

## Masons Have Had It Up To Here

Heavy rain storms, flooding damage lodge built in 1877.

By Amber Healy

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One of Clifton's historic structures is drying out, its flooring and wall paneling stripped away, after being flooded by Popes Head Creek. Acacia Lodge Number 16, a Freemasons Temple on Main Street just north of the railroad tracks in Clifton, suffered severe water damage on the first floor, causing the carpeting and wall paneling to be removed, revealing black flowered wallpaper that may be as old as the building itself.

"The damage is repairable and we're doing everything we can," said Mason Scott Call on Saturday, July 8, at the end of a week's worth of cleaning.

"The flooding was up to 21 inches on the outside of the building in some places," Call said, walking around the perimeter of the white building, bordered in the back by the creek. "There was so much rain, the water just came up and up and up and up."

Inside, the first floor has been stripped down to the bare walls.

"Our goal is to renovate all of the first floor," Call said.

In one corner, an unplugged stove stood a few feet from the wall.

"The entire kitchen is completely destroyed," said Fred Rankin, a member of the Masons. "The bathroom down here is pretty bad too."

WORK TO CLEAN the inside of the building began two days after water filled the first floor, said member William Baumbach. Originally built as a mill, the lodge was situated closer to Popes Head Creek before a team of horses moved it to the current location in the 1920s, Baumbach said. It is listed as number 58 out of the 62 structures in Clifton's Historic Registry.

"If we make any cosmetic changes to the outside of the building, we'll have to go through the Architectural Review Board here in town to make sure we use the right kind of windows and the right style of wall," Baumbach said. Any changes to the interior of the building may not need that kind of consideration, he said.

On Saturday, July 8, 13 members of the Acacia Lodge were joined by a handful of members from the Herndon and Fairfax Masonic Temples, gathered by a shared sense of commitment.

A "fairly new" member of the Herndon Lodge #264, Jim Butts said he heard about the need for help in Clifton through e-mails and "word of mouth" from other Masons.

"I thoroughly believe in the Masonic philosophy of helping your brother," he said. "I'm sure they'd help us if we needed them. The beauty of the Masons is that they're willing to help any community organization, we go where we're needed."

Clifton member Jim McDaniels agreed, describing his group as a close brotherhood. "I joined this lodge because of the closeness of the members and because the building itself is small and quaint," he said. The greatest expense in restoring the lodge will be pouring a new foundation underneath it, Baumbach said. When the lodge was



Photo by Amber Healy/The Connection  
Scott Call, a member of the Acacia Masonic Temple in Clifton, points out how high water from Popes Head Creek rose on the outside of the temple, which suffered some flood damage on the first floor.



Photo by Amber Healy/The Connection  
Carpeting, tile flooring and wall paneling had to be removed from the first floor of the Acacia Masonic Temple in Clifton last week, the result of flood damage.

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originally built, it was settled on top of support beams, but no solid foundation or basement was required. The flooding damaged the wooden beams after water filled the crawl space.

"We need to put in a real foundation because we're slowly sinking," Call said.

The building may have to be raised about 4 feet, Baumbach said, and early estimates put the work at between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

"We're hoping to start the Acacia Foundation so we can solicit funds and raise money," Call said. "Right now, we can't ask for donations, we can only take unsolicited gifts. We really want to keep meeting here in this historic building, and if we start our own foundation, we can raise money to maintain it."