



Princess Anne #25 AF&AM



Lodge History

Princess Anne Masonic Lodge traces its origins to Kempsville Lodge No. 12, chartered on October 5th 1785, and retains a minute book recording its meetings from 1815 to 1820. The minute book was found among the effects of Col. Edward James, a member of the Lodge. On March 6th, 1940 it was presented to the Lodge by J. F. Woodhouse, PDDGM. Col. James was the grandfather of J. F. Woodhouse's Wife.

Some of the business covered in the minutes includes opening a subscription for building a Lodge, obtaining a room to meet in from Bro. John Lee, making preparations for celebrating the Festivals of St. John the Bapstist and St. John the Evangelist, employing a nurse for a sick Brother, obtaining a Masonic certificate and the appointment of a Pursuivant.

While the physical location of Kempsville No. 12 is lost in memory, it is believed the Lodge met in the area known as Kemsps Landing. As a result of the years of inactivity, the Grand Lodge of Virginia pulled the charter in 1848.

The Lodge was again chartered in 1871 as Kempsville No. 25, meeting in a rented hall at the Kempsville Inn located just north of what is now the intersection of S. Witchduck and Princess Anne Roads. Norfolk No. 1 loaned such jewels and furniture as they could spare for the Brethren at Kempsville to get started.

As the prominence of Kempsville Township diminished, a movement surfaced in 1873 to relocate the Lodge to the county seat, which had moved south some years earlier. The Brethren were literally split down the middle of over the question, with the Master casting the deciding ballot to keep the Lodge in Kempsville. After a dispensation was sought to create Seaboard Lodge at the Courthouse, the Brethren voted to relocate the Lodge in September of 1875. This did not end the debate for the Brethren who resided in Kempsville. In 1882, the Grand Lodge of Virginia granted a dispensation to form Rising Sun Lodge, U.D. in Kempsville, a hope that was vanquished when fire destroyed all the Lodge property. Kempsville would not see another Lodge until 1955 When Kempsville No. 196 was established.

In 1877, the board of supervisors granted a request from the Lodge to lease space on the public grounds of the Courthouse for the construction of a two-story building, with the understanding that room would be provided, rent free, for the County Treasurer's office. In November of that year, after raising \$800 for building materials, the cornerstone was laid for Kempsville Lodge No. 25. In 1884, the Grand Lodge of Virginia granted a petition to change the name to Princess Anne No. 25.



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For 60 years the Lodge stood just east of the Courthouse, on what is now North Landing Road. In 1936, it was moved to the western edge of public property facing Princess Anne Road. In 1968, the building was moved to its present location at 2849 Princess Anne Road. The Lodge is currently planning to move the building a t third time, relocating it to West Neck Road onto property owned by Ms. Emmy Fountain, a daughter of the Lodge's former Secretary.

Princess Anne No. 25 has participated in a number of history Masonic events over the years. In 1896, the Lodge took life membership in the Masonic Home of Virginia. In 1899, the Lodge sent \$10 to the Grand Lodge to defray expenses in observing the centennial of the death of George Washington. In November, 1923, two members of the Lodge assisted in layin the cornerstone of the George Washington Masonic Memorial.

Moreover, the Lodge has played a significant role in the life of Princess Anne County and Virginia Beach, laying cornerstones of many public buildings and churches, most notably, that of the Confederate Monument which stands at the Courthouse.

Even in its early days, Lodge membership was composed of a cross section of professionals within the community. While the predominate occupation was that of farmer, the Lodge also drew doctors, lawyers, merchants, mechanics, grocers, innkeepers and surfmen. It remained the only Masonic Lodge in the county until 1912, when several members of the Lodge established Virginia Beach No 274 at the oceanfront.

Princess Anne Lodge has allowed a number of fraternal and civic organizations to meet in its building over the years: Knights of Honor, Oddfellows, Knights of Pythias, Princess Anne County Camp of Confederate Veterans, Daughters of the Confederacy, International Order of Job's Daughters and the Order of the Eastern Star.

It is surly no coincidence that the membership of these groups included local Freemasons and their families. Today the building is home to Princess Anne Lodge No. 25, Princess Anne Royal Arch Chapter No. 1607 and Princess Anne Council No 129, AMD.