

History of the George Washington Masonic Stamp Club: Founded 1956

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The George Washington Masonic Stamp Club was formally organized in the fall of 1956 as The George Washington Chapter No. 1 of the Masonic Stamp Club of New York. The membership of the Chapter approved a new constitution and by-laws in 1960 which recognized their independence due to administrative problems. As a result the George Washington Masonic Stamp Club (GWMSC) was constituted as a separate entity. Both the George Washington Masonic Stamp Club and the Masonic Stamp Club of New York (MSCNY) still exist separately, and have many dual members.

In its third year, a 1959 club History stated: “The spiritual inspiration which man derives from knowledge of Masonry and the material pleasure which he finds in philately {stamp collecting}, open limitless vistas to him. It was with this thought in mind that the founders proceeded to organize a purely social group where Masons can come together to enjoy their favorite hobby and study Masonry through philately. As long as the Chapter continues to serve this purpose, it will prosper.”

In the beginning, the George Washington Masonic Stamp Club membership consisted mainly of Master Masons from the Greater Washington, DC Area – the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland. However, the influence of members gradually spread into Pennsylvania and adjoining states. Total club membership in 2008 is over 400 Master Masons from most Grand Lodge jurisdictions in the Untied States, several jurisdictions in Canada, and various other countries. Many are also dual or plural members of other Masonic stamp clubs.

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s the GWMSC met nine time per year in various lodges, Masonic buildings, and historical structures from as far South as Fredericksburg, Virginia, to as far North as York and Lancaster, PA, Frederick, MD, and Union Bridge, MD. While Annual February meetings were always held at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial for the conferral of the Master of Philately, meetings in other months included various historic Masonic Lodges (Fredericksburg No. 4 on the 225th Anniversary of Washington being made a Freemason in 1977), and even such places as a Strasburg (PA) Railroad car, the Baltimore Streetcar Museum, and the House of the Temple (DC) library.

While some Past Grand Masters of various jurisdictions have been GWMSC members, along with other high ranking Masonic officials, the most active of these was MWPGM Edward Cann of Fredericksburg, VA, who was the 1932 Master of Washington’s Mother Lodge (in Washington’s 200th Birthday Year), the 1952 Mayor of Fredericksburg (in the 200th Anniversary year of Washington’s being made a Freemason), and the 1982 Master of Edward H. Cann Daylight Lodge,

named in his honor (during Washington's 250th Birthday Year). MW Lloyd Jefferson was pictured in the Fredericksburg newspaper, The Free Lance Star, November 5, 1982, with MWPGM Cann and a special GWMSC pictorial postmark used to commemorate the 230th anniversary of Washington being made a Freemason.

The Masonic Stamp Club of New York specializes in world-wide stamp collecting of Masonic significance, and issues a quarterly Masonic Philatelist magazine (\$15 annual dues). The George Washington Masonic Stamp Club, on the other hand, has no publication –The GWMSC Life Membership fee (no dues) at this writing is \$20/US. Communications are via email or through its web site. The GWMSC specializes in United States First Day of Issue covers of Masonic significance, in George Washington Birthday and Masonic event covers. Cachets, or covers, are envelopes imprinted by the GWMSC with the theme of the stamp being issued and the special First Day of Issue postmark or a special pictorial postmark in the case of its Washington Birthday covers. The numbers per year and purchase prices vary. The GWMSC Annual Meeting is held on the Sunday after George Washington's Birthday each February at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Building in Alexandria, Virginia. Members who have not received the Master of Philately may have it conferred at that meeting by the remaining officers and members in attendance, provided a reservation is made in advance. The only other regular club meeting is now held at the Baltimore Philatelic Exposition in Hunt Valley, MD, on the Saturday afternoon before Labor Day.

1957: First Washington Birthday Cover, 02-22-1957

The club issued its first George Washington Birthday Cover on 22 February 1957, and has continued the practice annually. The club has issued hundreds of Washington Birthday, First Day of Issue, Special Event and Meeting covers since 1957. Earlier covers were naturally issued in limited quantities, and as the membership grew over the years, it became quite a challenge to acquire a complete collection of the club

Herman J. Lichty Memorial Fund The Herman J. Lichty Memorial Fund honors GWMSC Co-founder, Past President, Secretary Emeritus, long-time cachet maker, and distinguished Freemason Herman J. Lichty through annual donations to worthy Masonic endeavors.

Herman printed many of the club covers, and other materials, for decades on a small printing press in his basement, after retiring from the Washington Star. He traveled extensively in Freemasonry throughout the world, and was one of three GWMSC members who were high ranking Royal Arch officers of the Grand Commandry of the District of Columbia

who with others conferred the Royal Arch degree upon President Gerald Ford at site in the Oval Office of the White House.

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