

PROCEEDINGS  
PROPERTY OF  
SCOTTISH RITE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. OF A

No. *M17973*

CONVENTION

TO FORM A

SUPREME GRAND LODGE

FOR THE UNITED STATES,

*at the Masonic Hall*  
HELD IN THE CITY OF BALTIMORE, ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> DAY  
OF SEPTEMBER, 1847.

BALTIMORE:  
PRINTED BY JOS. ROBINSON.

1847.

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*Proceedings of a Convention  
to form a  
Supreme Grand Lodge  
for the United States*

MASONIC HALL,

BALTIMORE, SEPT. 23, 1847.

This being the day appointed for the meeting of delegates from the several Grand Lodges in the United States, to consider the propriety of forming a General Grand Lodge, the representatives from the Grand Lodges of North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas and Maryland, met at the Masonic Hall, in the city of Baltimore, at 10 o'clock, A. M. Letters were read from several Grand Secretaries, in reply to the circular from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Maryland, stating that their Grand Lodges had approved the object of the Convention, and assigning the reasons why it was not convenient to send delegates. The members present resolved to proceed in the business for which they were convened; and the Convention was organized by appointing

Bro. WILLIAM P. MELLEN, of Mississippi, President, and  
Bro. Jos. ROBINSON, of Maryland, Secretary.

Bro. Gilman presented the following communication, which was read :

*Worshipful Brother—*

I am directed by the Grand Lodge of Maryland to tender to the Convention here assembled the use of the Grand Lodge Room in the Masonic Hall, for their accommodation.

The Grand Secretary is also authorized to make all necessary arrangements for your convenient accommodation.

I am respectfully and fraternally yours,

CHARLES GILMAN,  
G. M. of the G. L. of Md.

To the W. Wm. P. Mellen, President, &c.

*Baltimore, 23d Sept. 1847.*

On motion, Bros. Robinson, Northrop and Dwelle were appointed a Committee on the Credentials of members.

After which the Convention was adjourned till half past 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

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*Half past 3 o'clock.*

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment. Present the same members as in the morning.

The Committee on Credentials reported that the following brethren were properly accredited as delegates to this Convention :

*From the G. Lodge of North Carolina*—Isaac Northrop.

“ “ *Florida*—H. R. Taylor and Thos. Hayward.

“ “ *Georgia*—Lemuel Dwelle.

“ “ *Mississippi*—William P. Mellen.

“ “ *Arkansas*—William T. Gould.

“ “ *Maryland*—Chas. Gilman, Hugh Ely, D. A. Piper, R. C. Morse and Jos. Robinson.

On motion, it was resolved, that a committee be appointed to report to the Convention, at its next meeting, a Constitution for a Supreme Grand Lodge of the United States. The President appointed Bros. Gilman, Northrop and Gould, said committee.

Bros. Robinson, Hayward and Morse were appointed a committee to endeavor to ascertain the names of all the Grand Lodges which have agreed to appoint delegates to this Convention, and report at the next meeting.

The Convention was then adjourned till half past 7 o'clock this evening.

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*Half past 7 o'clock.*

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment. Present all the members.

Bro. Gould, from the committee, reported the draft of a Constitution for a Supreme Grand Lodge of the United States,—which was read.

The Convention then resolved itself into Committee of the Whole, Bro. I. NORTHROP in the Chair, for the purpose of considering said report—about ten o'clock the committee rose, and asked leave to sit again.

The Convention was then adjourned till 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

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*FRIDAY, Sept. 24th.*

The Convention met pursuant to adjournment. Present the same Grand Lodges as yesterday.

The committee appointed to endeavor to ascertain the names of all the Grand Lodges which have agreed to appoint delegates to the Convention, made a verbal report, which was accepted.

The Committee on Credentials of members further reported that Bros. Wm. B. Magruder, T. B. J. Frye, and Abram O. Bowen, were duly accredited as delegates from the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia—which delegation appeared in Convention.

The Convention then, in Committee of the Whole, Bro. LEMUEL DWELLE in the Chair, resumed the consideration of the Constitution reported by the committee—which having been amended, the committee rose and reported it to the Convention.

The Convention adopted the Constitution, as reported by the Committee of the Whole.

On motion, a committee of five was appointed to draft an address to the several Grand Lodges, to be printed with the record of the proceedings and Constitution. Bros. Gilman, Piper, Northrop, Dwelle and Robinson, were appointed said committee.

On motion, it was resolved, that the record of the proceedings be signed by the President and Secretary, and a printed copy thereof sent to each of the Masonic papers and periodicals in the United States.

On motion, resolved that the record of the proceedings be printed under the direction of the committee appointed to draft the address to the several Grand Lodges.

On motion, resolved that the thanks of the Convention be presented to the Grand Lodge of Maryland for the use of its Hall.

Bro. Mellen having retired from the Chair, the following resolution was offered and unanimously adopted :

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the Convention be tendered to Bro. Wm. P. Mellen, for the able and efficient manner in which he has discharged the duties of President of this body.

On motion, it was

*Resolved*, That the thanks of this Convention be tendered to Bro. Jos. Robinson, for his services as Secretary of this body during the session.

The business of the Convention being concluded, it was adjourned *sine die*.

WILLIAM P. MELLEN, *President*.

JOS. ROBINSON, *Secretary*.

A. CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
SUPREME GRAND LODGE  
FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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ARTICLE I.

SECTION 1. The Grand Lodges of Free and Accepted, Ancient York Masons, in the United States of America, are declared to be united under one *Supreme Grand Lodge*. *Provided*, that before the first day of January, 1849, sixteen of the said Grand Lodges shall have ratified this Constitution, and not otherwise. This section is to take effect on such Grand Lodges only as may ratify or adopt this Constitution, and such as may be formed under it. Any State Grand Lodge, which shall have come under this jurisdiction, may, at any time, withdraw from the same, without censure, by a concurrent vote of two-thirds at each of two successive, regular, annual meetings, communicated to the Supreme Grand Secretary. *Provided*, no Grand Lodge shall have the right to withdraw during the pendency of an appeal, to which said Grand Lodge is a party, nor while under censure.

SEC. 2. The Supreme Grand Lodge of the United States of America shall have jurisdiction over all Grand and Subordinate Symbolic Lodges in the United States and Territories, ratifying or adopting this Constitution, and in those where there is no Grand Lodge. Its jurisdiction shall extend to all disputes or differences between State Grand Lodges; to appeals from the same; to the government and superintendance of their own subordinate Lodges; and to the regulation of the mode of work, in the symbolic degrees, throughout its limits.

SEC. 3 The officers of this body shall be a Supreme Grand Master, two Deputy Supreme Grand Masters, Supreme Senior and

Junior Grand Wardens, Supreme Senior and Junior Grand Deacons, Supreme Secretary, and Supreme Treasurer. *Provided*, it shall be competent for the Supreme Grand Lodge to appoint, for the time being, such other subordinate officers as may be deemed expedient, who shall not be entitled to vote as such. The foregoing officers for the time being, with all Past Supreme Grand and Supreme Deputy Grand Masters, the Grand Masters, Deputy Grand Masters and Grand Wardens of State Grand Lodges, and Masters of subordinate Lodges in States and Territories having no Grand Lodges, shall constitute the Supreme Grand Lodge.

SEC. 4. Each Supreme Grand officer, and each Master of a subordinate Lodge shall have one vote, and the officer or officers present, or their proxies, of each State Grand Lodge four votes. The representatives of three State Grand Lodges shall form a quorum for business. The Supreme Grand Master, Supreme Deputy Grand Masters and Supreme Grand Wardens, and the State Grand Masters and Deputy Grand Masters and no others, may appear and vote by proxy. No proxy shall be given to a Supreme Grand officer, or to any person not a member of some Lodge under this jurisdiction.

SEC. 5. The Supreme Grand Lodge shall meet triennially, on the second Tuesday in July, at a place from time to time to be appointed. The meetings shall be holden, alternately, east and west of the Alleghany mountains, beginning at Baltimore, in the year 1849.

SEC. 6. If, at any time, the election of officers shall, from any cause, fail to be had at the appointed period, the existing officers shall hold their places till their successors shall be elected and installed.

SEC. 7. The Supreme Grand Master, and in case of his death or inability to act, either of the Supreme Deputy Grand Masters, shall have power to call a meeting of this body, at any time, on giving three months notice; and either of them shall do so, whenever requested by three of the State Grand Lodges.

SEC. 8. Either of the first three Supreme Grand officers may grant dispensations for Lodges in any State or Territory where there is no Grand Lodge; which shall be valid till the next meeting of this body, when a charter may be granted. *Provided*, that if there be in such State or Territory any existing Lodge, no dispensation or charter shall



issue, without a recommendation from the nearest Lodge. The fees for a Dispensation or Charter shall not be less than fifty dollars, and ten dollars to the Supreme Grand Secretary for engrossing the Charter, to be paid always in advance; which fee shall be immediately remitted, by the officer receiving it, to the Supreme Grand Treasurer. And every subordinate Lodge, acting under the immediate jurisdiction of the Supreme Grand Lodge, shall pay to this body, for every candidate raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, the sum of one dollar. The jurisdiction of the several Grand Lodges, under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Grand Lodge, shall be restricted to the limits of the State or Territory in which they respectively are held.

SEC. 9. The fees for conferring the first three degrees in Masonry, under this jurisdiction, shall never be less than fifteen dollars.

SEC. 10. The general duties of the officers of this body are sufficiently defined by Masonic usage. In the absence of the first five Supreme Grand officers, the chair shall be taken by the oldest Past Supreme Grand officer, highest in rank, present, and if none such be present, then by the oldest State Grand Master present.

#### ARTICLE II.

SEC. 1. The State Grand Lodges shall continue their present organization, powers and duties, without any change, but at their own pleasure, except so far may as be necessary to conform to this Constitution.

SEC. 2. In any State or Territory where three or more Lodges shall have worked for one year, under regular Charters, a Grand Lodge may be formed, by authority of this Supreme Grand body, or of either of the first three officers thereof.

SEC. 3. Whenever a Dispensation shall have been granted to a Lodge by a Supreme Grand officer, the Charter shall be granted by the Supreme Grand Lodge, notwithstanding the intermediate formation of a Grand Lodge in such State or Territory.

SEC. 4. The Grand Secretaries of each Grand Lodge under this jurisdiction, shall annually communicate to each other and to the Supreme Grand Secretary, all proceedings of their respective Grand Lodges, and full lists of their officers.

#### ARTICLE III.

SEC. 1. No Lodge or assembly of Masons shall work within this jurisdiction without a Charter or Dispensation from some regular Ma-

sonic body, or from some officer thereof, duly authorized to issue the same. And all Masonic intercourse is hereby forbidden with all assemblies of Masons, and the members thereof, held without such Charter or Dispensation.

SEC. 2. All subordinate Lodges, under the direct jurisdiction of this Supreme Grand body, shall make annual returns to the Supreme Grand Secretary, and pay their dues; and on failure thereof, steps may be taken to forfeit their Charters.

SEC. 3. All Lodges, chartered by this body, shall be duly consecrated, and their officers installed by one of the first three Supreme Grand officers, or by his proxy; and until such consecration and installation, no officer elect shall have a seat in this body.

SEC. 4. This Constitution may be altered or amended, at a regular meeting only, by a vote of two-thirds of the constitutional votes present.

#### ARTICLE IV. [TEMPORARY.]

SEC. 1. The foregoing Constitution shall be printed, and five copies thereof transmitted, as early as possible, by the Secretary of this Convention, to each of the several Grand Lodges in the United States. If, before the first of January, 1849, sixteen of said Grand Lodges shall adopt the same, it shall be established and confirmed. If not, it shall be null and void.

SEC. 2. The Grand Lodges adopting this Constitution shall forthwith report their adoption to the President of this Convention, to the Secretary of the same, and to the Grand Master of the District of Columbia for the time being. This threefold notice is required to avoid accident from death or otherwise.

SEC. 3. The President, or in case of his death or disability, the Secretary, and if both be dead or disabled, the said Grand Master shall, so soon as sixteen Grand Lodges have ratified this Constitution, give notice to all the Grand Lodges in the United States to meet in Convention, to organize the Supreme Grand Lodge; and all Grand Lodges sending delegations to that Convention, shall be received as subordinate to said Supreme Grand Lodge.

SEC. 4. Said Convention, if holden, shall meet in Baltimore, on the second Tuesday in July, 1849.

## ADDRESS

*To the Officers and Members of the several Grand Lodges of Free and Accepted Masons in the United States.*

By the herewith accompanying minutes of the proceedings of the Convention of Grand Lodges, recently held in the city of Baltimore, it will be seen that it was made the duty of the undersigned to address you upon the subject of a Supreme Grand Lodge for the United States, and to present to you some of the reasons why the Convention thought it advisable to adopt the proposed measure; and also to answer the objections that have been elsewhere urged against it.

Within the last few years the Masonic Institution has arisen to an importance to which it had never before attained in this country. It has taken a deep hold of the public mind, and is attracting the attention of those who, heretofore, have been accustomed to look upon it with indifference, not to say distrust. It, therefore, becomes those whose duty it is to guide and direct its movements, to see to it, that the great principles of truth and justice, philanthropy and benevolence, which it teaches, be inculcated and practised—to see to it, that the foundation upon which it rests is preserved intact by the restless and changeful—and that the fair fabric be kept in good and healthful condition.

To accomplish this desirable end, there must be unity of action as well as oneness of object. But there can be no unity without uniformity; no stability without a recognition of the same principles of action. And that uniformity can be had, and those principles of action known and maintained, only through the medium of an acknowledged head, to which all may look in confidence for direction.

It is a well known fact that difficulties are constantly arising between Grand Lodges, as to their respective jurisdiction—nay, even as to what shall constitute a Grand Lodge, how to be organized, and what its powers when established. The fraternity, in some States, have organized what they term Grand Lodges, and yet other Grand Lodges have pronounced them irregular and spurious, and have gone so far as to establish Lodges in those States, subordinate to their own;

whilst others, equally entitled to sit in judgment in the matter, have reprobated the course of the latter, denominating their proceedings acts of injustice and usurpation.

*Jay* To guard against conflicting interests among the Grand Lodges, and to prevent the mischief likely to result from the organization of Lodges by different Grand Lodges, in the same State or Territory, should be the ardent desire of every Mason. New States and Territories are being rapidly introduced into the Union. In a few years more, and the vast regions of the West will teem with thousands and millions of our race, and the Order will be proportionably increased. New Lodges will be established, and, if there be no general head to the Institution, charters will be granted by different Grand Lodges in the same State or Territory; competition will be excited; interests will conflict; jealousies spring up; and that which has been, will again be seen—*two Grand Lodges, formed by Lodges deriving their authority from different sources, both claiming the supreme power, within one and the same political community.* All this might, and would have been avoided, had these several subordinate Lodges derived their authority from ~~the~~ a common source. What tribunal shall then settle the difficulty ~~the~~ shall each Grand Lodge constitute itself an arbiter in the case? ~~Lodges~~, is it quite certain that they will all agree in the matter; or if they should not, that one will give way to another? Experience has taught otherwise.

Too much diligence cannot be used in guarding the Institution against the designs of the unworthy applicant for its rights from without, and the cupidity of the mercenary from within. There are those who would make merchandize of our rights and privileges, regardless alike of their obligations and duties; and there are those among us who, though well disposed, nevertheless, acting from impulse, unwittingly recommend an applicant without a sufficient knowledge of his character and previous history. Instances frequently occur of persons, after being rejected by Lodges at their place of residence, applying to Lodges in other States, receiving the degrees, and then, on return to their homes, demanding entrance, as visitors, at the doors of the Lodges whence they had been dismissed on account of their utter unworthiness to be made masons. And against this great evil

and injustice there is now no fixed rule acknowledged by the Grand Lodges.

The want of uniformity in the work and lectures has long been a subject of regret, and various ways have been suggested by which it was hoped the evil might be remedied. These have hitherto failed; so much so, that masons who were thought sufficiently skilful to conduct the business of Lodges at home, have found difficulty in obtaining admission, as visitors, in others abroad, even in an adjacent State.

It is not the purpose of the undersigned to enter into a detail of all the evils which it is believed a Supreme Grand Lodge might prevent, or correct, if found to exist. That it would prove effectual in the above mentioned cases, and in others that might be enumerated, they entertain no doubt. But a remark made by one of the most eminent and distinguished masons in the country, brother James Herring, chairman of the Committee of Foreign Correspondence in the Grand Lodge of New York—one whose zeal, fidelity, and untiring industry has elevated that Grand Lodge to an exalted position among her sister Grand Lodges, and who has done much towards infusing life and spirit into the Order in other parts of the country, where listlessness and inactivity had become but too apparent, is so descriptive of the present condition of things as to deserve the most serious consideration of all who feel an interest in the well-being of the Institution. In discussing the policy of instituting a supreme head for the order in the United States, he says: "Of late years, we have noticed in many places, a disposition to make innovations, and to vindicate those already made; many strange doctrines advanced, and singular enactments published." And how happens all this? It is because each Grand Lodge, composed as it is, not at all times of the best and wisest men, does that which seems good in its own eyes. It is because there is no regulating power—no controlling head. The present is an age of commotion—nothing seems permanent or fixed. The cry is for "the progressive system"—progressive politics—progressive religion—and shall we accumulate *progressive free masonry* too? May Heaven avert that calamity! And yet we but too clearly see the approach of that hydra-headed monster, and would cast it to the earth before it has power to do further mischief.

We come to the objections that have been urged against the measure.

It is said that the time has not yet arrived when such an institution can be established with advantage to the fraternity; that there is no occasion for a power superior to that which the Grand Lodges now wield; that Gen. Washington, in his time, deemed it inexpedient, and that it is not to be presumed we, of the present day, are wiser than were he and his compeers; that it would lessen the spirit of emulation among the Grand Lodges, and cool the ardor of their officers and members; that it would be a novelty, an innovation, and an experiment in masonry; and that such a measure has been heretofore successfully opposed. That if invested with sufficient power to subserve the purposes of its friends, it would accumulate to itself *all power*, and strike down all the Grand Lodges of the States; that if a lesser power be delegated, then its edicts would be inoperative—it would be merely an advisory power; and, consequently, its admonitions and counsels might be disobeyed with impunity; there being no authority to command, there would be no obligation to obey. These seem to be the principal reasons found among the proceedings of such Grand Lodges, have expressed themselves against the measure, where reasons have been assigned.

It is an easy matter to set up a theory, and, from assumed premises, to construct a plausible argument; easier yet to object to a measure where no reasons for such objections are demanded. But a little practical experience is of more value than all the theories of the imaginative, and is usually found sufficient to upset them.

It is objected that the time for such an Institution has not yet arrived; and that there exists no necessity for a power greater than that now exerted by the Grand Lodges. Is there necessity? Let him who doubts the fact examine the reports of Committees on Correspondence in the various Grand Lodges; there he shall find, page after page, filled with the notices of all sorts of irregularities, "*many strange doctrines and singular enactments*," collisions upon the fundamental principles of Grand Lodge organizations—crimination and re-crimination; one accumulating diverse rites, and claiming authority over degrees in Masonry, to which some of its members have never been admitted—another for these causes declaring such an organization to be subversive of all order, anti-masonic, and void—And in

all these, and other difficulties, there exists no power to decide as an ultimate resort. Whether it be the appropriate *time* for the establishment of such an institution, let this condition of things determine. That General Washington advised that it was inexpedient—Whether this be so or otherwise, or whether the attention of our illustrious brother was ever called to the subject even, the undersigned have no means of knowing. We all know that until near the termination of that great and good man's earthly career, he was at the head of the young Republic; that Republic then but recently organized under a Constitution which had encountered a most formidable opposition from some of the first men in the country, for the reason that they supposed they saw a great central power accumulating, which would ultimately terminate in a monarchical form of government. General Washington might readily have foreseen that the effort would be made to place him at the head of the Masonic Institution—and well might he have feared the effect that such a movement was likely to produce upon minds already sufficiently excited—the President of the Republic at the head of a systematically organized, secret, and powerful Institution, whose objects were now, well known and understood. But the condition of the Institution has undergone great changes within the last half century, and every one must know that we can come to no opinion as to what the men of that day would do in the present emergency, from what they did in their time.

That it would be a novelty, an innovation in Masonry, and would lessen the spirit of emulation among the officers of members of the Grand Lodges. The Grand Lodge of England can scarcely be called a novelty or innovation. And yet it is a Supreme Grand Lodge, with powers vastly superior to those proposed to be given to the contemplated institution. It is a Supreme Grand Lodge, having as its subordinates a great number of Provincial Grand Lodges, with their subordinate Lodges, and other Lodges immediately subordinate to itself. And has it yet been discovered that the officers and members of the Provincial Grand Lodges are less emulous or energetic than they would have been, had each been an independent community? The idea is imaginative, and too far fetched.

That if power were delegated sufficient to enable it to cause its decrees to be respected and obeyed, it would accumulate to itself all power, and destroy the Grand Lodges. In other words, that it would

voluntarily destroy the substratum upon which its own existence depends! And with what object? Does it appear that the Grand Lodge of England has ever manifested a desire to destroy, or even to lessen, the importance of the Provincial Grand Lodges? Are free masons of these United States less to be relied upon than those of the United Kingdom? Has the General Grand Chapter of the United States, which was organized more than half a century ago, and upon these same principles, ever manifested a desire to lessen the importance of the Grand Chapters under her jurisdiction? Nay, is it not a well known fact that she has, at all times, lent her aid and influence in the support and maintenance of those bodies? Her acts and doings attest this fact, and challenge contradiction. As well may it be said that a Grand Lodge would seek to destroy its subordinate Lodges, and thus commit an act of *felo de se*.

It is admitted that without the power to enforce its decrees, its acts would be nugatory, and itself a creature of useless existence. It is not, however, proposed to organize such a body, but one like the General Grand Chapter and the General Grand Encampment of the United States, possessing power; and whilst it controls the restless and designing, it at the same time will demand and receive the respect of all. The periodical meetings will call together many of the distinguished members of the masonic family from the various parts of our extended and extending country. This will bind closer the fraternal band, and give life, and spirit and energy to the hearts of those whose first and only aim is to be good and true.

By the provisions of the Constitution herewith submitted for your consideration, it will be seen, that if sixteen Grand Lodges shall approve of the measure, and signify their approval before the 1st day of January, 1849, then it is to go into effect, and not otherwise. And in the event of such approval, then the first meeting is to be held in the city of Baltimore, on the second Tuesday in July, 1849.

CHARLES GILMAN,  
DANIEL A. PIPER,  
ISAAC NORTHROP,  
LEMUEL DWELLE,  
JOSEPH ROBINSON.

BALTIMORE, September 25th 1847.

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