

Remark that Webb was author and creator of the MEM degree

Our remark that the illustrious Webb was the author and creator of the Most Excellent Master degree, and which we based on statements of writers of wide reputation, he combats, apparently quoting from a recent historical venture, as follows:

"That Webb originated the Most Excellent Master's degree is something that has been assumed by many Masonic writers, and yet the records of Providence Chapter, Providence, R. I., show that when that Chapter was chartered by Washington Chapter in 1793 it received the four degrees of our 'American' system, and that at its first meeting six candidates received the Mark Master's, Past Master's and Most Excellent Master's degrees. Now Webb is recorded as having received the Royal Arch degree in Harmony Chapter of Philadelphia in 1796, and it does not seem probable that he manufactured the Most Excellent degree before he was a Royal Arch Mason. Moreover, the preliminary degrees were given also in Hiram Chapter, Connecticut, in 1791. This Chapter, as well as Providence Chapter, had been chartered by Washington Chapter, and without doubt received those degrees from it."

"The four degrees have little or no coherence, and there is much truth in Comp. Bennett's comment."

If this sort of thing goes on, poor Webb's claim to ritualistic fame will suffer. Perhaps Jonathan Nye will again receive credit as the inventor of the M. E. and his co-worker be once more rated as the "modifier," But no matter in what relation Webb stood to the degree we fancy that the present day pyrotechnics in which it is framed, would occasion him something of a shock. However, somebody invented the degree for the learned Illinois Companion dubs it "a Simon pure Yankee production," and if Webb is to be deprived of the glory then there is a halo and posthumous fame waiting for a yet undiscovered genius:

"Seven cities grieved for Homer dead
Through each the living Homer begged his bread."

Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1908 report on Foreign Correspondence - MAINE