

## Masonry in Portsmouth Today



The Lodge Room

Today, the Temple is the home of several Masonic bodies:

St. John's Lodge No. 1 (chartered 1736)

St. Andrew's Lodge No. 56 (1848)

The York Rite:

Washington Chapter No. 3 (1816)

Davenport Council No. 5 (1864)

DeWitt Clinton Commandery No. 2 (1826)

The Scottish Rite:

Ineffable Lodge of Perfection (1842)

John Christie Council (1845)

New Hampshire Chapter of Rose-Croix (1866)

The James Whalley Masonic Museum and Library (1962)

Portsmouth Chapter No. 386, National Sojourners (1953)

The two Lodges have a combined membership of approximately four hundred. The York and Scottish Rite bodies draw their membership from a larger geographical region and bring the total number of Masons associated with the Portsmouth Masonic Temple to approximately eight hundred.

## The Masonic Temple Portsmouth, New Hampshire



## Information for Visitors 2009-2010



Contact:

St. John's Masonic Association  
351 Middle Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
603-436-3712  
[www.portsmouthmasons.org](http://www.portsmouthmasons.org)

## About Freemasonry

Freemasonry is the world's oldest, largest and most respected fraternal organization. The roots of Freemasonry date to the Middle Ages, when the stonemasons who built the Gothic cathedrals and castles of Europe formed lodges to regulate their trade. As European society moved into the modern era, these lodges evolved into educational, social and charitable organizations open to men of all classes, occupations and faiths. The earliest written records of such lodges date to the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Scotland, and Masonic lodges were a well-established part of European society by the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In the United States, Freemasonry was established during the Colonial period and grew as the nation grew.

Freemasons meet in lodges, which are local groups drawing members from a small area. Lodges provide social and educational activities for their members and engage in charitable work. There are currently sixty-nine lodges in New Hampshire, with a total membership of approximately seven thousand. There are some four million Freemasons in the world, meeting in nearly every free and democratic country. There is no central governing body; the Freemasons in each region govern themselves.

Freemasons are proud to have many prominent men in their ranks. Fourteen Presidents of the United States, including Washington, Jackson, both Roosevelts, Truman and Ford, were Masons, as were Winston Churchill; eleven recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize; Lewis and Clark; Omar Bradley, John Audubon, "Buzz" Aldrin; Henry Ford, J. C. Penney, Robert Burns, Rudyard Kipling and Mark Twain; John Wayne, Arnold Palmer, and musicians from Mozart to Brad Paisley,

Membership is open to adult men of good character who believe in God and are recommended by members of the lodge they wish to join. Traditionally, Masonic lodges do not openly recruit members, so a man seeking membership must ask a Mason. Masonry offers no financial or networking benefits to its members, and the discussion of politics and religion are forbidden within a Masonic lodge.

## The Hackett House Becomes the Masonic Temple

For several decades prior to the 1920's, the Masons of Portsmouth met in rented rooms in the Congress Block on Congress Street. In 1920, in search of better quarters for its social events, St. John's Lodge No. 1 purchased the Hackett House from Wallace's daughter Marion and her husband Robert Rogers for \$18,500. At that time they occupied the house and Wallace had retired to Annapolis, MD.

The house was first used as a social club only, and any Mason could become a member of the club by paying a fee. During the 1920's, St. John's Lodge worked to add better facilities for lodge meetings. The servants' hall at the back of the building was removed and the annex to the south of the house, containing a large lodge room on the second floor and a large banquet hall or auditorium on the first floor, was built. The annex was dedicated in 1928. St. John's Lodge was the first to use the annex for lodge meetings, but the other Portsmouth Masonic bodies moved from Congress Street into the new facilities by 1930. The addition of the lodge room and banquet hall made the Temple into one of the best facilities for Masonic meetings in Northern New England.

The cost of the annex was \$66,000. The funds were raised by issuing notes paying interest of 4%, an attractive return in the 1920's, and maturing twenty years from the date of issue. These notes were purchased primarily by Masons, and the last was paid in 1948.

In the 1960's, the Temple became the home of the James E. Whalley Masonic Museum and Library. This organization, funded by the estate of James Whalley, a prominent Portsmouth Mason and shipyard manager, is the premier Masonic museum in New Hampshire. The Temple saw major renovations during the 1970's, the time of the city's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the U.S. bicentennial, and during 2006-2008. Today the Portsmouth Masonic Temple is owned and operated by St. John's Masonic Association, a non-profit corporation formed in 1946, for the benefit of all of the Masonic bodies meeting there. The Temple is a private facility, not available for rental to the public.

## The Wallace Hackett House

The Hackett house is the first building to occupy the plot of land at the southwestern corner of Middle Street and Miller Avenue. The building was designed by Ball and Dabney, a prominent firm of architects in Boston, as a home for Wallace, his wife Abby and their daughter Marion, and was built in 1891-1892.

The outside is constructed of yellow brick with wood trim. The house measured 69 feet on the west, 41 feet on the east and 50 feet on the north and south. The overall style is Neo-Georgian.

On the first floor were the morning room on the west of the front hall, the drawing room on the east of the front hall, the dining room in the southwest corner and a library in the southeast corner. South of this family area were a large kitchen, butler's pantry and a walk-in china closet. Behind the kitchen was the servants' hall.

There are two stairways. The front hall contains the front stairway, extending from the first to the second floor and used by the family. There is a landing with leaded glass windows. There is also a back stairway that was used by servants.

The second floor contains a hall and had the master bedroom on the northwest corner. Next to the bedroom were the daughter's room and a dressing room for the lady of the house. Two guest rooms were situated on the east side. The one on the right as one ascends the stairs has an oriel, or interior bay window. Towards the back of the house was a billiard room, over the kitchen.

The third floor was partitioned into four large rooms for servants, as well as a large cedar closet. This area was accessed by the back stairway. The basement had a large coal-fired hot air furnace with fourteen ducts leading to each room, a boiler for heating water, storage areas and an ironing stove for heating irons. There were originally four chimneys.

Some of the most striking features in the house are the fireplaces. Although the house had central heating, each room has a unique fireplace. In the drawing room is one with facings of Sienna marble imported from Italy, while the morning room has a pine mantel and facings of pale green tiles.

## The Teachings of Masonry

The purpose of Freemasonry is to teach morality to its members; as is often said, "to make good men better." It is not a religion and offers no plan for salvation, but concerns itself with a code of conduct for living a kind, useful and satisfying life. The principal tenets of Masonry are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Brotherly Love teaches Masons about the innate worth of all human beings, that all have rights and are worthy of respect, that we are all members of one human family.

Relief is another word for charity. Masonry teaches that each of us has an obligation to help others. While Freemasonry is not a community service organization with charity as its primary goal, Masons provide scholarships, operate retirement homes, support medical research and much more. The largest and best known Masonic charity is probably the system of Shriners' Hospitals for Children, but much Masonic charity is performed quietly and privately, by visiting someone in a nursing home, taking a Mason's widow out to dinner, or simply offering support to someone in need.

Truth includes the search for truth in an intellectual sense, as well as the search for the truth about oneself and one's relationship with the Almighty. Masons are also taught that they must be truthful, dependable and loyal, in other words, men of honor.

The lessons of Freemasonry are taught in the lodge using symbols and allegories that draw from the historical roots of the order in architecture and building. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, the tools of stonemasons, such as the square, the trowel and the gavel, and legends from Biblical and Medieval times were used to develop a series of rituals and dramas that contain the moral teachings of the order. A man who becomes a Freemason participates in these ceremonies and then, both in private and in association with other Freemasons, is expected to use these lessons to live a life that is both useful to society and pleasing to the Almighty.

## Freemasonry in Portsmouth

We do not know when the first Freemason arrived in Portsmouth, but a lodge existed in February 1735, when six Masons meeting as St. John's Lodge wrote for a charter to a representative of the Masonic authority in England then resident in Boston. St. John's Lodge was chartered on June 24, 1736, and is the fifth lodge to be chartered in what is now the United States. Masonry grew with the city and today there are two lodges and several other Masonic organizations in Portsmouth.

As is the case elsewhere, many prominent men of the Seacoast area have been Masons:

- Robert Rogers, hero of the French and Indian Wars
- Benning Wentworth and John Wentworth, Royal Governors
- John Sullivan, Revolutionary War general and N.H. Governor
- William Whipple, signer of the Declaration of Independence
- Nicholas Gilman, signer of the U.S. Constitution
- Hopley Yeaton, first officer of the U.S. Coast Guard
- Hall Jackson, physician (Jackson-Gray Medical Building)
- Lyman Spalding, physician and pharmacologist
- Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War under Thomas Jefferson
- Frank Jones, brewer and railroad executive
- William Randall, printer
- Charles M. Dale, attorney and Governor of N.H.
- John Feaster, pastor of the North Church
- Raymond Brighton, local historian
- J. Bradford Mooney, naval officer and undersea explorer

Over the years, Portsmouth Masons have met in many places: private homes, the William Pitt Tavern and Stoodley's Tavern, both now in Strawberry Banke, the Senate chamber of the Old Statehouse, the Franklin Block and the Congress Block, and now at the Masonic Temple on Middle Street, formerly the Wallace Hackett residence.

## About Wallace Hackett



Hon. Wallace Hackett

Wallace Hackett was born in Portsmouth on May 1, 1856. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1879 and became a lawyer in Portsmouth, following the path taken by his father and grandfather. He later became involved in banking and several business interests. He served as City Solicitor, as chairman of a committee to revise the city charter, as Mayor during 1907-1908 and in the State Legislature during 1909-1910. He was instrumental in the preservation of the Thomas Bailey Aldrich House, now part of Strawberry Banke. He married Abby Winchester in 1883 and they had one daughter, Marion. He passed away in Annapolis, MD, on February 15, 1939.

Wallace Hackett became a Mason in St. Andrew's Lodge No. 56 in 1878, and served as Master in 1882-1883. He was also a member of the York Rite bodies of Portsmouth.