

# **AUDUBON-PARKSIDE LODGE #218 HISTORY**

## **Compiled by RW Raymond C. Thorne PGT**

### Chapter 1--1920

In the post-World War I boom, Camden County--and especially the City of Camden--were places of rapid growth. Local firms such as RCA Victor, Campbell's Soup, and New York Shipbuilding Corp. were expanding major employers. Also, men recently discharged from the military were finding that suburban New Jersey was a good place to settle down and raise a family.

This increase in the local population was reflected in the growth of the various area lodges. In late 1919 Charles A. Williams, Worshipful Master of Trimble Lodge #117, saw that lodge's rolls expand to over one thousand. A membership of this size, and still increasing, put an operating strain on the lodge and its officers.

Because of this enormous size and the problems it created, the possibility of creating a new lodge in Camden was explored. Meanwhile, in the Borough of Audubon, Masons from various lodges in several jurisdictions were coming to the conclusion that a lodge in that community was viable. The first official actions forming both those lodges came during February, 1920.

On the first of that month, a Sunday, the first meeting of the Master Masons Association of Audubon was called to order in Schnitzler's Hall, at the corner of Pine Street and East Atlantic Avenue, in Audubon. Fourteen Masons living in town met with RW Frank C. Sayers, District Deputy of the 18th Masonic District, and MW Wilber R. Coles, Grand Master.

The purpose of the Association, which was chaired by William D. Hopkins, PM of Trimble, was to form a lodge in Audubon. The following Wednesday, despite a blizzard, the Association again met with 27 in attendance. The petition for chartering a lodge was read and signed. The elected officers for the proposed lodge were selected and dues were established at \$5 per year. In subsequent meetings that month Schnitzler's Hall was secured as the proposed lodge's meeting place, the rest of the line was appointed and lodge meeting nights were established as the first and third Fridays of every month.

Schnitzler's Hall was a logical place for a meeting place. Built in 1895 by Charles Schnitzler--who would become the first mayor of the Borough of Audubon and a member of Audubon Lodge--the hall was, among other things, the first home of Audubon's first fire company, the first meeting place of Audubon Methodist Church outside the home of James (Pop) Caskey (who would also become Mayor of Audubon and a lodge member), and the borough's first movie theater.

Years later, Harry Mund, who was raised in Schnitzler's Hall, recalled one problem with the meeting place: it was across the street from railroad tracks and whenever a train went by the noise was such that the meeting had to stop until the train passed.

On Sunday February 15, thirty-nine members of Trimble who all lived in the Parkside section of Camden met in a Red Room of Camden Masonic Temple with four members of Trimble, WM Arthur P. Johnson, SW William G. Hinderer, and two Past Masters, WB Williams and RW Sayers. The plans for the new lodge were well developed. WB Williams was convinced to become the new lodge's charter Worshipful Master.

The Camden Masonic Temple had been the center of Masonic activity in Camden County since it opened in September, 1913 (WB Hopkins was Worshipful Master of Trimble at the time). The temple was home to four Masonic lodges, three York Rite bodies, the four bodies of the Scottish Rite Valley of Camden, plus several Eastern Star Chapters and Amaranth Courts. Lodges would meet in the Blue Room, the other organizations would meet in one of two Red Rooms.

A second Royal Arch Chapter would be chartered the day before Parkside. Universal Lodge #216 would be chartered three days after Parkside. By the end of the decade two more lodges would be chartered, plus a DeMolay Chapter, Rainbow Assembly, and several more Eastern Star chapters. This center of Masonic activity would give Parkside a natural base of support of all its endeavors for several

On February 20, after a regular communication of Trimble, the intended Parkside charter members meeting with the top three officers and four PM's of Trimble signed the petition for a new lodge. SW Hinderer chose the name Parkside. RW Sayers put up the \$50 petition fee. The group decided the new lodge would meet the first and fourth Thursdays of every month, except July and August, and that dues would be \$5.

In the following two months or so the intended members of Parkside Lodge performed the three Masonic Degrees to the satisfaction of Trimble Lodge. Since the proposed charter members were all members of the same lodge, presumably the intended officers performed their work during one or more communications of Trimble.

At an emergent communication of Haddon Heights Lodge #191 on March 4, the intended officers of Audubon exemplified the Masonic ritual to the satisfaction of those present. Haddon Heights then presented the proto Audubon Lodge with an altar Bible, which the lodge still has although no longer in use.

Present for the ritual presentations of both intended lodges were RW Sayers and MW Josiah W. Ewan, PGM, who were satisfied that both groups had met the requirements to be chartered as Masonic lodges.

In Trenton, as part of Grand Lodge's Annual Communication, April 20, the Grand Lodge Committee on Dispensations and Warrants reported that six new lodges were to be chartered, among them three in Camden County: Universal #216, Parkside #217 and

Audubon #218. While there is nothing recorded, it was probably by design rather than coincidence that Parkside's number would be exactly one hundred above that of its Mother Lodge.

On May 20, 1920, after a banquet in the Logan Memorial Presbyterian Church, the first emergent communication of the new Grand Lodge year was opened by MW Cooper H. Prickett, Grand Master. No doubt the banquet sight, which had to be large enough to accommodate the large attendance, was secured through the aid of Rev. George Kane, Charter Chaplain and pastor of Logan Memorial.

Grand Lodge marched as a body to Schnitzler's Hall in a procession led by RW William B. Mackey, Grand Marshal, a Past Master of Collingswood Lodge #210 and future Grand Master. In the procession was RW Frank C. Sayrs, Junior Grand Warden, RW William H. Witte, District Deputy of the 18th Masonic District, four other DD's of New Jersey and one from Pennsylvania, two PGM's, three PDD's, 32 visiting Worshipful Masters and Past Masters (including six from Trimble and WB Charles A. Williams of Parkside).

Audubon Lodge #218 was chartered, and 54 dimitted Masons from lodges in the jurisdictions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, as well as from the 18th District lodges of Camden, Ionic, Trimble, and Haddon Heights now had a center for Masonry in their town of residence.

Audubon's Charter Master was William D. Hopkins. Wilbert Davis, the Charter Treasurer, served in that capacity for 24 years. The Charter Secretary, Harry B. Beckley, wore the crossed quills for 25 years. Charter Tyler John B. Lingerfield was 52 when he was first placed outside the outer door and he stayed there for 26 years, stepping down only four months before his death in March, 1946.

The first regular communication of Audubon was held May 21, 1920, at which time 21 petitions for initiation were read, including those of three future Worshipful Masters.

On Friday, June 4, 1920, Grand Lodge met again in emergent communication, opening in a Red Room of Camden Masonic Temple. Besides Grand Master Prickett and the elected line (including RW Sayers) and most of the appointed line (including RW Mackey) were 12 current or past District Deputies (including RW Witte), 51 present or past Masters from New Jersey and Pennsylvania (including the WM and 15 PM's from Trimble, plus WB William D. Hopkins--who was missing his own meeting).

Grand Lodge proceeded to the much larger Blue Room, where Parkside Lodge #217 was chartered. The forty dimitted members of Trimble who became the charter members of Parkside would henceforth be known and hailed as "The Forty Thieves." Trimble presented Parkside with an altar Bible, which our lodge still has although no longer in use. The speaker of the evening was RW Henry Snowden Haines, Grand Instructor.

Parkside's Charter Master was Charles A. Williams. The Charter Treasurer, Samuel S. Joslin, handled the lodge's funds for 22 years. But the champion of charter officers for

either lodge was Mortimer L. Nottebrock, who was installed Tyler of Parkside on June 4, 1920, and still retained that post when he died December 23, 1955. Thus it was that Audubon Lodge, which met on Fridays, was constituted on a Thursday, and Parkside Lodge, which met on Thursdays, was constituted on a Friday. Both lodges had a Charter Master who was a Past Master of Trimble Lodge and a dedicated core of charter members who would help lead their respective lodge into its third or even fourth decade. At Parkside's first regular communication, June 24, 1920, 15 petitions for initiation and two for affiliation were read. Three days later Parkside lost its first member, George W. Reese. His son, Jacob C. Reese, was the Charter Junior Warden and would become Worshipful Master in 1922. Audubon met throughout the summer, both in regular and emergent communications (by the end of the year there were more of the latter than of the former), conferring degrees and searching for a suitable site for a Masonic Temple.

The first person raised in Audubon was a courtesy raising for a Philippine lodge. By dispensation, the candidate was entered with four others at a regular communication July 16 and on an emergent held July 20 was crafted with four others, then raised that same night with the officers of Trimble doing the work.

At Audubon's regular communication on August 20 the purchase of the northeast corner of the White Horse Pike and Pine Street was authorized. Two months later a permanent board of three trustees was appointed to hold all real estate in the name of the lodge. Also at that communication was the raising of a class of five, including future Worshipful Masters Luther Krout and John Zanger. The first lodge member raised by Audubon Lodge was Thomas B. Smith. Three years later to the day Brother Smith's mortal remains would be laid to rest with due Masonic services.

With the arrival of fall, Parkside started conferring degrees. Their first conferral of the Master Mason Degree was October 13, on a visit to Collingswood Lodge #210. The officers of Trimble, as they had in Audubon, conferred the first Master Mason Degree in Parkside when, on November 4, they raised Thomas W. Reader, the son of Charter Member Addison Reader. Parkside started a tradition that lasted for many years by having a Ladies Night on Thanksgiving. Since Thanksgiving back then usually fell on the fourth Thursday of November, which was Parkside's regular meeting night, the lodge would usually hold a short business meeting before the festivities. Three hundred or more would attend these galas. Obviously, members and wives from other lodges were also present.

Audubon's first Annual was an emergent in Haddon Heights on December 22, and Parkside's first Annual was a regular communication the following day. Attending both Annuals was Grand Master Prickett. It is interesting to note that after each first Annual Communication was closed--well after 10:30 at night--came the banquet. Audubon hired an entertainer and Parkside dined to live music. Both lodges had started their first growth spurt. Parkside added 11 members by the end of 1920 and Audubon had raised 34.