

in this court was the large brazen altar, "on which the burnt offerings and the appointed parts of other sacrifices were burned;" while between it and the Sanctuary was the brazen laver for the ablutions of the priests.

This tabernacle was constructed at enormous expense, but with great magnificence, that it might be regarded as more suitable for the manifestation of God's presence, and better represent the value of those eternal blessings of which it was designed "as a type or emblem."

The period of its construction, as well as the tabernacle itself, has had its influence among Masons. In the lodge, attention is directed to the tabernacle; an attempt, at least, is made to give a representation of it in the chapter, but it is not so generally known that there was a time when the era of Royal Arch Masonry was fixed as of even date with the erection of the "Tabernacle of the Congregation."

In 1793, how much before we are unable to show, it was the custom of Royal Arch Masons to add 1500 to the vulgar era to find the year of the Rite—and this in the year A.D. 1793, would give the year of Royal Arch Masonry as 3293. This is established by the engraved plate from which the original Book of Marks was printed for St. Andrew's Chapter, and by the records which show that the dates therein entered are given correctly.

As to the manner in which this date was found the records are silent, and it was not without much inquiry and study that the true reason was detected.

In 1822, the Grand Chapter of Massachusetts appointed a committee to ascertain the true date, but the conclusion was, that so much obscurity surrounded the question, that it would be better to use, on the diplomas, the same date as that used by the Grand Lodge, and this practice still prevails in this jurisdiction.

It appears from this, that the brethren of 1820 were not quite satisfied with the date adopted thirty or more years before, neither did they care to inquire into the correctness of the earlier chronology. One authority says, Moses was born about 1600 years before Christ; another, that he was born A. M. 2493, and traditions concerning this varied. It seems, however, to be very well settled that he was eighty years old when he led the march to Sinai. In all this there is a degree of uncertainty as to exactness, but we may inquire further.

It appears that six whole months were exhausted in preparing the tabernacle, and that it was set up on "the first day of the first month," the first day of Nisan A. M. 2514, or, according to Usher, April 21st. It was filled with the glory of the Lord, and on the fourteenth day thereafter the Israelites celebrated the second passover from their coming out of Egypt.

From whatever sources the brethren of 1793 derived their information, it is apparent that they did not add 1500 to the vulgar era out of mere caprice. If they placed the birth of Moses at 1600 B. C. and deducted his age (80) and so much of a year as was consumed before the tabernacle was erected, they would find 1519 B. C. as the date, or, if they followed the date of A. M. 2514 as the time of its erection, then the term would be 1486 years B. C., and in either case a sufficient justification, on the score of convenience, for adding 1500 to the vulgar era, as already stated, and using that as the date of the beginning of Royal Arch Masonry.

Why the brethren of 1793 associated the erection of the tabernacle with Royal Arch Masonry, would extend this article to an inconvenient length.

Briefly, the Ark of the Covenant was constructed by Moses at God's command (Exodus xxv.); in it was placed the golden pot filled with manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of