

Charles C. Dame Lodge

So, when did it all start for 'Charles C. Dame Lodge'? The history as told by George Perry who was a blacksmith in the town of Byfield tells of truly destitute man coming to the area of Georgetown looking for lodging at a local inn. He was recognized as a Freemason and received as such. Shortly thereafter he became very ill suffering from the smallpox infection. He received care from the local masons. This occurred in the late 18th century.

Let us not forget that at this time there was tremendous Anti-Masonic feelings in the country . . . these feelings ran all the way to the United States Congress. The political landscape viewed Freemasonry very 'unfavorably' largely due to the "William Morgan Affair" in New York where Masons were accused of kidnap and murder. Still, during the Civil War and shortly after its end, there were talks beginning about the possibilities of having a lodge in Georgetown.

Georgetown had over 200 of its men serving in the Union Army, More than 50 died in the war and many others died in the new few years as a direct result of the war. With the 'shoe industry' booming and other supporting industries surrounding it, Georgetown started to thrive. No doubt that with the chartering of Saggahew Lodge in 1866 the discussions turned into plans. The plan to petition Grand Lodge for dispensation to hold degrees in Georgetown were hindered due to lack of a suitable meeting place. But then the Town Hall, where Central School is now, was obtained as a meeting place and a dispensation was granted on April 15th of 1867 to work degrees. Meetings continued here until a new building could be made ready.

The Lodge obviously needed a name, but what name? There was a very prominent Mason and citizen of Newburyport serving as Grand Master at the time. His name was Charles C. Dame. He was born on June 5th 1819 in Kittery Point, District of Maine, Commonwealth of MA. He began his Masonic life in 1857 by joining Revere Lodge in Boston. He was a teacher and became the head of the English Department of Chancy High School in Boston. At this same time, he studied Law and was admitted to the Bar in 1859. He then returned back to Newburyport and began a successful career as a lawyer. At the end of the Civil War, he as appointed Collector of the Internal Revenue by President (and Brother) Andrew Johnson and reappointed by the four following presidents.

His Masonic accomplishments and affiliations were numerous including both the York and Scottish Rites. He was an Active 33rd degree mason in the Scottish Rite, his 33rd degree patent is on display in the dining hall. He was installed as Grand Master in 1865, 1866, and 1867. While he was Grand Master, the Grand Lodge Building at the corner of Boylston and Tremont Streets in Boston was erected. To say he was an active and influential Mason would be an understatement!

In September of 1867, the newly build lodge rooms in Georgetown were ready for use. Charles C. Dame himself was in attendance at the first meeting and presented the officer jewels to the lodge. They too are on display in the dining room. The lodge and hall were consecrated on Dec 26th 1867 in Masonic Tradition by the Grand Lodge officers presided over by the Grand Master . . . Charles C. Dame himself.

He continued to be a great supporter of the lodge attending many of the lodge meetings and activities in the following years. And this was just the beginning of the lodge in Georgetown.

