

The Convention That Changed Freemasonry



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Wilkerson College Lodge



The Baltimore Convention

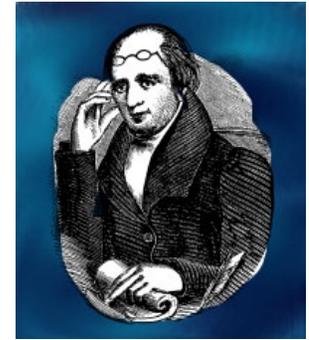
Agenda

- Freemasonry ...early 1800's
- The 1842 meeting before the convention
- The Baltimore Convention of 1843
- Freemasonry after the convention
- Summary



Setting the stage of Freemasonry...early 1800's

- **Freemasonry in a state of uncertainty – deplorable condition**
- **1826 – William Morgan who had purported to be a Freemason disappeared**
- **Freemasons accused of his murder...no evidence he was ever harmed**
- **This event set off a cry against Freemasonry**
 - **Many Grand Lodges could not find a quorum to meet**
 - **Lodges turn in charters by hundreds, Freemasons quit by the thousands**
 - **Kentucky lost half its members, NY went from 227 lodges to 41**
 - **Many ritualist lost to the craft...many died...ritual forgotten**
 - **Others quit in fear of persecution against their families**
 - **Many lodges not operating near capacity**
- **Anti-masons made available to the profane public exposures of complete ritual, signs, grips, words**
- **Became difficult to know who “was” or “was not” a member of the craft**
 - **Lodges turned visitors away**
- **So damaging was the state of Freemasonry that a political party was formed to eliminate Freemasonry**
 - **Anti-Masonic Party had a presidential candidate in 1832**
 - **Later became absorbed into the Whig party**



Events of 1842 leading up to the Baltimore Convention

- **Resolution adopted by Grand lodge of Alabama in late 1839 called for a convention to rectify many of the things that had gone awry with the following objectives:**
 - **Determine a uniform mode of work**
 - **Establish other lawful regulations for the interest and security of the Craft**
- **Meeting held in Washington, DC, March 7, 1842 at the Central Masonic Hall**
- **Ten Grand Lodges were represented at this special gathering**
 - **Michigan turned away since that Grand Lodge had not been established under constitution principals**
 - **NC appointed Kenneth Rayner to attend this meeting but in accordance with the proceedings of 1843 of the Ancient York Masons of NC, Brother Rayner was listed as not having attended**
- **Concluded that not enough participation by Grand Lodges and not enough time to formulate a uniform ritual**
 - **Differences of opinion among committee were too many and not reconcilable**
 - **Voted that all Grand Lodges appoint someone well versed in the ritual and style him as their Grand Lecturer**
 - **Called for a delegation of all Grand Lecturers to attend a convention the following year to discuss and determine a common ritual.**



1842 meeting sets agenda for 1843 convention

- **Committee on General Regulations Involving the Interests and Security of the Craft made suggestions that would have important, immediate and far reaching effects on Grand Lodges in the US.**
- **Recommended that the Representative System already adopted by some Grand Lodges be extended to all Grand Lodges**
 - **To protect the fraternity from unworthy men claiming to be Masons, it recommended that “certificates of good standing” of visiting brethren be made available by their Grand Lodges. This would shield the Institution and also furnish the widow and orphan of a deceased brother the best evidence of their claim upon the Fraternity. (1st Dues Cards)**
 - **Considered as “reprehensible” the practice of receiving promissory notes for the fees for conferring the degrees instead of demanding payment in cash before the degrees were conferred. (Initiation fees)**
 - **Considered it “impropriety” to transact business below the Degree of Master Mason except as such that appertained to the conferring of the inferior degrees. Grand Lodge of Missouri is given credit to bringing this to the attention of Freemasons everywhere. Committee went on to say that EA’s and FC’s were not members of Lodges nor are they entitled to the franchises of members.**
 - **Suspension of a Mason for non payment of dues was considered and uniform legislation was requested to protect the Fraternity. (NPD’s)**



1842 meeting sets agenda for 1843 convention

- **Note: Many Grand Lodges after this meeting changed their laws to conform to these recommendations**
 - **Certificates or cards were issued by Grand Secretaries**
 - **Grand Lodges order subordinate lodges to set cash fees for the degrees**
 - **Representatives were appointed by some Grand Lodges that had never done so before**
 - **Many Grand Lodges changed from conferring all business in the Entered Apprentice Degree to the Master Mason degree.**
 - **Practiced today by CT, MO, WA, ID, CO, KS, AZ, NV, AL, MN, OR, MT, MD, NM, UT, and DC (as of 2001)**
 - **Note: Past GL-IN felt is was an innovation of Masonry to change from EA to MM**
 - **Maryland acted immediately after this meeting**
 - **Virginia started business in MM degree later in 1842. Maine started in 1851 and other lodges took longer to adapt to this change**

**Actions of 1842 at Washington, DC meeting
instrumental in changes adopted in 1843**



The Baltimore Convention.....facts

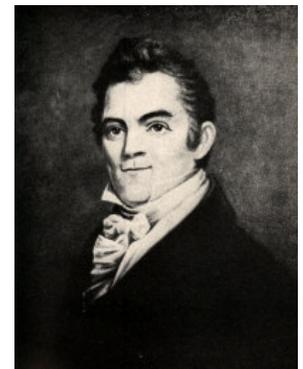
Baltimore Convention **May 8-17, 1843** **Masonic Hall – Saint Paul Street**

- **Given credit as the Convention that changed the face of Freemasonry**
- **Sixteen Grand Lodges attended the nine day meeting:**
 - **AL, DC, FL, GA, LA, MA, MD, MO, NC, NH, NY, OH, RI, SC, TN and VA**
 - **Past Grand Master Robert Strange of Fayetteville was appointed to attend as the NC representative**
- **Many hours spent discussing point brought and recommended at Washington, DC meeting**
 - **Officially approved everything accomplished at the 1842 meeting**
- **John Dove, Grand Secretary – VA was appointed President**
 - **Stated for the first time in the Masonic history of the US that it was found necessary to assemble the Craft to basically work to preserve the ancient landmarks of our beloved Order.**
- **May 9th Committee on the General Object of the Convention declared the Objective which was adopted and it was two fold:**
 - 1. To produce uniformity of Masonic Work**
 - 2. To recommend such measures as shall tend to the elevation of the Order to its due degree of respect throughout the world at large**



The Baltimore Convention.....facts

- **Four standing committees were appointed:**
 - **On the work and lectures in conferring degrees**
 - **On the Funeral Service**
 - **On the ceremonies of Consecration and Installation**
 - **On Masonic Jurisprudence**
- **May 10th – 12th:**
 - **Recited 1st degree, adopted 14-1 with NY casting dissenting vote**
 - **Opening and closing of 1st degree was adopted**
 - **Recited 2nd degree lecture, adopted. NY representative Ebenezer Wadsworth not happy and requested to be excused from serving**
 - **Opening of 3rd degree adopted 12-1 with NY again casting a dissenting vote.**
- **May 15th: The Committee on Dedication, Consecration and Installation of Lodges reported**
 - **After comparing various authors and systems, the “Monitor” under the authorship of MW Thomas Smith Webb republished in 1812 possess the least faults, has a high claim to antiquity and having been in general use as a standard of work for nearly half a century, possess no errors of material as to require alteration except six minor points which were recommended, three of which were in the Installation Ceremony.**



The Baltimore Convention.....facts

- **The Convention adopted a resolution that was to have far-reaching and controversial effects:**
 - **That a Committee be designated to prepare and publish at an early day, a text book, to be called "The Masonic Trestle-Board," to embrace three distinct, full and complete "Masonic Carpets," illustrative of the three Degrees of ancient Craft Masonry; together with the ceremonies of consecrations, dedications and installation; laying of corner-stones of public edifices; the Funeral service, and order of processions. To which shall be added the Charges, Prayers and Exhortations, and the selection from scripture, appropriate and proper for Lodge service.**
 - **The Committee further reported, that they deem it expedient that a work be published to contain archaeological research into the history of the Fraternity in the various nations of the world.**
 - **The Committee on Masonic Jurisprudence reported it had considered whether or not "the evils which this Convention has met to rectify and remove, have arisen from any defect or fault in the present system of organizations as adopted by the Fraternity of the United States." It concluded the evils existed, mainly because of the individual action of the numerous Grand Lodges in the United States.**
 - **Inter-communication between Grand Lodges did not exist. The "purity and unity" of work prevalent in Europe was therefore missing.**

- **"UNITY throughout the whole Masonic family is essential," claimed the Committee. "Any system of polity tending to throw obstacles in its way must be wrong. The simple truth that we are all Brethren of one family, and look up to one common Father, the Lord our God, is the basis of all the ancient constitutions. "**



The Baltimore Convention.....facts

- **To correct the "evils" that prevailed, the Committee said it had considered two plans:**
 - **1st - A General Grand Lodge of the United States.**
 - **2nd - A triennial convention of representatives of the several Grand Lodges of the United States."**
- **It went on to state: "Your Committee, without encumbering their report with long arguments, beg to recommend the latter course as being that, which in their opinion, will best attain the end proposed.**
- **So, contrary to what many Freemasons have been led to believe, the Baltimore Convention of 1843 **did not** recommend the establishment of General Grand Lodge. It did recommend "the several Grand Lodges of the United States to enter into and form a National Masonic Convention."**
- **Other considerations recommended:**
 - **The Master is an integral part of its government, unable to sit in judgment on himself, and yet without whom the Lodge could not act. The Committee offered the following, with which the Convention concurred.... "a subordinate Lodge has not the right to try its Master, but that he is amenable to the Grand Lodge alone."**
 - **The Committee considered sojourning Masons as "freeloaders." It believed all Masons living in the vicinity of a Lodge and not a member of it should be required to contribute "a sum equal in value to the annual dues per capita of the subordinate Lodge in whose jurisdiction they reside."**
 - **In an attempt to bring unity "Throughout the world in all things pertaining to Masonry," the Convention approved a recommendation to send "a Delegate from the Masonic Fraternity of the United States to their Brethren in Europe."**



The Baltimore Convention.....facts

- **May 15th – 16th:**
 - **Additional degree work exemplified in all degrees**
 - **It was "Resolved, that the interest of the Masonic Fraternity, and the good of mankind may be greatly promoted by the publication of a periodical devoted to Free-Masonry. This Convention, therefore, cheerfully recommend the Free-Mason's Monthly Magazine, edited and published by Brother Charles W. Moore, of Boston, Massachusetts as eminently useful and well-deserving the generous patronage, support and study of the whole Fraternity." The Convention concurred.**
 - **Each delegate contributed \$5.00 to defray the expenses of printing.**
 - **It was resolved to hold the next Convention in Winchester, Virginia, "on the second Monday in May, in the year 1846." This was never held.**

- **May 17th: The Convention approved a letter, read by the Secretary, Albert Case, to be sent to "the Masonic Fraternity of the United States." Each paragraph contained the flowery language of the day pleading with the Freemasons of the country to unite in love, friendship and brotherhood.**
- **This letter, written immediately following the anti-Masonic craze that began in 1826, called upon all Lodges "to exercise their powers and cleanse the sanctuary" of unfaithful Masons.**
- **It concluded by asking all Freemasons to "Be true to your principles, and the great moral edifice will stand beautiful and complete. Together, Brethren, be true and faithful."**



The Baltimore Convention.....conclusions

- **The main objective of the Convention was:**
 - **1) Attempt to perfect the ritual**
 - **2) Draw up articles for the permanent organization of a Triennial Masonic Convention of the US**
- **In both these efforts it failed**
 - **Body of attendees were too small, twenty-three delegates from fourteen Grand Lodges**
- **Following the Baltimore Convention:**
 - **May 11, 1846: Representatives from NC, VA, IA, MI, DC, and MO met in Winchester, VA but with only eight delegates attending they adjourned without doing any business**
 - **Past Grand Master Lewis H. Marsteller was appointed as the NC representative to attend the 1846 convention. PGM Marsteller was also appointed Chairman of this convention by those delegates attending from the other jurisdictions**
 - **September 23, 1847: Held again in Baltimore, delegates from NC, FL, GA, MS, AR, MD and DC met to consider forming a General Grand Lodge. Constitution adopted and sent to other Grand Lodges with the understanding that if sixteen of them approved the measure before January 1, 1849 it would go into effect. This project failed to get the necessary support and came to a halt**
 - **Additional conventions were called for in 1855 and 1859 but were never held**

The Convention was ended, but its accomplishments would change the face of Freemasonry throughout the United States.



The Baltimore Convention of 1843.....summary

- First known introduction of “dues cards”
- Introduction of initiation fees prior to degrees
- Many Grand Lodges changed to transacting business in the MM degree
- Established suspension for NPD's
- And some suggested uniformity of work was established

Significant long lasting changes were a result of this convention



Questions??



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