

Joseph Sylvester McCoy (18 Nov 1839 – 19 Nov 1916)



The Evening Star, May 3, 1908, pt. 2, p. 9

Contest Winner's Letter

Joseph S. McCoy Expresses Gratitude to F.G. Smith Piano Company

The F.G. Smith Piano Company has received a letter from Mr. Joseph S. McCoy, 523 B street northeast, winner of the Webster player-piano in the company's recent dot-counting contest, in which Mr. McCoy expresses his gratitude and his appreciation of the courtesy and fairness of the judges and of the officers of the F.G. Smith Company. The letter reads as follows:

Washington, D.C., April 21, 1908

The F.G. Smith Piano Company
1225 Pennsylvania avenue northwest,
Washington, D.C.

Gentlemen:

I acknowledge with thanks the receipt this date of the Webster player piano awarded me by your company as the result of the decision of the judges in your dot-counting contest, and, in so

doing desire to add that, considering the high character and standing of the judges, I am assured of the perfect fairness with which the contest was conducted.

I have given the instrument due trial and find it in mechanism, beauty and tone, the best I have seen.

I gave much time and effort to the count, but in view of the courtesy and kindness shown, and the fact that the gift of the piano resulted, I was indeed well repaid.

Wishing the company continued success in its business and business methods, and again thanking you for your kindness, I beg to remain.

Very gratefully,

(Signed) Jos. S. McCoy

Room 250, War Department.

The Evening Star, November 20, 1916

Col. Joseph S. McCoy Dies at His Home Here

Prominent Member of Masonic Order in District and Veteran of Civil War

Col. Joseph S. McCoy, dean both of the past grand masters of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia and of the past grand high priests of Royal Arch Masons, died at his home, 423 B street northeast, yesterday morning, at 10:30 o'clock. Arrangements for his funeral have not been completed.

Col. McCoy was grand master of Masons in 1880, and he was grand high priest of the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons in 1878. He was born near New Rochelle, N.Y., November 18, 1839, and was therefore seventy-seven years old the day preceding his death. His early years were spent in New

York city, where he attended the public schools and St. John's College. At the close of his sophomore year he was obliged to seek employment, and for a time was with the Methodist Book Concern, later teaching school until he went to Montgomery, Ala., in 1860. The sentiment at the time against northern men forced his return to New York.

Enlists in U.S. Army

He enlisted in Company B, 2d United States Cavalry, which was stationed at Camp Colorado, Tex., until 1861, when his regiment was ordered first to New York and then to Washington. He participated in the first battle of Bull Run and the battles of Williamsburg, Gaines Mill, Savage Station, Nelson's Farm, Glendale and Malvern Hill, when he was wounded. Discharged from the army April 1, 1863, he accepted a position in the office of the adjutant general, at the War Department, and continued in service in that department until his death.

He was made a master Mason in Lafayette Lodge, No. 19, F.A.A.M., of this city, March 11, 1867, and was master of the lodge in 1873 and 1874. He was grand lecturer of the Grand Lodge in 1876 and became grand master in 1880.

He became a Royal Arch Mason in Mount Vernon Chapter, No. 20, of Maryland and the District of Columbia, now Mount Vernon Chapter, No. 3, of the District of Columbia, April 22, 1867, receiving also the degrees of royal and select master and of superexcellent master, which were then conferred in the Royal Arch Chapter.

Charter Member of Chapter

May 27, 1867, he became a charter member of Lafayette Chapter, No. 5, and was its high priest in 1874-5. He was grand lecturer of the Grand Chapter in 1874-5 and became grand high priest in 1878. He was master of Lafayette Council, Royal and Select Masters, now extinct, from 1875 to 1883 and charter master of Washington Council from 1888 to 1890. He was knighted in Columbia Commandery, No. 2, Knights Templar.

Until his health began to fail some years ago, Col. McCoy was regarded as an indefatigable Masonic worker and he possessed intellectual and personal qualities that won for him a host of friends in and out of the fraternity. His wife died several years ago.

The Evening Star, November 21, 1916

Final Rites for Col. McCoy

Honors to be Paid Under Auspices of Masonic Order

Funeral services for Col. Joseph S. McCoy, past grand master of Masons and past grand high priest of the Royal Arch Masonic body, who died Sunday morning, will be held at his late residence, 423 B street northeast, tomorrow afternoon. The Knights Templar services will be conducted at the house by Columbia Commandery, No. 2, Knights Templar, of which the deceased was a member, and the Blue Lodge services will be conducted at the grave by the officers of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the District of Columbia. The interment will take place at Congressional cemetery.

Lafayette Lodge, No. 19, F.A.A.M., of which the deceased was a member, will escort the Grand Lodge and the Grand Chapter of the District will be represented at the funeral by Grand High Priest William C. Fowler and other officers of the Grand Chapter.

In addition to the surviving grand high priests many other prominent Masons will attend the services.

Harper, Kenton N., History of the Grand Lodge, 1911, p. 363-366

Grand Master 1880

The subject of this sketch has to his credit more than three decades of active and valuable work for the benefit of the Fraternity. Possessed of an unusual intellectual equipment he has also ever been an indefatigable worker, and these qualities, united with a magnetic and pleasing personality, a courteous demeanor, a genius for executive work, and an exceptional ability as a convincing speaker, gave to the administration of the many offices to which he has been called a rare degree of success. His autobiography, amended only to the extent of several additions his modesty ignored, is of such interest that it is here quoted in extenso:

"I was born on a farm, some five miles back of the present town of New Rochelle, Westchester Co., New York, on Monday, November 18, 1839. My parents removed to New York City in 1844, and when seven years of age I entered the public schools of that city. In September 1854, I was promoted to the grammar class, and graduated therefrom in June 1855. Subsequently, I entered St. John's College, N.Y., and in June 1857 concluded my sophomore year. By reason, however, of the financial panic of that year, I entered the service of the Methodist Book Concern, then located in New York City, where I remained until September 1857, when I secured a school. I taught school from September 1857 until June 1860, when I was offered a more advantageous position to teach at Montgomery, Ala. I sailed from New York in July 1860 with the purpose of accepting the position. On arriving at Savannah, Ga., I proceeded by rail to Montgomery, but on arriving there I found that sentiment was such, at that time, that I returned to New York.

"Being desirous of trying my fortune on the Pacific Coast, and with that object in view, there being a regiment of cavalry there at the time to which I was assured I would be assigned, I enlisted in the regular army for the cavalry service, on the 27th of August, 1860. Instead of being assigned to the Department of the Pacific, I was assigned to the Department of Texas, commanded by Maj. Gen. David E. Twiggs. I was assigned to Company B, 2d U.S. Cavalry, the officers of which were Edmund Kirby Smith, Captain; Walter H. Jenifer, 1st Lieut.; and Fitzhugh Lee, 2d Lieut. The field officers of the regiment were Albert Signey Johnson, Colonel; Robert E. Lee, Lieut. Col.; George H. Thomas, Senior Major, and Earl Van Dorn, Junior Major. The regiment, rank and file, was considered the best and its officers the ablest in the service. For a time I was much disappointed with my assignment, but in a short time, owing to the consideration shown me by both officers and men, I became fully reconciled with it.

"My company was stationed at Camp Colorado, Coleman Co., Texas, and during the time I was there, with drill, and reading the northern papers and magazines a month old, time passed pleasantly. We learned of the election of President Lincoln a few days before Christmas 1860, and subsequently that the Southern States had, or would soon secede from the Union. Rumor was abroad, but it was not until the military forces were surrendered by Maj. Gen. Twiggs, commanding the Department of Texas, that we realized our condition. By reason of the influence of our officers and the fact that the paroling officer of the State was our own Major (Van Dorn), who had resigned from the army, my regiment alone of all the troops stationed in Texas, was not 'captured and paroled.'

"My company left Camp Colorado in February 1861 and proceeded to San Antonio, thence to Indianola, where we embarked, leaving only our horses and horse equipment with the State authorities, and proceeded, via Key West and Havana, for New York, where arrived early in April 1861. Maj. Geo. H. Thomas was at the wharf to receive us. That afternoon we left for Carlisle, Pa., where we obtained our remounts and on May 2, 1861, proceeded to Washington, D.C., where we arrived May 5, 1861.

"On the night of May 31-June 1, 1861, under instructions from Lieut. Gen. Winfield Scott, my company made a raid on Fairfax, C.H. We lost four or five men and some horses, and regained our camp near Falls Church, Va., on the morning of June 1, 1861. On July 18, 1861, my Division (the First), Army of Northeastern Virginia, made a reconnaissance along the Confederate lines at Bull Run, and was with General Tyler, its commander during the engagement. On the 19th of July, 1861 I was one of General Barnard's escort, in his observations of the several fords along the line of Bull Run. I participated in the

Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861, and my company formed a part of the rear guard, at Centerville and Fairfax Court House, during the retreat of the Federal Army from the battlefield.

“I also participated in the battles of Williamsburg, Gaines’ Mill, Savage Station, Nelson’s Farm, Glendale, and Malvern Hill, during the Peninsular Campaign. I was wounded in the latter engagement. Subsequently to my discharge from the army on April 1, 1863, to accept an appointment in the office of the Adjutant-General of the Army, I served in Company A, War Department Rifles, from June 1864 until June 1865, my commissions being signed by Assistant Secretary of War Tucker.

“During my service in the army I held the following grades: recruit, private, corporal, duty sergeant, orderly sergeant, second lieutenant, first lieutenant, and captain, Assistant Adjutant-General of Volunteers.

“I received the Master Mason’s degree in LaFayette Lodge, No., 19, March 11, 1867; the Royal Arch degree in Mt. Vernon Chapter, No. 20, April 22, 1867, including the Royal, Select and Super Excellent Master’s degrees, which were conferred in the Chapters of this jurisdiction in those early days. I was Master of LaFayette Lodge, No. 19, 1873-74, and after filling several of the subordinate chairs was Grand Master for the year 1880; was High Priest of LaFayette R.A. Chapter, No. 5, during the years 1874 and 1875, and Grand High Priest of this jurisdiction for the year 1878; Master of LaFayette Council, No. 1, Royal Select and Super Excellent Masters, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Council of Massachusetts, from 1875 until 1883; Charter Master of Washington Council, 1888 to 1890; knighted in Columbia Commandery, No. 2, Knights Templar, March 14, 1868; was Grand Lecturer of the Grand R. Chapter of the District of Columbia from December 1873 to December 1875, and Grand Lecturer of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, 1876. In the absence of the High Priest of LaFayette Chapter in Europe nearly the whole of the year 1873, and while King of that Chapter and Grand Lecturer of the Grand Chapter of the District of Columbia, at the request of the Grand Chapter of Canada, and as representing LaFayette Chapter, I conferred the Royal Arch degree on three actual candidates before the Grand Chapter of Canada, in the town hall at Kingston, Canada. I held, at various times during my Masonic career, the offices of Grand Representative of the Grand Chapter of Canada; the Grand Chapter of Nova Scotia, B.C.; the Grand Mark Lodge of England, Scotland, and Wales, and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown, and of the Grand Lodge of Arkansas, F.A.A.M., which latter representation I still hold.