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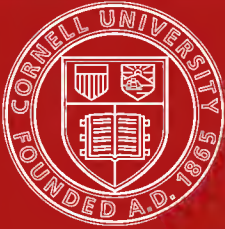
HISTORY

CAPITULAR MASONRY

IN NEW JERSEY

By P. G. H. P. I. LAYTON REGISTER





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## History of Capitular Masonry in New Jersey

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The work of compiling a history of important events of the past is rendered difficult when the characters that filled the places have passed away, and when most of the records are either altogether lost or exist only in fragments. Though such fragments be yellowed with age, their pages make definite and positive an otherwise abstract bit of history. They fortify incomplete testimony with hard facts, and thereby give to posterity a concrete idea of what did happen. But for these valuable records, all history would have become much more vague and uncertain than we find it to-day. In placing the scattered Masonic gems of Capitular Masonry in New Jersey into a harmonious mosaic, some fallacies have been cleared away, and buried stones have been brought to light; crooked things have been made straight, and rough and rugged roads smooth.

In this labor of love, we are indebted for information to Companions C. E. Weeks, Joseph S. Miner, George Scott, Boas Barnert, and P. G. Master Cannon. The Secretaries of all the Chapters courteously proffered assistance.

1803.—It is just about a hundred years ago that any known attempt was made by the brethren of New Jersey for further advances in the mysteries of the Order, and it seems fitting that this centennial event should be duly celebrated by a presentation of its early Capitular history.

Very few Chapters had been previously organized in sister jurisdictions, and the General Grand Chapter of the Northern States, composed of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York Grand Chapters, came into existence only five years before (1798). New Jersey was therefore not backward, though the Companions in those days passed through the usual vicissitudes attending new organizations. It was a time when the country had barely started in its career among the nations. We owe to these early upbuilders of the Temple more than we can claim for ourselves, for we have received the benefit of all they have done, which should be an inspiration and a pledge to increased efforts by the present generation.

1804.—As a result of this agitation to establish Royal Arch Masonry in New Jersey, a committee was appointed by the Grand Lodge, November 13th, 1804, which reported that while "They cannot, at this time, devise such a plan as they can feel perfect freedom and satisfaction in reporting to be adopted, notwithstanding, they would submit, that if a sufficient number of brethren of that degree will congregate themselves and undertake to open a Chapter under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge, that they have liberty so to do, at such time and place as they may think proper, giving notice thereof to and having permission therefor from the M. W. Grand Master."

1805.—November 12th, "The M. W. Grand Master reported that since the last Communication he had granted a dispensation to Washington Lodge, No. 12, to hold a Royal Arch Chapter." This is supposed to have been Solomon's Chapter of New Brunswick, all records of which are lost, says P. G. Master Cannon.

During the following six years, other Lodges made ineffectual efforts to organize Chapters, when attention seems to have been directed to the growing influence of the General Grand Chapter, which had been organized in 1798. In 1811, Cincinnati Mark Lodge, No. 1, of Hanover, N. J., and in 1812, Union Mark Lodge, No. 2, of Orange, New Jersey, each received charters from the General Grand Chapter. These Mark Lodges appear to have been the first that were chartered by the General Grand Chapter. But the minutes of the General Grand Chapter are singularly silent in giving any further reference to them, and all local records are lost. That these Mark Lodges must have had an active membership is proven by a unique Mark that belonged to Brother Joseph Leonard, a member of Mark Lodge, No. 2, that was found, in 1881, hidden in the walls of an old colonial mansion in Morristown, that was then torn down. The finder, not being a Mason, kept it as a curiosity, and its import was not known till 1902.

1813.—May 13th, a dispensation was granted by the General Grand Chapter to Washington Chapter, No. 1, at Newark. This was the first Chapter in New Jersey to receive authority from the General Grand Chapter. But there appears to have been provoking delay in receiving their charter, for among some rare old letters recently brought to light by Secretary C. E. Weeks, of Union Chapter, of Newark, there is a copy of one dated February 26th, 1817, written by Louis Atterbury, the Scribe, addressed to the General Grand Secretary, John Abbot, in which complaint is made that "This Chapter has hitherto acted under a dispensation alone, and is desirous of its Warrant of Constitution. I must request the favor of you to forward it to me as early as convenient."

The desire of the new Chapter was not immediately gratified, and their natural impatience was expressed in a letter dated October 23d, 1819, by Nathan F. Wood, the Scribe, of Washington Chapter, ad-



dressed to the General Grand Secretary, John Abbot, as follows: "At the meeting of the Grand Chapter of the United States last month, the Dispensation of Washington Chapter, No. 1, Newark, N. J., was delivered up, the time for which it was granted having expired, and it was resolved that a Warrant be granted to our Chapter forthwith. Some time having elapsed, the members of the Chapter are disappointed in not receiving their Warrant according to promise. The Chapter in this town has flourished since its commencement, and we are waiting for power to act. Considerable business is now on hand waiting for the opening of the Chapter.

"We trust you will see the necessity of our having power to act soon, and the detriment it will be to the Chapter to have it closed for any length of time, and will forward on the Warrant as soon as you possibly can."

Meanwhile, however, the charter was issued, having been granted by the General Grand Chapter, September 11th, 1819.

1815.—October 16th, at a meeting attended by Companions James Giles, Peter Bilderback, and James Westcott, who appeared to have been *members* of Philadelphia Chapters, but *residing* in New Jersey, they "were appointed a committee to petition Brearley Lodge, No. 9, of Bridgeton, for a Warrant to form a Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons. The committee reported that they had presented the representation, and it was unanimously resolved by said Lodge to grant the use of said Warrant for a Holy Royal Arch Chapter, and also the use of their room for the Chapter to hold their meetings." And P. G. Master Cannon, in his Notes, adds: "The sum of \$150 was loaned to the brethren for the purpose of aiding the organization." Because Brearley Chapter was thus organized by members of Pennsylvania Chapters, it has been erroneously stated, and believed by many to this day, that Brearley Chapter was working under a Warrant issued by the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania. This mistaken belief was subsequently the cause of much trouble that lasted forty years. But as no history is complete that fails to take cognizance of controversies, we quote in full the few records bearing on the subject.

There were then three regularly organized Chapters in New Jersey, being the required number to form a Grand Chapter.

1817—April 28th, Solomon's Chapter, of New Brunswick, addressed a letter to Washington Chapter, of Newark, quoting from their minutes as follows:

"*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to meet a deputation of Brearley Holy Royal Arch Chapter, at Trenton, on Tuesday evening, 15th May next; and that said committee be instructed to address Washington Chapter, No. 1, regarding their concurrence and appointment of a deputation, to meet at the same time and place, with the view of determining the practicability of uniting the three Chapters

for the purpose of forming a Grand Royal Arch Chapter for the State of New Jersey."

The Secretary further added that his Chapter had received a letter from Brearley Chapter proposing the interview at Trenton, and was informed that Washington Chapter had received another letter of the same tenor from Brearley Chapter.

The Secretary of Solomon's Chapter, Lewis Deane, concludes as follows:

"The appointment of our deputation was peremptory and bottomed on the belief that your Chapter would not forego the meeting, as we think, though a part of their letter is discouraging, yet from the latter clause they evince a disposition to merge the minor evil of paying for the dispensation to the U. S. G. R. A. Chapter, in the important desideratum of creating a Grand Chapter for this State. We hope, therefore, you will consent to the arrangement proposed, of an interview, and we indulge sanguine hopes of a favorable result."

In a postscript the Secretary says: "You will excuse the haste and want of premeditation with which the foregoing is penned, as the private conveyance was unexpected and of short notice."

The mail service was evidently infrequent in those days.

Under date of May 2d, 1817, Lewis Atterbury, Scribe of Washington Chapter, No. 1, wrote the following answer:

"Your letter of 28th ult. was duly received and laid before the Companions of Washington Chapter last evening. I am directed to inform you that the letter from Brearley Chapter was predicated upon one from us to them, inviting them to come under the jurisdiction of the General Grand Chapter and unite with Solomon's Chapter and ours in forming a Grand Chapter for the State. Their letter to us in reply declares it to be the unanimous opinion of that Chapter that it would be unnecessary, inexpedient and improper to apply to a body styling themselves the General Grand Chapter of the United States for a dispensation or warrant. As this appears to be their fixed and unalterable determination, and as it is impossible for us to unite with them whilst they maintain those sentiments, we have deemed it proper to decline the proposed interview at Trenton, conceiving no possible good could result from it. We have advised them of our determination, and have expressed our readiness to meet a deputation of that Chapter at Trenton or elsewhere should they at any future period be induced to act under one common head."

Thus ended the first attempt to form a Grand Chapter, but the Companions were not discouraged in their laudable efforts, for on February 7th, 1820, James Giles, the first High Priest of Brearley Chapter, wrote to Louis Atterbury as follows:

"Your favor of the 28th ult. is received. I regret exceedingly that the views of Brearley Chapter have been misconceived by Brother Parvin, as his representation of them have given you some unnecessary

trouble. So long ago as May, 1817, when I had an interview at Trenton with Companions McKissack and Deare on the subject of a union, those gentlemen were kind enough to say to me that the expense of a warrant should be no bar to it, as they would undertake to exonerate us from the payment of it, except the Secretary's fee of \$5.00. The payment for a warrant was, certainly, one of the objections we raised, but it certainly was not the most interesting one to us. We then declared, and have ever since uniformly declared, that we could not consent to the subjecting ourselves to the jurisdiction of the General Grand Chapter until a modification of the general regulations was obtained, so as to permit us to continue our visits to the Chapters in Pennsylvania and Delaware, for to be denied the privilege of visiting those Chapters would, in effect, be shutting us up in our own, and depriving us of all intercourse with others, except at an annual communication.

"Permission was given to the Maryland Chapters to work in their own way; and in my opinion it would be the interest of the General Grand Chapter to repeal the offensive *Interdiction* altogether, if not totally, then as far as it operated on us, for by a friendly intercourse with the Pennsylvania Chapters more liberal views might be inculcated, and these Chapters eventually brought into the fold.

"Brearley will not consent to pay for a warrant, neither will the members consent that any others should pay for them. They consider the one they now work under as strictly constitutional, and, consequently, want no other. If, indeed, a union should happily be formed, and a Grand Chapter established in this State, I think it probable that if it should then be deemed essential, a new warrant from the State, free from expense, would be accepted by them.

"If the General Grand Chapter will permit Washington and Solomon Chapters to form a union with us, and at the same time suspend, as far as regards us, the interdiction contained in the second section of the third Article, until Pennsylvania acknowledges the General Grand Chapter, and no longer, all obstacles to the formation of a Grand Chapter for the State will be removed. But if, unfortunately, less liberal views should be entertained, we must be content to remain as we are.

"Brearley entertains a lively sense of the friendly interest that Washington and Solomon Chapters have taken in her behalf, and she tenders them her most grateful acknowledgments, accompanied with her best wishes for their prosperity."

These old letters are fine examples of the spirit and loyalty that animated the Companions in those early days.

1819.—September 10th, the minutes of the General Grand Chapter show that the subject had been brought before that body, and gives the following report of the Committee on the Communication from New

Jersey: "The committee to whom was referred the communication from the Companions from the State of New Jersey on the subject of forming a Grand Chapter in that State beg leave to report that they have examined the several communications committed to their charge, and from the information of the Companions who presented the same it appears that there are two Royal Arch Chapters in the State of New Jersey under the jurisdiction of this General Grand Chapter, and one under the authority of the State of Pennsylvania, which does not acknowledge the jurisdiction of this General Grand Chapter." (This statement is now known to have been erroneous.)

"Your committee therefore are of opinion that the constitutional regulations interdicting all communication of Chapters and members under this jurisdiction with those who do not acknowledge it ought to be strictly adhered to, and that no Grand Chapter can be legally constituted in said State until there shall be three Royal Arch Chapters acknowledging this jurisdiction." Happily, this interdictum was afterwards abrogated.

Of the three Chapters above referred to by the General Grand Chapter, Washington, No. 1, of Newark, appears to have been the only one chartered by the General Grand Chapter. Solomon's Chapter, though older, was numbered 2 by the General Grand Chapter, and was reported as having paid dues to the General Grand Chapter in the Proceedings of 1826, but its warrant is supposed to have been received from the M. W. Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey in 1805. There is no record of a charter issuing to it from the General Grand Chapter.

The third Chapter referred to by the General Grand Chapter is Brearley. Through the courtesy of the Grand Secretary of the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania, diligent search was made in the minutes of the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania without finding any record that Brearley ever received a warrant or authority from that jurisdiction; and Secretary Joseph S. Miner, who has faithfully served Brearley Chapter for the past thirty-nine years and is one of the most careful officers and an authority on Masonry, says that Brearley never received a warrant from Pennsylvania.

In those days, nearly a century ago, traveling facilities were backward. It was not until several years later (1831) that the first railroad (the Camden and Amboy) was built in New Jersey. Bridgeton, being located in the southern part of the State, had more direct communication with Philadelphia, and then only by water and stage coach. The Companions who formed Brearley Chapter were probably members of Philadelphia Chapters, but *resided* in Bridgeton, New Jersey. The warrant for the Chapter was granted by Brearley Lodge, No. 9 (now No. 2). The Chapter was constituted by the Grand Officers of the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania, because of convenience. They wrote that they would, "God willing, cross into Jersey the following Tuesday, so as to be ready to take the stage for Bridgeton Wednesday morning." This was in April, 1816. These circumstances probably gave rise to the

erroneous belief that Brearley was working under the authority of Pennsylvania.

This prohibition of the General Grand Chapter prevented further effort at that time to form a Grand Chapter in New Jersey.

After a few years renewed efforts proved successful, for in 1825, January 25th, the first Grand Chapter of New Jersey was organized at Elizabeth, by Washington, No. 1, of Newark; Solomon's, No. 2, of New Brunswick, and Franklin, No. 3, of Elizabeth, the latter having received only a short time previously its dispensation from the General Grand Chapter. A charter was issued by this first Grand Chapter to Hiram, No. 4, of Eatontown. This ancient charter relic, which was supposed to have been lost, now adorns the walls of one of the ante-rooms of the Masonic Temple at Trenton.

Companion George Scott has in his possession an ancient ark, and the charter issued to Lafayette Chapter at Paterson, all records of which are lost.

Very little is now known of the proceedings of this first Grand Chapter, but in the published minutes of the General Grand Chapter for 1826, September 15th, mention is made that the Grand Chapter of New Jersey was formally recognized, and that John Scott, the Grand King, attended that General Grand Convocation and voted with the majority against the "Kentucky Memorial" that sought a dissolution of the General Grand Chapter.

1825, July 14th, it is stated as an item of some importance, that General Lafayette visited Washington Chapter, No. 1.

Not knowing that a Grand Chapter had been formally organized by Companions in the northern part of the State a few weeks earlier, Brearley Chapter appointed delegates April 4th, 1825, to attend any meeting of delegates from other Chapters for the purpose of forming a Grand Chapter of New Jersey. Learning later what had transpired, at a stated meeting of the Chapter on October 3d, 1825, it was resolved: "That the existence of the unfortunate differences which have arisen between this Chapter and those Chapters of Royal Arch Masons in New Jersey which have associated themselves together as a Grand Chapter of New Jersey is much to be deprecated. That it is much to be feared this continuance will tend to injure the cause of Royal Arch Masonry, especially in this State. That the members of this Chapter present individually lament that such differences ever arose, and that the cause of Masonry requires that proper means should be immediately adopted to effect their speedy arrangement and termination. *Resolved*, That in order to effect this purpose a committee of three be appointed to notify all the members of the Chapter, and also, as far as may be convenient, all other Royal Arch Masons residing contiguous to this Chapter, to attend a meeting to consider this subject and devise the proper measures to be adopted."

"At the meeting of October 31st, 1825, it was resolved that a committee of seven be appointed to inquire upon what terms this Chapter can be admitted a member of the Grand Chapter of this State."

1825, November 28th, the committee reported they had made regular application to the Grand Chapter to be permitted to visit said Grand Chapter at Trenton the 9th inst., to present the several resolutions adopted by Brearley Chapter. That the committee was refused admission to visit the Grand Chapter. That they received a paper from a committee of the Grand Chapter, of which the following is a copy:

"In Grand Chapter of New Jersey, November 9th, 1825, A. L. 5825. On motion, *Resolved*, that Brearley Chapter be invited to unite with and join the Grand Chapter of New Jersey upon condition of their conforming to the rules and regulations of this Grand Chapter and of the General Grand Chapter of the United States, and that on these terms a warrant from this Grand Chapter be offered to them gratis."

"A committee of Brearley Chapter was appointed to draft an answer to said resolution, and, on December 10th, 1827, the High Priest reported that he had applied for admission as a visitor to said Grand Chapter, in order to fulfill the duties devolving upon him by his appointment, and that no notice was taken of his application, nor was he admitted into said Grand Chapter."

No further reference to the subject appears on the minutes of Brearley Chapter.

1826, November 16th, at the Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter of New Jersey, held at the Masonic Temple in the city of Trenton, the following officers were duly elected for the ensuing year, viz.: M. E. John E. Ruckle, G. H. P.; M. E. John Scott, D. G. H. P.; M. E. Jephtha B. Munn, G. King; M. E. Thomas L. Woodruff, G. Scribe; E. F. Van Artsdalen, G. Treasurer; E. Andrew Parsons, G. Secretary, and E. Pruden Alling, G. Marshal.

1827.—Past Master and Mark Master's Lodges were frequently held in Salem Lodge, No. 19, and most of the members of the Lodge received these degrees. A committee was appointed by Salem Lodge to confer with the Royal Arch Masons of Salem county in reference to forming a Chapter, which probably received a charter from the Grand Chapter, for it is stated that "At the Lodge meeting August 1st, 1827, the use of the Lodge-room in the new building erected by Masons was offered to the Chapter of the county at a yearly rental of thirty dollars." This may have been Chapter No. 5, the records of which are lost, as it was swept out of existence by the fierce anti-Masonic storm that soon after raged over the land.

1827.—November 14th, Sussex Chapter, No. 6, at Newton, was chartered by the Grand Chapter of New Jersey, and the Warrant, framed, decorates the ante-room of the Masonic Hall at Trenton.

This Chapter, too, was submerged in the fateful fight against Masonry, and all its records have disappeared.

1836.—November 8th, the Grand Chapter of New Jersey held its last Convocation at Trenton. It must have been a sad occasion. Companion Durand, in an address in 1895, says: "The great wave of anti-Masonic excitement and intemperate denunciation of our honored institution extended in unceasing violence over whole States. A combination of sincere and good men on the one hand and of political demagogues and office-seekers on the other formed a political party pledged to opposition to the Masonic Fraternity, an institution which then numbered, as it does now, many of the best men in the land. This new political party nominated and supported candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States, carrying one State on the issue made by them. This warfare brought to a low condition many of the Masonic bodies. The lowest point was reached in 1840. After that date the Symbolic Lodges began to recover from the persecution of those times, and the Chapters later experienced an improvement and interest."

1841.—The Grand Chapter of New Jersey being dissolved, the General Grand Chapter advised Hiram Chapter, No. 4, which survived the storm, to place itself under the jurisdiction of the Grand Chapter of the State of New York.

1843.—September 3d, Washington Chapter, No. 1, of Newark, paid its dues, \$35.85, to the General Grand Chapter, and was empowered to resume labor as a subordinate of the General Grand Chapter in consequence of the dissolution of the Grand Chapter of New Jersey.

1844.—March 28th, Washington Chapter held its last Convocation. Hiram Chapter thus became the only surviving Chapter in the State.

1848.—March 13th, dispensation was granted by the General Grand Chapter to Union Chapter, No. 1, of Newark, the members of which formerly belonged to Washington Chapter, that had dissolved four years previously. Companion Weeks, well known for his historical researches, says it is unfortunate that the Companions did not apply for a revival of their original Warrant and retain the name of Washington, and so derive the advantage of having been practically in existence since 1813.

1848.—March 20th, Newark Chapter, No. 2, received dispensation from General Grand Chapter.

1850.—September 17th, charters were granted by the General Grand Chapter to Union Chapter, No. 1, and Newark Chapter, No. 2, both of Newark.

1851.—October 2d, application was made to the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania by several Royal Arch Masons in Bridgeton for a Chapter, which request *was refused* by the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania. This request was probably made because the Grand High Priest of Pennsylvania had previously informed the Companions (August 28th, 1851) that in consequence of Brearley Chapter having had no meetings for a period of more than seventeen years (September 2d, 1833, to April 29th, 1851), that the Chapter had, by Masonic law, forfeited its right to work, and recommended the Chapter to obtain from some regular and legally constituted source a right to work as a Chapter. A committee was appointed to arrange the matter, and on February 12th, 1852, Brearley Chapter was reorganized under the warrant of Brearley Lodge, this action being sanctioned by the officers of the Grand Lodge.

1853.—March 25th, Newark Chapter, No. 2, received an invitation from Union Chapter, No. 1, to unite with them. The invitation was accepted; Newark Chapter was dissolved, and its twenty-two members were received into Union Chapter. September 17th, same year, the Committee on Dispensations and New Chapters of the General Grand Chapter reported that Newark Chapter had been merged in Union Chapter, and that the action was approved.

1854.—November 14th, Hiram Chapter, No. 4, which, upon recommendation of the General Grand Chapter, had been previously transferred as a subordinate to the Grand Chapter of New York, after the Grand Chapter of New Jersey became extinct was again transferred to the General Grand Chapter with the approval of the Grand Chapter of New York.

1856.—September 11th, the General Grand Chapter granted charters to Enterprise Chapter, No. 2, Jersey City; Boudinot, No. 5, Burlington, and Hiram, No. 4, Eatontown. These three Chapters met 1856, December 30th, and formed the present Grand Chapter of New Jersey, now numbering thirty-eight subordinates and 3,739 members; the Proceedings of which have since been published annually, and, therefore, require no reference in this historical sketch.

In the formation of this Grand Chapter, Union Chapter, No. 1, did not participate, and claims to have had no knowledge of the intention of other Chapters applying for a charter, and on June 10th, 1859, a committee of the Chapter wrote to the General Grand Secretary about it. He replied that three regular Chapters having met and resolved to form a Grand Chapter, made formal application for a charter to the General Grand High Priest, which was duly granted. This act, he said, did not change the relation of Union Chapter as a subordinate of the General Grand Chapter. "But," as the General Grand Secretary



further wrote, "It is unfortunate that it should be so, and until the matter is in some way amicably settled there must and will be a clashing of jurisdiction between you and the Grand Chapter," and he hoped they would "bring about a kind and fraternal feeling among all Royal Arch Masons within the State."

This spirit animated Union Chapter, for it forthwith applied for membership, and a charter was granted at the next Convocation of the Grand Chapter in the same year, 1859. But as there were already six Chapters chartered in this jurisdiction, Union Chapter was necessarily registered as No. 7. Brearley Chapter, which had continued working under its charter from the Lodge, was received into membership in the Grand Chapter of New Jersey the same year, 1859, thus cementing in one Royal Arch all the existing Chapters of the State.

The faithful builders have all laid down their working tools, honored by the grateful tributes of the Craft they served so well, and enshrined in the abiding and undivided affection of the cause they loved with such unquestioned devotion. Their careers are an inspiration and a heritage for which we should be profoundly thankful, and which will ever continue to be a source of perpetual pride.











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