

Capsulated History of The United Supreme Council, 33° AASR, S.J.

the successor to
The Washington Supreme Council for The Southern and Western Jurisdiction (1869)
Washington, D.C.
and
The Star of Bethlehem Supreme Council (1870)
Baltimore, Maryland

By:

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The first Scottish Rite Mason of record in the now Southern Jurisdiction was Illustrious Edward M. Thomas, 33°, Washington, D.C., a member of the Mother Supreme Council at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who petitioned to form a Supreme Council for Washington, D.C.

On Monday, May 5, 1856, seven Sovereign Grand Inspectors General from Philadelphia conferred degrees upon Bros. John A. Gray (1), Joseph Smallwood (1), John T. Costin (3), Henry H. Dade (4), Adolphus Hall (4) and Alfred Lee (4). A Supreme Council was NOT organized that day.

A constitutional number of Illustrious Peers, under the authority granted Ill. Edward M. Thomas and seven Sovereign Grand Inspectors General from Philadelphia, Penn., formed the second Supreme Council for colored men in the United States of America designated The United Supreme Council, 33° for The Southern and Western Jurisdiction, Grand East at Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, April 5, 1869 with the following Table of Organization:

- III. William H. Thomas Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander
- III. William H. Edinborough Puissant Lt. Grand Commander
- III. John A. Gray Grand Minister of State
- III. Henry H. Dade Grand Treasurer General, H.E.
- III. John T. Costin Grand Secretary-General, H.E.
- III. Adolphus Hall Grand Auditor General, H.E.
- III. John W. Freeman Grand Master of Ceremonies
- III. John B. Washington Grand Herald
- III. Joseph Smallwood Grand Tiler
- III. Alfred Lee
- III. Edward M. Thomas

The Star of Bethlehem Supreme Council, Grand East at Baltimore, Maryland, came into existence after the conferral of the degrees by Baron Hugo Auguste de Bulow, a member of the Grand Orient of France upon Bro. Lemuel G. Griffin and six others from as many states in 1862, Ill. Griffin in 1870 as Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander. Among the early Peers were Ill. Rev. Bro. James A. Handy, Hiram Watty.

In 1871, Bro. Joshua D. Kelly and six others from Pennsylvania received the degrees from Ill. Lemuel G. Griffin, MPSGC. From these auspicious beginnings, King Frederick Supreme Council of Philadelphia reportedly became extant in 1879.

The dissolution of The National Grand Lodge in 1877 guaranteed the appreciable alternative to union suggested in 1881.

The condition of the five Supreme Councils in the United States of America prompted a conference call

by those in authority in each Supreme Council to determine the question of amalgamation. A Council of Deliberation met in New York, New York, Monday, January 31, 1881, determined two Supreme Councils for the U.S.A. and adopted and signed The Articles of Union, thus launching the now Northern Jurisdiction on its career of service to God, country and mankind.

In sessions held in Washington, D.C., Friday, September 17, 1886, Ill. Thornton A. Jackson, and in Baltimore, Maryland, Ill. Rev. James A. Handy, Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commanders, respectively, in compliance with the rulings of The Council of Deliberation of January 31, 1881, named the following Commissioners, viz:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Washington Supreme Council III. Thornton A. Jackson III. James Dean III. Richard Howell Gleaves III. John N. Dorster III. Henry H. Dade III. John W. Freeman III. Jerome A. Johnson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Baltimore Supreme Council III. James A. Handy III. Lemuel G. Griffin III. A. Webb Tancil III. Richard H. Freeman III. Hiram Watty III. Joseph H. Lee III. William H. Mitchell |
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Thus, the year 1886 can be considered the "ne plus ultra" phase in our founding in which ALL the designs were laid on the trestleboard for January 27, 1887.

On Thursday, January 27, 1887, the fourteen Commissioners met in Washington, D.C. (the Grand Lodge building, 308 Eleventh Street, N.W.) in Senate Chamber, in Council of Union and Amalgamation, set up a temporary organization; Ill. James A. Handy, 33° presiding, Ill. James Dean, 33°, secretary, A. Webb Tancil, 33°, assistant secretary, John B. Hutchings, 33°, Captain of the Guard and Peter W. Bryant, 33°, Seneschal.

The Articles of Agreement between the two separate entities were read in their entirety and unanimously adopted; the presiding officer then proclaiming The United Supreme Council of the Thirty-third and last degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America duly and permanently established, abolished the temporary organization, filled all stations and places and called Ill. Thornton A. Jackson to the Throne to open The United Supreme Grand Council.

The election produced the following results:

- III. James A. Handy, 33° Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander
- III. Thornton A. Jackson, 33° Puissant Lt. Grand commander

III. Joseph H. Lee, 33°	III. Grand Prior
III. Richard Howell Gleaves, 33°	III. Grand Chancellor
III. A. Webb Tancil, 33°	III. Grand Minister of State
III. James Dean, 33°	III. Grand Secretary-General, H.E.
III. Henry H. Dade, 33°	III. Grand Treasurer General, H.E.
III. Hiram Watty, 33°	III. Grand Almoner
III. Jerome A. Johnson, 33°	III. Grand Auditor

The following nine officers were appointed:

III. John N. Dorster	III. Grand Master of Ceremonies
III. Richard H. Freeman, 33°	III. Grand Chamberlain
III. Peter W. Bryant, 33°	First Grand Equerry
III. James Lewis, 33°	Second Grand Equerry
III. John W. Freeman, 33°	Grand Standard Bearer
III. Lemuel G. Griffin, 33°	Grand Sword Bearer
III. Richard T. Greener, 33°	Grand Herald
III. Theodore H. Green, 33°	Grand Organist
III. William H. Mitchell, 33°	Grand Tiler

III. Lemuel G. Griffin, Past MPSGC, answered the call to the Throne; the Secretary-General designate again read The Articles of Union for this Supreme Council, demanded and was given the necessary pledges and administered the oath of allegiance and fealty to all present. III. Rev. James A. Handy invoked the aid of Diety upon the works. III. Lemuel G. Griffin declared The United Supreme Council of the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General of the 33rd and last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America, duly constituted, inaugurated and consecrated and thereupon, duly installed all officers with appropriate ceremonies.

Other valleys came into existence that day, viz; Illinois, Nebraska and Florida.

The Committee on Constitution (III. Sirs Thornton A. Jackson, Hiram Watty, Jerome A. Johnson and Richard H. Freeman) made its report which was received and adopted.

After other unfinished business, The Supreme Council called from labor to rest, whence it reconvened March 25, 1887; III. Sirs John G. Jones and Frederick C. Revels were introduced and inducted into membership. Rosters of the former Supreme Councils were placed on file. III. Sirs John G. Jones, E.R. Overall and James E. Francis became active members that day. III. Sirs Handy, Jackson and Dean became members of the commission to treat with the Northern Jurisdiction respecting boundaries. Other standing committees were appointed. There being no further business, The Supreme Council adjourned.

III. John G. Jones, when PLGC, and provoked at not being elected again to that station or being elected MPSGC (1893), initiated a schism which caused his suspension on November 6, 1895 and what later had become his permanent suspension at the annual session of October 22, 1896 held at Washington, D.C. He and his close collaborator, Dorsey F. Seville (10) of Washington, D.C. embarked upon a program of establishing clandestine masonic organizations nationwide that continues to plague Prince Hall masonry to this day.

In the early years of the new century, The Supreme Council housed itself in its own commodious building 1633 Eleventh Street, N.W., which it occupied until the 1960s when the law of eminent domain forced vacating the building.

Growth accelerated after the Second World War, The Supreme Council commencing many charitable endeavors, among them, the acquisition of housing

units in the several states as a means of relieving conditions endemic among the Negro populace (The Supreme Council headquarters are located at 33 K Street, N.W. one of our Housing Units and the instituting of The Charitable Foundation and becoming a stabilizing community influence.

Here is an infinitely brief account of our seven Sovereign Grand Commanders.

III. James A. Handy, 33° (1887-1888), and The Supreme Council concerned themselves with the organizational birth pangs.

III. Thornton A. Jackson, 33° (1888-1904) continued the organizational trends, contended with the Jones-Seville faction, kept the "Ship of State" on an even keel and expanded Scottish Rite masonry wherever.

III. Joseph L. H. Smith, 33° (1904-1911) secured the rental of 1633 Eleventh Street, N.W. In 1906, the association brought the property. In 1907, boundary lines were agreed by the two Supreme Councils.

III. Robert L. Pendleton, 33° (1912-1929) continued the great works of his predecessors under the additional burden of recessionary times.

III. Dr. Willard W. Allen, 33° (1929-1961) advocated in the strongest terms, the establishing excellent rapport with the Grand Masters; he further repaired the Cathedral and finally burned the mortgage in Atlanta, Georgia, March, 1944.

III. Dr. John G. Lewis, Jr., 33° (1961-1979) under whose incumbency the Cathedral had been abandoned as disclosed in a preceeding* paragraph. Indeed, Dr. Lewis was one of the outstanding masons of all times. A forthcoming publication, "Jno. G. Lewis—An End of an Era: history of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Louisiana 1842-1979 speaks to many of the accomplishments nationwide.

III. Dr. I. H. Clayborn, 33° (1979 to present) as his predecessors, greatly enhanced Scottish Rite masonry, gave increased scope to The Charitable Foundation, realized increased memberships. As his hand is always in God's hand, HE WILL ESTABLISH A CATHEDRAL FOR THIS SOUTHERN JURISDICTION!!

All of the above seven SGCs have greatly added to the prestige of our institution and with the continued help of The Sovereign Grand Commander of the Universe, we will continue our triumphs and affirm the indomitability of Prince Hall Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

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