

Area cornerstones hold some surprises

In 1825, the Marquis de Lafayette returned to America. The Revolutionary War hero was cheered wherever he went. In Camden, he used a silver trowel made of Mexican silver

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NEARBY HISTORY

coins to seal the cornerstone of a monument dedicated to another great foreign benefactor, Gen. Baron DeKalb, who died in the Battle of Camden.

The silver trowel became a treasured possession of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina. Lafayette was a Mason, and the Masonic rituals had been performed at the laying of the DeKalb monument.

The Lafayette Trowel, as it is known, was used at the dedication on May 12, 1894, of the Main Building (Tillman) of "The Winthrop Normal and Industrial College of South Carolina."

Before a crowd estimated at 12,000, Grand Master Stiles

Dendy tested the cornerstone with square and level. On top of the stone he poured "The corn of nourishment, the wine of refreshment, the oil of joy."

The Winthrop student body came up from Columbia to participate in the ceremony. Also present was the Clemson College corps of cadets.

One of the speakers noted that the college had already trained 157 teachers and that 32 more were to graduate in a few weeks. All speakers noted that the state had built South Carolina College (USC) for men in 1801 and later had built the Citadel before recognizing the need to educate the state's women.

During the speeches, Masonic leaders, called Grand Stewards, collected money for the needy workmen. The money was placed on the stone until the dedication ceremony began.

Among the articles deposited in a specially constructed copper box was a photograph of the 3-member commission that engineered the establishment of the college three years earlier: David Bancroft Johnson, who was to be president for 42 years,

and teachers Hannah Hemphill and Mary Yeargin (Yeargin drowned before the dedication took place).

There were many papers, including a copy of the legislative act to establish the college, the report of the Peabody Board (which furnished money to start the school), a history of the college and "First Report of the Dispensary." (The dispensary system, which controlled the manufacture and distribution of all alcoholic beverages in the state, was the brain-child of Gov. Benjamin Tillman. Tillman was the chairman of the board of trustees and master of ceremonies of the cornerstone dedication program.)

Other items placed in the cornerstone were a map of Rock Hill, a \$500 Confederate bill and some U. S. coins. An oddity was a piece of brick that came from a house that was bombarded in the Revolutionary battle of Eutaw Springs.

The contents of cornerstones vary a great deal. A good example is the cornerstone of a statue standing in front of the Lancaster County Courthouse.

On Feb. 15, 1909, the Lafayette Trowel was used at the Lancaster dedication of the monument to Confederate soldiers that stands in front of the Courthouse. Some of the articles in the monument's cornerstone are a copy of the Ordinance of Secession, the rolls of all the Lancaster Civil War companies, Confederate money, miniature Confederate flags, copies of war songs and letters written home by soldiers in the field. There were pictures of Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet, Robert E. Lee, the Lancaster Courthouse, the jail, graded school buildings and Main Street.

There was also a paper on the fidelity of slaves during the war, Palmetto buttons from uniforms and a piece of homespun that was woven during the war.

The Confederate Veteran, a magazine, was placed inside, along with copies of the Lancaster News, the Kershaw Era and a Lancaster Ledger printed during the Civil War.

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