Americans marched 9 miles to Trenton. Though attacking in daylight rather than the hoped for pre-dawn action, the surprise attack upon some of Europe’s best soldiers was complete. The Hessians’ initial resistance faltered when their commander, Col. Johann Rall, was mortally

wounded. Though 500 Hessians escaped, nearly 1,000 were killed, wounded or captured, as were a large stock of sorely needed arms and supplies. The totally unexpected American victory electrified “The Glorious Cause,” saved the U. S. Army, and gave heart to the continued 7 ½ year effort which lead to our independence.

So, as we enjoy the bounty of our labors this holiday season, let us be thankful for the crossing of the Delaware River that cold winter’s night those many years ago.

A vex: What British Freemason Commander “chased” the ragged American Army across New Jersey?

- (a) Oliver Cromwell
- (b) Lord Cornwallis
- (c) Lord Kitchner

(Vol. 2, Issue 3 Vex’s answer: Washington’s half brother, Lawrence, built and resided at Mt. Vernon, which George would inherit.)

- Steve Campbell



The Streets of Trenton

Delivering the Charge *part 1*

Two long time Army comrades and fellow Freemasons met upon the field on America's bloodiest 3-day battle, on ridge just outside of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. These two Brothers were George Edward Pickett and Winfield Scott Hancock. In Part I, we will look at the life and military career of George Pickett.

The Soldier

He was born in Richmond, Virginia, on January 28, 1825, the son of Col. Robert Pickett. Receiving a basic education, he entered an uncle's law office to study law in Illinois. It was there in 1842 that he received an appointment to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point from Congressman Abraham Lincoln! (As a result Pickett would never stand for any negative comments regarding Mr. Lincoln.) His record at West Point was not very illustrious - he averaged 170 demerits per year, and upon graduation in 1846, in the class with Thomas Jackson and George McClellan, he ranked 59th in a class of 59.

Pickett, along with such men as R. E. Lee, U. S. Grant, T. J. Jackson, and James Longstreet, served with distinction in the Mexican War from 1846 - 1848. He was cited for bravery and was the first to scale the walls in the capture of Chapultepec, Mexico's Military Academy. After the war he was posted in Texas (Ft. Bliss) and Virginia. He married his Richmond sweetheart, Sallie Minge, who died soon after their wedding. Bereaved, he took an assignment at Ft. Bellingham in the Washington Territory. In 1856 Capt. Pickett received the thanks of Congress for

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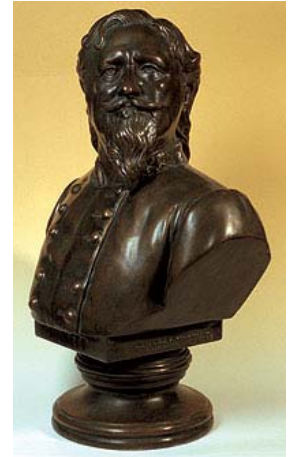
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preventing the incursion of British troops into U. S. Territory there.

In early 1861, Captains Pickett, Richard Garnett, Winfield Scott Hancock and Lewis Armistead attended a sorrowful reunion in Los Angeles. Three of the four were "going south"; having resigned their long-time U. S. Army commissions to offer their services to the newly formed Confederate States of America. First appointed a Colonel, Pickett was promoted to Brigadier General in January 1862 under the command of his friend and mentor, Gen. James Longstreet. Within the 1st Corps he commanded troops at the Battles of Williamsburg, Seven Pines, and at Gaines Mill, where he was wounded. He was placed on medical leave, and in October 1862 was promoted to Major General. His Division played a major role in the Confederate victory at Fredericksburg in Dec. 1862. Gen. Lee detached Longstreet's Corps to southeast Virginia to gather supplies. Whilst there, Pickett the widower, became enamored by a teenage beauty named LaSalle Corbell. Later they would marry.

After the victory at Chancellorsville (and the death of T. J. Jackson) Gen. Lee recalled the 1st Corps in his preparation for his second thrust into the North. In June 1863, the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac River and at a small crossroads town named Gettysburg, engaged in America's bloodiest 3-day battle (USA 100,000+ troops, CSA 75,000). On Friday, July 3, Lee's plan was to



Bust of Gen. George E. Pickett

"These two Brothers were George Edward Pickett and Winfield Scott Hancock."

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"Longstreet's continued friendship protected his comrade."



General George E. Pickett

"Our next blood drive is scheduled for March 22nd, 2006."

water mark" break through. Of the 5,800 men in Pickett's Division, 75% were killed, wounded or captured. Of Pickett's old Army comrades with whom he served before the war, Richard Garnett and Lewis Armistead were killed, and Winfield Scott Hancock, who commanded the Union center, was seriously wounded. Though Gen. Lee took responsibility for the failed charge, Pickett never forgave him for the losses suffered by his Division.

Upon the retreat back into Virginia, what remained of Pickett's command was sent to northeast North Carolina to refit. There they would take part in the failed siege of New Bern before being recalled to join the army of Northern Virginia in its life and death struggle with the new Federal Commander, U. S. Grant, another old Army comrade. Pickett's division fought at Cold Harbor, the Wilderness, and the 9 month siege of Petersburg. He was given the task of holding the vital roadways at Five Forks, which Gen. Lee said "must be held at all costs."

On April 1, 1865, after hard fighting, Federal troops broke through Pickett's line. There was concern as to his absence when the battle began (he was a mile away at a shad bake with several

other general officers) and this resulted in his being relieved of his command and placed under arrest. This was, however, academic, for within a week the Army of Northern Virginia was boxed in near the village of Appomattox Court House. Unfortunately, Gen. Lee did not forget Pickett, and commented "Is that man still with the Army?" Longstreet's continued friendship protected his comrade.

The Man

While there are few students of American history who have not heard of Pickett's Charge, little is known of the man. He was charismatic, energetic, a bit vain and without doubt brave! According to a staff officer in the Civil War, Pickett "was very foppish in his dress and wore his hair in ringlets - he was what would be called a dapper little fellow but brave as they ever made men." Though thirsting for glory, he instilled confidence in his men. On his serious side, he was a romantic - grateful - though not a great scholar. In the winter of 1862/63, three of General Longstreet's four children (1 year old Mary Ann, 4 year old James, and 6 year old Augustus) died of scarlet fever in Richmond. Overwrought

with grief, Longstreet and his wife deferred all funeral arrangements to his long time comrade, Brother George Pickett. Soon, after the end of the war, Pickett, his wife and children fled to Canada. He was concerned that he may be tried for having ordered the execution of Confederate deserters who had been captured wearing Federal uniforms near New Bern, NC. However, a long time comrade by the name of U. S. Grant interceded on his behalf. He also offered Pickett a U. S. Marshal's post in Virginia, which he declined. He also turned down a generalship with the Egyptian Army. His wartime sorrow was a burden which took a toll on his life. He went into the insurance business and in 1875, at the age of 50, died of natural causes in Norfolk. He was laid to rest in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery (as was his beloved second wife Sally in 1998!).

While not perhaps lucky in battle, his bravery was never questioned, and his name lives on. Brother George Pickett was raised in Dove Lodge, No. 51, in Richmond, Virginia.

Forthcoming: Part II, "Receiving the Charge"

- Steven Campbell

Another Successful Blood Drive!

Blackmer Lodge held its third Red Cross Blood Drive on September 28th and netted a total of 31 pints of blood. Once again we exceeded our

goal and everyone had a great time in the process!

Thanks so much to those who donated, or attempted to donate, as well as to every-

one who came early and stayed late!

Our next blood drive is scheduled for March 22nd, 2006.

From the Ground Up *A Building and Grounds Committee Report*

Progress plods ahead! Whilst the mowing season is over, we face other challenges with our building, and we are happy to report they are being addressed:

1. Our old heating/ac system has been “showing its years” - hence we have voted to replace the system and hopefully the more fuel efficient system will be up

and running before year’s end. Way to go sub-committee members!

2. Overhanging trees are impacting the life span of our roof. Efforts are under way to find a respected person, or service, which will trim the trees at a reasonable cost, as well as clean the overfilled gutters. We need to get this done soon, before the weight

of winter’s ice, rain and snow takes its toll on the roof.

Any pledges or donations for these efforts would be greatly appreciated. What we do as Freemasons tells people who we are. Where we meet in our community sets the tone and needs to be properly maintained.

- Steven Campbell

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2006 Officers Elected

Blackmer Lodge held its annual election of officers at our December 6th stated communication with 30 in attendance. The following Brothers were elected to serve during the 2006 year: Harvey Safrit – Master, Randy Browning – Senior Warden, Terry Bursleson – Junior Warden, Doug King – Treasurer, and Stimpson McRae – Secretary.

Brother Safrit announced that he would be appointing Brothers Casey Harris as Senior Deacon, Kevin McRae as Junior Deacon, David Kime as Senior Steward, Joel Howard as

Junior Steward, Rev. Alex Willoughby as Chaplain, and Ken Fritts as Tyler.

There will be an open installation of officers on January 3rd following our regular stated communication. Brother Safrit has received word that M. W. Brother Leonard Safrit, PGM, (Brother Harvey’s cousin) has agreed to serve as the Installing Officer, along with M. W. Brother Bill Simpson, PGM, serving as the Installing Marshall, and W. Brother Robert Gresham, Grand Marshall, serving as the Installing Chaplain.

This should be a most exciting year for Blackmer Lodge given the fact that our Master, Senior, and Junior Wardens are all graduates of Wilkerson College, North Carolina’s college of Freemasonry. Our officers have received instruction and wisdom from our most noted North Carolina Freemasons on lodge management, operations, and finance, and now they have the opportunity to put what they have learned to work! Congratulations Brothers on your elections and appointments, we hope you have a most prosperous year!

Blackmer Fun Shoot Update

Our October 15th sporting clays “fun shoot” turned out to be a resounding success! We had 25 participants, some coming from as far away as Belews Creek and Greensboro, to join in on the fun at Dewitt’s Game Farm.

The shoot began at 9:00 AM and, after a round of 50 clays, the shooters were treated to a lunch consisting of grilled pork chops,

chicken, chicken wings, green beans, coleslaw, grilled garlic bread, and homemade banana pudding (It should be noted here that Brothers Ray Hall and Doug Wright of Greensboro almost broke the cook and we might have to pay extra the next time we host a shoot)!

After lunch our high scoring shooters were recognized with engraved

crystal plates and donated door prizes were drawn for (everyone in attendance received a door prize!).

We had so many requests for another shoot that plans are being made for a Spring shoot. Details on our next shoot will be forthcoming.

We received almost \$300 in donations that day and we want to thank everyone for being so generous!



Bro. Joel Howard at Station 5

Blackmer Lodge No. 127



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If you would like to contribute to a future edition of the "Blackmer Buzz" please contact Larry Thompson, Jr. at: editor@blackmerlodge.org or by phone at: 704-888-1796

Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesdays
6:30 PM Dinner
7:30 PM Meeting

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.blackmerlodge.org

Membership Changes

First of all, we want to extend a warm welcome to our newest lodge members. Brother Jim Sharpe was Initiated into the lodge on November 29th and, since our last newsletter, Brother Philip D. Yarboro has affiliated with us.

After our last newsletter had gone to press, Brother Alex C. Willoughby, III was made a Master Mason. It is a very special occasion when we have a father take part in his son's third degree and this night was no exception!

On a more solemn note,

we are sad to announce the passing of W. Brother J. C. Robbins, Brother Walter B. Robinson, Mrs. Ruby Robinson, and Mrs. Iola Harris. May the Great Architect of the Universe Bless the loved ones that they have left behind...

Lodge Happenings

By the time you read this our Christmas fruit baskets will have been delivered to the widows of our deceased Brothers. Please be sure to take the time to thank Joyce Fritts, Debbie Campbell, and Phyllis Strider for their help in making these beautiful baskets!

Brothers you have heard from our Building and Grounds Committee that improvements are being

made to our lodge and it should go without saying that these improvements come at no small cost.

In our present financial situation our small certificate of deposit (our only savings) will need to be tapped in order to help pay for the new heating and cooling system. Brothers we need your financial help! If you are able to make a donation to help offset this cost and

eliminate the need to redeem our certificate of deposit, now would be the time to do so! We have one Brother who has already issued a \$100 challenge. Would you please consider matching his generous offer?

Finally, we still have a financial pledge to replace the upstairs carpet with a tiled floor. If you want your contribution to go

About Our Organization...

"The mission of Freemasonry in North Carolina is to raise the moral, social, intellectual, and spiritual conscience of society by teaching the ancient and enduring

philosophical *tenets* of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, which are expressed outwardly through service to God, family, country, and self under the Fatherhood of God within the Brotherhood

of Man." - *NC Lodge Manual. Freemasonry is the largest and oldest fraternal order in the world. If you would like more information on the fraternity, please contact us!*

BLACKMER LODGE NO. 127 A. F. & A. M.

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