

A BRIEF NARRATIVE HISTORY OF

The following pages will provide the reader with a history of the M.W. African Harmony Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted, Ancient York Masons, Prince Hall Origin - National Compact. Any history is told from the writer's prospective and is influenced in part by the times in which he or she lived.

Certain aspects may be open for debate, but our mission going forward must be to seek out the truth and insure that our masonic family is provided with facts.

I'm certain this was a labor of love for Brother Emery. He was a Master Masons, Master Mason who at one time held a "Council of Nine" seat on the Supreme Council of the M.W. National Grand Lodge. Enjoy his writing and salute hsi efforts to tell our story.

Hon. Felton N. Ferguson 33rd

Past Grand Master - African Harmony Grand Lodge

F.& A.A.Y. Masons, P.H.O. - National Compact

By: William G. Emery 33°, P.G.M. of Delaware

Forward and Background

All individuals, groups and nations have a history, but the unfortunate thing is that it is often not written or only partially written and thus faulty memory must be substituted for the record.

This is particularly true of Negro Masonry in Delaware. A great deal has, from time to time, been written on the background of the beginning of Colored Masonry in this State, but the whole truth has not been told; only the part that has benefited certain groups and up to this writing has never been contradicted or confirmed by our group (F. & A.A.Y.M).

It is possible to read numerous Masonic history books and not have a clear picture of what happened. None of these books are lying, but simply ignoring the total truth.

History connects man to his past and imbues him with a sense of continuity. It sometimes serves a selfish purpose suppressing feeling of guilt, omitting inferiority or weaknesses, and it points up failures in their causes aiding in planning for posterity.

It has been assumed that people of color in most Northern cities were a direct result of the great migration from the South. Three cities, New York, Philadelphia and Boston, with the town of Wilmington, Delaware were thriving shipping centers that included in their population sizable communities of free black people.

Wilmington like Philadelphia, typical of the cities named, had a colony of free Colored Citizens long before the slavery question split this nation into warring camps. Like other immigrants seeking freedom, the Colored immigrants arrived as indentured servants. A few were able to buy their passage outright, and a very small percentage came as slaves of the English gentry and merchant princes who envisioned America as the land of opportunity.

As Wilmington grew and developed, Colored people became the skilled craftsmen, domestics and common laborers, both in private and public life. Also many sailors and stewards on the ships which sailed the Delaware River and foreign ports.

It was in this environment that Absalom Jones, Peter Spencer and others from lower Delaware arrived in Wilmington. In a short time, Absalom Jones moved to Philadelphia where he organized the first Colored Episcopal Church. Also he became the first Master of African Lodge No. 459 of Philadelphia. In the year 1837 he and others organized the Caterers Guild of which nearly all of the male domestics of Philadelphia and Wilmington were members.

Origin

Part One

In the year 1808, John Emory, a young sailor and a resident of Wilmington, Delaware and working on the 60-ton Sloop "Nancy" of the Samuel Bush Freight Service, sailing between Wilmington and Philadelphia, whose headquarters were at the foot of French Street, made application to African Lodge No. 459 of Philadelphia, and was made a Mason and became a member of that lodge. Elizah Black and James Harmon, both of Wilmington in 1812, made application to Laurel Lodge No. 5 and were made Masons. About 1816, Jacob Ray of Middletown, Delaware, made application to Laurel Lodge and was received and made a Mason. In 1818, Israel Lotman of New Castle, Delaware, made application to Harmony Lodge No. 5, (under African Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania), and was made a Mason.

Between the years 1820 and 1840, Freeman Lattimore, Grand Master of Pennsylvania, and Past Grand Master, Rev. Absalom Jones, known as the Sons of Zion, organized a group of Masons here in Delaware. Their main duty was to operate the Underground Railroad. Two factors entered into this namely: the intense interest of the "Abolition Society" headed by the Quakers and the willingness of the free Colored people to conceal fleeing slaves; here at are some of the names of members as they worked a as lodge under a dispensation from the African Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, to wit: -

George Emory
 Elzy Russ
 Joseph H. Reason
 Isaac Lloyd
 Alexander Postals
 John Fisher
 Allen Davis
 William T. Raikes

Robert Price
 Moses Nicholis
 George W. Wright
 Isaac Morris
 John H. Benson
 Samuel Railey
 William C. Rains
 Benjamin Green

James B. Crozier

Part Two

During this period another agency was at work in the State making Masons which was the inevitable result of there being two Grand Lodges of Colored Masons in this State today. Herewith is a brief review of the cause, so we take you back to Philadelphia.

In the year 1819, Union Lodge No.4 was expelled and ordered to surrender its warrant but refused. The warrant being in the hands of Benjamin Chase, a former Wilmington man, they continued to work and became known as Seventh Street Masons. In the year 1825, African Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania expelled Harmony Lodge No. 5, and its warrant demanded, they refused and continued to work as a lodge. They claimed in later years to have obtained in 1833, a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ohio (white) sitting at Chillicothe, May 8, 1833, which empowered them to warrant a sufficient number of lodges to constitute a Grand Lodge.

Accordingly, in July 1837, a convention composed of the expelled lodges No's. 4 & 5 with others, established under the alleged authority from Ohio, was held, and a Grand Lodge under the title of the Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. This new Grand Lodge proceeded to establish lodges in the opposition to African Grand Lodge, which excited much division. The bitterest feelings, both in church and social relations, existed between those who had formerly been friends. This continued until 1845, when it broke out in public print. Numerous articles were issued pro and con, and the whole aspect of affairs caused a blush of shame by all true Masons, many of whom withdrew in disgust from the organizations.

After this Grand Lodge established a lodge here in Delaware in September, 1845, the same conditions existed and remained so until 1847, when the National Grand Lodge of North America was formed at Boston, MA, of which the four Grand Lodges existing at the time of this convention were:

Prince Hall Grand Hall of Boston, MA

1st African Grand Lodge of PA. (Of which we were a part)

Hiram Grand Lodge of PA

Boyer Grand Lodge of NY

So dear reader, every subordinate lodge in existence at that time came under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge F. & A.A.Y.M. and the two Delaware lodges became one and the same by the formation of the two Grand Lodges in Philadelphia. We now conclude the second part and commence to the third part.

Part Three

Formation of the Grand Lodge for the state of Pennsylvania between the first African independent Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, and the Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, which made every Colored Mason in Pennsylvania and Delaware one and the same.

At a meeting of the Masters and Wardens and Legal Representatives of Subordinate Lodges, under the African Independent Grand Lodge of North American and the Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania held in the hall of the A.I. Grand Lodge, January 19, A.D. 1848, according to the previous notice and arrangements, for consolidating the two Grand Lodges did agree that the two Grand Lodge warrants, and all former warrants and dispensations, under their jurisdiction are hereby revoked and declared forever null and void; and did select and install the following name Brethren For the Ensuing Year:

Wm. H. Riley, M.W.G.M.
 Jacob Jenkins, R.W.D.G.M.
 Thomas Black, G.S.W.
 Robert Anderson, G.J.W.
 Robert Brown, G. Treasurer
 James P. Clay, G. Secretary
 Emanuel Cohen, G. Tyler
 James J. Bias, Member
 Samuel Gray, Member
 Andrew Brown, Member

Henry Brooks, G.S.B.
 George C. Lewis, G.M.C
 Jonathan R. Miller, G. Marshal
 John Minton, G. Pursuivant
 William Douglas, G.S. Deacon
 Solomon Clarkson, G.J. Deacon
 Prince Blacke, Member
 John Anderson, Member
 William Cropper, Member

All was peace and harmony, but in October 1849, dissensions arose, and those, which had formerly constituted Hiram Grand Lodge, flocked to them, and on November 1849, at a meeting held in the hall on South Seventh Street, adopted this resolution:

“Resolved, that the members herein names dissolved all further connection with the National Grand Lodge of the U.S.A., to take effect forthwith.”

Union Lodge No. 4
 Sheba Lodge No. 7

Prudence Lodge No. 11
 Christian Lodge No. 12

Fidelity Lodge No. 8
Harmony Lodge No. 10

Paxon Lodge No. 16

These lodges aided and abetted by the Grand Master, Jacob Jenkins, a former Delaware Man (who was elected December, 1848, in a secret meeting without the proper officers or warrant being presented and the other lodges excluded from said meeting), claimed to be the Grand Lodge for the state of Pennsylvania. The M.W. Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, was the title of both bodies, but was better known as Eleventh Streeters and Seventh Streeters.

This trouble extended itself into Delaware and the lodges and members which had formerly worked under the old Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, with the help of this, Jacob Jenkins, Grand Master of the so-called Seventh Street Masons, called a convention on Saturday, June 9, 1849 and formed what was known as "The Hiram Grand Lodge of the state of Delaware" and their first officers were installed by Jacob Jenkins and Peter Anderson, these having been removed from office of the legal Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania by suspension.

The other group of men who originally had been members of lodges of the old African Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, (here in Delaware) remained loyal to the Eleventh Street Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania which continued to work by and under the authority of the National Grand Lodge of the U.S.A. These men continued to meet and work for nearly five years hoping that some reconciliation could be reached, in the meantime, the N.W. Samuel Van Brakle, N.D.D.G.M. for the Middle District National Compact had rearranged and organized them into five lodges namely: -

King Solomon Lodge, Abner Black, Henry Craigg, Jr, Moses Biddle and others.

St. James Lodge, Henry A. Craigg, Joseph G. Walker, Thomas Harden and others.

Mt. Lebanon Lodge, Newport, Delaware, Benjamin Fields, Kennard Trusty, John Tillman and others.

Pythagoras Lodge, Camden, Delaware, Nathaniel Brinkley, Thomas Brinkley, Vincent Berry and others.

Union Lodge, Wilmington, Delaware, Nehemiah Walker, John Young, Caleb Bell and others.

So according to previous notice and arrangement by the N.D.D.G.M., Samuel Van Brakle, the Masters, Wardens, and Legal Representatives of subordinate lodges of the state of Delaware, to wit: for King Solomon Lodge – Abner Black, Absolom Black, Isaac P. Carti, Richard Brown, John Dilihay, Solomon Flamer, David H. Gustus and Jacob Branton.

For St. James Lodge – Henry Craigg, Joseph G. Walker, William Robinson, Thomas Harden, John Batson, William Tillman and James Crozeir.

For Mt. Lebanon Lodge – Benjamin Fields, John Tillman, Kennard Trusty, Garrett Wilson, John Davis, and David Wiley.

For Pythagoras Lodge – Nathaniel Brinkley, Thomas Brinkley, Prince N. Callwell and Vincent Berry.

For Union Lodge – Nehemiah Walker, John Young, Abraham King and Caleb Bell.

These lodges met in solemn convention on the 27th day of March 1855 in the city of Wilmington, Delaware to take into consideration the formation of a Grand National Lodge in and for the state of

Delaware under the National Lodge of the U.S.A. The following Declaration of Sentiment were drawn and signed.

Whereas, this convention have met in solemn convocation for the express purpose of organizing a State Grand Lodge under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge, and to protect the Craft from innovation, and give a quietus to imposition as practiced in this State by a body of Colored clandestine Masons.

Sentiment (1) – That this Convention deplore the condition of Colored Freemasonry in this State; from the fact, that men have violated their solemn obligations to the Supreme Judge of the universe, and have brought the whole Order in disrepute.

Sentiment (2) – Therefore, in pursuance of the above call, we have met in general Convention, to give our expression and execute our design, for the prosperity of the Craft.

Sentiment (3) – The Great National Convention that was held in the city of Boston, June 23, 1847, we hereby pledge ourselves to each for the support of its great principles to the full extent of our abilities and implore the hand of Providence and protection of this Great Masonic Family in the solemn ties of Brotherhood.

Sentiment (4) – We claim to be offspring's of a parentage that once for their excellence of attainment in the arts, literature and science stood before the world unrivaled. Masonry raised her proud head and marched forth in all her splendor. We have mournfully observed the fall of those institutions that shed luster on our mother Country, and extended to Greece and Rome those refinements that made them the theme of admiration.

Sentiment (5) – We rejoice that we are the inhabitants of this proud State, where law protects the liberty of speech and the press. We ever will be loyal to the government of this State, and pledge ourselves to sustain its mandates and as members of the Royal Craft walk before the world worthy of our profession.

Sentiment (6) – We, therefore, declare to the world this declaration of sentiment, that our object is to extend the principles of peace and good will to all mankind, and correct abuses that have been made within the limits of this state by a body of expelled Colored Masons, and implore the hand of Providence to protect us in our noble design.

John Dilahay, Chairman.

David H. Gustus, Secretary

After which according to ancient rule and possessing the right of congregation and establishing a Grand Lodge in this State; with the title of "The Most Worshipful African Harmony Grand Lodge, F. & A.A.Y.M." We did therefore elect and install the following names brethren as its first Grand Officers, for the ensuing year:

Absolom Black, M.W.G.M.
Henry A. Craig Jr., R.W.D.G.M.
Benjamin Fields, S.G. Warden

John Dilahay, J.G. Warden
James Williams, G. Treasurer
Davis Gustus, G. Secretary

David Wiley, G. Tyler

Brother Samuel Van Brakle, N.D.D.G.M. and Brother William H. Riley, M.W. Grand Master for the State of Pennsylvania and others conducted the installation.

The M.W. National Grand Lodge of the United States of North America granted a Grand Warrant to this body, June 24, 1855, bearing the signatures of Enos A. Hall, N.G.M.N.; Paul Drayton, N.D.G.M.; Joshua Woodlin, N.S.G.W.; Lewis Hayden, N.J.G.W.; William H. Siles, N.G., Treasurer. Samuel Van Brakle, N.D.D.G.M. (for Middle District); Attest, Thomas Macpherson, N.G. Secretary.

Since that time the following Lodges have been organized:

***Jerusalem Lodge No. 6—Wilmington, Delaware

1859***Eastern Star No. 7 – Wilmington, Delaware

1866***St. Johns No. 8 – Wilmington, Delaware

1867***Mt. Moriah No. 9 – Wilmington, Delaware

*** No. 10 – Wilmington, Delaware

***Diamond State No. 11 – Christiana, Delaware

1873***Mt. Pisgah No. 12 – Wilmington, Delaware

1875***Mt. Olive No. 13 – Wilmington, Delaware

1875***Mt. Carmel No. 14 – Newark, Delaware

1877***Mt. Nebo No. 15 – Wilmington, Delaware

*** No. 16 –

1868***Mt. Olive No. 17 – Tallahassee, Florida

1878***Prince Edward No. 17 – New Castle, Delaware

1887***Widows Son No. 18 – Wilmington, Delaware

***Keystone No. 19 – Summit Bridge, Delaware

***Ivenhoe No. 20 – Hockessin, Delaware

1885***Zerubbel No. 21 – Wilmington, Delaware

1890***Antioch No. 22 – Wilmington, Delaware

1890***Mt Arrarat No. 24 – Camden, New Jersey

1891***Dorich No. 23 – Merchantville, New Jersey

1891***Excelsior No. 4 – Wilmington, Delaware

1911***Mt. Moriah No. 24 – Lewes, Delaware

1934***Aberdeen No. 23 – (Watch Care) Aberdeen, Maryland

1951***Mt. Zion No. 23 – Wilmington, Delaware

Union Lodge No. 5 was expelled in 1882 after being charged with contumacy and ordered to surrender warrant, which they refused to do, and on October 31, 1883 did form a union with Hiram Grand Lodge F. & A.M. and did become a part thereof, carrying the National warrant with them and now known as Lodge No. 21.

The following bodies in the higher degrees of the Order and of the adoptive degrees of the ladies are at work in our jurisdiction:

Zenith Grand Chapter – Order of Eastern Stars

St. James Grand Chapter, Holy Royal Arch

Eureka Grand Court, Heriones of Jericho – Auxiliary of the Royal Arch

St. Lukes Commandry, Knights Templar

Cyrenne Council of Crusaders – Auxiliary of Knights Templar

Hiram Consistory – 32nd Degree

Deborah Court, Royal and Exalted Amaranth – Auxiliary of the 32nd Degree

Mecca Temple – A.A.O.N.M.S. (Shriners)

Mecca Court – D.O.I., Auxiliary of Mecca Temple

This Grand Lodge has been the host for the Most Worshipful Grand National Lodge F. & A.A.Y.M. in and for the United States of North America (National Compact) three times.

First in October 1869. National Grand Lodge did not pass out of existence as many have stated in 1877, but met the next year on May 8, 1878 here in Wilmington, Delaware, and has met every triennial grand session since.

The 15th Triennial Grand Session was held October 7th to 11th, 1895 at the National Hall, 9th and Walnut Streets, at this time P.G.M. Jacob Webb was the National Deputy Grand Master of the N.G. Lodge.

The following named brothers were the dually elected delegates of the M.W. African Harmony Grand Lodge to this 15th Triennial Session:

Henry Robinson, George Diggs, Joseph Clark, Wm. H. Sewell and Daniel Dutton

On July 18, 2002 the Hon. Felton Ferguson, Past Grand Master for African Harmony Grand Lodge, was elected as the first National Grand Master hailing from the state of Delaware.

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