

INSCRIPTION ON STEPHEN CHAMBERS'S TOMESTONE IN ST. JAMES'S CHURCHYARD

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

In Vol. 34, p. 104, of the Proceedings of The Lancaster County Historical Society, is a biographical sketch of Stephen Chambers, who in his day was a leading member of the Lancaster bar and an influential citizen. In that article the statement is made that there is nothing on his tombstone in St. James's churchyard in Lancaster, to indicate that Mr. Chambers served as an officer in the Revolutionary War and as a delegate to the convention which ratified the Federal Constitution on the part of Pennsylvania.

Subsequent to the publication of that paper in May, 1930, I addressed the following letter to the secretary of Lodge No. 43, Free and Accepted Masons:

Lancaster, Pa.,
November 7th, 1930.

Mr. J. Fred Fisher, Secretary,
Lodge No. 43, F. & A. M.,
Lancaster, Pa.

Dear Sir and Brother:

It is not generally known that Stephen Chambers, Esq., who helped to organize Lodge No. 43, and who served as its first Worshipful Master, lies buried in the graveyard adjoining St. James's Protestant Episcopal church, this city.

Mr. Chambers was a prominent attorney in Lancaster, although only 36 years of age at the time of his death. As an officer, he served with distinction in the Revolutionary War; and at its close, studied law, was admitted to the bar, and secured a large and lucrative practice. In an obituary in a local newspaper it was stated of him that "he was unselfish in his profession and served many poor gratuitously." He was a delegate to the convention that ratified the Federal Constitution on the part of Pennsylvania. He was wounded

in a duel with Dr. Jacob Rieger on May 11th, 1789, and died five days later. His funeral service was attended by an unusually large concourse of citizens. On his tombstone is this inscription:

Here lies the Body of
Stephen Chambers, Esquire,
Counsellor at Law,
Who departed this Life
On the 16th day of May,
1789,
Aged 36 years.

You will note that there is nothing in this brief epitaph (which is becoming indistinct) to indicate that he was an officer in the Revolutionary War, or that he was the first Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 43, F. & A. M.

Recently, I obtained permission from the rector and wardens of St. James's church to have the inscription on the Chambers stone recut, and to have the following statements added:

An Officer in the Revolutionary War.
First Lieutenant, 12th Pennsylvania, 1776.
Captain, 1777.
Retired, 1778.

First Worshipful Master
of
Lodge No. 43, F. & A. M.
Lancaster,
1785.

The cost of recutting the inscription on the stone, and supplying the additional information, will be about fifty dollars. I am wondering whether the officers and members of Lodge No. 43 will generously assist in this undertaking by contributing that amount in order to have the work done? It does not seem right that I, personally, should bear this expense, especially since I am not related to Mr. Chambers. So far as I am able to ascertain, there are no descendants of his in Lancaster. I am appealing to the officers and members of your lodge, in order that the memory of your honored first Worshipful Master may be suitably perpetuated.

Fraternally yours,

William Frederic Worner,

Member of Lamberton Lodge No. 476, F. & A. M.
Librarian of The Lancaster County Historical Society.

At a stated meeting of the lodge on Wednesday evening, November 12th, 1930, the letter was read to the members present. The matter was referred to the trustees, who were authorized to use their judgment. A conference followed between Dr. George R. Rohrer, a trustee of the lodge, and the writer, a few days later, which resulted in the employment of W. Y. Haldy, the well-known marble mason, to execute the work on the fine old table stone covering the remains of Captain Chambers, in accordance with the suggestions contained in the letter of November 7th, 1930. The cost was generously borne by the lodge. The full inscription, as it now appears on the stone, is as follows:

Here lies the Body of
Stephen Chambers, Esquire,
Counsellor at Law,
Who departed this Life
On the 16th Day of May,
1789.
Aged 36 Years.

An Officer in the Revolutionary War.
First Lieutenant, 12th Pennsylvania, 1776.
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