

**THE CARPENTERS' COMPANY OF THE CITY
AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA: INSTITUTED
1724. ORATION OF HENRY ARMITT BROWN,
ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEETING
OF CONGRESS IN CARPENTERS' HALL, AND
PROCEEDINGS IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,
PP. 1-68**

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The Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia: Instituted 1724. Oration of Henry Armitt Brown, on the 100th Anniversary of the Meeting of Congress in Carpenters' Hall, and Proceedings in Connection Therewith, pp. 1-68 by Various

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VARIOUS

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INSTITUTED 1724.

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NOTE.

THE READER will find a repetition of some Facts in the following pages, arising from the articles being compiled at distant periods, and by different hands. It was thought best to republish, without attempting a condensation of them.

INTRODUCTION.

In no nation does the history of its early institutions possess more interest than those of our own country, where, while associating for "the mutual good," the germ of self-government was carefully guarded, and the embryo master-spirits fostered, who contributed finally to mould a nation's destinies.

One of the earliest Associations in Pennsylvania, and perhaps the oldest now existing, is The Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia, maintaining an uninterrupted organization from the year 1724, about forty years after the settlement of the colonial government by William Penn. Among the early associators were many whose names are prominent in colonial history, and whose architectural tastes are impressed on the buildings that yet remain, memorials of that early day.

James Portius, whose name is second on the list of members, designed and executed Penn's mansion, on Second Street, above Walnut; and the lively interest he felt in the association with his fellows, induced him at his decease, in 1734, to bequeath his works on architecture to the Company.

Edmund Wooley, from plans by Robert Smith, (both members,) erected the "State House," on Chestnut between Fifth and Sixth Streets, assisted by the amateur labors of Dr. J. Kearsley.

The primary object of the Association was to "obtain instruction in the science of architecture; to assist such of its members, or the widows and children of members, as should be by accident in need of support;" and the adoption of such a system of measurement and prices "that every one concerned in building may have the value of his money, and every workman the worth of his labor." The difference between the plain, simple buildings erected in the province and those in the "mother country" was such, that it became necessary to examine the "method of measuring," as according to the "system practised in England," the prices were "set on the general and not on the particular parts of the work."

The price of admission (thirty shillings,) led, after the lapse of a few years, to the formation of a similar association, under the title of "The Second Carpenters' Company," but after a few years of separate existence, their efforts for a union with the first Company were successful, and they, according to their own declaration, "joined, and became members of the old Company," in 1752.

To build a hall for the use of the Company was an object of early interest, and the minutes show, by the appointment of committees to fix upon a "proper lot of ground," that it was never lost sight of. A determined effort was made in 1763, but it was not attained until 1768, when the present "lot on Chestnut Street" was purchased, at an annual ground rent of "176 Spanish milled pieces of eight," and conveyed to trustees appointed by the Company. Many schemes for its improvement were suggested. A proposition to unite with the Library Company of Philadelphia in erecting a "building that might accommodate both," was, among others, seriously entertained, but no feasible plan was matured until 1770, when, "as the funds were not sufficient," it was agreed to open a subscription among the members of the Company, in shares of four pounds each, and when the sum subscribed shall amount to "three hundred pounds," the Company, shall "appoint a number to begin to erect a building." Robert Smith prepared "a sketch of a building," and the subscription

paper having been filled in about one week to the required amount, a certificate was given to each subscriber, entitling, "according to the sum advanced," to receive a dividend "as often as rents of the building shall be received by the Company's treasurer."

The fee of admission was raised in 1769 to four pounds. This caused the formation of "The Friendship Carpenters' Company," whose admission fee was "five shillings." It was not long before overtures were made to "their elder brethren" on the "different methods used in measuring and valuing carpenter work." To this it was replied, that the mode of measuring and valuing carpenter work pursued by their elder brethren was "more equitable, expressive, and satisfactory than any method practiced in the city before, and was not inferior to the best method practiced in any city in the King's dominions."

The plan of building being adopted, it was commenced on the "5th day of the second month, 1770." The duties assigned the building committee were "discharged with fidelity," and the building "so far completed that the annual meeting in 1771" was held therein, and during that year the Library Company of Philadelphia rented and removed "their library to the second story of the new building," where it continued until 1782. Though the amount subscribed was more than that proposed, yet it fell short of finishing the Hall; hence the "outside finish of the doors and windows was deferred until the sums advanced by the several members were fully paid."

In 1775 the efforts of the Friendship Carpenters' Company to effect a union were renewed, and a committee of conference appointed; but it was not accomplished until 1785, when the members thereof, on "the payment of four pounds each to the treasurer, and signing the articles of association," were admitted into membership.

The Hall was freely used at the beginning of the Revolution. The committee appointed "at a general meeting of the inhabitants of the city and county" met therein on the second day of the sixth month, 1774, and "as Governor Penn had declined to convene the Assembly," they ap-

pointed three of their number to wait upon the speaker, and request "a positive answer whether he would call the Assembly together or not." They had the use of the Hall during their appointment.

On the 15th following, the "different county committees" met therein to consult the Philadelphia committee on "what was best to propose" to the General Assembly, which was to meet on the 18th inst. Their resolves "declaratory of the sense of the province," and the necessity for a "general congress of delegates from all the colonies," are matters of historical record. The regular quarterly meeting of the Company was not held, in order that these deliberations might not be interfered with.