

HISTORY OF
ROYAL ARCH MASONS
OF
THOMASVILLE, GEORGIA

Thomasville Chapter No. 44 Royal Arch Masons was granted a Charter on May 1, 1857 to the following petitioners: A. H. Hansell, Milton C. Smith, Francis H. Remington, Thomas J. Bottoms, D. S. Brandon, Peter E. Love, Ansel Dekle, R. R. Evans, Jared Everitt and James T. Hayes. These Masons were “pillars of the community” and some were from families of the earliest settlers in Thomasville. For example, Judge A. H. Hansell was Solicitor General at the time of the Civil War; David S. Brandon was a physician and son-in-law of Thomas Jones who founded the famous Greenwood Plantation; Peter Love was a long-time attorney and served as the U. S. Congressman from the 1st Congressional District; Francis (Frank) Remington was a successful merchant whose building still stands at the Corner of Remington Ave. and Broad Street downtown.

The first officers were: Augustin H. Hansell – High Priest; Milton C. Smith – King; Francis H. Remington – Scribe. The fee for this degree was set at \$10.00 and dues were \$1.00 annually.

The Civil War disrupted many lives and many Masonic organizations. St. Thomas Lodge No. 49 in Thomasville lost many young masons to the carnage of war and thus Thomasville Chapter No. 44 suffered as well. Accordingly, This Chapter surrendered their Charter was surrendered April 27th, 1876. However, as times slowly improved, the Charter was restored June 20th, 1889 only to be surrendered again sometime between 1891 and 1895. According to a local newspaper article published August 3, 1895..”*Grand High Priest of the State, Wessolowsky, organized Thomasville Chapter No. 44 Royal Arch Masons, here on Tuesday evening. The following officers were elected: A. Patten, HP; L. B. Bouchelle, King; J. H. Davidson, Scribe; J. J. Biggs, Capt.of Host; J. J. Stephens, Principle Sojourner; J. L. Beverly, Royal Arch Captain.*”

It is apparent that problems continued to plague the Chapter for the next 6 years and the Charter was surrendered for the final time on June 12th, 1901.

For nearly 12 years there was no Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Thomasville.

In nearby Boston, Georgia a Chapter had been granted a Charter on April 26th, 1900 and J. M. Rushin Chapter 23 was established. This Chapter was represented at the annual Grand Chapter meeting in April 1903 by Rev. J. M. Rushin, High Priest. He reported that the Chapter had 32 members and had paid \$38.00 to the Grand Chapter for the year. Meetings were held on Friday night before the first Sunday in each month.

Apparently, J. M. Rushin Chapter 23 prospered for several years but according to an article in the Thomasville Daily Times Enterprise on March 20th 1913, the Chapter received special dispensation to move it to Thomasville.....” *J. M. Rushin Chapter No. 23, which was organized and has been operated at Boston for a number of years, is to be moved to Thomasville. This movement is the result of an activity on the part of the younger Masons of the Thomasville Lodge No. 369 who were desirous of having a Chapter here and co-operating with the Boston Chapter decided as the most advantageous move to transfer the chapter to Thomasville with the same name. The first meeting will be held Friday of next week. The chapter was named for Rev. J. M. Rushin, one of the most illustrious and beloved Masons that South Georgia has ever had and it is fitting that it should remain in the same name. The Boston members, numbering about 50, will remain with the Chapter and a number of additions from this city will be made in a short time.*”

We learn more about Rev. J. M. Rushin in the following newspaper article published by the Thomasville Daily Times Enterprise.....



REV. JAMES McCANN RUSHIN

Boston, Georgia

Rev. J. M. Rushin, one of our truly most beloved citizens, has been a resident of the Hub City for a great many years. He has contributed a great deal toward the material advancement as well as the moral and spiritual uplift of the community. A native of Thomas County, born here July 15, 1838, he has known no other place or section as home. Long identified with the higher and nobler interests hereabout, Mr. Rushin has let no opportunity pass whereby he would render a community service or to do a good turn for a weaker brother.

Mr. Rushin is no longer active in the ministry, having retired a great many years ago because of the declining health of his dear helpmate and because of advancing years charged to his account in life. But even at his mature age, 81 years, he is a constant worshipper at the church of his faith and is ever ready to shoulder whatever responsibility it may be necessary for him to shoulder for advancement of the Lord's kingdom. Truly he is a self-made man, with

absolutely no frills or furbelows, plain as an “old shoe” in his everyday walk, always the same in his even tempered, gentleness toward all mankind and is ever ready to encourage someone along the pathway of righteousness. Perhaps there is no one in Boston today, nor among those who have gone before or beyond, who is or was, held in higher esteem than Rev. Mr. Rushin. If there be one person in the known wide world who harbors an unkindly feeling toward him, surely, he does not know it. He not only is greatly loved in this life but his memory, no doubt, will be deeply revered.

Since Rev. Mr. Rushin hasn't many more years on this side of eternity, it perhaps will be of interest in this connection to publish a brief sketch of his life which brings out his long association with and steady progress in Free and Accepted Masonry to which he has given his second-best interest and endeavor from the day he was made a Master Mason.

James McCann Rushin was born in Thomas County, Georgia, July 15, 1838; took in marriage, Miss Julia A. Groover October 20, 1858; united with the Missionary Baptist Church at Grooverville during June 1868; was ordained for the ministry in the year 1872 at Grooverville.

Mr. Rushin served in the Confederate Army from June 1861 until the surrender in 1865, engaging in many desperate conflicts. His connection with Free and Accepted Masonry is noted in the following progress: Was made a Master Mason in October 1859 at Thomasville; a Royal Arch Mason in 1872 at Thomasville; a Royal and Select Mason in 1885 at Macon; a Knight Templar (date not remembered) at Thomasville; an Eighteen Degree Scottish Rite Mason in 1885 at Macon; a Thirty Second Degree Mason (date not remembered) at Savannah; a Shriner (date not remembered) at Valdosta.

Mr. Rushin is a Past Master, Past High Priest, Past Thrice Illustrious Master, Past Eminent Commander and has held the following Grand Lodge offices: Grand Junior Warden, Grand Senior Warden, Grand Deputy Master. He is now Grand Treasurer, which office he has held continuously for 21 years.

This article was published in 1919 in the Thomasville Daily Times Enterprise.

J. M. Rushin Chapter No. 23 has continuously operated for more than 121 years and today we have 38 members and meet quarterly on the first Thursday of February, May, August and November at 7:00 pm at Thomasville Lodge No. 369, located at 307 N. Pinetree Blvd., Thomasville.