

The San Diego Herald

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Masonic Celebration

San Diego Lodge U.D. celebrated the anniversary of the nativity of St. John the Baptist – their Patron Saint – in a spirited and appropriate manner, on the 24th; and as this was the first demonstration of the kind ever made in this region, it attracted no little attention from the native population. Although they were prohibited by the *Padre* from witnessing the ceremonies, many of them satisfied their curiosity by skulking round corners, and peeping out of windows and half closed doors.

There could not have been a more beautiful day for a Masonic Festival than Thursday last, and all who mingled in the proceeding, must have been highly gratified with the manner in which the committee matured and developed the various departments connected with the getting up of the celebration.

When it is considered that there are so many towns along the six hundred miles of coast between this point and San Francisco – some of them far exceeding this in point of population – and that San Diego can boast of having erected the first and, at present the only Lodge in Southern California, we think our brethren have reason to be proud of the fact, and of the occasion which called them together.

As many of our readers may not be familiar with the origins and associations of the Festival of SAINT JOHN, we insert the following brief narrative, which may be interesting to other than members of the craft.

ST. JOHN the Baptist – the harbinger of the blessed Redeemer, and the teacher of his Gospel – became an early friend and Patron of the Order of Free Masons. His devotion to its principles and his many virtues, secured for him the esteem and veneration of the early Christian Masons, and caused his name to be handed down as a Patron Saint of the Order. The following is one of the old Masonic traditions, which may be interesting to our readers:

“From the building of the first Temple at Jerusalem to the Babylonish captivity, Free Mason’s Lodges were dedicated to King Solomon; from thence to the coming of the Messiah, they were dedicated to Zerubbabel, the builder of the second Temple; and from that time to the final destruction of the Temple of Titus,

in the reign of the Emperor Vaspasian, they were dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Subsequently, the Masons deputed seven of their most eminent members to wait upon St. John the Evangelist, who was at that time Bishop of Ephesus, and requested him to take the office of Grand Master. He returned for answer, that though well stricken in years (being then upwards of ninety), yet having been in the early part of his life initiated into Masonry, he would take upon himself that office; he thereby completed by his learning, what the other St. John had completed by his zeal; and thus drew what Free Masons term a 'true Parallel.'”

Since then, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist have been considered Patron Saints of Masonry.

The procession formed at the new Lodge Room, under the direction of Comp. James W. Robinson, Chief Marshall of the day, aided by Bro. George P. Tebbetts, Deputy Marshall.

The following were the officers for the day:

J. Judson Ames, Worshipful Master.

W. T. Conlin, Senior Warden.

W. H. Moon, Junior Warden.

Lewis Rose, Treasurer.

Isaac A. Goldman, Secretary.

G. P. Ogden, Senior Deacon.

Robt Stewart, Junior Deacon.

M. M. Sexton, 1st Steward.

Peter Foa, 2nd Steward.

J. C. Cremony, Tyler.

Rev. Dr. John Reynolds, acting as Chaplain.

When it is remembered that San Diego Lodge commenced work only six months ago, with but seven members – all there then were in the whole county – and that four of the original number are now absent – the fraternity may well be proud of the respectable number that turned out on this occasion.

The different divisions of Masons – the Knights Templars in their black velvet regalia, trimmed with silver; the Royal Arch Masons in scarlet and gold; and the Master Masons in blue – gave a fine variety to the procession, and elicited many a compliment from the dark-eyed *senoritas*, who had the courage to steal glances at the “*heretics*,” through half-closed lattices.

The procession, after marching through the principal streets, halted under the galleries of the “Exchange” and “Colorado House,” to listen to the oration by J. Judson Ames R. A. and K.T., which occupied about half an hour in the delivery. On its merits, it is not of course proper for us to speak.

After a most beautiful and impressive prayer, by Rev. Dr. Reynolds and the reading of the oration, the procession again formed and marched back to the Lodge Room from whence they repaired to the house of Bro. Robinson, where arrangements had been made for the company to dine.

The tables were handsomely and tastefully arranged, and contained every delicacy and substantial article of food that could be found in this or San Francisco market.

After the cloth was removed, another hour was spent in a most agreeable manner, enlivened by speeches, songs and sentiments, when the craft was called from "refreshment of labor," and the brethren repaired to the Lodge Room, when the exercises of the day were closed.

The utmost harmony and good order prevailed throughout the day, and nothing occurred to mar the enjoyment of any one present.

Everyone regretted the absence of our Worshipful Brother Ferrell, Collector of the Port, who was detained at the Playa in anticipation of the arrival of the mail steamer and of Brother Hays, Treasurer of the Lodge, who was confined to his house by sickness.

Thus passed off the first celebration of this Festival that was ever witnessed in this section of country. May its influence be felt among the opponents of the Order, and tend to lessen the prejudice which has so long existed with a certain class, against the Fraternity.