

OUR MASONIC HISTORY:

THE MASONIC HOME AND IT'S FOUNDER

The founder of the Masonic Home in St. Petersburg, Florida was Most Worshipful Governor Albert W. Gilchrist.

Albert W. Gilchrist was born in Greenwood, South Carolina on the 15th of January 1858. He was a descendant of the grandfathers of both George Washington and James Madison. He was a graduate of the Carolina Military Institute and a member of the class of 1882 of the United States Military Academy. Gilchrist was a civil engineer, real estate dealer and an orange grower in Punta Gorda, Florida. As a member of the Florida Militia, he resigned as Brigadier General in 1889 to enlist as at the rank of Private in Company "C" 3rd United States Volunteer Infantry, and served in Cuba during the Spanish-American War, being mustered out as a Captain in 1889. He was a member of the Board of Visitors of the United States Military Academy in 1896, a member of the House of Representatives from DeSoto County for the sessions of 1893 - 1895 and 1903 - 1905, and Speaker of the House in 1905. On the 5th of January 1909, was inaugurated as Florida's twentieth Governor, with his term expiring in 1913.

As a member of Punta Gorda Lodge no 115, Brother Gilchrist received his Entered Apprentice Degree on the 16th of April 1890, Fellowcraft Degree on the 17th of May 1890 and was raised on the 24th of May 1890. He served his Lodge as Worshipful Master in 1895. He later served The Grand Lodge of Florida as Junior Grand Warden in 1905 and 1906, as Senior Grand Warden in 1907 and 1908, and as Deputy Grand Master in 1909 and 1910.

At the Grand Lodge Session in 1911 the Brethren elevated our Brother to the highest office within the gift of Masonry, that of Grand Master; serving the people of Florida as governor at the same time.

At the Grand Lodge Session of January 1902, M.:W.: Gilchrist introduced the following resolution : "Resolved: First: That a Masonic Home and Orphanage shall be built in the State of Florida. Second: That the Most Worshipful Grand Master shall appoint a Committee, whose duty shall be to formulate plans for the effective carrying out of the same, corresponding with such Communities as may be desirous for the location of the home . To prepare approximate plans, and statements as to cost, and to report same at the next Grand Annual Communication."

Thus, the need for a Masonic Home in Florida was being brought to the attention of the Brethren in a very forceful manner.

At the Grand Lodge Session in 1913, M.:W.: Gilchrist reported to the Brethren the the Masonic Home Committee had on hand about twenty thousand dollars to apply to the purchase of a Home, and on the 19th day of January 1917, a committee of seven was appointed to search for and select a site. After much work and many considerations, it was decided that the Southland Hotel property in St. Petersburg was the most desirable location; hence on the 2nd day of July 1918, the property was purchased for the future site for the Masonic Home and Orphanage of Florida.

A letter was sent to all Lodges on the 10th day of February 1919 stating that on Monday the 7th day of April 1919, at the hour of ten o'clock a.m., the Masonic Home and Orphanage would be dedicated. ***Thus on this day through the untiring efforts and vision of M.:W.: Albert W. Gilchrist, the Masonic Home of Florida became a reality, and was sent on its mission of Brotherly Love, relief and duty, and stands today as a monument to the memory of that Man of God, who gave so generously of his time and talent with which God had wonderfully blessed him.***

M.:W.: Brother Gilchrist served as Chairman of the First Board of Trustees of the Home and served as a Member of The Board until his death in 1926.