

OUR MASONIC PRESIDENTS SHORT

TALK BULLETIN - Vol.XI July, 1933 No.7

by: Unknown

William L. Boyden, P.M., Librarian of the Supreme Council, A.A.S.R., S.J., a Masonic historian of tireless energy and scholarly ability, was author of that classic of the Craft, "Masonic Presidents, Vice Presidents, and signers of the Declaration of Independence" on which this Bulletin has drawn heavily.

Fifteen Presidents were members of the Fraternity:

Buchanan, Ford, Garfield, Harding, Jackson, Andrew Johnson, Lyndon B. Johnson (A.E. only), McKinley, Monroe, Polk, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Truman, and Washington. Jefferson and Madison have often been claimed as Masons, but there is no acceptable evidence to prove that either was ever a Mason.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

George Washington, 1st President (1789-1797), has a Masonic history so rich a Short Talk Bulletin (Vol.10, No.2, February 1932) was necessary for a bare outline. Washington was initiated, passed and raised in "The Lodge at Fredricksburg, Va.," (now No.4 on the Virginia Register) on November 4, 1752, March 3, and August 4, 1753. He was made an honorary member of Alexandria Lodge No.39, June 24, 1784. When his Lodge gave up its Charter under the Provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania to accept one from the Grand Lodge of Virginia and become No.22, April 28, 1788, Washington was named as Charter Worshipful Master, and was re-elected Master December 20, 1788. He was made and Honorary Member of Holland Lodge No. 8, New York, 1789.

His Masonic activities and visits were many; his letters to and about Lodges and Masons fills a volume. He was the only President ever to be Master of his Lodge during his incumbency. The cornerstone of the United States Capital was laid by Washington, with Masonic ceremonies, on September 18, 1793, at the request of Maryland's Grand Master pro tem.

He died December 14, 1799, and was buried with full Masonic honors by Alexandria Lodge No.22, on December 18th. The Lodge later changed its name to Alexandria Washington Lodge No.22. To his memory and fame the Masons of the United States are erecting the mightiest stone monument ever raised to honor any man. Built without metal, to endure as long as granite shall last; this memorial stands on Shooter's Hill, just outside the city of Alexandria, Va.

JAMES MONROE

James Monroe, 5th President (1817-1824), was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia April 28, 1752.

The original records of Williamsburg Lodge No.6, Williamsburg, Va., show (November 6,1775) that he was “recommended as a fit person to be admitted a member of this lodge and the motion recorded. On November 9, 1775, he was “preferred, received and balloted for; passed and accepted and entered an apprentice.: The curious reader will note that he was not quite seventeen years and six months old at this time!

His dues were paid through October 1780, but no record shows as to when he was raised. Tradition states that he received the Master’s Degree in a Military Lodge during the revolution, and also credits him membership in Kilwinning Cross Lodge No.2, Port Royal, Va. Little is known of his Masonic life. He visited Cumberland Lodge No.8, at a meeting especially called to receive him in Nashville, Tennessee, June 8, 1819. He died in New York, July 4, 1831.

ANDREW JACKSON

Andrew Jackson, 7th President (1829-1836), born at Waxhaw Settlement, N.C., March 15, 1767, was unquestionably a Mason, but when and where he was raised is not certain.

At the first meeting of Tennessee Lodge No.2 (originally No.41, N.C.) March 24, 1800, in Love’s Tavern, Knoxville, Tennessee, Jackson was present as a member of Harmony Lodge No.1, Nashville, Tennessee (originally No. 29, N.C.).

Past Grand Master Comstock of Tennessee, noted historian, believes Jackson was made a Mason in Harmony Lodge No.1. Federal Lodge No.1, Washington , D.C., elected him an Honorary Member January 4, 1839; Jackson Lodge No.1, Tallahassee, Florida, Elected him an Honorary Member sat some unknown date; the Grand Lodge of Florida elected him an Honorary Member January 15, 1833. His chief claim to Masonic fame is that he is the only Grand Master to become President. He was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee and served from October 7, 1822, to October 4, 1823. In the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge (1822) he is credited with being a Past Master but no records substantiate the statement. Past Grand Master Comstock also believes that Jackson was a Royal Arch Mason, receiving these degrees, as was the custom in early days, under the authority of the Blue Lodge Warrant. He served the Grand Chapter of Tennessee as Deputy General Grand High Priest at its institution, April 3, 1826, but no record exists of his affiliation with any Chapter.

He acted as Senior Warden at the first meeting of Greenville Lodge No.3 (formerly No.43, N.C.), September 5, 1801; contributed thirty-five dollars in 1818 to the erection of a Masonic Temple in Nashville; requested two Lodges to perform funeral services; introduced Lafayette to the Grand Lodge of Tennessee in 1825; while President, assisted

Washington's Mother Lodge to lay the cornerstone of a monument to Washington's Mother at Fredricksburg, Va. (May 6,1833); assisted in the Masonic laying of the cornerstone of Jackson City (across the river from Washington, D.C.) January 11, 1836; attended the Grand Lodge of Tennessee in 1839, and the same year visited Cumberland Chapter No.1 of Nashville, to assist in installation of officers. He died at "The Hermitage" near Nashville, Tennessee, June 8, 1845.

JAMES KNOX POLK

James Knox Polk, 11th President (1845-1849), was born in Mecklenburg County, N.C. November, 1795. He was initiated in Columbia Lodge No. 31, Columbia, Tennessee, June 5, Passed August 7, and raised September 4, 1820. In October he was he was elected Junior Deacon, and Junior Warden December 3, 1821, but there is no record of his having been Master. In 1825 he received the Royal Arch Degree in Lafayette Chapter No. 4, Columbia, Tennessee. June 24, 1840, he attended the feast of St. John the Baptist celebrated by Columbia Lodge No.8 and Hiram Lodge No.7 at Nashville, and marched with them in procession to a church for Divine Services. May 1,1847, he assisted in the Masonic laying of the cornerstone of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. He died at Nashville, Tennessee, June 15, 1849.

JAMES BUCHANAN

James Buchanan, 15th President (1857-1861), was born near Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, April 23, 1791. When twenty-three years of age he petitioned Lodge No.43 (the lodge had no name) of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and was elected and initiated December 11, 1816, and both passed and raised on January 24, 1817. He was elected Junior Warden December 13, 1920; Master December 23, 1822, and was installed March 12, 1823. He was appointed First District Deputy Grand Master for Lancaster, Lebanon and York Counties, December 27, 1823.

May 20, 1826, he was exalted in Royal Arch Chapter No.43 (also no name) of Lancaster. Thirty-two years later he was made a Life Member by his Lodge. He delivered the address in the Masonic dedication of the statue of Washington, Washington Circle, Washington, D.C., February 22, 1860. He died June 1, 1868, and was buried Masonically by his Lodge.

ANDREW JOHNSON

Andrew Johnson, 17th President (1865-1868), was born at Raleigh, N.C., December 29, 1808. He received the degrees in Greenville Lodge No.119 at Greenville, Tennessee in 1851; is supposed to have been a Chapter Mason but the name of the Chapter and date of exaltation are unknown; was Knighted in Nashville Commandery No.1, Nashville, Tennessee, July 26, 1859, and, the First President to become a Scottish Rite Mason,

received those degrees in the White House June 20, 1867, from Benjamin B. French, 33 Deg. and A.T.C. Pierson, 33 Deg., both active members of the Supreme Council, S.J. He participated in five cornerstone layings; the monument to Bro. Stephen a Douglas, Chicago, Illinois, September 6, 1866; Masonic Temple, Baltimore, Maryland, November 20, 1866; Masonic Temple Boston, Massachusetts, June 24, 1867; National Cemetery, Antietam, Maryland, October 17, 1867; and Masonic Temple, Washington, D.C., May 20, 1868. To attend this ceremony he gave leave to all Masons in government service, and President Johnson marched on foot in the parade as a Master Mason.

At the cornerstone laying of the Baltimore Temple some one suggested that a chair be brought to the reviewing platform for him. Brother Johnson refused it, saying: "We all meet on the level." He died July 31, 1875, and was buried with full Masonic Honors by Greenville Lodge No.119, R.W.G. C. Connor, Deputy Grand Master of Tennessee conducting the services in the presence of four Lodges and Coeur de Lion Commandery No.9 of Knoxville, which performed the Templar service.

JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD

James Abram Garfield, 20th President (1881), was born in Orange, Ohio, November 19, 1831. He was initiated November 19, 1861, in Magnolia Lodge No.20, Columbus, Ohio. Passed two weeks later, he waited almost three years (due to military service) for his raising, November 22, 1864, in Columbus Lodge No.30, Columbus, Ohio, by request of his mother Lodge.

He dimitted August 1, 1865, and joined Garrettsville Lodge No.246, Garrettsville, Ohio, October 10, 1866, serving as Chaplain in 1868 and 69. On May 4, 1869, he became a Charter Member of Pentalpha Lodge No.23, D.C.. In Washington he was exalted in Columbia Chapter No.1, April 18, 1866; received the Templar degrees, May 18, 1866, in Columbia Commandery No.2, and the 14th degree, Scottish Rite, January 2, 1872. The degrees from the 6th to the 13th were communicated to him by Albert Pike, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction.

Hanselmann Commandery No.16, Cincinnati, Ohio, made him an Honorary Member July 19, 1881; after he was assassinated on July 2. He died September 19, 1881. Columbia Commandery No.2, D.C., escorted his remains to Cleveland, where he was buried in the presence of a large number of Cementers and other Masonic Bodies.

WILLIAM McKINLEY

William McKinley, t President (1897-1901), was born at Niles, Ohio, January 29, 1843. He was made a Mason in Hiram Lodge No.21, of Winchester, Virginia. Prior to being elected and initiated May 1st, passed May 2nd, and raised May 3rd, 1865; as a Lieutenant he was making a round in a hospital for Confederate wounded. Noticing that the regimental surgeon distributed gifts of tobacco and money to certain patients, he was told that these particular wounded Southerners were brother Masons. McKinley then

expressed his desire to become a member of the Fraternity that promoted such sentiments between opposing armies.

He dimitted the same day he was raised, affiliating with Canton Lodge No.60, of Canton, Ohio, August 21, 1867, Only to become a Charter member on June 2, 1869, of Eagle Lodge No.431, of the same city, which afterwards changed its name to William McKinley Lodge No.431. He received the Royal Arch Degree in Canton Chapter No.84, December 28, 1883; was made a Knight Templar in Canton Commandery No.38, December 23, 1884; elected a Life Member of Washington Comandry No.1, D.C. December 23, 1896, and became an Honorary Member of the Illinois Masonic Veteran Association, October 26, 1898. His Masonic activities include reviewing a parade of Knights Templar from the White House, May 6, 1897; a visit to his Mother Lodge in Winchester, Virginia, May 19, 1899; participation in the Masonic centennial observance of the death of George Washington, December 14, 1899; again reviewing a Knights Templar parade from the White House, October 11, 1900, and attending a reception of California Commandery No.1, in San Francisco, May 22, 1901. He dies in Buffalo, N.Y. September 14, 1901, following his assassination September 6,1901.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President (1901-1909), was born in New York City, October 27, 1858. He was initiated January 2nd, passed March 27th and raised April 24, 1901, in Matinecock Lodge No.806, Oyster Bay, New York. Pentalpha Lodge No. 23, D.C., made him an Honorary Member April 4, 1904, as did the Illinois Masonic Veterans Association in 1903.

Roosevelt's interest in the Fraternity was often expressed and his visits to Lodges were not only in this country, also abroad. November 5, 1902, he attended the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania celebration of Washington's initiation in Philadelphia; in Washington, D.C., February 21, 1903, he honored the Masonic ceremonies of laying the cornerstone of the army War College with his presence; May 26, 1903, he broke ground for a Masonic Temple at Spokane, Washington; April 14, 1906, he attended the Masonic cornerstone laying of the House of Representative's Building in Washington, D.C., where he delivered the address, presenting a bound copy of it to the Grand Master, inscribed:

“To Walter A. Brown, Esq., Grand Master of Masons, from Brother Theodore Roosevelt,” and June 8, 1907, he wore Masonic Regalia and delivered an address at the laying of the cornerstone of the New Masonic Temple, Washington, D.C. He died in Oyster Bay New York, January 6, 1919.

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

William Howard Taft, 27th President (1909-1913), was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, September 15,1857. Unique among Masonic Presidents, he was made a Mason “at

sight," at Cincinnati, Ohio, February 18, 1909, in an Emergent Lodge called together for the purpose. At five O'clock in the afternoon Grand Mast Charles S Hoskinson personally administered the obligations and esoteric instructions. That evening Taft witnessed the Master's degree conferred by Kilwinning Lodge No.356, of Cincinnati, which elected him to membership April 14, 1909.

Crescent Lodge No.25, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, elected him an Honorary Member June 5, 1918. On April 22, 1909, he visited Temple-Noyes Lodge No.32, at Washington, D.C., of which his close friend and aide, Major Archie Butt, was a member and for whom, after the Titanic disaster, Temple-Noyes Lodge held an elaborate Memorial Service which Brother Taft attended as one of the Chief Mourners. He visited the famous American Union Lodge No.1, at Marietta, Ohio, June 15, 1910;

Alexandria Washington Lodge No.22, on Washington's birthday, 1911;

May 9th of the same year he posed for a picture in Washington's Masonic regalia at the White House; May 13th he visited St John's Lodge No.1, Newark, N.J., to help celebrate its 150th anniversary; on December 27, 1914, he addressed the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, and on June 5, 1918, he spoke to Crescent Lodge No.25 of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He dies March 8, 1930.

WARREN GAMALIEL HARDING

Warren Gamaliel Harding, 29th President (1921--1923), was born in Morrow County, Ohio, November 2, 1865. His interest in the Order was of his mature years. He was initiated in Marion Lodge No.70, Marion, Ohio, June 28,1901, when thirty-six years of age, but was not passed until August 13, 1920, nineteen years later. He was raised August 27, 1920.

His three years as a Master Mason were short but crowded. Albert Pike Lodge No.36, Washington, D.C., made him an Honorary Member and presented him with a Gold Membership Card at the White House May 4, 1921; Marion Chapter No.62, Marion, Ohio, exalted him January 13, 1921; Marion Council No.22, elected him to the Cryptic Rite but he died before receiving it; March 1, 1921, Marion Commandery No.36, conferred upon him the Red Cross, Malta and Temple Degrees;

January 5, 1921, he received the Scottish Rite Degrees from the 4th through 32nd in Columbus, Ohio. The Supreme Council of the Northern Jurisdiction elected him to receive the 33 deg. September 22, 1921. The degree was to be given him a year later, but he could not attend on account of Mrs. Harding's illness. He died before the session of 1923. Aladdin Temple of the Shrine, Columbus, Ohio, created him a Noble (the first President to receive the Red Fez) January 7, 1921;

Almas Temple, Washington, D.C. elected him an Honorary Member March 21, 1921; the Imperial Council of the Shrine elected him an Honorary Member June 1923; Kallipolis

Grotto, Washington, D.C. made him a Prophet at the White House May 11, 1921, presenting him with a Gold Life Membership Card;

Evergreen Forest No.49, Milford, Delaware, made him a Tall Cedar, June 9, 1923, and Washington Chapter No. 3, National Sojourners, presented him with a Gold Badge of Membership at the White House, May 28, 1923.

By letters and personal conversations, he evidenced much interest in his new relationships. He had agreed to review the Ascension Day Parade of Knights Templar in Washington, D.C. in 1921, but weather prevented it. May 9, 1921, he reviewed a parade of Shriners and in the evening made an address at a ceremonial of Almas Temple, Washington, D.C. In 1923 he visited the Scottish Rite Bodies in St. Augustine, Florida; June 5, of the same year he delivered an address before the Imperial Council of the Shrine, Washington, D.C.; later, wearing his Fez, he reviewed the parade, declaring it: "The greatest spectacle I ever witnessed.: In July, 1923, he officiated at the laying of the cornerstone for the Masonic Temple of Ketchikan Lodge No. 159, Alaska.

He died in San Francisco, California, August 2, 1923; and after laying in state in the National Capital, was buried in Marion, Ohio, August 10th.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd President (1933-1945), was born at Hyde Park, New York, January 30, 1882. He was initiated in Holland Lodge No.8, New York City, October 10th, passed November 14th and raised November 28, 1911. He received the Scottish Rite degrees in Albany, New York, February 28, 1929. He was a member of the Grotto (Poughkeepsie, New York) and Tall Cedars (Warwick, New York). He was "Right Worshipful" having been accredited the representative of the Grand Lodge of Georgia near the Grand Lodge of New York September 22, 1930.

Stansbury Lodge No.24, Washington, D.C. made him an Honorary Member November 21, 1919, when he officiated at the Masonic laying of the cornerstone of its Temple.

He attended Architect Lodge No.519, of New York City, February 17, 1933, where he raised his son Elliott to the Sublime Degree and made an address in which he stressed the importance of Masonic principles to this Nation, and his faith in the Americanism of the Ancient Craft. He died at Warm Spring, Georgia, April 12, 1945, and was buried at Hyde Park, New York.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Harry S. Truman, 33rd President (1945-1953). For the second time in the 169 year history of the United States of America, a Past Grand Master of Masons was elevated to the office of President. Harry S. Truman became the 33rd Chief Executive, Thursday, April

12, 1945, when he was sworn in by Chief Justice Harlan Stone, two and a half hours after the untimely death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was born May 8, 1884, a LaMar, Barton County, Missouri. He was made a Mason in Belton Lodge No.450, of Missouri, March 9, 1909, and served as Junior Warden in 1910. In 1911, he organized Grandview Lodge No.618 and served as its first Worshipful Master. Later, he was its Secretary, and again, in 1917, its Master. From 1925 to 1930, he served the Grand Lodge as District Deputy Grand Master and District Deputy Grand Lecturer, and in 1930 was appointed Grand Pursuivant, and progressed regularly until his elevation as Grand Master in 1940.

On November 15, 1919, he was exalted in Orient Chapter No.102, Kansas City, Missouri; greeted in Shekinah Council No.24, Kansas City, Missouri, December 8, 1919; Knighted by Palestine Commandery No.17, of Independence, Missouri, June 15,1923, receiving the 32 deg in Western Missouri Consistory, Kansas City, Missouri. On November 21, 1941, he received from Grand Commander Melvin M. Johnson, 33 deg, of the Northern Supreme Council, the Gourgas Medal for distinguished service to Masonry. Humanity and Country. In 1945, he was crowned a 33 deg by the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th President, was born on August 27, 1908, on a farm near Stonewall, Texas. He was sworn in as the Chief Executive on November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. A year later, running against the Republican nominee, Senator and Brother Barry Goldwater of Arizona, he won a landslide victory, to serve as President for the four-year term, January, 1965; January ,1969. He declined to run for re-election in 1968.

On October 30, 1937, he was initiated an Entered Apprentice in Johnson City, Texas. He never advanced. A week after his initiation he won an election for Representative in Congress and began a very busy political career in Washington which lasted until his retirement from the Presidency in January of 1969.

The opinion among Masons is divided as to whether he should be regarded as a Masonic President, since he never achieved the status of Master Mason. Masonic law in Texas declares that "Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts are Masons," although denied certain rights and privileges, Lyndon B. Johnson was accepted and initiated in a Masonic Lodge, and at that time was addressed as "Brother."

GERALD RUDOLPH FORD, JR.

Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr., 38th President, was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 14, 1913, but has lived most of his life in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He represented the 5th Michigan district in Congress from 1948 till 1973, when he was appointed Vice President

by President Richard M. Nixon. When Nixon was forced to resign, Brother Ford became President on August 9, 1974.

With three brothers, he was initiated into Masonry in Malta Lodge No.465, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on September 30, 1949. Columbia Lodge No.3 of the District of Columbia conferred the Fellowcraft and Master Mason degrees as a courtesy to Malta Lodge No.465. He became a Master Mason on May 18, 1951. He became a member of the Scottish Rite in the Valley of Grand Rapids, A.A.S.R., Northern Jurisdiction, in 1957, and was coroneted an Honorary 33 deg S.G.I.G. in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 26, 1962. He is also a Shriner, Saladin Temple, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and an Honorary Member of DeMolay Legion of Honor.