

RICHMOND RANDOLPH LODGE NO. 19

Chartered 1787

Meeting in Masons Hall
Erected 1785-1787

1807 East Franklin Street
Richmond, Virginia

Mailing Address:
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Richmond, Virginia 23230

March 13, 2017

Ms. Marianne Pitts
Planning and Preservation Division
Department of Planning and Development Review
City Hall, Room 510
900 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219-1907

Re: Approval of Masons Hall
Application for an Individual Old & Historic District

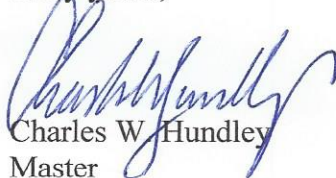
Dear Ms. Pitts:

Thank you and the City of Richmond for your assistance with our application for the designation of Masons Hall as an Individual Old & Historic District. We appreciate the opportunity to appear and speak twice before the City of Richmond Commission of Architectural Review ("CAR"). On both occasions, I stated as Master of Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19, the owner of Masons Hall, that the application was made by Historic Richmond Foundation on the owner's behalf. As our application advances with the unanimous CAR recommendation for approval, we respectfully reiterate our request for approval to the City Council.

A copy of our statement to CAR on January 24, 2017, is attached for your ease of reference.

Should there be any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Truly yours,


Charles W. Hundley
Master

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Cc:

Historic Richmond Foundation
Masons Hall 1785, A Charitable Foundation

CITY OF RICHMOND COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW ("CAR")

Meeting: January 24, 2017

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF RICHMOND RANDOLPH LODGE NO. 19

IN SUPPORT OF

INDIVIDUAL OLD & HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION FOR MASONS HALL

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this meeting. I am Charlie Hundley, master of Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19, the owner of Masons Hall.

Masons Hall, erected in 1785 – 1787, is a prominent historic building located in Shockoe Valley.

We are requesting approval of Masons Hall as an individual Old and Historic District. The approval requested is part of new efforts to preserve, restore and make this amazing building available to the public for visits and study as an important part of the history of our city.

Even though Masons Hall is the oldest continuously used Masonic building in America, its significance extends beyond the Masonic fraternity.

Masons Hall is associated with Richmond's leaders. The building was designed and constructed under the leadership of Edmund Randolph and John Marshall. Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19, chartered in 1787, was named to honor the leadership of Edmund Randolph, well-known lawyer, Virginia governor, first United States Attorney General and Grand Master of Virginia Masons. Other grand masters with offices in Masons Hall include John Marshall, lawyer and judge, and Solomon Jacobs, Richmond mayor, businessman and president of his congregation. The Virginia delegation to the constitutional convention met in Masons Hall before travelling to Philadelphia in 1787.

Masons Hall was a hospital during the War of 1812. Lafayette and his son (named George Washington in honor of the first president) visited Masons Hall and were made honorary lodge members in 1824. Richmond City courts and council met in Masons Hall. For many years, it was the office of the Grand Lodge of Virginia and its longest-serving secretary, John Dove, a prominent Richmond physician. In keeping with Freemasonry tenets of religious tolerance, religious groups unwelcome elsewhere conducted services in Masons Hall during the 19th century. The actress Eliza Poe, mother of Edgar Allen Poe, last performed at Masons Hall. The future English King Edward VII attended a lodge meeting at Masons Hall.

Masons Hall is architecturally significant. It is one of few surviving 18th century frame buildings with large public spaces. The unusual heavy beam structure has been studied by architects and engineers. The lightning rod system was designed by Benjamin Franklin.

There are many interesting stories about Masons Hall. One story is associated with the end of the American Civil War. There was no battle of Richmond in 1865. As Union armies approached from the southeast, the city was evacuated. Chaos erupted and fires set to destroy military stores raged out of control and laid waste to much of the undefended city. The city fell prey to violence, looting and rioting. The mayor, under a fluttering white sheet, approached the Union army in a carriage with the urgent request for speed to advance and protect the citizens of the city. The Union army advanced, restored order and extinguished the fires. Armed Union soldiers were immediately posted to protect three Richmond buildings, one of which was Masons Hall. President Lincoln walked near Masons Hall on his way to the Virginia Capitol on April 4, 1865, 10 days before he was assassinated. Masons Hall survived the devastation of war. However, time has taken its toll.

Masons Hall is in dire need of repair and restoration. It should be restored and made available to the public so future generations may visit this exciting and important structure and learn about those who served freedom and tolerance during times this nation was born and strived to survive. Masons Hall 1785, a Charitable Foundation, was established in 1997 as a tax-exempt foundation by Grand Master of Virginia Masons and Richmond Circuit Court Judge James B. Wilkinson to restore and maintain the building and, most importantly, to educate the public about its significant history.

We are excited about the relationship which has developed among Historic Richmond Foundation, Masons Hall 1785 and Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19. The lodge owns the building. Masons Hall 1785 can receive and disburse funds for building preservation. Historic Richmond Foundation has important and respected expertise with historic building preservation. These three groups are working together with governmental agencies and other groups, such as the Department of the Interior Historic American Buildings Survey in Washington D.C., to develop and implement a plan to restore and maintain Masons Hall. A part of our plan is working with organizations such as CAR to obtain appropriate historic designations for Masons Hall.