

Who we are

The St. Giles and St. George's Bloomsbury Volunteers were established at the beginning of the 19th. Century and are recorded as on parade 600 strong at a review in Hyde Park in 1803.

"The Bloomsbury Rifles" were formed in 1859 as the 37th Middlesex (St Giles and St George's Bloomsbury) Rifle Volunteer Corps. In 1880 they became 19th Middlesex (St Giles and St George's Bloomsbury) Rifle Volunteer Corps and in 1881 they were designated a Volunteer battalion of The Rifle Brigade. The Regiments most famous member was Private Alfred Henry Hook of the defence of Rorke's Drift fame, receiving the VC whilst still at Rorke's Drift. He served the Regiment for 20 years as a volunteer instructor.

In February 1890 Lt. Col. Smith-Richards, the Commanding Officer of the 19th. Middlesex Rifles Volunteers (The Bloomsbury Rifles), decided to form a Masonic Lodge, meeting at Chenies Street and a petition was sponsored by the Victoria Rifles No.822

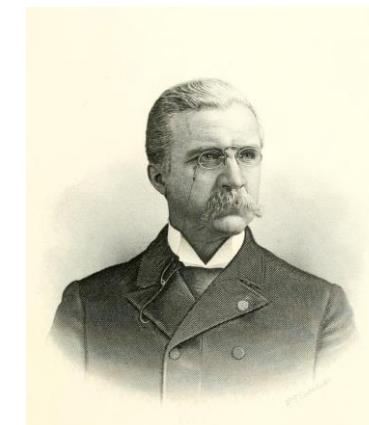
Originally the Lodge required its Members to be taken from the ranks of the Regiment, but today this requirement no longer stands and Members come from all walks of life. However, many of the traditions remain including a toast to "The Regiment" during the festive boards.

In 1926 the Lodge sponsored the Petition for the formation of the "Bond of Friendship Lodge" No.4853 and several members of the Bloomsbury Rifles Lodge occupied the Master's Chair in the next few years. The Lodge similarly sponsored the Petition for the formation of the "Seven Stars Lodge" No.5892 in 1943. Both of these Lodges are still very active.



Bloomsbury Rifles Lodge
No. 2362
bloomsburyrifles@icloud.com

1890 - Our First Visitor



BLOOMSBURY RIFLES LODGE
No 2362

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Banner Dedication.

The Banner which adorns almost every English Constitution Lodge and Chapter today became popular during the middle to second half of the 18th Century, originating from a simple means of identification dating back thousands of years. An easily recognized symbol was used as a rallying point in time of battle or to identify the location of the group within the camp. The Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all fought under their respective banners and even today, the Colours so revered by every army battalion are items of great pride and lifelong honour.



So, as in the past, we range under our respective banners .

Consecration of our Lodge

During an official visit to London, Most Worshipful Bro. John W Vrooman, Grand Master of New York, accompanied by Chairman of the Trustees and Chief Commissioner of Appeals, was received and welcomed by the Consecrating Grand Lodge Officers.

The minutes of the first ever meeting, 9th. July 1890, record the following: "The W.M. then rose and said a most pleasing task was now before him and nothing could give him more satisfaction than to propose as the first act of the Bloomsbury Rifles Lodge that they should elect as Honorary Members the G.M. of New York (recorded in the minute book as Bro. John Vrooman) and the two officers who accompanied him, this having been unanimously carried the W.M. addressed the G.M. of New York and said he had the greatest possible pleasure in welcoming him as the first elected member of the Lodge."



Unfortunately it appears that in October 1894 the Founders Jewel presented to MW Bro. Vrooman was destroyed in a fire, in writing to the Lodge he requested to obtain a replacement at his own costs, the Lodge arranged for a replacement to be sent out along with the best wishes of the Lodge for his personal safety.

Unfortunately MW Bro. Vrooman was never able to visit again, but on his return to New York reported in the New York Times of his visit and his joy of being admitted as an Honorary Member of Bloomsbury Rifles.

On the 5th August 1884 the Freemason Edward M.L. Ehlers, Grand Secretary and a member of the Continental Lodge 287, read the list of items to be included in the copper box within the cornerstone. The traditional Masonic ceremony was observed. The cornerstone being found square, level and plumb, the Grand Master applied the mortar and had the stone lowered into place. He then struck the stone three times, and declared it duly laid. Then the elements of "consecration" were presented, corn, wine, and oil.

The "Most Worshipful" Grand Master then spoke a few words. He posed the question: "Why call upon the Masonic Fraternity to lay the cornerstone of such a structure as is here to be erected?"

His answer was: "No institution has done more to promote liberty and to free men from the trammels and chains of ignorance and tyranny than has Freemasonry."

Richard M. Hunt, principal architect of the pedestal, presented the Working Tools to M. W. William A. Brodie, Grand Master, who in turn distributed them to the Grand Lodge officers: R. W. Frank R. Lawrence, Deputy Grand Master; R. W. John W. Vrooman, Senior Grand Warden; and R. W. James Ten Eyck, Junior Grand Warden.

By traditional ceremony, the cornerstone was then tested and being found, square, level and plumb, the Deputy Grand Master completed the work by applying the mortar and by having the stone lowered firmly into place. The Grand Master then struck three blows with the gavel and declared the stone duly laid. The elements of consecration, corn, wine and oil, were next presented by R. W. Brothers Lawrence, Vrooman and Ten Eyck.

John W. Vrooman was our first guest and first elected Member of the Lodge

Introduction



What has our Lodge and the Statue of Liberty got in Common?

"The Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World" was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the United States and is recognized as a universal symbol of freedom and democracy.

This colossus in New York's harbor was conceived by Freemasons, financed by Freemasons, built by Freemasons, and installed by Freemasons in a Freemasonic ceremony. The maker of the statue was Freemason Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi. Structural framework was provided by Freemason Gustave Eiffel, The chairman of the American committee to receive the statue contacted the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York. It had been a tradition in America to have the cornerstone of major public and private buildings and monuments "consecrated" with full Masonic rites, ever since Freemason George Washington, in 1793, had personally laid the cornerstone of the Capitol.

History of John W Vrooman.

He was born on March 28, 1844, in German Flatts, Herkimer County, New York, the son of Nicholas Vrooman and Christina (Wright) Vrooman. He attended Little Falls Academy from 1857 to 1859, and then taught school in the countryside. Then he studied law in the office of Judge Ezra Graves, but enlisted in the Union Navy during the American Civil War. Afterwards he resumed the study of law, and was admitted to the bar. From 1868 to 1876, he was Clerk of the Herkimer County Surrogate.

He was Deputy Clerk of the New York State Assembly in 1877. He was Clerk of the New York State Senate from 1878 to 1887, officiating in the 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th and 110th New York State Legislatures. Afterwards he returned to Herkimer and engaged in banking as Vice President and General Manager of the Herkimer Bank.

He was a member of the New York Republican State Committee from 1877 to 1884, and Secretary of the State Committee from 1880 to 1888. He was Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of New York State from 1889 to 1890., President of the Herkimer Historical Society and author of The story of the Typewriter 1873-1923

He was Senior Grand Warden of Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York from 1883-1885 and was Deputy Grand Master from 1885-1888 and became Grand Master 1889-1990

He died on November 24, 1929, in Herkimer, New York.



Laying the corner stone of the Statue of Liberty.

