

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS....

By

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1783 is the year of discontent, Connecticut brethren are wondering - If we form a Grand Lodge how do we go about doing it. All Connecticut lodge's at that time had charters from either New York or Massachusetts and both these Grand Lodge's had charters from England. Two years earlier the Provincial Grand Lodge of NY was dissolved when their charter was transferred to the rebels, just prior to the Tories departure for Halifax. In its place the Grand Lodge of F&AMs of the State of NY is organized..

In Massachusetts things go differently. In this state there were two regular Grand Lodges, the old St Johns Grand Lodge of Boston, and the Massachusetts Grand Lodge under charter of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. It is this latter Grand Lodge, whose Grand Master was Dr Joseph Warren. These two Grand Lodges were about to unite, but instead the Massachusetts Grand Lodge is dissolved and the St Johns Grand Lodge reorganized into the "Ancient and Honorable Society of F&AMs of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

For six years nothing happened, CT lodges were on the verge of being dropped from the rolls of these two grand lodges. On March 31,1789 in a letter written by Ephraim Kirby, but is sent out over the signatures of three brothers of St Pauls Lodge, asking that all CT lodges attend a meeting to be held on May 14th, 1789, in Hartford, to advise on the question of establishing a Grand Lodge in this state, and the appointment of necessary officers.

The meeting was held, and Bro. William Judd was elected president, and Bro. Ephraim Kirby, secretary. They also voted to have Pierpont Edwards, Asher Miller, Judd and Kirby, act as a committee of four to draft a plan for the formation of a Grand Lodge in this state, and have it ready for a meeting to be held in New Haven at 4 PM. on July 8, 1789.

At the time and date appointed, in the Assembly room of Amos Doolittle's tavern, 22 brothers assembled, 5 from the lodge in New Haven, 4 from Middletown, 2 from Farming-

ton, Colchester, and Fairfield; and one each from Salisbury, Litchfield, Danbury, Wallingford, Stratford, Woodbury, and Hartford. You will note that the lodges of Derby, Norwalk, Stamford and Norwich did not attend for some unknown reason, most likely lack of timely notice..

Five and one half years earlier, on January 14th, 1784, at a similar meeting, a vote was taken and those present elected a slate of Grand Lodge officers with the purpose of submitting them to the Grand Lodge of England along with a petition for a charter to form a Grand Lodge in Connecticut. Well, nothing of this earlier meeting bore fruit.

In the words of historian, James Royal Case, "The only nominee of that meeting to be carried over was Pierpont Edwards as Grand Master. It was his due, perhaps deferential."

Ephraim Kirby, secretary of the convention, then read a draft of the new Constitution which was passed without opposition.

Thus, on July 8, 1789, "The Grand Lodge of the State of Connecticut" was born.

At the second meeting held on Oct 14, 1789, three ordinances were adopted

- 1) a fee of \$3 be charged for each EA made;
- 2) all lodges must submit a list of members and their ranks and titles; and
- 3) all lodges had to turn in their old Charters so that new ones could be issued.

The officers for 1790 were then elected. Only two changes took place Bro. Henry Champion became Grand Treasurer and Bro Ephraim Kirby was elected Junior Grand Deacon.

From the minutes of this meeting we read that the presiding officer is addressed as "the Rt. Worshipful Grand Master"

The third meeting of the Grand Lodge took place in May of 1791 and an entirely new slate of officers were chosen for the year 1791. Bros. William Judd-GM, Ralph Pomeroy-DGM, Samuel Wyllys- GSW, and Ephraim Kirby- GJW.

One historic observation must be made: It was at this third meeting of Grand Lodge, that Pierpont Edwards made his last appearance at a Grand Lodge session,. No reason has been

attributed for his absence during the next 35 years of his life. He didn't die until 1826.

During the tenure of Grand Master Pierpont Edwards, our Grand Lodge moved forward very slowly. As James Case had said, "his appointment was deferential." He was not in any sense of the word, a leader of the Craft. Things were definitely different in his political life, where he was a leader in state government.

William Judd, on the other hand was a true leader, and during the next seven years the Grand Lodge was jump started into rapid growth all over the state. In 1798, Stephen Hosmer is elected Grand Master, and reelected for the next 18 years.

As a Masonic historian, I have been honored to have been elected the Master of the Masonic Lodge of Research. In that capacity I'm going to bring to light facts at this time which will show an oversight and an error in Connecticut's Masonic History.

It is about a brother mason who I describe as the "Man Who Never Was."

The brother I'm going to describe never received the honor due him by this Grand Lodge. He was a man who never served as our Grand Master, but was the "father" of Grand Lodge of Connecticut.

Our late, Right Worshipful Brother James Royal Case, a Grand Historian of this Grand Lodge, and one of this countries most learned and honored Masonic researchers during the past century wrote the following: "The formation of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut was largely through the instrumentality of Brother X" I leave his name a mystery at this time.

This Brother was the son of a humble farmer and was born in Litchfield, February 23rd, 1757 Nothing is known of his boyhood life, but at the age of nineteen, immediately after the Lexington alarm he enlisted in the volunteer cavalry and reached Boston in time to take part in the Battle of Bunker Hill, (under General and Grand Master Joseph Warren who is remembered for saying "Don't shoot until you can see the white's of their eyes.") He later fought at Brandywine, Monmouth, Elk River, and Germantown. At Elk River he received seven saber cuts in the head and was left on the field as dead. In all, he was in 17 battles and many skirmishes; he received 13 wounds. and was with the patriot army until

the surrender at Yorktown, being at home only when wounded.. He was discharged as an ensign, August 23, 1782. and later became a colonel in the 17th regiment of the Connecticut militia.

After the treaty of peace he went back to Litchfield, and studied law with Raymond Marvin who had been the King's attorney, and married his daughter, Ruth, by whom he had eight children. His townsmen honored him by thirteen successive elections to the General Assembly, and he was also several times a candidate for Governor of the State.

He had a large law practice and was a close observer of the proceedings of courts and in 1789 published a report of the cases adjudicated in the Supreme and Superior Courts of Connecticut, being the first volume of law reports published in the United States.

He was an early member of the Society of Cincinnati, and secretary of the Connecticut branch.

This brother became a member of St. Paul's Lodge No. 11, Litchfield, on Dec. 27, 1781, but it is not known if this was his original lodge, He held nearly all of its offices, being its W. M. for five different terms. He was elected its secretary, and his early records of the lodge were all written by him, and are extraordinary specimens of accuracy and penmanship. It is said that he had a part in organizing a lodge at Woodbury, Connecticut in 1782.

As I reported earlier, a few meetings of the delegates from the various lodges of Connecticut were held as early as 1783, but it was not till May, 1789, that steps were taken to form a Grand Lodge. At this meeting, this brother was its Secretary, and one of the committee of four to formulate a plan for the Grand Lodge. This committee reported on July 8th 1789, a constitution substantially like the present one which was then adopted, and Grand Officers elected. In 1790 he was elected Junior Grand Deacon, and in 1791, 2,3,4, and 5, was elected Grand Junior Warden, and held the Grand Senior Warden's chair in 1796 and 1797.

Little is known of his chapter record except that he was a member of the Mark Lodge located at New Town, Connecticut, and was a signer of the by-laws of Hiram Chapter No. 1

of the same city, March 31, 1792

In researching material for this talk I reviewed the history of the Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter of Connecticut, and found a major error in the records. The latest Proceedings of our Grand Chapter (1999) lists the founding of the Grand Chapter as being May 17, 1798, of this there is no dispute, but then it lists as the first GHP a Stephen T. Hosmer who served in the years 1798 to 1799.

In the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge it lists Stephen Titus Hosmer, as Connecticut's third Grand Master, serving from 1798 to 1816. In fact, he was elected Grand Master just the day before, on May 16th. It is not possible for this one man, to have been elected the head of two Grand Bodies at the same time, and history not record this fact.

Historian Ray Denslow, in the official History of Royal Arch Masonry and James R. Case with Merle Tapley in the book "Thank-you Mr Edwards" both state that it was Brother X who was elected Grand High Priest, and that he then installed his junior officers, with Stephen T. Hosmer as his Deputy GHP.

This Companion was later elected to be the first Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of the Northern States of America. In January 1799, that name was changed to the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons for the Six Northern States of North America, and in 1806 it again was changed to the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons for the United States of America. It wasn't until 1799, a year later, that this Companion was the first Mason to receive the title of General Grand High Priest.

What happened to the man who led the way to the creation of the Grand Lodge of CT; the creation of the Grand Chapter of CT; and cofounder, along with Thomas Smith Webb, the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons?

Under President Jefferson, he was appointed federal revenue collector for Connecticut in 1802, and in 1804 was appointed the first Territorial Judge and Land Commissioner of the new Territory of Louisiana.

Before starting for Louisiana he gave St. Paul's Lodge, No. 11, a part of his large Masonic

library, some 300 volumes, and his sword, which were to be carefully preserved as sacred mementoes of this distinguished brother, but alas, it was reported that as of 1950, the collection had been reduced to but 200 books, and I don't know its condition today. I visited its library and failed to discover any books prior to 1850, Maybe what is left is secure in some other location.

While enroute by boat, from Connecticut to New Orleans, he was taken sick at Fort Stoddard, Alabama. Here he died, Oct. 4, 1804 and was buried in an unmarked grave in an unknown cemetery, aged 47.

In 1953, Royal Arch Masons, led by Col. Woolsey Finnell, of Ala., erected a monument to his memory in Mt. Vernon, Ala.

This was the fate of "The Man Who Never Was" - Grand Master, nor given the honors due the "Father of The Grand Lodge of Connecticut." Maybe. we the Masons of his Grand Lodge, in the third millennium, can correct history, and honor the memory and deeds of

Brother and Companion Ephraim Kirby