MASONIC TEMPLE FOR ALBANY

TO ARISE ON THE SITE OF THE FIRST LODGEHOUSE IN AMERICA.

The Story of the Establishment of Freemasonry in This Country from Its First Introduction.

ALBANY, March 7.—Plans have been prepared, and shortly there will rise on the site of the first lodgehouse of Free and Accepted Masons in this country, corner of Maiden Lane and Lodge Street, a stately and solid structure.

There are in Albany eleven Masonic bodies, with a membership of close on to 2,500. For years these bodies have leased quarters, which have been exceedingly cramped at times. By act of the Legislature of 1891 a new Masonic Temple Commission was formed, and it has secured grounds and plans for a one-hundred-thousand-dollar building, which will be begun early in May.

By its constitution the Grand Chapter meets in Albany annually, and other bodies would meet here oftentimes were the accommodations adequate. The proposed new temple will be used exclusively for Masonic purposes.

Freemasonry in Albany dates back more than a century and a half. The first lodge was No. 74, (Registry of Ireland,) and was composed of officers in the Second Battalion Royal, holding a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ireland, dated Oct. 16, 1737. These officers brought with them a large and valuable library of rare books, which they left when the battalion was ordered away, and which is still intact in the Female Academy here. During the stay of the soldiers in Albany a number of residents had been admitted to the lodge, and, when the battalion was ordered to another post, the officers left authority for the resident members to continue their communications. Masters Lodge purchased from the City of Albany a plot of ground on the northwest corner of Lodge Street and Maiden Lane, and the city having given an adjoining piece of land, a lodgehouse was erected, the cornerstone being laid May 12, 1768. This first lodgehouse in America was occupied by Masters Lodge and the Ineffable and Sublime Grand Lodge of Perfection, (Scottish Rite.)

After an occupancy of some years by these bodies, the house was leased to St. Peter's Church for a rectory, and the rectory which replaced the lodgehouse still stands. The Ineffable and Sublime Grand Lodge of Perfection was instituted by Henry Andrew Francken, who came from Jamaica, Dec. 20, 1767, and that body still retains its original charter. The Grand Council of Princes of Jerusalem (Scottish Rite) was organized at the same time.

Since 1798 the Grand Chapter has held its annual communications in Albany.

Before the Revolutionary War lodges in this country were held under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons of England, and were denominated Provincial Grand Lodges and were subject to the supervision of the Grand Lodge of England. The initial lodge constituted in Albany under these conditions was Union Lodge, on Feb. 21, 1765. It was under the authority of George Harrison, Provincial Grand Master, and Peter W. Yates was made Worshipful Master. The name of the lodge was afterward changed to Mount Vernon Lodge, No. 3.

On March 5, 1768, Masters Lodge came in under the new dispensation, and had to accept No. 5. Its first Master was William Gamble, and its first Wardens were Samuel Stringer and Jeremiah Van Rensselaer.

John Hanmer, well skilled in ancient lectures and the modes of work as practiced in England, came to Albany in 1793 and remained for seven years. He awakened much interest in Freemasonry, and during his stay, on Nov. 14, 1796, Temple Lodge, No. 14, was established, he being the first Master. Also while here Temple Chapter, No. 5, of which he was High Priest, and the Grand Chapter, of which he was Secretary, were organized, as was Temple Commandery, No. 2, Knights Templars, in 1797.

Washington Lodge, No. 85, was formed in 1841; Ancient City Lodge, No. 452, in 1852; Wadsworth Lodge, No. 417, in 1856; De Witt Clinton Council in 1861; Capital City Chapter, No. 242, in 1870, and Guttenberg Lodge, (German,) No. 737, in 1873.