



George Washington's Lodge
Fredericksburg
Lodge No. 4

June 2026

Trestle Board

W.:M.: Seth Roderick
Magnanimity - Fidelity - Honor

First Recorded Meeting - September 1, 1752

Scottish Charter - July 21, 1758

Virginia Charter - January 30, 1787

Ill. Bro. George Washington

Initiated November 4, 1752

Passed March 3, 1753

Raised August 4, 1753

803 Princess Anne Street
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

June 2026 Events

	1	2	3	4	5	6 Pancake Breakfast 8 - 10 AM FredNats Concessions 4 - 9 PM
7	8	9	10 Practice or Called Communication 7:00 PM	11 Hugh Mercer Lecture by Trip Wiggins 7 PM	12 Dinner 6:30 PM Stated Communication 7:30 PM	13
14	15	16	17 Practice or Called Communication 7:00 PM	18	19	20 FAM What Remains Program 6 - 8 PM FredNats Concessions 4 - 9 PM
21	22	23 District 8 Ritual School 7:00 PM	24 Practice or Called Communication: 7:00 PM	25 George Weedon Lecture by Bro. Charlie McDaniel 7 PM	26	27 FredNats Concessions 4 - 9 PM
28	29	30	FAM What Remains Program Saturday, June 20 6 - 8 PM Cost: Non-Members: \$16, FAM Members: \$12 Registration is required. Get tickets here.		FredNats Concession Stands Help volunteer to raise funds for the historic preservation of our 1816 Lodge! Sign up here.	

Masonic Anniversaries

Bro. Robert D. Samuels	55 yrs.	Bro. Philip H. Walden, Jr.	22
Bro. Charles G. McDaniel	54	Bro. Derek J. Honyoust	22
Bro. Carlos J. Munoz	53	Bro. Martin T. Smith II	20
Bro. Bobby D. Merritt	53	Wor. Christopher R. Wilson	19
Bro. Edwin R. Sompayrac	47	Bro. Erik E. Cobham	19
Bro. James L. Vance	45	Bro. James W. Haley, Jr.	18
Wor. Thomas C. Shelton	43	Bro. Christopher B. O'Donnell	16
Bro. Mark A. Jones	43	Bro. Jason M. Lesko	13
Wor. William J. White	42	Bro. David A. Palacios	10
Bro. Donald L. Brooks	33	Bro. Jerry B. Howle, Jr.	10
Wor. Anthony L. Rudder	26	Wor. Patrick F. McConnell	9
Bro. Dennis R. Hooks	25	Bro. Kyle S. Olesevich	2
Wor. Larry L. Adams II	23		

Master's Message

*State of the Lodge,
May 2026*

Seth Roderick, WM

May was a busy and meaningful month for Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4.

We began the month with our regular Pancake Breakfast, which continues to provide good taste and a nice opportunity for Brethren, families, and friends to gather. These breakfasts matter and they keep getting better and better. Thank you to the Stewards and regular Breakfast Brothers who keep the smoke down, the bacon sizzling, the biscuits hot and eggs buttery. It's always wonderful to see our regular crew: Bro. Bruce, Bro. Rand, Bro. Buzzy, Bro. Tom, Bro. Ken, Wor. Pat, and many others mixing it up in the kitchen with our newest Brothers.

The officers also met during the month to discuss the budget and the work remaining for the rest of the year. A Lodge must enjoy fellowship, perform ritual, and preserve tradition, but it must also see carefully to the administrative duties that allow those things to continue. The work of planning, budgeting, and setting priorities is part of responsible stewardship.

We also had the privilege of conferring two Entered Apprentice Degrees. It is always a good sign when good men seek admission, and it is a serious duty when they are received. The first degree is a man's entrance into Masonry, and it deserves our care, attention, and best work. I am grateful to all who took part in the degrees and to the Brethren who came out to support these new Brothers. If you haven't attended an EA degree yet this year, you may be in for a treat. This year we are conducting Initiations in the old Lodge room under candlelight (LED candles, not real). Please pay attention to This Week and Beyond emails and the Lodge Calendar for future EA degrees dates.

Before our Stated Communication, we enjoyed a fine dinner of roasted turkey and all the fixings, prepared by Brother Ken and Worshipful Jamie. It was an all-day affair in the kitchen for them but well worth it, and the Baker room never smelled so good. My thanks to them both for the time, effort, and care they put into that meal.

During the month of May, Fredericksburg Lodge also helped provide Masonic funeral rites for a Brother who was not known to this Lodge, but a Brother just the same. Right Worshipful Shupe and Fredericksburg Lodge afforded him the highest courtesy we could give. This is the most solemn duty of the Craft. When a Brother reaches the end of his earthly journey, it is fitting that Masons should stand for him, remember him, pray for him and his family, and commit his memory with dignity. Whether we knew him well or scarcely at all, he was our Brother. Fredericksburg No. 4 also hosted the funeral for Right Worshipful David Weaver of Stafford Lodge No. 279. RW Weaver was our District Instructor of Work and made a good and permanent mark on many Masons and people in the area. Stafford Lodge No. 279 conducted the funeral, fit for such a man and Brother as RW Weaver. Lodge No. 4 was honored to host for our Stafford Brethren and Brethren from all over the District. OES Fredericksburg Chapter #29 provided a warm and beautiful reception for all in the Baker room immediately following. Rest in Peace, our Brother David.

May also gave us occasion to remember Virginia's own road to independence. We celebrated with a Virginia Independence cake and two excellent lectures as part of this year's partnership with Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. The lectures on the Fifth Virginia Convention and Brother Gustavus Wallace helped place our Lodge, our town, and our Brethren within the larger story of Virginia and these united States. These programs remind us that our history is not remote. It is near at hand, written into the streets, buildings, records, and lives of this community.

One of the month's principal events was the Reunion of the Nine Founding Lodges dinner. More than seventy-five people attended. The evening began with tours of the Fredericksburg Area Museum and a social hour, followed by dinner and keynote remarks from our guest speaker, Most Worshipful Jeffery E. Hodges. It was a fine evening, and it gave us a proper opportunity to honor the Lodges whose early efforts helped form the Grand Lodge of Virginia. I am grateful to all who helped plan, support, and attend this event. There are three people I would be remiss not to call out for special thanks in the planning: WB James Snyder, without your detailed planning, tracking and coordination among the Lodges this event would not have been a success, Bro. Ethan Burgess for your outreach, communication and public relations, Ms. Kylie Thompson for your planning, execution and coordination of a most interesting tour of the Fredericksburg Area Museum's America250 exhibit for all of the guests.

On Memorial Day, we observed a traditional Decoration Day. Due to rain, the planned picnic in the cemetery was moved indoors, but the weather did not diminish the commitment of the day. More than thirty people attended. After the picnic, we went to the Masonic Cemetery and decorated graves with flowers. Decoration Day began as a way to remember the dead, gather families, and honor those who came before us. In that spirit, our Lodge stood in continuity with an old and proper custom.

All in all it was a good month. We fed one another. We planned for the future. We initiated new Brothers. We honored the dead. We taught history. We welcomed guests. We gathered in fellowship.

My thanks to every Brother who attended, planned, cooked, spoke, taught, carried flowers, gave tours, performed ritual, cleaned up, set tables, made calls, and helped in any quiet way. The strength of Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4 rests in such service.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,
Seth Roderick, WM

p.s. WB Chuck Cooper will put on a funeral ritual class. See WB Cooper if interested. We could use more Brothers who can deliver the ritual, Around the Bier. It is the last high honor we can provide for a Brother, his widow and family.



*Fredericksburg's Revolutionary War
Heroes Lecture Series*

Brig. Gen. Hugh Mercer




Trip Wiggins
 Hugh Mercer Historic Interpreter
 7:00 PM Thursday, June 11
 Fredericksburg Masonic Lodge No. 4 | FREE







*Fredericksburg's Revolutionary War
Heroes Lecture Series*

Brig. Gen. George Weedon



Bro. Charles McDaniel
 7:00 PM Thursday, June 25
 Fredericksburg Masonic Lodge No. 4 | FREE





[*Learn More About the Series*](#)

What Am I Afraid Of? Am I Worthy?

by Jeff Harvey

What am I afraid of? I often ask myself this question when I feel apprehensive about starting something new or have to do something that is possibly uncomfortable or unpleasant. Over the last several months, I have felt the desire to get more engaged with the Lodge but something has been holding me back. It is the same thing that has been holding me back since I joined the Lodge. It's that feeling of wanting to be part of something bigger than me but, unsure that I am worthy, can devote the time/make the time, or am I properly prepared enough to feel comfortable participating in Lodge.

Recently I had a conversation with a fellow Brother from another Lodge. He had not attended Lodge in about a year. He felt bad about not being at Lodge. I could hear it in his voice and see it in his face. There was a bit of regret and embarrassment as well as trepidation about how he would be received when he came back. I could almost read his mind. I am rusty, I am not sure I properly remember the signs and catechism liturgy. Will they scoff at me or raise their eyebrows if I don't quite get it right? Am I still worthy of being in Lodge?

Like him I have had that fear of judgement. I was made a Master Mason in 2018 at a One Day Conferral. I attend Stated Communications on a fairly regular basis but my internal dialogue has me questioning myself. Am I worthy? Am I, to use the word that was popular in the 1980s, "A Poser".

Of course, I am worthy and am not a "Poser". I have attained the sublime degree of a Master Mason. There is no higher degree in Masonry. We all as Masons have our own journey that takes the rest of our lives. We all take our own paths in our due time. The trepidation is unfounded. The Brothers of the Lodge are always supportive, extolling the virtue of Brotherly Love. I have seen it many times in Lodge. When a Brother has not been in Lodge for a while, he is greeted warmly, when he needs help in the lodge room, a Brother offers to sit with him and provide support with remembering "The Word" and "The Signs".

For me, being a One Day Conferral, I have questioned my worthiness. The One Day Conferral was a blessing for me. At the time, my mentor was the Worshipful Dan Goodwin. I had a very hectic work schedule and had difficulties adequately devoting time to master the catechism. He took time and significant effort working with me on the Entered Apprentice Degree but, it was clear that I needed help. The One Day Conferral was the answer for me.

During the April Stated Communication, Brother Justin Garrett made a call for catechism coaches. The ranks are getting thin and how else are we going to bring in new Masons? I was drawn to this request but, asked myself, "am I worthy and can I help"? I personally like meeting good men and getting to know their story. At work, I am a bit older than most of my co-workers and am a bit of a mentor. I really like that role and thought it would be great to be a mentor to fellow Masons and to help grow the Lodge with more good men.

After Lodge was closed, I came up to speak with Brother Justin. I have always been appreciative of and respect his work as the Lodge Chaplain. I was very impressed when he and Worshipful Chris Tripp recited the Master Mason degree at the March Stated Communication. I finally got up the nerve and asked, "Am I worthy and can I help". I explained that I was a One Day Conferral and that I did not know the catechism but wanted to learn it and be a coach. I said I know it will take time to get me up to speed and I don't want to waste your time. Of course, his answer was yes to both questions, and you won't be wasting my time. What other answer should I receive from a fellow brother?

Now I am on my journey towards perfecting my ashlar. My stone is very rough but, I have the tools to make myself better. My lessons with Brother Justin have been amazing. Working through the catechism, has been more than memorizing words, it has allowed me to clearly see the symbolism and understand the meaning behind it. Making progress is improving my self confidence and, as we both said last session, my emotional intelligence as a Mason.

My message to any Brother who has not been at Lodge in a while, whether it has been months or years, "there is nothing to be afraid of", "you are not a Poser", and "you are worthy". You are a Mason and a Brother.

Hope to see you in Lodge someday.

Brother Jeff Harvey

250th Anniversary of Our Country *Masons, Some Gave All*

by Vince Travens, PM

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of our country we need to also recognize the contributions of Brother Masons to the cause of freedom and independence. The Fredericksburg Lodge, as it was called at the time, had Brothers who added their financial backing and industrial expertise to the success of the effort. Many are not aware of how deeply they were involved and how much they believed in the cause.

The most illustrious Brother from the Fredericksburg Lodge, George Washington, is well known. Others, not so much, but their contributions led to the success of the Revolutionary War.

Fielding Lewis, brother-in-law of George Washington through his second marriage, was from a prominent family in Virginia and a Mason of the Fredericksburg Lodge. He followed in his father's footsteps and became an industrialist. He was known as Colonel Fielding because during the French and Indian War he supplied provisions for the local militia who participated in the action. He was very competent in handling logistics, supplies and equipment, which is just as important as those who are in combat. No supplies, there is no fight, no bullets, no shooting. He also had ships, as an industrialist, to carry goods, before the war, to England and to bring back goods for the colonist.

In August 1775 he was appointed, with four other gentlemen by the third Virginia Revolutionary Convention, to be commissioners in charge of erecting an armory in Fredericksburg. The "Gunnery," as it was called, was built south of Fredericksburg. It, along with Hunter's Iron Works, which was several miles upriver from them, were the main providers of weapons for the Continental Army. Both were recognized for their importance to the cause of liberty by state legislatures and the Continental Congress, though they failed to support them with appropriate financing. Politicians can do the talk but you need a well armed army to do the walk and break the chains of suppression. So the need of an armament industry was essential. Gunnery Road, today, got its name from the buildings that were once located at the site.

One of the other commissioners, and the guy who took charge of the gunnery, was Charles Dick. He was also a Brother from Fredericksburg Lodge and a good friend of Fielding. He was a successful merchant, land owner and community leader. He handled all the day to day operations of the Gunnery.

Being very optimistic about the endeavor that were about to undertake Fielding wrote to George Washington in November 1775, by New Years Day they should have 50 men employed and making 12 guns a day. Well, 5 months later, in March 1776, he penned another letter to Washington, we haven't made one musket yet, but they were fixing a lot of old muskets that were disabled by the English governor when he left the colony. A report from May 1777 stated that they were producing 20 muskets a week. It took a while but they finally got up and running as best as they could. They had problems finding qualified people to work at the Gunnery.

While the Gunnery was doing the best as they could Fielding was building the Virginia Navy. He bought ships, schooners and sloops, to patrol the Rappahannock River. He also had a ship built to patrol the Chesapeake Bay. He armed them with 18 pound cannons and other pieces of artillery.

Fielding Lewis spent a great deal of his own money and he borrowed more money to keep the Gunnery and the Navy going. He spent, in today's money equivalent, more than \$1.6 million. He borrowed close to \$9 million dollars to cover the needs of the Gunnery, equipment, material and labor cost and building, manning and arming the ships he had. To cover many expenses, he sold a great deal of his lands. Needless to say, that all of this took a toll on his health and his bottom line. He was slightly reimbursed for some of his expenses by the State of Virginia but not enough to get him out of debt. In 1781 he was broke and died of consumption, TB, at the age 56. His wife, Betty, George Washington's sister, eventually ended up selling their mansion, Kenmore, and went to live with her daughter.

Charles Dick experienced the same situation as Fielding, lack of funding from the state government. He personally funded a lot of the work done at the Gunnery along with Fielding. The lack of government financial support also took its toll on him, draining his finances and health. He ran the Gunnery until he died in January 1783 from an asthma attack at the age of 68.

There is an old saying, "All gave some, some gave all." These two Masonic Brothers from Fredericksburg Lodge gave all, their finances and their lives in their dedication to the cause of liberty.

The sad thing today is that there is no place where we could go and pay our respects to these worthy Brothers. Their grave sites are not recorded. We can only remember them in our hearts for their patriotism and hope we could ever emulate them if called upon.

The Reflection Chamber: So Why Did You Ever Doubt?

by Justin Garrett, Chaplain

Story time!

One day, I showed up to the lodge at 11am, taught a Brother some stuff, broke for lunch, came back, taught another Brother, decided the weather was nice and went for a walk. On that walk, I ran into a homeless girl who just needed enough cash for her Uber ride to work. I said sure, continued my walk, took a call from a young man who needed some guidance, and finished my night with a beer and a cigar. This isn't a typical day, but it's not atypical either.

About a week later, I thought about how I haven't been working for a while, and got a bit down on myself about it, but I asked myself in a journal if I would have traded those experiences that day and the lives I touched for a couple bucks. My answer was definitely not.

Fast forward, my asthma inhaler runs out, the doctor's visit is two months away, and I decide to go to a doc-in-the-box. Once my day is over, I'm on the phone with my now long-distance girlfriend, Cheryl, complaining about the cost because I'm a quite miserly dude in real life, and as I pass by the bar, I told myself there was beer at home. She stopped me and told me that you've got to live your life too. So I go, and who is the first person I see? That homeless girl! It was as if God had brought everything full-circle in reminding me what's really important and what my lesson is this time around. While I would like to report that she's doing better, some things in life just don't move that fast, but at least for that night, we shared in communion among friends.

There's a question that always comes up in my mind in moments like these; moments that remind me that nothing is by coincidence: "Why did you ever doubt?"

I wake up some days having no clue what the day will bring, and it might seem like nothing makes sense until it does. Some days, something says "Justin, go to the mall." Why? I hate the mall! But I go, and invariably, inevitably, I see what I'm supposed to see, I meet who I'm supposed to meet, I help who I'm supposed to help. This happens often enough that I just don't even question it most days, but when I do, the same question always is, "So why did you ever doubt?"

I recently had a night where I sat with a dear Brother of ours, and we talked about our Masonic careers, where things are going for us, and the like. I told him that being the Chaplain is the best title I've ever held, which took him by surprise. I went on to explain how meaningful it is to be able to sit with people, hear their struggles, and be there for them while they get through their difficulties. To treat it as a sacerdotal duty as opposed to a chair in the corner that people rarely notice.

An all-knowing, all-powerful, ever-present God would know our thoughts and what's on our hearts or minds before we even ask about it. If such is the case, perhaps all thoughts are prayers.

It reminds me of some interesting statistics out there. The Shannon Number is the lower number of proposed possible chess games out there. That number is 10^{120} . Of the number of atoms proposed in the universe, only 10^{80} . Out of 8.3 billion people in the world, it's estimated that about 6 million are Masons. Of those numbers, out of roughly 330 million people in the US, about 2 million are Masons. That's 0.6% of the US population. Literally less than one percent.

With numbers like that in mind, it really makes you question the vastness of the world, the universe, and the mysteries of life itself. Out of all these people, you're you. You are exactly who you're meant to be, where you're meant to be, and what you're meant to be doing. If you weren't, you'd be somewhere else, wouldn't you?

So when I see a Brother with his doubts about everything going on, about worries and fears, about problems he has, he forgets the statistics about some of these things. Suffering is guaranteed to 100% of the population, but the chance of being exactly who you are is 1 in 8.3 billion. In the Bible, it seems every time someone expresses doubt, irony rears its head to remind them that they're on the right path. Sarah, Abraham's wife, thought she was too old to have children, but then Isaac came along. God spoke to Moses and said not to cry out to Him, but to part the Red Sea himself. Gideon had no faith in himself, and yet with only 300 men took trumpets and torches drove out the Midianites from Israel. Elijah heaped bucket on top of bucket of water over an altar and brought down fire from heaven to consume a sacrificial bull, and even after proving such a great triumph, even he expresses his doubt under a tree until an angel appears and reminds him of his purpose. A private admonishment after such a public display.

Just as nobody is immune to suffering, nobody is immune to doubt. When those same Brothers triumph a while further down the road, they walk with their heads held high and can say they did exactly what they were meant to. My question to them, of course, is "So why did you ever doubt?"

Once upon a time, we all petitioned the lodge, sat with a mix of hope and worry, and finally got the phone call that we were elected to receive the degrees of Freemasonry. Once upon a time, we had worries and fears about college, schools, or jobs and we made the cut. Once upon a time, we had worries about our lives and trajectories and it all worked out. Another Brother just got his PhD, and I'm sure he had doubts sometimes. So the question remains: Why did you ever doubt? What are you doubting right now? What fears, concerns, and problems are you facing that would make no logical sense you'd succeed in? Peter walked on water and it wasn't until he started panicking that Jesus grabbed him. And what did he say to Peter? "Why did you doubt?" Behold! A rock that floats on water!

When I took the position of Chaplain, I had many doubts, myself. I kept wondering if I was the right guy for the job or if I was doing the right thing. I don't question that anymore. You wouldn't be at the door if you weren't meant to knock. I didn't choose that chair, that chair chose me. What is happening in your life that's calling? What door is there in your life just waiting for your one and only key to open it? Some may call it destiny; others, fate; and some may call it God's plan. Either way, there is only one you. There were many chaplains before me and many who will come after me, but there will only ever be one Justin Garrett, Chaplain. What only one thing is calling you? And when you get to the top of that mountain and plant your flag, I want you to look down at the path you took to get there and see how it really was, and ask yourself this one question: "Why did you ever doubt?"

From the Brightest Seat in the House,

Justin C. G. Garrett
Chaplain and Catechism Chair

Chapter 432

In music, it is said that certain tones, when precisely attuned, bring the mind into harmony rather than agitation. It is said 432hz is such a tone. In like manner, poetry and prose can also be a medium to steady thoughts and temper passions.

The selections presented in Chapter 432 are drawn from the works of Freemasons, writers traditionally associated with the Craft, and authors whose words reflect the moral, symbolic, and philosophical spirit of Masonry. We hope you enjoy these selections and selections in future Trestle Boards.

Meditation XVII "No Man Is An Island"

by John Donne

No man is an island, entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee.

Character of the Happy Warrior, Excerpts

by William Wordsworth

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavours are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright;
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn.

Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train,
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives.

Traveling Man: Masonic Fleet

by George Dunlap, Junior Deacon

Some of you may have noted the absence of this column during the last two Trestle Boards; that was due to me being at sea applying my trade. When I left you, though, I left you with this picture and the question of whether anyone could identify the brother in this picture:



This is Brother Stephen Decatur Jr., otherwise known as Commodore Decatur, who commanded both the USS Enterprise and the USS Constitution. Currently, his name is carried by the USS Decatur (DDG 73), stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.



Five U.S. Navy ships have been named USS Decatur(3). Brother Decatur is an interesting man who was apparently initiated in 1799 while attached to the USS United States and stationed in Newport(1). There is some disagreement about which St. John's Lodge he was initiated into, but the fact that he was initiated does not seem to be in question(2). I have reached out to St. John's Lodge in Providence, Rhode Island, to confirm further. This got me thinking about how many other ships are potentially named after Freemasons. There are obvious ones like the USS George Washington (CVN 73), USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), and USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78). There is also the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74). This means 5 of the 11 aircraft carriers currently in use by the United States are named after Freemasons. Now, these capital ships are great, but let's talk about real warships: destroyers.





What is a destroyer? Their original purpose was as “torpedo boat destroyers.” Torpedo boats are exactly what they sound like: small boats that use weapons to detonate explosions underwater near the hull of a ship. This relatively low-cost platform could take much larger ships out of the fight. Thus, the torpedo boat destroyers were created. The first destroyer was the USS Bainbridge (DD 1), commissioned in 1902. It had two torpedo tubes and two 3-inch guns(6). From their very beginning, destroyers were the workhorses of the fleet. These ships could escort, scout, fight submarines, and provide picket air defense. Original destroyers had the designator (DD); modern U.S. destroyers carry the designation Destroyer, Guided (DDG).

I respect the concept of uninitiated Freemasons from history. Due to the nature of consent to the degrees, I operate under the rule that if an individual is not recorded in some actual verifiable source, or they did not profess membership publicly or privately, we should not count them among the brethren. Based on my research, there are 10 active U.S. destroyers with at least one namesake being a Freemason, two probable Freemasons that require further investigation, one likely Prince Hall Freemason also needing further work, and one ship under construction that will be named after a living Freemason. Five out of the first six DDGs are named after Freemasons.

The 10 active destroyers are the USS Arleigh Burke(14) (DDG 51), USS Barry(15) (DDG 52), USS John Paul Jones(16) (DDG 53), USS Stout(17) (DDG 55), USS John S. McCain(18) (DDG 56), USS Decatur (DDG 73), USS Roosevelt(21) (DDG 80), USS Winston S. Churchill(21) (DDG 81), USS Preble(20) (DDG 88), and USS Farragut(21) (DDG 99). The USS John S. McCain was originally named after John S. McCain Sr. and Jr., the former being a Freemason for most of his life, with the latter becoming a Freemason later in life. After the death of Senator John S. McCain III, he was added as a namesake for the ship; however, John S. McCain III was not a recorded Freemason. Similarly, the USS Roosevelt is named for Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) and Eleanor Roosevelt. FDR is a Freemason of some fame.

It is likely that Commodore William Bainbridge, namesake of the USS Bainbridge, was a Freemason. It is believed that he was initiated in Philadelphia in 1810(4). This may be the topic of a future column or further research. It is also possible that Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher, namesake of the USS Mitscher (DDG 57), was a Freemason. His name is called out in others’ work(19), but I was unable to confirm this myself. I unfortunately had to move DDG 57 from the confirmed list to the “needs further work” list.

The USS Gravely is named after Samuel L. Gravely Jr., who may have been a Prince Hall Mason, but this will also require more research.

Lastly, there is one destroyer currently under construction: the future USS Sam Nunn (DDG 133), named for Senator Samuel Augustus Nunn Jr. Brother Nunn is a Freemason in the Grand Lodge of Georgia and appears in the Scottish Rite Hall of Honor. The ship is scheduled to be commissioned in 2028. I hope I can attend.

While there are other classes of U.S. Navy ships that will require some work to get through, most are not named after people but locations, which makes the process fairly easy(7). There is one of note that I actually did not know about. The ship was decommissioned early in 2021 due to a fire, but the USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) was named after Brother Benjamin Franklin. This was the pseudonym he used for some writings known as Poor Richard or Goodman Richard. "Goodman" was a way for the gentry to address a respected commoner. There have also been multiple USS Franklins as well. Brother Franklin probably holds the distinction of having two different pedigrees of ship names in his honor. Hopefully, with the unfortunate loss of LHD 6, the next USS Bonhomme Richard will return to capital ship (CVN) status. Maybe a destroyer named USS Franklin could be a possibility as well.

Other non-destroyer ships include USS Henry M. Jackson(8) (SSBN 730), USNS Lewis and Clark(10) (T-AKE 1), USNS Richard E. Byrd (T-AKE 4), USNS Wally Schirra(12) (T-AKE 8), and USNS John Glenn(13) (T-ESD 2).

Fleet Admiral Nimitz, from the other Fredericksburg (Texas), may have been a Freemason, but I am having issues finding credible sources. He appears on some lists, but I have not been able to find any tangible evidence. I will be reaching out to the lodges near his hometown and museum to see if they have any hard evidence.

It is very likely that the Bonhomme Richard name will grace the stern of another ship, not to mention some great names that have not yet been used: Austin, Buchanan, Dole, Goldwater, Harding, Monroe, and Polk, to name a few.

So, the current final active ship count is 5 carriers, 10 destroyers, 1 ballistic missile submarine, and 4 support craft. I would say this is a pretty decent start to our Masonic fleet.

1. https://www.phoenixmasonry.org/the_builder_1920_may.htm
2. <https://archive.org/details/10000famousfreem00dens/page/297/mode/1up>
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Decatur
4. https://massfreemasonry.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/2013_Fall_Trowel.pdf
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Sam_Nunn
6. <https://destroyerhistory.org/destroyers/introduction/>
7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_ship_naming_conventions
8. <https://gwmemorial.org/blogs/gl-of-the-month/grand-lodge-of-washington>
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Every Man Who Asks

by Seth Roderick, WM

I was sitting in my Lodge office the other day, trying to come up with an article for this month's Trestleboard. Nothing was coming together. I had no theme, no outline, and no clear beginning. Then I thought of my uncle.

For more than forty years, he wrote monthly articles for his company's newsletter. He was a Mason for about that same length of time. Month after month, he found something to say. That takes discipline, and care for the people who will read it. I knew from conversations with him that words did not always flow freely from his pen, but he always seemed to find a nugget of inspiration by being present, still and observant, at his desk or on the porch. My own father had a knack for writing. As did my grandfather. Inherently, I suppose I received a passion for writing, but not a knack for it.

Since no thought was coming from my desk, I got up and I went and sat at my uncle's writing desk. That desk is now in our Temple, a recent addition after he left it to the Lodge upon his passing. I sat there for a while. I looked around. I thought. Still, nothing came. Then I noticed the Bible on top of the desk. I opened it to the place marked by a bookmark and found this passage:

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you for a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15

Here now was something to work with. Be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks for a reason of the hope that is in you. At this point I knew it meant something. I still didn't know what it meant in regard to an article on a Masonic theme, but I accepted that Providence must be at work here and that it had to mean something. So I broke down the passage and, finally, there it was, "every man who asks."

Every man who comes through our doors is seeking something. He may not know how to say it at first. He may speak of fellowship, tradition, self-improvement, history, family ties, knowledge, or a desire to belong to something serious and lasting. Beneath those words however, there is usually a Hope.

He hopes to find good men. He hopes to become a better man. He hopes to be known, be guided, corrected when needed, and encouraged when he is tired. He hopes that what he finds in the Lodge will be real. That hope matters. It is the same hope we had when we first asked the question.

Our duty as Brothers is to know one another well enough to understand that earthly hope. To know a Brother means more than knowing his name, his job, or how long he has been a Mason. It means knowing something of what he is seeking. It means taking enough interest in him to understand what brought him here, what keeps him here, and what may help him grow.

We cannot answer for another man, and we cannot tell him what his hope must be. We cannot do his work for him. Each Brother must think, learn, act, and grow by his own effort. But we can help him ask the right questions. That is Brotherhood. Every man who asks.

A petitioner has questions. An Entered Apprentice has questions. A Fellowcraft has questions. A newly raised Master Mason has questions. So does the Brother who has been absent for a while. So does the Brother who is grieving. So does the Brother who seems to be doing fine. So does the Brother we see every week.

When we know our Brethren, we are better able to help them ask the right questions and we are better able to answer him. We are better able to notice when something is wrong. We are better able to encourage them, include them, and remind them that they belong among us. This is why attendance matters. This is why fellowship matters. This is why a conversation over dinner matters. This is why a phone call, a visit, or a handwritten note matter. These things are simple and they are always important.

The verse also tells us how to answer: with meekness and fear. That means with humility, reverence, and care. A man's hope should be handled gently. When a Brother trusts us with part of his life, we should receive it with respect. So let us be ready to listen. Ready to welcome. Ready to teach. Ready to learn. Ready to sit with a Brother in sorrow. Ready to rejoice with him in good fortune. Ready to remind him of his obligations. Ready, to remember our own.

As we move through June, I ask each Brother to consider this instruction: learn the hope of your Brother. Ask how he is doing and listen to the answer. Speak to the new Mason. Call the Brother who has been away. Sit beside someone you do not yet know well. Be present when your presence may strengthen another.

My uncle's desk did not give me an article at first. It gave me a place to sit. Then it placed before me a Bible, opened to the right passage at the right time. That was enough. That was the hope I didn't know I was asking for.

Do good unto all.

Hugh Mercer Memorial Day Wreath Laying

Remarks given by Ethan Burgess
May 25, 2026

Thank you to Washington Heritage Museums for inviting me to speak today, for the Tricentennial year of Hugh Mercer's birth and during this Semiquincentennial year of the nation which he did not live to see flourish. I owe my passion for and my career in public history to this organization and the unique historic sites it stewards. I dedicate these remarks to the countless who served with Mercer in all the lands and conflicts which led to the formation of this Nation in one way or another, even without any hope or dream of such a prospect of liberty in their mind. Additionally I wish to recognize Genevieve Bugay who just retired after 40 years of growing the Apothecary's Shop fame and Mercer's reputation, Anne Darron who also just retired from WHM and guided the organization over the past decade and a half, and to my wife Allison who's passion for 18th-century medicine and Mercer's legacy drew me towards the importance of this legendary Scotsman who found himself in Fredericksburg.

A few years ago, during a school tour of the monuments on this avenue, a student asked why this statue wasn't of George Washington. A reasonable question given the avenue name but before I could even explain the two generals' relationship, the commonality of their appearance and horses, or that the avenue was originally intended to be the Mary Washington Avenue, the student eagerly misread the pronunciation on the plaque and remarked "Huge Mercer?!"



He really was larger than life wasn't he?

What kind of moments from Mercer's life would rally Fredericksburg to adopt him and erect this monument, or animate Edward Valentine to sculpt him in just this way?

Born and raised in Pitsligio, Scotland and a student of Marischal College, he was not destined to become a clergyman or an academic. His first encounter with the brutality of war was at the age of 19 as an assistant surgeon under his local Baron, Alexander Forbes. You see, Bonnie Prince Charles had returned to Scotland to avenge the loss of his forbears' crown. And while it was yet another entry in the centuries of European power struggles, and ended in travesty, something new bubbled up from the Scottish soil there and it came to America. A new kind of freedom to fight for, beyond crown and coin, something universal understood in the hearts of soldiers like Mercer.

Do remember that Culloden was the last stand of the Scottish and from then on Mercer was a fugitive of his own homeland, never to return. These new ideals of freedom out of the Enlightenment and just staying alive were one and the same for him. Never again could Mercer stand by and let it happen again. But where? Where could he fight his next battle? For the next eight years we find our wandering Scottish doctor in the wilderness of Pennsylvania, honing his craft and eventually leading as a militia Captain in the defense of British-American settlements. George Washington's infamous engagement at Fort Mifflin was less than 100 miles from Mercer's settlement. After Braddock's defeat, Mercer's company was dispatched in a larger counter-attack campaign and found purchase with the French and Native American outpost of Kitanning. The successful, but chaotic sacking resulted in Mercer narrowly escaping death. More than one primary source remark in disbelief at his two-week return journey. A broken arm, nothing to eat but just berries, some clams, and a rattlesnake. He was even abandoned by his party at the approach of a Native patrol and he hid behind a log until they passed. You can't make this stuff up.

He was promoted to Major and then Lt. Col., showing mastery of not just logistics and coordinating large maneuvers of soldiers during the Forbes Expedition and at Fort Pitt, but a real sense of camaraderie with his fellow officers as shown in many letters. With the Seven Year's War wound down and enlistments ending, Mercer's time in Pennsylvania came to a natural end. He went from obscurity and exile to becoming an itinerant leader, shaping all those encountered. Now it came time for him to shape a new place, the well-recommended port town of Fredericksburg.



Credit: Washington Heritage Museums

It's important to note that Mercer himself considered his early time in Fredericksburg to be a trial period. You can understand why. While an immediately successful apothecary practice enticed him to reconsider Fredericksburg, the warmth of its community embraced him for who he was. A Scottish immigrant who had lived through uncertainty and danger longer than he had peace. Remember that "North Britons" were not fully welcomed in every social circle. But Dr. Sutherland and the community of Scottish merchants here gave him a glimpse of home. He found a good match by marrying Isabella Gordon and was truly welcomed into the town by his new brother in law George Weedon and the brothers of his lodge. He and Isabella welcome five children into the world over the next decade and half, and with the strong reputation of his practice and esteem among the citizenry, he finally found a home not just to fight for in the future, but to redeem his painful odyssey from one war-torn land to the next.

In response to Lord Dunmore's April 1775 plot at the Williamsburg Gunpowder Magazine, it was Mercer and Weedon who assembled 600 militiamen from surrounding counties in just five days. We don't know how Hugh Mercer reacted to the Townshend or Stamp Acts, though he was a frequent visitor of the known seditious hotbed at Weedon's Tavern, this shows that despite circumstances or reason, when the common good became apparent, Mercer did his job and had his finger on the trigger to lead. He saw the travesty of disorganization at Culloden, honed his leadership in Pennsylvania, and was willing to bet it all on Fredericksburg and the Commonwealth of Virginia right there at that moment. Months before Bunker Hill or Great Bridge, there could have been a Battle of Williamsburg.

We could have a seminar all afternoon about the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, but it's THE John Hancock who sends Mercer his Brig. Gen. promotion letter. And it was THE United States Congress that authorized this here monument as far back as 1799. Yet today, Mercer's most notable mention in popular media is in the line from the Hamilton musical, when Aaron Burr says "and all he had to do was die."

Suppose that it was just that simple. That all Mercer had to do was die.

I'd argue that no other man in the American Revolution understood mortality more than Mercer. Certainly not a one in New Jersey in the winter of 1777. He was a constant adversary to death, be it as a doctor or a leader. He knew what he was asking of his men braving the hellish ice and snow of Trenton. And he knew as his horse was struck from underneath him at Princeton, and his retreat through the orchard, that when it came time for him to face the very bayonets of tyranny, he did not yield when he was bid to ask for quarters. In his own words, made to correct the many battlefield rumors and false reports, "I felt that I deserved not so opprobrious an epithet, and determined to die, as I had lived, an honored soldier in a just and righteous cause; and without begging for my life or making reply, I lunged with my sword at the nearest man. They then bayoneted and left me."

George Lewis whose family lived at Kenmore here, attended to Mercer in his final days at nearby farmhouse. On his own death bed Mercer corrected Cornwallis's staff surgeon who was sent, pointing to the smallest of his wounds and saying "that is the fellow that will do my business." A clock seemed to have started all the way back at Culloden, and with the span of his life Mercer finally exchanged and bought the rest of us an endless amount of time of peace in this land so long as we keep it.

It's tragic how difficult it is to imagine a Mercer who lived present at any table of the Early American Republic other than his family's. In order for his family to be deprived of him thereon, yes, all he had to do was die. But we honor and look to him as a model citizen for so much more, all that he dared to do in the face of death, again and again. He could have surrendered. But in that defiance he redeemed the deaths of all those around him, and all those he witnessed in a life pledged against oppression.

One conflict after another he spent his life marching to wherever he was needed, and what we must remember today, that when it came time for him to do a final march for the sake of the home he finally found, here in Fredericksburg, he did not return from it. He did not meet his fifth child, Hugh Tenant Weedon Mercer, who was born during that campaign. In an act of tremendous grace and familial hospitality, the Weedons took in his family.

Mercer's legacy is one of vigilance for injustice. I see it in the gaze of this monument. When times are dark remember his words as he exited the battlefield: "Cheer up my boys, the day is ours." I ask each of us to remember our fallen heroes in a new way, be the citizen which they could no longer be when they made their ultimate sacrifice. You don't need a flag or a uniform, or a regiment behind you to do it. Your presence and attention is all that is needed, even when you feel the most alone and surrounded.

"The day is ours."



The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777 by John Trumbull
Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery

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