

The
Ohio Masonic Historical Society
and the John Snow Homestead

By

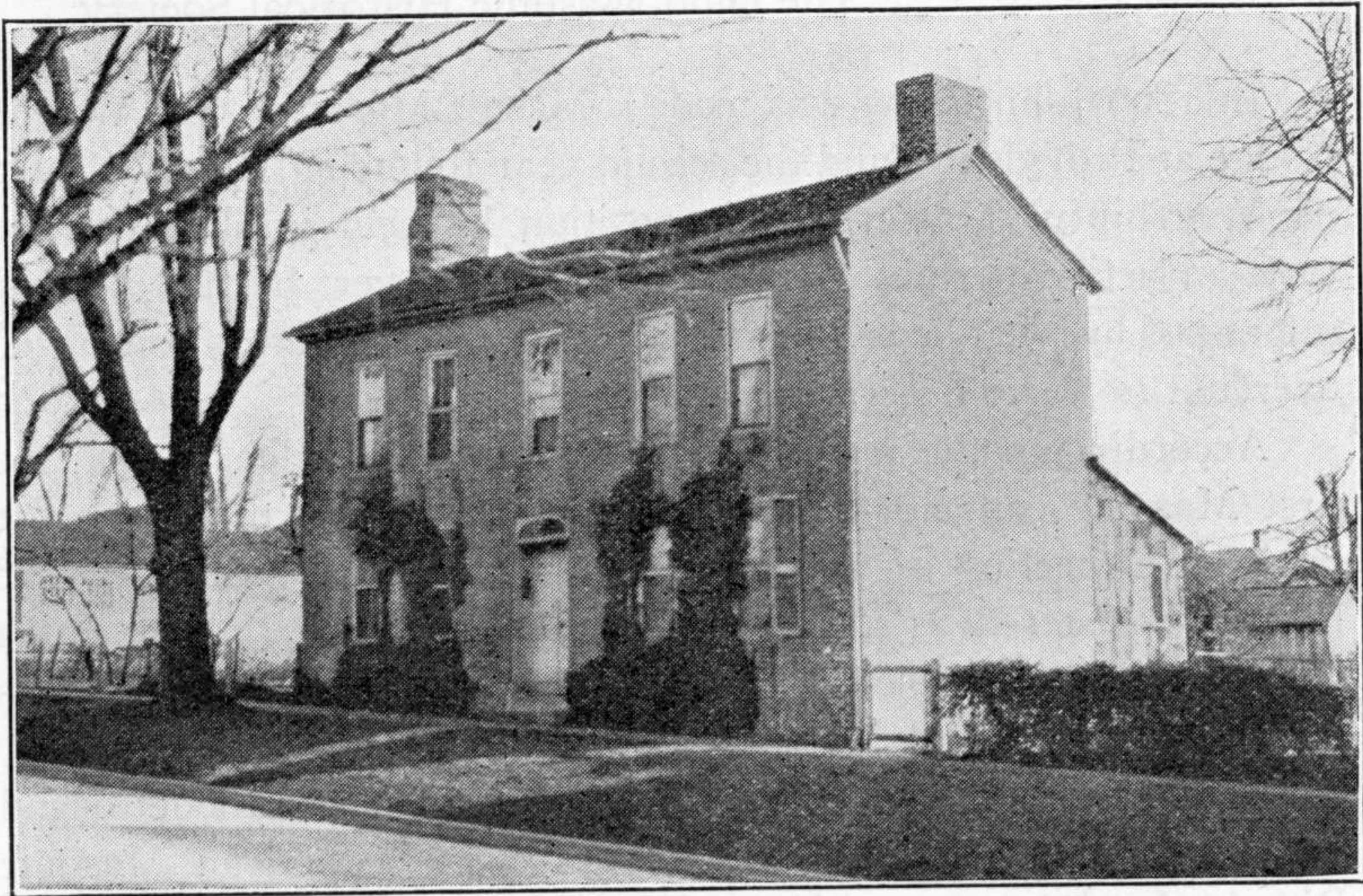
CHARLES S. PLUMB, 33°

President, The Ohio Masonic Historical Society

UNIVERSITY LODGE No. 631 F. A. M.
YORK TEMPLE
COLUMBUS, OHIO



Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio
1935



JOHN SNOW HOMESTEAD

The Ohio Masonic Historical Society and the John Snow Homestead

BY CHARLES S. PLUMB, 33°

President, The Ohio Masonic Historical Society

At some time late in 1817, nearly 120 years ago, a man named John Snow arrived at Worthington, Ohio. He had come from Providence, Rhode Island, where he was born on February 25, 1780. When fourteen years of age he was placed in service with a jewelry manufacturer named Dodge in Providence, with whom he was employed for seven years. Having then attained his majority, he changed his residence to Newport, to engage in the same business. His health did not prove as he desired, so he moved back to Providence and entered a mercantile career. In 1802 he married Mary Thurston, a grandniece of the first Colonial Governor of Rhode Island, a woman who was a devoted companion through many years, outliving him some years.

In 1809 John Snow was made a Master Mason in Mt. Vernon Lodge at Providence, and the second year following he was elected its Worshipful Master. This position he held until 1817, and took an active part in Lodge affairs. However, he had become impressed by what he had heard of the new West, and so journeyed overland to make a personal inspection.

According to the records of New England Lodge, No. 4, the first Masonic contacts made by Bro. Snow in Worthington were made at a meeting of this Lodge on September 29, 1817, where he was registered as a visiting Brother. At this time he must have made a favorable impression because not long after he was made the Worshipful Master.

Thomas Smith Webb, who was also born in Rhode Island and who might be called the father of the American Masonic Ritual, also became a citizen of Worthington and a member of New England Lodge. A warm friendship and business relations thence occurred between Snow and Webb, and this involved various degrees of Freemasonry, including the highest known at that time.

Bro. John Snow became one of the most noted Masons in the history of Ohio, and, in fact, had a national reputation in the field of Freemasonry. Note the various honors thrust upon him during his life at Worthington. He was Master of New England Lodge from 1818 until 1822, declining re-election at this latter date. Later, however, he was in 1827 persuaded to be re-elected, so that he continued to act as Worshipful Master until 1831.

It is interesting to note that in 1819 he was elected Grand Master and Grand Lecturer of the Grand Lodge. Quoting from the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge for 1853: "In this two-fold character he encountered the laborious enterprise of visiting every Lodge within the State, inspecting their records, correcting irregularities, and reducing their work and lectures to a system of harmony and order. Many among the present fathers in the Fraternity, as well in this as in other States, date their first lessons in the mystic art to these teachings of our lamented Bro. Snow; and they recur with fond recollections, as tales of a first love." M.:W.:Bro. John Snow continued to act as Grand Master until

1823, when he declined re-election. However, in 1829 he was called upon to again serve another year as Grand Master.

The members of Horeb Chapter, No. 3, elected Companion John Snow their High Priest on November 17, 1818, which position he held until December, 1822, when he declined re-election. Nevertheless, in November, 1827, he was again elected High Priest, a position he continued to hold for three years longer.

We now come to an especially important item in the life of this illustrious Mason. Soon after arriving at Worthington, he purchased a property on what is now New England Avenue, W., that was in process of construction, a brick, two-story building, containing three rooms on the first floor and three on the second. Bro. Snow completed this home of his sometime late in 1817 or early in 1818.

We here enter a new phase of the Masonic career of John Snow. While living in Providence, he had been created a Knight Templar in St. John's Encampment. "This accounts for Sir John Snow receiving, on March 14, 1818, from M. E. Thomas Smith Webb, Deputy General Grand Master of the General Grand Encampment of the United States, a Dispensation authorizing him to assemble together at Worthington, Ohio, a sufficient and legal number of Knights Templar, Knights of Malta, and Red Cross, and open a Council and Encampment in said town, and therein confer said orders upon such tried and worthy Companions of the Royal Arch as may make application for the same."

Passing over some of the details relative to this subject, Sir Knights Thomas S. Webb, John Snow, and Frederick A. Curtis were authorized to organize a Council of the Red Cross and confer that Order upon a number of applicants.

On March 20, 1818, an Encampment of Knights Templar was opened and sundry applicants admitted to that Order. "On January 27, 1820, the General Grand Encampment of the United States (Sir DeWitt Clinton, presiding) granted to Sir John Snow and his associates a Charter, 'to form, open, and hold an Encampment of the Valiant and Magnanimous Orders of Red Cross, Knights Templar, and Knights of Malta or Order of St. John of Jerusalem, by the name, style, and title of Mt. Vernon Encamp-

ment; and declaring the rank and precedence of said Encampment to be from the sixth of June, 1818, and appointing Sir John Snow first Commander; Sir Rev. Roger Searle, first Captain General, and Sir Joseph S. Hughs, Prelate.' ”

Thus came into birth Mt. Vernon Encampment, No. 1, later in 1844 to be known as Mt. Vernon Commandery, No. 1, with the first home of an Encampment west of the Allegheny Mountains in John Snow's home in Worthington. Sir Knight John Snow was re-elected Commander each year until 1830, when, due to the infirmities of age, he declined further re-election.

Sir John Snow as a Representative from Rhode Island assisted in organizing a General Grand Encampment Knights Templar of the United States in 1816 at New York City, when he was elected General Grand Standard Bearer, and in 1819 was elected General Grand Generalissimo. This same year he was also elected General Grand King of the General Grand Chapter, and in 1826 became General Grand Deputy High Priest. He was the Acting General Grand High Priest in 1826 and again in 1829. In 1828 he was elected President of the Ohio Council of Anointed High Priests at time of organization. His degrees of Royal and Select Master were conferred by Sir Knight Jeremy Cross, another eminent Masonic educator in the early days of the nineteenth century.

John Snow died on May 16, 1852, at Worthington, and was buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery adjoining this town. Here the Grand Lodge erected a substantial monument to his memory.

The residence so long the home of John Snow is located one half square west of the celebrated old Masonic Temple in Worthington, which was constructed by Bro. Snow and made a gift by him as a home for New England Lodge, No. 4. The Snow house occupies a plot of land with 155 feet frontage, and is in sound condition considering its age.

It has been assumed by many that the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons was created in this house, but this is an error for the first volume of the Proceedings of the Grand Chapter specifies this took place in 1816 in the Academy on High Street. Although Horeb Chapter, No. 3, was organized in 1816, prior to the construction of the Snow home, it is quite likely that the Chapter met

there from time to time, though no special evidence seems available up to this time on this subject.

The Snow homestead has been in the possession of this family since its construction. It is at present occupied by Miss Eva Snow, the great-granddaughter of John. Here she was born, and this has been her home now for nearly seventy years. She is unmarried, a woman of pleasing personality, and shows much interest in this old home and its future.

At the time of the Centennial of Mt. Vernon Commandery, No. 1, at Worthington, Bro. Ralph R. Rickly, of Columbus, visited Miss Snow and brought up the question of the Masons of Ohio securing the Snow home as a memorial to her distinguished great-grandfather. On this occasion, Miss Snow stated that she would be glad to present this house to the Masons of Ohio if they would assume her future support and care during her life and relieve her of taxes, repairs, and upkeep on the property. This proposition interested Bro. Rickly and no doubt he would have carried the matter further but for his untimely death.

From time to time the purpose of securing the Snow house as a memorial has come before a number of Masons in Franklin County. Now for some years Bro. Roscoe R. Walcutt, P. G. H. P. Bros. Burleigh Cartmell, Eli O. Ackerman, J. E. Frahm, and the writer have had a special interest in this property and its possible future. Miss Snow agreed to make good the proposition she had advanced to Bro. Rickly, but matters did not crystallize. An effort was made to secure consideration by the Grand Chapter, and a Committee was appointed with this in view, but this organization accomplished nothing tangible. Finally, in 1934, Bro. Roscoe R. Walcutt was elected Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons, who appointed a Committee of five to consider the situation and report to him in 1935, prior to the annual session of this Grand Body. In his instructions to the Committee he specified "that no financial obligation should be considered for any Grand Masonic Body to assume." This Committee consisted of Bros. J. E. Frahm, C. S. Plumb (Chairman), F. E. Reynolds, Robt. H. Pausch, all of Columbus, and W. Stewart Sedgwick, of Newark.

Third, the purposes for which said corporation is formed are: Promoting, disseminating, and encouraging knowledge and study of Masonic history, by establishing, preserving, and maintaining permanent memorials and museums, libraries, historic centers, and the publication of such Masonic literature as conditions may warrant or justify; to acquire by purchase, lease, devise, bequest, or otherwise, any real or personal property suitable for said purpose or purposes, and the doing of all things necessary or incidental thereto.

Fourth, the following persons shall serve said corporation as Trustees until the first annual meeting, or other meeting called to elect Trustees:

Charles S. Plumb, 1980 Indianola Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

Russell E. Eicher, Worthington, Ohio.

Allen W. Williams, 50 W. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio.

Carl C. Braun, 3849 Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, Ohio.

J. E. Pelton, 94 E. Tulane Rd., Columbus, Ohio.

Everitt Antrim, R. R. 2, Worthington, Ohio.

Fifth, membership in said corporation is subject to the following:

"Free Masons who shall qualify as provided in the Code of Regulations shall be eligible for membership.

Sixth, a Board of Trustees, to consist of nine members, shall be elected for the term prescribed in the Code of Regulations. Each Grand Masonic Body of the State of Ohio, if so desired, may have an official representative on this Board of Trustees, whose term of office shall expire with the expiration of his term as an official of said Grand Body.

"The Board of Trustees shall have the control and management of the business, funds, and property of the Society, subject only to the action of the members in meeting assembled. It may adopt by-laws not inconsistent with the articles and the Code of Regulations adopted by the Society, promulgate and enforce rules governing the property and affairs of the Society. The election of Trustees shall be held at the annual meeting of the members or at a special meeting called for the purpose. All Trustees must be members of this Society."

Miss Snow has furnished the Ohio Masonic Historical Society with a deed to the property, but with proviso that as compensation she was to receive \$40 a month for life, and was also to be provided the full and complete use of the premises as a residence. The Society also agreed to establish and maintain upon the premises an historical Masonic center in honor of John Snow, her great-grandfather, and employ her as custodian with residence in

the house. Should the terms of settlement in the deed be violated by the Society, the property then should revert to the original possessor or her successors.

By the present arrangement, if each subscriber to this plan pays five dollars a year, one thousand dollars annually should result for the treasury. However, possibly we shall fall short of this sum due to nonpayments. It is to be noted, however, that a number of Subordinate Bodies have contributed small sums, without suggestion, to this fund, simply as a gift in behalf of a worthy movement. Other Bodies have indicated a similar purpose. It is also hoped that some interested assistance may be offered by Grand Masonic Bodies in the State of Ohio. Such action was taken by the Grand Chapter R. A. M. at its annual 1935 session. Immediate plans do not call for an expenditure of over \$1,000 to care for current expenses and taxes. This first year of the Society will involve expenses for repairs, equipment, taxes, and the bills of Miss Snow, which may be cared for in due season. However, the Grand Lodge of Ohio with 180,000 members, or Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons with 50,000 members, by a per capita gift of one cent a member, would provide a most generous income for this notable Masonic Memorial. The Board of Trustees also feel that occasions may arise when some Brother of comfortable finances may feel a desire to make a worth-while financial gift to promote the work. It is also proposed to place a small box on a table in the house, in the cover of which will be a slot through which a coin may be dropped by a Brother in recognition of the merits of the cause.

The Snow Homestead will be maintained in its original colonial form. An appropriate card will be placed on the front of the house, indicating its nature. The inside will present features of historic interest to visitors. There are two beautiful old sofas, two small wooden stools, a Benjamin Franklin stove, a large and beautiful silver tankard, and a punch bowl, each of which were originally owned by John Snow. Interesting items are to be framed and placed on the walls at an early date, including a portrait of Bro. Snow. This historic memorial to one of the greatest Masons in the history of Ohio should become a shrine to which the Masons of this great State may pay due reverence.