

## Robert Clarke

(6 Oct 1815 – 26 Feb 1905)

---

*The Evening Star, February 27, 1905*

### **Maj. Robert Clarke Dead**

#### **Union Veteran and Former Resident of This City**

#### **Prominent in Masonic Circles Here**

#### **Aided in Laying Corner Stone of Washington Monument**

A dispatch from Erie, Pa., last night says: Major Robert Clark died today, aged 89 years.

Major Clarke was a native of this city where he had lived for many years. He was born October 6, 1815, and was therefore in his ninetieth year.

For a long period of time he was in business in Southeast Washington, but upon receipt of the news of the firing on Sumter in 1861 he gave up his business and opened a rendezvous for the enlistment of soldiers. He raised a company and the 24th day of April 1861, was mustered into the service of the United States. With his company he did guard duty in and around Washington, and on that fateful Sunday of the first Bull Run battle (July 21, 1861) was in command at the Virginia end of the Long Bridge.

In describing this incident two or three years ago Major Clarke said: "Over this bridge most of the troops passed into Virginia. I remember distinctly the cry 'On to Richmond' by members of Congress and others as they followed the army in carriages into Virginia. But about half-past nine the evening of the day of the battle they began to come back the most crest-fallen set of men I ever saw. They had witnessed the battle and were sorry they had gone.

"For several days the soldiers were crossing the bridge, completely demoralized, and not a regiment retreated in anything like order."

Major Clarke was mustered out July 24, 1861, his three months' service having expired, but he immediately raised another company and was mustered into the service for three years with the 1st Regiment of the District of Columbia Volunteers, was ordered into Virginia and was wounded at Cedar Mountain, August 10, 1862. Upon recovering he was ordered to special duty at Alexandria, and subsequently appointed provost marshal at Fort Ethan Allen near the Chain bridge. He was promoted major, took command of his regiment in the absence of his superiors and after a war service of four years and three months was honorably discharged.

Major Clarke was prominent as a member of the Masonic order. He was made a Master Mason in Naval Lodge, No. 4, May 6, 1838, and at the time of his death was its senior past master. He was deputy grand master in 1846 and was past high priest of Washington Chapter and deputy grand high priest in 1856. In 1847 he was elected grand treasurer of the Grand Lodge and served as such until 1855. As grand treasurer he took part in the Masonic ceremonies at the laying of the corner stone of the Washington monument July 4, 1848, and had the honor of making the Masonic deposits therein. His name is engraved on a silver plate that was placed in the corner stone. He was present also at the completion and dedication of the monument February 21, 1885, when Chester A. Arthur as President was presiding officer and Myron M. Parker, as grand master of Masons, had charge of the ceremonies.

Maj. Clarke was knighted in Washington Commandery of this city, April 29, 1848, and had been continuously a member of that venerable and notable organization for upward of 57 years.

An unusual incident of the career of Major Clarke was the presentation while convalescent from the wound received at Cedar Mountain of a sword, belt, revolver and cap from the members of his Masonic lodge.

For some years he had resided in Erie, Pa., well known and highly respected by the entire community.

*The Evening Star, December 28, 1905, p. 8*

## **Masonic Grand Lodge**

### **Review of the Year**

### **Tribute to the Dead**

### **The Masonic Dead**

The grand master also alluded feelingly to the Masonic dead of the year, saying:

"Robert Clarke, past deputy grand master, died at Erie, Pa., February 26, 1905. He was born in this city October 6, 1815 and for many years was one of its most prominent citizens and capable business men. He was a gallant soldier in the civil war, serving four years and three months, and attaining the rank of major, by which title he was afterward known. He was initiated in Naval Lodge, No. 4, May 5, 1838, passed and raised September 1, 1838, and was master of the lodge in 1842 and 1847; was junior warden of the Grand Lodge in 1845, senior grand warden in 1846, deputy grand master in 1847, and grand treasurer from 1848 to 1854. He was high priest of Washington R.A. Chapter, No. 2, and deputy grand high priest in 1856. He was knighted in Washington Commandery, No. 1, this jurisdiction, April 29, 1848. As grand treasurer of the Grand Lodge he took part in the Masonic ceremonies at the laying of the corner-stone of the Washington Monument, July 4, 1848, and had the honor of making the Masonic deposits therein.

"At the time of his death R.W. Brother Clarke possessed the distinction of being the oldest affiliated Mason on the rolls of our Grand Lodge. He was a man of the strictest integrity, was possessed of the highest sense of honor, and was highly esteemed by all who knew him. He worshipped his God, revered his country and loved his fellow men.

### **History of the Naval Lodge, No. 4, F.A.A.M.**

Robert Clarke, one of the most interesting characters in the history of Naval Lodge, served as Worshipful Master during the years 1842 and 1847, and a rather extended sketch of his life cannot fail to be of interest. He was born in Washington, D.C., Oct. 6, 1815, and for many years was one of its prominent citizens. He was in the carpentering and undertaking business in Southeast Washington, but upon receipt of the news of the firing on Ft. Sumter in 1861 he gave up his business and opened a rendezvous for the enlistment of soldiers. He raised a company and on the 24th day of April 1861, was mustered into the service of the United States. With his company he did guard duty in and around Washington, and on that fateful Sunday of the first Bull Run battle (July 21, 1861) was in command at the Virginia end of the Long Bridge. Major Clarke was mustered out July 24, 1861, his three months' service having expired, but he immediately raised another company and was mustered into the service for three years with the 1st Regiment of the District of Columbia Volunteers, was ordered into Virginia and was wounded at Cedar Mountain, August 10, 1862. Upon recovering he was ordered to special duty at Alexandria, and subsequently appointed Provost Marshal at Fort Ethan Allen near the Chain Bridge. He was promoted Major, took command of his regiment in the absence of his superiors and after a ware service of four years and three months was honorably discharged. Major Clarke attained considerable eminence in Masonic circles. He was initiated in Naval Lodge, May 5, 1838, and passed and raised Sept. 1, 1838; was Junior Grand Warden in 1845; Senior Grand Warden in 1846; Deputy Grand Master in 1847, and Grand Treasurer from 1848 to 1854; was High Priest of Washington R.A. Chapter, No. 2, and Deputy Grand High Priest in 1856. As Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge he took part in the Masonic ceremonies at the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument July 4, 1848, and had the honor of making the Masonic deposits therein. His name is engraved on a silver plate that was placed in the corner stone. He was present also at the completion and dedication of the monument Feb. 21, 1885, when Chester A. Arthur, as President, was presiding officer, and Myron M. Parker, as Grand

Master of Masons, had charge of the ceremonies. Major Clarke was knighted in Washington Commandery of this city April 29, 1848, and had been continuously a member of that organization for upward of fifty-seven years. An unusual incident of the career of Major Clarke was the presentation August 22, 1862, while convalescent from the wound received at Cedar Mountain, of a sword, belt, revolver, and cap from members of Naval Lodge, No. 4. For some years he resided in Erie, Pa., well-known and highly respected by the entire community, and died in that city Feb. 25, 1905, in the ninetieth year of his age. At the time of his death he was the Senior Past Master of Naval Lodge and possessed the distinction of being the oldest affiliated Mason on the rolls of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. He was made a life member of his Lodge, Nov. 21, 1889.