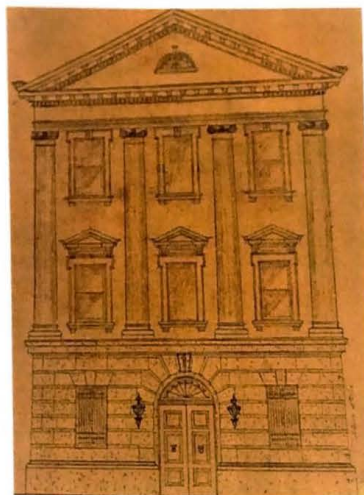


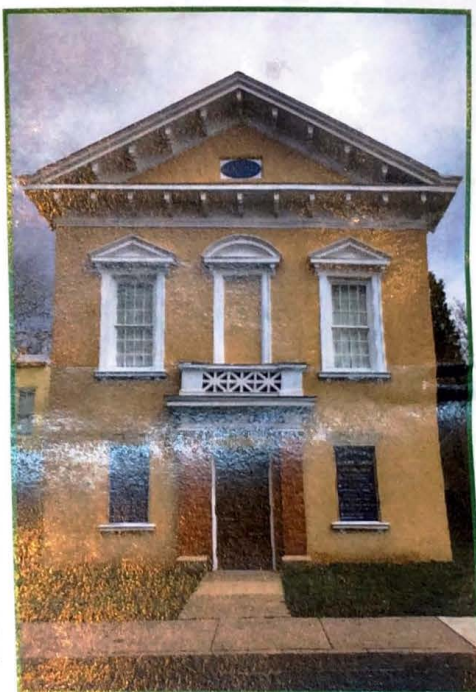
BENEFICIAL SOCIETY → MASONIC HALL



Starting in 1850, the Masons, an international fraternal and charitable organization, had rented the Beneficial Society Hall for \$16.15 per month, up to \$25.00 in 1857. (St. Paul's Episcopal congregation also gathered there until their church was ready for occupancy in 1848.) On April 8, 1857 the Hall was purchased by Doylestown Masonic Lodge No. 245 for \$2,545.00 and was dedicated on October 28, 1858, by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. According to *Bucks County Intelligencer*, "An extra train was run from the city affording an opportunity for Philadelphians residing along the railroad to visit Doylestown to witness the ceremonies" and about 300 members of the fraternity did attend. The Lodge held its first meeting in their new hall on January 29, 1858; and for many years thereafter, the Lodge continued the practice of renting space. On May 15, 1860, the *Doylestown Democrat* reported, "We see that John S. Preston has opened a green grocery in the basement of the Masonic Hall where he will keep a constant supply of fresh vegetables, fruits, etc. within season. Such an establishment has been much needed in our borough and we hope the enterprising proprietor will receive a liberal share of patronage."

In 1902 improvements were made to the exterior of the Hall, according to plans submitted by A. Oscar Martin (1873-1942), a well-known Doylestown architect. In 1921, plans were again presented by Martin, who had become a member in 1908, to make improvements and remodel both the exterior and interior. The rear wall was deteriorating, the main lodge room had to be strengthened, and new benches were to be installed to accommodate the increase in membership. To this end, bids were submitted from the following contractors, Harry Murphy-structural work; John J. Rufe-heating and ventilating systems; and Charles B. Moyer-electrical wiring. It is estimated that the total cost was no less than \$15,000.00. Financing was through a mortgage, and six hundred bonds were issued for \$25.00 each, payable in not less than 20 years. The work commenced in September 1921 and meetings were moved to the second floor of Lenape Hall. Upon completion in February 1922, *The Intelligencer* regarded it, as "one of the most attractive and commodious (halls) in this part of the state. The Lodge and banquet rooms have been lengthened to twenty feet, a very large and fully equipped kitchen has been constructed and there are lobbies and retiring rooms of large size and attractive design."

The building at 55 East State Street, which continues as the Masonic Hall, houses an organization of more than 570 members and is in its 174th year, making it one of the oldest buildings in Doylestown still in use today.



OUR ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

The Doylestown Historical Society houses a broad range of photos, documents and other resources which bear significance to the history of the Doylestown area. These materials are available for review and study in the Society's library and archives. A few examples are listed below:

Doylestown Boys Brigade, 1907-1998. News clippings, annual dinner programs, photographs. An organization founded by George Murray whose objective was to give the youth of Doylestown an alternative to street corner life.

Doylestown Car Shows, 1977-2017. Show programs and miscellaneous news clippings.

Doylestown Centennial, 1938. News clippings, photographs, miscellaneous mementos relating to the celebratory event.

If you are interested in exploring any of our holdings, please contact the Society office (215-345-9430).