

Birth of the Grand Lodge

It was inevitable that Iowa Masons would soon begin to think of establishing a Grand Lodge of their own. Curiously, the first suggestion that this be done seems to have come from the Far West Lodge of Galena, Illinois, which itself desired to be included in the Iowa jurisdiction. Another similar proposal came from Rising Sun Lodge at Montrose. This group was within the Territory but, like an early lodge at Keokuk, was considered "subordinate to influences emanating from the Mormon center." Both of these lodges fell under the ban of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, which had chartered them, and their title was shadowed in the esteem of Iowa Freemasonry. They were not permitted to participate in the work of evoking a Grand jurisdiction in Iowa.

It was in Des Moines Lodge at Burlington, on October 31, 1842, that a proposal was adopted to form a committee to communicate with the other lodges on the subject of organizing a Grand Lodge. The Bloomington Masons responded by proposing that a convention be called to assemble in Iowa City. Dubuque consented, and the Iowa City lodge appointed Chauncey Swan, A. J. Wil-

lis, and Lewis S. Swafford to serve as a committee of arrangements. The convention was in session from the ninth to the eleventh of May, 1843, and resolutions were adopted calling for the dispatch of a delegation to the Grand Lodge of Missouri to request enabling power. This delegation, composed of Oliver Cock (Burlington), Ansel Humphreys and Theodore S. Parvin (Bloomington), John Johnson (Dubuque), and James R. Hartsock (Iowa City), attended the session of the Grand Lodge of Missouri and their petition was granted. Thereafter, these delegates made arrangements for a convention at Iowa City to "ordain a constitution, make by-laws, elect Grand officers and do all other things requisite to the perfect organization of the Grand Lodge of Iowa." Iowa City was selected as the place of meeting, the date to be January 2, 1844.

Three delegates were appointed by each of the lodges: J. H. McKinney, Wesley Jones, and H. T. Hugins of Burlington; Ansel Humphreys, T. S. Parvin, and B. S. Olds of Bloomington; Timothy Fanning, George W. Cummins, and Thomas S. Wilson of Dubuque; and William Reynolds, S. M. Ballard, and James R. Hartsock of Iowa City. Certain other delegates were present from the chartered Rising Sun Lodge of Montrose, and from Eagle Lodge at Keokuk and

Clinton Lodge at Davenport, the two latter still operating under dispensation. Sharp controversy speedily developed in respect to these lodges and their delegates. In the end, Rising Sun Lodge was not permitted to participate in the convention. Delegates from Eagle and Clinton Lodges took part in the discussion, but their votes were not recorded.

It was well known that Iowa Lodge of Bloomington ardently desired the honor of providing the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in the person of Ansel Humphreys. But the Burlington Masons, who had initiated the project, quietly approached the Iowa City delegates with the proposition that if they would oppose Humphreys and support a Burlington candidate, the Burlington delegates would press for James R. Hartsock as Grand Secretary. Standing in the way of this "deal", however, was the positive instruction of Iowa City Lodge to its delegates to give united support to Humphreys for the high office. But, like Caesar, Hartsock was ambitious. Nor were the other Iowa City delegates insensible to the distinction that would come to their lodge in providing the Grand Secretary. When the first ballot was taken in the election of the supreme officer, the vote stood six for Ansel Humphreys, Worshipful Master of Iowa Lodge, and six for Oliver

Cock, Worshipful Master of Des Moines Lodge. Supporting the first were all the delegates from Bloomington and Dubuque, and demanding the latter were all the delegates from Burlington and Iowa City. This deadlock was broken by Ansel Humphreys who withdrew his name and, in the interest of complete harmony, urged his friends to vote for Cock. The latter was then accorded twelve votes and the unanimous election.

There seems to be no doubt that the election of Ansel Humphreys as the first Grand Master was the general intent and expectancy. He had served as District Deputy Grand Master of Missouri, and was held in the highest esteem for his personal character and Masonic competence. Oliver Cock was not a party to the intrigue for he was not present in Iowa City at the time, and the convention had to be adjourned for five days while a man rode horseback to Burlington to report what had transpired and request his presence. Cock then journeyed to the capital city and was duly installed. He was judged by his brethren "in every way worthy of the distinction." It may be added that consolation eventually came to the friends of the defeated candidate, for Ansel Humphreys was elected Grand Master of Masons in Iowa and served in that office from 1847 to 1849.

The other Grand officers elected by the convention were Timothy Fanning of Dubuque (Senior Grand Warden), William Reynolds of Iowa City (Junior Grand Warden), Benjamin S. Olds of Bloomington (Grand Treasurer), and Theodore S. Parvin of Bloomington (Grand Secretary). In spite of plotting and log-rolling, Hartsock failed to win an office, but eventually he was honored with positions of trust.

A constitution and by-laws, fashioned after the pattern of those of the Grand Lodge of Missouri, were discussed and adopted by the convention. Among the adjustments made by the newly-constituted Grand Lodge of Iowa was the dropping of the Missouri numbering and the establishment of an Iowa sequence. In the new charters the designations were: Des Moines Lodge No. 1 (Burlington), Iowa Lodge No. 2 (Bloomington), Dubuque Lodge No. 3 (Dubuque), Iowa City Lodge No. 4 (Iowa City).

In the evening of January 8, 1844, the historic convention at Iowa City adjourned. Ansel Humphreys, in his character as District Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri, opened a session of that jurisdiction for the purpose of constituting the Grand Lodge of Iowa and installing its officers. In solemn procession the officers elect marched from the Iowa City Lodge

hall to the Methodist Episcopal Church. Following an oration there by Joseph Williams, the Grand Lodge of Iowa was constituted "in due and ancient form," and its officers installed. The historic day closed with a banquet at Chauncey Swan's hotel. It was morning, January 9th, when the first session of the Grand Lodge of Iowa "was closed in ample form."

In this month of June, 1944, the Grand Lodge of Iowa of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons (Clifford D. Jory, Most Worshipful Grand Master), gathers in Cedar Rapids, for the one hundredth anniversary of its organization. This Centennial Communication was originally planned to take place in Iowa City, scene of the Grand Lodge's birth. The honor was yielded to Cedar Rapids because so many of the facilities of the natal city were in use by the personnel of the armed forces as the Commonwealth of Iowa was doing all that was asked to support the nation in the universal struggle for freedom, security, and peace.

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