



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: The Origins of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska

Full Citation: Dennis N Mihelich, "The Origins of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 76 (1995): 20-21.

URL of article: http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1995Pr_Hall_Origin.pdf

Date: 3/9/2011

Article Summary: Prince Hall Masonry is an African American fraternal organization that arose because blacks were excluded from white Masonic lodges. This article presents an early history of black Masons in Nebraska, piecing together limited documentary evidence from the establishment of the first lodge in 1875 through the formation of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska in 1919.

Part of a series: see also, "World War I, the Great Migration, and the Formation of the Grand Bodies of Prince Hall Masonry (Spring 1997), "["Boom-Bust: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska during the 1920s"](#) (Summer 1998), and "["From the Depths: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska, 1930 – 1960"](#) (Spring 2009)

Cataloging Information:

Names: H K Hillon, G F Franklin, M O Ricketts, J H Henderson, C E Coleman, R W Freeman, Joseph Carr, G N Johnson, T P Mahammitt, A W White, William Rosier, S S Westerfield, G W Buxton, Isaac Trice, Ferdinand L Barnett, J H Wakefield, E C Underwood, N Hunter III, Walter L Seals, Mary E Allen, R M Ella Hunter, William Burrell, H Warner, Will N Johnson, Wynn McCulloch, A N Wade, H O Wood, Haywood Hall, W H Washington, Richard Young, John Albert Williams, Nellie Gordon, Lizzie Carpey, Eva M Pickett, Dora Donley, Mrs William Woods, Mrs C R Runyon, Mrs Izella Malone, Mrs Laura Johnson, Maude Hancock, Mrs John Galbraeth, P L Moore, J W Birdwhistle, C W Wiggington, Moses Dickson, I L Brown, Norris Brown, Gilbert M Hitchcock, James Dahlman

Place Names: Boston, Massachusetts; Lexington, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; Lincoln, Nebraska; Fort Robinson, Nebraska

Keywords: Black Masonry; Prince Hall Masonry; Rough Ashler No 74; Excelsior Lodge No 110; Damascus Temple of Mystic Shriners; Ivanhoe Commandery; Knights St John Consistory; Eureka Chapter No 33; Lebanon Lodge No 126; Acacia Lodge No 46; St John's Lodge No 31; Ninth Cavalry; Tenth Cavalry; *The Enterprise*; *Progress*; Missouri Jurisdiction; Trans-Mississippi Exposition; Iowa Grand Lodge; Missouri Grand Lodge; Grand Lodge Annual Communication; *Omaha Daily News*; *Omaha World-Herald*; Emancipation Day Celebration; Knights of Pythias Hall; Order of the Eastern Star (OES); Dan Desdunes's orchestra; Western Star Court No 23; *The Monitor*

Photographs / Images: Dr Matthew O Ricketts; Ferdinand L Barnett; Inset: News of the Lodges and Fraternities, *The Monitor*, December 2, 1916; Grand Lodge Officers; Grand Musical Concert ad, *The Monitor*, January 6, 1917; Dan Desdunes's orchestra group photo; Rev John Albert Williams of St Phillip Episcopal Church [Omaha]; Will N Johnson as a University of Nebraska football player

The Origins of the **Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska**

By *Dennis N. Mihelich*

Black Masonry originated in colonial America in 1775 as a result of racial discrimination. After being rebuffed by Boston Masons, Prince Hall, a mulatto artisan and minister, received a charter from the Grand Lodge of England. Subsequently, the black institution adopted his name and spread among free blacks in antebellum America. It grew rapidly and moved westward after the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves (only the free born may join Prince Hall Masonry). It follows a federal structure of governance, whereby each state eventually established an independent grand lodge, the supreme governing body for the subordinate or blue lodges of that state. Prince Hall Masonry came to Nebraska during the late nineteenth century, and the Great Migration of World War I finally gave it the numerical strength to create the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska. The history of that gestation also reveals the lifestyle of "respectable" African Americans (in Victorian terminology, those who displayed publically the correct manners and morals), as well as the intricate, shifting parameters of white-black race relations in Nebraska.

In 1865 the Prince Hall Masons of Missouri established an independent grand lodge and a decade later it chartered the first blue lodge for black Masons in Nebraska. Other than the knowledge of its founding date in 1875 in Omaha, no records exist in Nebraska to reveal the early history of Rough Ashler (an unfinished, squared block of build-



Dr. Matthew O. Ricketts was the first African American to graduate with a medical degree in Nebraska, and the first black person elected to the Nebraska legislature (1892). Former worshipful master of Omaha Excelsior Lodge No. 110, Ricketts was elected grand master of the Missouri Grand Lodge in 1907. (NSHS-L514)

ing stone) Lodge No. 74.¹ By the end of the century, five blue lodges existed in Nebraska, as well as several affiliated bodies, but specific founding dates are not known. The new organizations probably originated as a result of the dra-

matic population increase of the 1880s. Individual lodge records do not reach back to the nineteenth century and local city directories did not begin to list black fraternal societies until 1913, although the Omaha City Directory began to identify individual "coloreds" with a "(c)" in 1887 and Lincoln followed suit in 1891.

Although the state's first black newspaper was established in Omaha in 1889, extant copies of the various publications date only from 1895, with lengthy gaps in the collections until the post-World War I era. Thus, in one of the first surviving issues of *The Enterprise*, a story proclaimed that H. K. Hillon, G. F. Franklin, and Dr. M. O. Ricketts attended the annual grand lodge meeting in Lexington, Missouri. Shortly thereafter the paper ran an announcement concerning "a joint meeting" of Rough Ashler No. 74 and Excelsior No. 110.²

Similarly, the earliest extant copy of the *Afro-American Sentinel* (1896) documented the existence of several black fraternities, including the Odd Fellows and the Knights of Pythias. The list included the following Masonic groups:

Rough Ashler No. 74

J. H. Henderson, Worshipful Master
C. E. Coleman, Secretary

Excelsior Lodge No. 110

R. W. Freeman, W. M.
Joseph Carr, Sec.

Damascus Temple of Mystic

Shriners, G. N. Johnson, Potentate
T. P. Mahammitt, Chief Rabin

Ivanhoe Commandery

G. N. Johnson, Commander
J. H. Henderson, Recorder

Dennis N. Mihelich is a professor of history at Creighton University in Omaha.

Prince Hall Masons

Knights St. John Consistory

A. W. White
[no title listed; Commander-in-Chief]
Joseph Carr, Sec.

Eureka Chapter No. 33

[Royal Arch Masons]
T. P. Mahammitt, H. P. [High Priest]
J. H. Henderson, Sec.³

All the lodges met twice a month at a hall at Fourteenth and Dodge streets.

The existence of Prince Hall Masonry outside of Omaha went unreported at that time. Certainly Lebanon Lodge No. 126 had been formed in Lincoln. In a June edition *The Enterprise* divulged that "a new lodge of the masonic order was instituted at South Omaha Thursday night [June 18, 1896]." Then in September, for the first time, the paper's letterhead proclaimed it as "The official organ of the M. W. Grand Lodge of the State of Missouri and its Jurisdiction." Now the paper's new, more comprehensive listing also included:

Lebanon Lodge No. 126

William Rosier, W. M.
S. S. Westerfield, Sec.

Acacia Lodge No. 46

G. N. Johnson, W. M.
H. K. Hillon, Sec.

St. John's Lodge No. 31

[Grand Island, Nebraska]
G. W. Buxton, W. M.
Isaac Trice, Sec.⁴

Almost a decade later an article stated that in June 1909 St. John's No. 31 celebrated its "15th birthday."⁵ If that was not a typographical error, then in 1894 St. John's became the third or fourth subordinate lodge established in Nebraska. However, when Nebraska organized its separate grand lodge and numbered its blue lodges, traditionally in order of age, it established Lebanon in Lincoln as number three and the Grand Island lodge as number five. If the institutional memory was correct, that meant that Lebanon came before and St. John's came after Acacia in 1896.

The Missouri numbers cause confusion because the grand lodge frequently reused numbers from defunct lodges; after a certain point the numbers no longer indicated the order of creation. Further disorder is created because another lodge, Marvin No. 127 in Hastings, was established and apparently disbanded before the first press listing appeared. A Hastings, Nebraska, newspaper reported a "colored Masonic ball" in June 1891 and the following year the *Hastings Weekly Nebraskan* detailed the following:

Marvin lodge No. 127, colored, will give a picnic at Cole park on Sept. 9 and in the evening will hold a grand soiree at G. A. R. hall in this city. Col. A. A. Jones of Lincoln, has been secured as orator of the day and will deliver a speech on the race and political issues of the day at the park in the afternoon at 2 o'clock and at the hall in the evening at 7:30 o'clock. Splendid music for the occasion will be furnished by the Hastings colored glee club. Admission to the ball in the evening, for the purpose of defraying expenses, has been placed at the very low sum of 10 cents. Everyone is invited. Come one, come all. A reduced rate has been made for the occasion on the railroads between Omaha and Hastings. Committee arrangements, Nelson Briley, John Hoff, and Chas. Davide; chairman, J. S. Craig.⁶

Despite being the "official organ," and its editor G. F. Franklin serving as deputy district grand master for Nebraska, *The Enterprise* listing in 1896 also did not recognize the existence of the military lodges. The Missouri Grand Lodge became "the 'Mother' Grand Lodge of the four black units then authorized by Congress," the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry. Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., argued that Eureka Lodge No. 135 was the first black military lodge, chartered among the Tenth Cavalry sometime before 1888.⁷ If this is correct, and if at least the highest numbers assigned by the Missouri Grand Lodge remained in sequence, then Excelsior No. 110, Lebanon No. 126, and Marvin No. 127 originated at least as early as the mid-1880s. Marvin probably dis-

banded as a result of the disastrous decline in the African American population in Hastings during the depressed 1890s. While several blacks operated prosperous businesses or farmed in the area, the vast majority gained employment as domestics. According to a local historian, "to have Negro servants was a splendid status symbol," but one easily foregone during hard economic times. At the beginning of the decade 327 blacks lived in Adams County; the 1900 census counted only 63.⁸

The Ninth and Tenth Cavalry were stationed at Ft. Robinson, Nebraska, between 1885 and 1907. During that period the black cavalrymen established two lodges, Adventure No. 136 and Military No. 152. In 1897 *The Enterprise* reported that "Grand Master Pelham" traveled to "Ft. Robinson on his annual visitation," confirming the Masonic presence there, without revealing which lodge or lodges were active.⁹ Subsequently, the black infantrymen established a lodge in 1906 during their brief tour at Ft. Niobrara, Nebraska.¹⁰ The transfer of these units to other posts prior to World War I removed them from the history of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska.

The history of the urban lodges during the 1890s revealed a variety of activities and various forms of competition that eventually produced a schism. According to an oral interview of the aged William C. Burrell, in 1894-95 the Omaha lodges sought to switch jurisdictions to the Grand Lodge of Iowa, which had just wrested its independence from the Missouri Jurisdiction. In recounting the episode, Burrell, realizing that "peace and harmony" must reign in order that Masonic brotherhood may exist, discreetly mentioned that he omitted "some situations deemed to be unpleasant or possibly detrimental to relations in general."¹¹ Because he became a charter member of Acacia No. 46, established in 1896, his dates missed the mark by a year or two, but the comments established the existence of a smoldering controversy.

Corroborating the tension, *The Enterprise* reported that in 1897 “much discussion” ensued concerning the creation of a separate grand lodge for Nebraska. The story claimed that many were “enthusiastic over the proposed venture,” including “some of the most prominent masons of Omaha.” Editor G. F. Franklin counted himself among the “conservative few” opposed to independence. He argued that although a sufficient number of lodges existed, the actual number of members could not finance the operation of a grand lodge. Furthermore, the death benefit granted to widows and orphans had reached \$120, “a figure no loyal mason would care to see cut down.” The per capita dues on the reduced number of brothers needed to maintain that benefit, he argued, would be prohibitive. Despite his personal views, Franklin promised that as the official organ of the Missouri Jurisdiction, the paper’s columns remained “open to a free and impartial discussion,” and that “the entire body” would benefit if “leading masons” expressed themselves “fully and freely.” No responses appeared.¹²

The “conservative few” prevailed temporarily, but competition continued to produce tension. This time “the hotly contested” issue was the site of the 1898 Missouri Grand Lodge Annual Communication, and Franklin led the upstart Omaha delegation. City boosters had already devised a “world’s fair,” the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, as a way of ending the lingering impact of the Depression of 1893. The editor believed the Missouri Grand Lodge should join the “hundreds” of other secret and civic societies that would hold their annual meetings in Omaha that year. “That fact will bring the leading men of America to Omaha. Among them will be many prominent colored masons from foreign [i.e., other than Missouri] jurisdictions who can avail themselves [sic] of the opportunity to fraternize with the craft of Missouri.”¹³ The Omaha contingent failed in its quest.

Intrastate business and politics also



Ferdinand L. Barnett, a member of Omaha Acacia Lodge No. 46, edited *Progress*, one of three black weekly newspapers in Omaha. He served in the Nebraska House of Representatives in 1927. (NSHS-L514)

caused competition. At the end of 1896, Cyrus D. Bell, editor of the *Afro-American Sentinel*, asked “What are secretaries for?” He posed the rhetorical question to chide fraternal scribes into submitting news stories. According to Bell,

There is no weekly paper printed in Omaha that reaches, and is read, by so large a number of colored people as the *Afro-American Sentinel*. There is no Negro paper printed in Omaha—or out of Omaha—that circulates so largely among white people of this community. Why not allow everybody to learn what you are doing through the columns of this wide-awake paper? The community will take pleasure in learning of the good work we [African Americans] are doing.¹⁴

The invitation appeared regularly for the next eight months prompted, perhaps, because Bell’s competitor, G. F. Franklin, had become the official spokesman for the Masons. The rivalry became more complex with the addition of politics. Bell, a Democrat who supported William Jennings Bryan in 1896, nonetheless participated in the

intraparty bickering among three Republican Masons. He publicly supported Dr. Matthew O. Ricketts, worshipful master of Excelsior No. 110 and two-term representative in the Nebraska legislature, while criticizing G. F. Franklin, editor of *The Enterprise* and worshipful master of Rough Ashler No. 74. The political infighting became a three-cornered Masonic affair when F. L. Barnett, a member and future worshipful master of Acacia Lodge and the editor of the third existing black weekly, *Progress*, openly sided with Ricketts. Franklin editorially criticized them both with regularity.¹⁵

The late 1890s, with competing black weeklies and contending African American politicians, was unrepresentative of the longer history of Nebraska black Masonry. Seemingly, less cacophonous events dominated even that decade. The lodges cooperated in performing cornerstone layings and political competitors could unify around racial concerns. In 1897 activists arranged a mass meeting to draft a new civil rights statute to submit to the legislature to protect “the thousands” of blacks expected to attend the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. Franklin and Ricketts were among the eleven named conveners, plus at least three other Masons (they could be identified from the only extant roster, which listed only one of the three Omaha lodges; other conveners may also have been Masons).¹⁶

The lodges also sponsored regular public entertainments and fundraisers. The annual installations of officers became public events that included fundraising devices such as mock courts. Special revenue-generating lodge clubs also sponsored promenades, musical entertainments, dances, and female popularity contests (a man paid a prearranged price to cast a ballot for his favorite woman). For example, *The Enterprise* ran the following advertisement in early 1897:

Excelsior Club will give a Masonic Benefit at Central Hall Tuesday evening, February 9th. The Musical program will consist of

Prince Hall Masons

attractive numbers rendered by the best local talent, after which dancing will employ the remaining hours. . . . The patronage of the public is kindly solicited. Admission 25 cents.¹⁷

A subsequent story disclosed that the variety show included two dramatic readings; bass, violin, and tenor solos; vocal and violin and piano duets, as well as supper and later refreshments. Following the spectacle a front-page headline proclaimed it a "grand success," claiming that "never in the history of Masonic Benefits, in this city, were there so many of Omaha's leading lights in attendance." In Victorian style, the week-night affair lasted until 3:00 a.m. and the club announced that it planned to hold monthly events.¹⁸

Not everyone appreciated the galas. Rev. John Albert Williams of St. Philip's Episcopal Church wrote a column for *The Enterprise*, the "official organ" of the Masons, which criticized all the secret societies. In his feature called "Through the Parson's Spectacles," he claimed his attitude towards the fraternities was "much misunderstood and generally misrepresented." Writing in the third person he explained,

He is not opposed to these organizations because they are secret organizations, but upon other grounds, chief of which are economic grounds. They are too expensive a luxury. In his judgment they do not pay.

Williams felt that men joined these societies for three reasons: a social instinct, the desire for mutual protection, and to provide for their heirs. The organizations failed to fulfill the third purpose "because we are a very, very poor people. Our funds invested in these organizations must necessarily be small and the benefits derived commensurate therewith." By Williams's calculation,

A man belongs to one of these societies. He pays his dues regularly. He has been a member, say for ten years. It has cost him on average say \$12.00 a year. During the ten years it has cost him something over \$100. He dies. He is given a large funeral. His heirs receive probably \$150. This is a very small sum. The provi-

sion for his family is as you can readily see, inadequate.

Buying insurance or investing in blue chip stocks, Williams argued, would have produced a far larger estate and thus accomplished goal number three far better. The Reverend concluded,

He would like to see more putting their money into life insurance and realty and fewer spending their money merely for good fellowship and bright colored regalia. If this were done, fewer widows would have to work as hard as many do now to earn their daily bread.¹⁹

Williams's practical advice, given during a depression era, did not seem to slow the growth of black Masonry in Omaha. Obviously for many, the "investment" feature of fraternal organizations was not the primary attraction. Also many of his ministerial colleagues did not hold similar concerns. From its inception Prince Hall Masonry attracted a sizeable contingent of ministers, especially from the African Methodist Episcopal, the Colored Methodist Episcopal, and the Baptist denominations. Early twentieth-century lodge rosters confirm that generalization held true for Nebraska.

External criticism had a negligible impact. The creation of Acacia Lodge only a few months prior to Williams's editorial, however, illuminated internal stress among the existing Omaha lodges that eventually ended in a rupture of fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of Missouri. Organization of the new lodge began a year earlier when a number of the brothers of No. 74 and No. 110 "withdrew their membership because of people in them and their conduct, and the suicidal manner in which they persisted in conducting lodge affairs."²⁰ The existing Omaha lodges resisted the secessionists' attempt to gain a warrant, but the Grand Master of Missouri granted the group a dispensation to organize as Acacia Lodge No. 46 in the suburb of South Omaha, with the right to move later to Omaha.

Animosity and bickering continued for the next two years, culminating with Acacia's change of jurisdictions. Fate denied the lodge representation at the annual communication in 1898. They could not afford to send any of their own members, so they secured the services of G. F. Franklin, seemingly a brother not resisting the separation, to act as their proxy. Franklin, however, fell ill in Kansas City enroute to the grand lodge session. With Acacia thus unrepresented, unsupportive delegates from the other Omaha lodges secured the passage of a resolution condemning Acacia's move back to Omaha. All but

News of the Lodges and Fraternities

Masonic.

Rough Ashler Lodge No. 74, A. F. & A. M., Omaha, Neb. Meetings, first and third Tuesdays in each month. J. H. Wakefield, W. M.; E. C. Underwood, Secretary.

Excelsior Lodge, A. F. & A. M., Omaha, Neb. Meetings first and third Thursdays in each month.

Zaha Temple No. 52, A. E. A. O. U. M. S., Omaha, Neb. Meetings the fourth Wednesday in each month. N. Hunter, Ill. Potentate; Walter L. Seals, Recorder.

Shaffer Chapter No. 42, O. E. S., Omaha, Neb. Meetings first and third Friday in each month. Mrs. Mary E. Allen, R. M. Ella Hunter, Secretary.

Rescue Lodge No. 25, A. F. & A. M., Omaha, Neb. Meetings first and third Monday in each month. Lodge rooms, Twenty-fourth and Charles streets. William Burrell, W. M.; H. Warner, Secretary.

Omaha Lodge No. 146, A. F. and A. M., Omaha, Neb. Meetings first and third Fridays of every month. Lodge room 1018 Douglas street. Will N. Johnson, W. M.; Wynn McCulloch, Secretary.

The Monitor, December 2, 1916.

two of the approximately forty members of No. 46 lived in Omaha and forcing the group to meet in the southern suburb caused a serious inconvenience.

The club immediately sent a delegation to petition the Iowa Grand Lodge for "protection" (i.e., admittance to its jurisdiction). Iowa Grand Master I. L. Brown issued a dispensation permitting Acacia to change jurisdictions and asked the opinion of the grand secretary of the white Grand Lodge of Iowa, who confirmed the validity of his action: "The rights of Grand Lodges in states or territories where there is no Grand Lodge is too well established to allow one Grand Lodge to exclude all others. You have done right in granting a dispensation."²¹

The correspondence revealed a distinct informal relationship between white and black Masons in Iowa during the late nineteenth century. It did not last; hostility from white, southern grand lodges stifled attempts by some white western lodges to establish amicable relations with their African American brethren. Intra-racially, the relations between black Masons in Iowa and Missouri entered a brief period of hostility. The Missouri Grand Lodge officially severed fraternal relations with the Iowa Grand Lodge for six years. Finally, with new leadership on both sides, Iowa initiated a healing of the rupture in 1905. The Missouri Grand Lodge gave demits [certificates of honorable resignation] free of charge to individuals who were members of Acacia at the time it surrendered its warrant. Thus the grand master of Missouri gave legal Masonic sanction to the jurisdictional shift and "here ended the controversy." Acacia, re-named Rescue Lodge No. 25, was now ensconced in the Iowa Grand Lodge and the competing grand lodges resumed formal, but not necessarily cordial, relations.²²

The paucity of records pertaining to the first decade of the twentieth century creates a gap in the story. Exacerbating the quandary, *Progress* and the *Afro-American Sentinel* ceased publication

by 1899 and *The Enterprise* took a hiatus from 1897 to 1908. Before it ceased printing, John Albert Williams in "Through the Parson's Spectacles" praised the Omaha white press for treating African Americans favorably in stories and editorials. When the paper resumed publication, however, its new editor, T. P. Mahammitt, began complaining about news coverage from the white press:

The daily papers of Omaha are ever eager to publish the things which show weaknesses and shortcomings of the race while they seldom mention the good things that members of it do. . . . So eager are they to find something degrading in Negro life that the history of the Negro of the city of Omaha is being written very largely from the records of the police court.²³

Given this outlook, it is not surprising that the white papers did not cover the activities of the Iowa Grand Lodge Annual Communication held in Omaha July 12-14, 1904. The *Omaha Bee* wrote about the white Elks departing for a meeting in California, the *Omaha Daily News* reported on a group of white Shriners riding a train through town on the way to their national convention, and the *Omaha World-Herald* recounted the events at that national convention, but none printed a single word concerning the hometown Prince Hall Mason event. Rescue Lodge hosted the session at the hall where it rented space to hold its regular bi-monthly meetings. Entertainment included a trolley ride to Riverview Park for a picnic.²⁴

Although Omaha contained only one of the dozens of lodges comprising the Iowa Grand Lodge, its position as the twentieth most populous city in the United States, according to the census of 1900, enabled it to attract many major regional, and on occasion, even national conventions. That stature, and the talents of individual members of Rescue Lodge, ensured a steady presence in the officer ranks of the Iowa Grand Lodge. In the much larger Missouri Grand Lodge, Nebraska Prince Hall Masons did not make quite as impressive a contribution (see Fig. 1).

The reappearance of a black weekly towards the end of the decade helps to document, albeit episodically, the vitality of black Masonry in Nebraska. In 1908 H. K. Hillon, representing Rescue Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Iowa, and T. P. Mahammitt, representing the Omaha lodges affiliated with the Missouri Grand Lodge, attended the centenary in Boston celebrating the establishment of the first Prince Hall grand lodge. *The Enterprise* instituted the "Masonic Column," edited by Joe E. Herriford of Kansas City, Missouri, which gave Missouri Grand Lodge news such as the resolution establishing December 26, the Sunday nearest to St. John the Baptist day, as the date for the annual sermon.

Herriford "hoped that the observance of this day will be fully appreciated by the subordinate lodges and that proper showings of Christian religious devotion will be made everywhere." The editors of the paper and the column pleaded for local news, but little came forth, including information concerning the annual sermons in Omaha. The column appeared sporadically and then ceased after about one year.²⁵

In 1909 individual Masons played a significant role in the success of the Emancipation Day Celebration, a gala held at the Omaha City Auditorium. Organized similarly to a fair, many clubs, churches, and societies staffed booths that told their story. Dan Desdunes, a Mason and the preeminent Omaha black band leader of the era, supplied music for the dance that "attracted 300 colored people." Promoters claimed that an ongoing strike by streetcar workers kept the crowd down.²⁶ Attorney H. J. Pinkett, also a Mason, served as the master of ceremonies for the grand opening, which included speeches by United States Senator Norris Brown, Congressman Gilbert M. Hitchcock, Mayor James Dahlman, and grand master of the Missouri Grand Lodge, Dr. Matthew O. Ricketts.

Senator Brown argued that no race problem existed in America. "The eman-

Prince Hall Masons

Figure 1. Grand Lodge Officers

Iowa Grand Lodge (all from Rescue #25)		
<i>Appointed:</i>		
Grand Senior Steward	H. K. Hillon	1900
	Haywood Hall	1901-02
Grand Lecturer	H. K. Hillon	1902
Grand Junior Deacon	William Burrell	1903
Grand Tyler	A. N. Wade	1903
Grand Chaplain	H. O. Wood	1904
Grand Pursuivant	William Burrell	1906, 1908
Grand Marshal	William Burrell	1907
Grand Custodian	W. P. Wade	1908-09
Grand Standard Bearer	William Burrell	1913
Grand Junior Steward	William Burrell	1913-14
Grand Senior Deacon	William Burrell	1914-15
Deputy District Grand Master	H. K. Hillon	1900-01
	Haywood Hall	1902-06
	W. H. Washington	1907
	A. N. Wade	1908
	William Burrell	1909-10
<i>Elected:</i>		
Grand Secretary	H. K. Hillon	1905-06
Grand Treasurer	H. K. Hillon	1907-11
Grand Junior Warden	W. P. Wade	1919
Missouri Grand Lodge		
<i>Appointed:</i>		
Grand Junior Warden	M. O. Ricketts #110	1887
	T. P. Mahammitt #110	1901
Deputy District Grand Master	M. O. Ricketts	1888
	T. P. Mahammitt	1903
Grand Senior Warden	T. P. Mahammitt	1902
	Richard Young #126	1912
<i>Elected:</i>		
None in Grand Lodge		
Grand Treasurer, United Grand Commandery, Knights Templar	T. P. Mahammitt	1908-09

... cipation proclamation," he exclaimed, "brought freedom to one race and honor to another." Dr. Ricketts disagreed. He had been born in 1853 to slave parents in Louisville, Kentucky. Newly free, he migrated with his parents to Booneville, Missouri, and subsequently graduated from the Lincoln Institute in 1876. He taught school for two years and in 1880 moved to Omaha. There he worked his way through the Omaha Medical College, serving as the school's janitor and becoming the first African American to graduate with a medical degree in Nebraska. According

to his eulogizer, "his practice was necessarily limited"; therefore, he entered politics. He served two terms in the Nebraska House of Representatives and then worked for the election of John M. Thurston to the U. S. Senate. Thurston, however, was unable to provide a government job; at the end of the century Ricketts returned to the practice of medicine in St. Joseph, Missouri. The former worshipful master of Excelsior No. 110 was elected grand master of the Missouri Grand Lodge in 1907.²⁷ Ricketts challenged Senator Brown, asserting that discrimination by whites produced

a very real "race problem." In Booker T. Washington fashion, however, he stipulated that "we do not contend for social equality, but we do contend for civil rights."²⁸

During that era "social equality" was a code phrase used by white Americans who feared that it entailed "the prospect of Negroes becoming members of white cliques, churches, and voluntary associations, or marrying into their families." Civil rights, on the other hand, meant "equal access to public facilities, opposition to segregation in public places, and defense of the right to compete on the open market for houses."²⁹

The availability of and access to quality housing, in particular, received special attention in the local black press. T. P. Mahammitt, worshipful master of Excelsior No. 110 and publisher of the rejuvenated *Enterprise*, frequently editorialized about the necessity for blacks to become property owners. In 1909 he saw his former competitors, the members of Rescue No. 25, put his philosophy into practice. The splinter group, now under the Iowa Jurisdiction, purchased a vacant lot at Twenty-fourth and Erskine streets valued at \$1500 and announced plans to construct a building. Seemingly, at that date the lodge stood in sound financial condition. Simultaneously, *The Enterprise* reported that Rescue held an "imposing affair" at which it presented "a handsome and appropriate jewel" to each of eight past masters. Probably indicating that the rivalry had subsided, Mahammitt allowed the lodge to boast, as the story proclaimed that it was "the first time in the history of Omaha colored Masons when such high honors have been conferred [sic] upon past officers." Possibly Mahammitt used the Rescue announcement to prod the Omaha lodges within the Missouri Jurisdiction. Three months later Rough Ashler and Excelsior established a building committee to raise funds to erect "a temple."³⁰

By comparison, 1909 was a watershed year in Lincoln. In June, Missouri Grand Master Ricketts reorganized Leba-

non No. 126. He credited William R. Rozier and John L. Wright for “keeping the lodge . . . together amid years of struggle and hardship.” Probably the lingering effects of the Depression of 1893, accompanied by a significant decline in the black population in Lancaster County and reinforced by the impact of the Panic of 1907, caused the disruption. Ricketts admitted ten men by demits, initiated fifteen new apprentices, and claimed that adding them to the existing membership made Lebanon “stronger than it has been in its history.” At the end of the year it held a “grand reception” at the Knights of Pythias hall attended by 150 guests. In 1910 it held other fundraisers and inducted at least a dozen new members. Thus the new leadership steered the lodge out of the doldrums at the dawn of the new decade.³¹

At the same time, female Prince Hall affiliates made their first press appearance in Nebraska. The black papers of Omaha during the 1890s made no reference to the several varieties of women’s organizations associated with Prince Hall Masonry. When *The Enterprise* resumed publication in 1908, however, it soon ran the following announcement:

Keep in mind Shaffer Chapter No. 42 Holiday Dance at Washington Hall Monday evening Dec. 28th. Desdunes full orchestra. Dancing until 1 a. m. Admission 50 cents.

The chapter also purchased weekly advertisements for the month, which made the affair “largely attended” and “a splendid financial success.”³²

The announcement, of course, referred to a chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star (OES). According to F. A. Bell the order originated in the seventeenth century among noble ladies in England and also appeared in the eighteenth century in Russia and France. Eventually many different organizations sprouted and disappeared in the United States, but none succeeded as well as the OES. A Mason, Robert Morris, created the society in Mississippi before the Civil War, but interest remained low un-

til 1868. To an extent he modeled the ritual on Masonry, thus the terminology—“adoptive rite.” Initiates had to have a bloodline to a Mason—mother, wife, sister, daughter—that then allowed them to be “adopted into Freemasonry.” In Bell’s words, “the Order of the Eastern Star was [sic] the result of a desire on the part of Masons to afford the women of their families as far as possible the benefits and privileges of Freemasonry, and also to secure the help and co-operation of the women in their benevolent projects.”³³

Another historian interpreted the cause-effect differently, claiming that the OES resulted from women’s protest. The secrecy and gender exclusivity of most of the fraternities angered many

nineteenth-century women. “By the 1860s and 1870s,” according to Mark C. Carnes, “most orders [in the United States] followed the lead of the Odd Fellows [Degree of Rebekah, 1851] in devising some form of auxiliary organizations or ladies degrees. Masonic grand lodges did not formally recognize the Order of Eastern Star (1869), but individual Masons sponsored and supported its activities.”³⁴

One Prince Hall Mason historian argued that one could not establish “the date of the earliest Eastern Star Chapter” among “colored people.”³⁵ Mrs. S. Joe Brown, matron of the International Conference of Grand Chapters of OES (Prince Hall Affiliation), however, contended that Thornton A. Jackson re-

Look Who’s Here!

Shaffer Chapter, No. 42

—at—

ALAMO HALL

Tuesday Eve., Jan. 9th

GRAND MUSICAL CONCERT

Under Management of Mrs. Lizzie Buford

DESDUNE’S FULL ORCHESTRA

COME ONE! COME ALL!

ADMISSION 25c

ELLA HUNTER **MARY E. ALLEN,**
Chairman **Matron**

The Monitor, January 6, 1917.

Prince Hall Masons

ceived several degrees of the Rite of Adoption on August 10, 1874, from C. B. Case, a deputy and agent of Robert Macoy, the supreme patron of the Rite of Adoption of the World, to establish OES among African Americans. Rapidly, Jackson established two chapters in the nation's capital, one in Alexandria, Virginia, three in Baltimore, and three in Philadelphia—a total of nine in eighteen months. Then in 1880 Bishop J. W. Hood organized the first grand chapter at Washington, D. C. That same year North Carolina established the first state grand chapter, followed by Tennessee (1881), California (1882), and Kansas (1883). The first of two grand chapters in Missouri formed in 1890 and Iowa constituted its grand chapter in 1907.³⁶

Seemingly, Iowa did not contribute to the growth of the order in Nebraska, but Kansas and Missouri did; therefore, the women followed the men's pattern and split their chapters between two jurisdictions.

David Vinton, an early nineteenth-century Masonic lecturer, invented the Heroines of Jericho, another women's allied group. "From what source the Negro brethren obtained the degree is not known," but the historic ritual for Prince Hall affiliated courts was written by Moses Dickson in 1895 and distributed by his Regalia and Supply Company, headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri.³⁷ Some time thereafter, the Heroines entered Nebraska from Missouri and Kansas. On June 8-10, 1909, the

Kansas Grand Court held its annual session in Lincoln, Nebraska. Meetings were held at Bullard's Hall at 1130 N Street and they included an opening-night public fundraising entertainment (admission, \$.15) and a closing "grand drill" (admission, \$.25). While no membership numbers figured in the news coverage, *The Enterprise* later revealed that in the neighboring jurisdiction, the Heroines constituted the oldest and largest women's Masonic organization in Missouri with 2,600 members distributed among eighty-one courts. That story failed to mention if any of those were in the state of Nebraska, but a subsequent article alluded to the existence of Western Star Court No. 23.³⁸

Complicating the ability even simply



Dan Desdunes's orchestra (at rear) played for many Masonic and non-Masonic functions in the Omaha area. Desdunes (in the white cap) was a Prince Hall Mason. (NSHS-K90-445)

to chronicle the continuation of the group, in 1913 the Omaha City Directory listed two OES chapters but no Heroines of Jericho courts:

Shaffer Chapter No. 42

Meets 1st & 3rd Fridays @ 202 S. 13
Nellie Gordon, Royal Matron
Lizzie Carpew, Sec.

Hiawatha Chapter No. 57

Meets 2nd & 4th Fridays
@ 1425 N. 24th
Eva M. Pickett, Royal Matron
Dora Donley, Sec.

Missouri claimed both OES chapters in its jurisdiction. Two years later, the last time the Omaha City Directory listed black societies prior to World War II, Margaret Ransom served as royal matron and Elmira Obee as secretary at Shaffer and their counterparts at Hiawatha were Elnora Jones and Willie Watson. In 1914 the Lincoln City Directory cataloged two women's masonic groups:

Magnolia Court No. 10, H. O. J.

[Kansas Jurisdiction and host of the Grand Court in 1909] Meets
@ 145 S. 11th
M. A. M. Mrs. William Woods
S. M. Mrs. C. R. Runyon
Sec. Mrs. Izella Malone

Amaranth No. 54, OES

Meets @ 145 S. 11th
R. M. Mrs. Laura Johnson
S. W. [sic] Maude Hancock
[probably Associate Matron]
Sec. Mrs. John Galbraeth

Apparently the Lincoln OES chapter originated only a few years earlier. Royal Grand Matron Mrs. Mary E. Herriford and Royal Grand Associate Patron T. P. Mahammitt created an OES chapter in the state capital in July 1909 shortly after the Missouri Grand Chapter Annual Session in Omaha.³⁹ The new chapter also came in the wake of the reorganization of Lebanon Lodge one month earlier. The Lincoln City Directory seems to indicate that chapter was Amaranth No. 54, and when Nebraska created an independent grand chapter

it ascribed to Amaranth the number three. Another chapter also existed in Lincoln, however, when the grand chapter began. No records establish its formation date, nor even its jurisdiction, but the Nebraska Grand Chapter assigned Princess Hattipha Chapter the number eight.

Of the three identifiable chapters extant during the first decade of the twen-



Rev. John Albert Williams of Omaha's St. Philip Episcopal Church was critical of secret societies such as the Masons. In July 1915 he became publisher of *The Monitor*. *The Monitor*, February 19, 1916

tieth century, Shaffer in Omaha garnered all of the press because of its fundraising activities and its volatility. In February 1909 Mrs. Jennie Lawrie gave a musical benefit and in May the chapter sponsored a "Hard Times Dance"; the title probably signified the lingering effects of the Panic of 1907 on blacks in the local economy. Ironically, however, the title also could have referred to widening fissures in the spirit of Masonic sisterhood. The annual sermon in 1909 turned into a public platform to lecture

the chapter on proper behavior. After Royal Matron Lulu Rountree "read a paper on the history and development of the Order of the Eastern Star" and Royal Patron Fred L. Smith gave an "appropriate" address, the Reverend Dyett of St. John's AME Church took the women to task. According to *The Enterprise*, he "very properly emphasized the need of the members of the chapter putting an end to their internecine strife which is so prevalent, and urged them to practice charity." Grand Master Ricketts contributed similar advice and T. P. Mahammitt editorialized,

May this advice, which is so sorely needed, be appreciated by the members of the chapter, and may they learn as Dr. Ricketts so well said, that the strength of masonic institutions does not depend upon numbers, but upon the character of the men and women who compose them.⁴⁰

The presence of the grand master and the public upbraiding may have been deemed necessary because the Missouri Grand Chapter Annual Session was scheduled to convene in Omaha in one month. The previous year Fred L. Smith had been elected associate grand patron and had extended an invitation from Shaffer to host the grand session. The successful bid may have unleashed some un-Masonic competition for positions in the limelight, and T. P. Mahammitt opined that now that the meeting had become a reality the nineteenth annual session would "cure the 'sore heads' and 'malcontents' that linger [sic] on the vital shores of life to cause canker and decay." *The Enterprise* altered its printing and distribution schedule to give priority to making the annual session a success.⁴¹

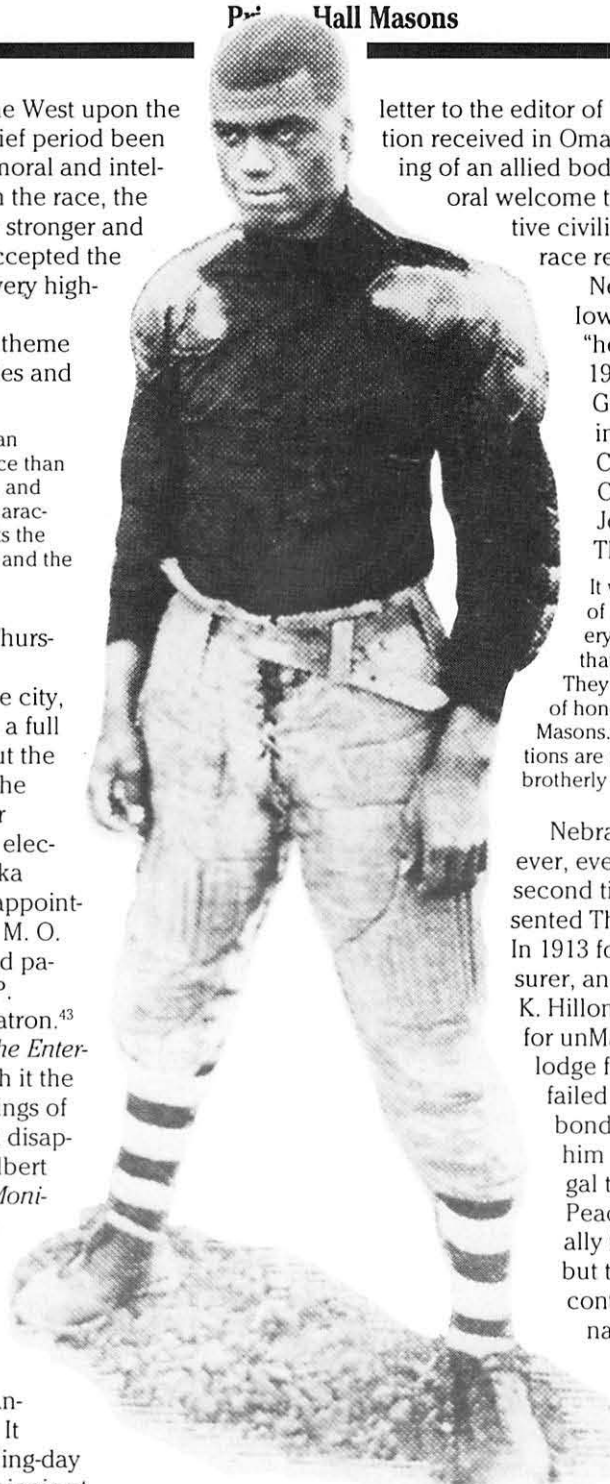
Outwardly, a smooth session ensued. Festivities began with an "Allstar Concert and Promenade" on Wednesday evening and Mayor James Dahlman welcomed the attendees at a public opening ceremony Thursday morning. He "assured the visitors that they were entirely welcome to the city" and "turned the key over to them." The mayor also

“congratulated the Negroes of the West upon the fact that they [sic] had in this brief period been able to organize such splendid moral and intellectual energy that through them the race, the state, and the nation might grow stronger and better.” Grand Master Ricketts accepted the remarks “as a just tribute to the very highest excellence within the race.” Mahammitt continued the uplift theme so central to the thinking of whites and blacks of the era, proclaiming,

Few bodies anywhere in the land can boast a higher average of intelligence than obtains in the Order of Eastern Star, and none can boast a higher average character. In these and kindred movements the voice of true progress speaks aloud and the light of racial uplift dawns.⁴²

The official meetings began Thursday afternoon, followed by a predinner trolley ride through the city, an evening business session and a full day’s work on Friday. Throughout the event Shaffer Chapter provided the 150 delegates with two meals per day. The session closed with the election of officers. While no Nebraska woman garnered an elective or appointive position, former Omahan Dr. M. O. Ricketts secured the post of grand patron and the delegates chose T. P. Mahammitt as associate grand patron.⁴³

As the new decade opened *The Enterprise* ceased publication and with it the journalistic insight into the workings of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska disappeared. In July 1915 Rev. John Albert Williams began publishing *The Monitor*, but given his views on secret societies, his coverage of Masonic activities was limited and perfunctory. During the hiatus, only a brief article in the white press recorded the activities of the 1912 Missouri Grand Lodge Annual Communication in Lincoln. It met at the state capitol and opening-day events included a parade and a picnic at Epworth Lake. The reporter noted that the delegates stated their appreciation for the fine treatment accorded them in Lincoln. Similarly, in 1915 Missouri Grand Master Nelson C. Crews wrote a



Will N. Johnson, shown here as a University of Nebraska football player, was elected worshipful master of Omaha Lodge No. 146 in 1915. (NSHS-U58-2380/W393-48M)

letter to the editor of *The Monitor* praising the good reception received in Omaha by the delegates to a grand meeting of an allied body.⁴⁴ The above examples, and the mayoral welcome to the OES delegates, attest to the relative civility that remained in pre-World War I race relations in Nebraska.

New leadership in the Missouri and Iowa jurisdictions moved for a complete “healing” of their ruptured relations. In 1913 Iowa extended, and Missouri Grand Master R. T. Coles accepted, an invitation to speak at the Iowa Annual Communication. The following year Coles accorded Iowa Grand Master John L. Thompson the same honor. Thompson reported,

It was indeed a great love feast of eloquence of Masonic love. Grand Master Coles did everything to royally entertain us the two days that we were there and they did show us.

They presented me with a Grand Lodge badge of honor. I shall never forget those true Missouri Masons. I believe that those two Grand Jurisdictions are now bonded [sic] together in stronger brotherly relations than ever before.⁴⁵

Nebraska’s desire for independence, however, eventually doomed the “love feast” for a second time. Moreover, Rescue Lodge presented Thompson with another grave problem. In 1913 former grand secretary, grand treasurer, and long-serving secretary of No. 25, H. K. Hillon, was tried, convicted, and expelled for unMasonic conduct. He admitted using lodge funds for a real estate deal and when it failed he could not repay the treasury. The bonding company insisted the lodge sue him for embezzlement, but “through a legal technicality . . . the Justice of the Peace quashed the indictment.” Eventually the bonding company repaid Rescue, but the unfortunate incident obviously contributed to the inability of the once financially sound Rescue Lodge to construct its building before the goal became moot with the formation of the Grand Lodge of Nebraska.

The refederation of the Omaha lodges shifted the outlook towards a grand lodge headquarters shared by all Prince Hall Masons. The situation at Rescue, however, improved steadily over the next few years. Thus, unable to afford to send representatives to the 1916 Annual Communication,

the Iowa grand master reported in their stead. He stated that on his annual visit to the lodge he witnessed a resurgence; he noted that “the outlook is good for a splendid year” and “they are getting out of their financial embarrassment.”⁴⁶

While the Iowa Jurisdiction experienced problems in Nebraska, the Missouri Jurisdiction expanded and prospered. In October 1915 *The Monitor* registered for the first time Omaha Lodge No. 146 (it had not been listed in the 1913 city directory nor on the roll printed by *The Monitor* July 3, 1915) making it the fourth lodge in the city. It secured a meeting room at 1018 Douglas and elected Will N. Johnson worshipful master and Wynn McCulloch secretary.⁴⁷ The address of the meeting room, as well as those of the other lodges, chapters, and allied bodies, and the places where they held their entertainments signified the continued minimal nature of segregation in Omaha prior to World War I. In just a few years following the Great Migration, however, all such activity was confined to an emerging ghetto adjacent to the downtown, the Near North Side in local parlance.

World War I unleashed significant and long-lasting historical forces. They eventually altered the nature of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska. Through forty years of growth black Masonry in the state experienced the short-lived participation of several military lodges and established at least six subordinate lodges in four cities. Women’s auxiliaries appeared in Lincoln and Omaha in the form of the Order of the Eastern Star and the Heroines of Jericho. Both the York and the Scottish Rite higher-degree societies had also established a presence in the state’s two most populous cities. In addition to earlier registers the Lincoln City Directory in 1914 identified:

Hiram Chapter No. 59 R.A.M.
[Royal Arch Masons]
Meets at 145 S. 11th
R. H. Young, H.P. [High Priest]
Wm. Rosier, [sic] Scribe

Ricketts Commandery No. 14 K.T.
[Knights Templar]
Meets at 145 S. 11th
P. L. Moore, Gen.[eralissimo]
J. W. Birdwhistle, Capt.

The absence of records veils the reason for apparent name changes for two higher-degree societies; possibly they disbanded and were subsequently reformed with new designations. Whatever the circumstances, the Omaha City Directory of 1913 no longer listed the Knights of St. John Consistory and the Damascus Temple. Instead there appeared:

Joshua David [sic]
Kelly Consistory No. 27
Meets at 202 S. 13th
C. W. Wiggington, I.P.
[sic, Comm.-in-Chief]
W. W. Peebles, Rec. [sic, Sec.]

Zaha Temple No. 52
Meets at 202 S. 13th
C. W. Wiggington, I.P.
[Imperial Potentate]
W. W. Peebles, Rec.

Following the formation of their first lodge in 1875, Nebraska’s African Americans supported a vigorous and varied Masonic establishment. Both the men’s lodges and the women’s auxiliaries were divided by affiliation to two separate jurisdictions, which, in some cases, jealously tried to prevent separation. The Great Migration of World War I, however, rapidly produced a new historical context that overwhelmed all resistance to an independent grand lodge for Nebraska. The black population of Omaha doubled between the 1910 and 1920 census and other towns also experienced a significant increase. War production produced temporary prosperity in the black communities, which encouraged individuals to join Prince Hall Masonry in record numbers. Rosters of existing lodges expanded significantly and three new lodges, one each in Hastings, Alliance, and Scottsbluff, joined the Nebraska contingent. By war’s end the sizeable membership,

state patriotism, and the prospect of titles, prestige, and power for local officers prompted the formation of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska in 1919. The half-century gestation of black Masonry in Nebraska came to a foreshortened and rapid conclusion during the tumultuous events of World War I.

Notes

¹ Attempts to gain access to records of the Missouri Grand Lodge failed.

² *The Enterprise*, Nov. 16, 1895.

³ *Afro-American Sentinel*, Febr. 2, 1896.

⁴ *The Enterprise*, June 20, Sept. 5, Oct. 10, 31, 1896.

⁵ *Ibid*, June 25, 1909.

⁶ *Weekly Nebraskan* (Hastings), Sept. 15, 1892; Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *Adams County: The Story* (Hastings, Nebr.: Adams County - Hastings Centennial Commission, 1972), 330-31.

⁷ Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *Black Square & Compass: 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry* (Richmond, Va.: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc., 1979), 69.

⁸ Creigh, *Adams County*, 330-31.

⁹ *The Enterprise*, July 3, 1897.

¹⁰ Walkes, *Black Square*, 70.

¹¹ William Burrell Oral Interview, Prince Hall Mason Manuscripts (hereafter cited as PHM MSS, with reference to the appropriate file). Microfilm is located at the Nebraska State Historical Society and at the Historical Society of Douglas County. These interviews must be used carefully because they contain many factual errors. The above interviews should be distinguished from the separate interviews conducted by the author and deposited at the same archives under the designation, Prince Hall Mason Oral History Project.

¹² *The Enterprise*, Apr. 2, 1897.

¹³ *Ibid.*, May 1, 1897.

¹⁴ *Afro-American Sentinel*, Dec. 19, 1896.

¹⁵ The Nebraska State Historical Society newspaper collection does not include copies of *Progress*. The political tussle can be examined only through the eyes of the editors of the *Afro-American Sentinel* and *The Enterprise*, 1896-97. Bell died before the earliest extant rosters of Omaha lodges; thus if he were a Mason, it cannot be confirmed through the Nebraska collection of PHM MSS.

¹⁶ *The Enterprise*, Jan. 23, 26, 1897.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Jan. 27, 1897.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Febr. 6, 13, 1897. See Apr. 17 and May 29,

Prince Hall Masons

1897, issues for examples of the women's contests.

¹⁹ Ibid., Oct. 10, 1896.

²⁰ *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1904*, 12. Copy in author's possession.

²¹ Ibid., 19.

²² *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1906*, 22-23. Copy in author's possession.

²³ *The Enterprise*, Sept. 26, 1896; Jan. 14, 1910. Seventy-five years later, these same sentiments led the Prince Hall Masons of Nebraska to ask me to write a history of the Nebraska Grand Lodge.

²⁴ *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1904*; Burrell interviews, PHM MSS. Neither source identified the hall. In 1896 the *Afro-American Sentinel* listing stated Acacia met at Crouse Hall at Sixteenth and Capitol. In 1909 *The Enterprise* listed Rescue's meeting place at Twenty-fourth and Charles.

²⁵ *The Enterprise*, Sept. 4, Oct. 16, 1908; Dec. 17, 1909.

²⁶ Ibid., Oct. 1, 1909.

²⁷ *Proceedings of the Fifty-first Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri, 1917*, 5-6. Copy in author's possession. Ricketts died in St. Joseph in 1917 at age sixty.

²⁸ *The Enterprise*, Oct. 1, 1909

²⁹ St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harper & Row, Rev. Ed., 1962), 117, 121.

³⁰ *The Enterprise*, Aug. 21, 1908; May 28, Aug. 27, 1909; *Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1916*. Copy in author's possession.

³¹ *The Enterprise*, June 11, Dec. 31, 1909; Mar. 11, Oct. 14, Dec. 9, 1910.

³² Ibid., Dec. 4, 1908; Jan. 1, 1909.

³³ F. A. Bell, *Order of the Eastern Star* (Chicago: Ezra A. Cook, 1948), 12-18.

³⁴ Mark C. Cames, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 85, 198 n89.

³⁵ Harold Van Buren Voorhis, *Negro Masonry in the United States* (New York: Henry Emerson, 1945), 66.

³⁶ Mrs. S. Joe Brown, *The History of the Order of the Eastern Star Among Colored People* (Des Moines: The Bystander Press, 1925), 15, 37, 76; Voorhis, *Negro Masonry*, 68-69.

³⁷ Voorhis, *Negro Masonry*, 69.

³⁸ *The Enterprise*, June 4, July 30, 1909; Apr. 22, 1910;

³⁹ Ibid., July 30, 1909.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Febr. 19, Apr. 30, June 11, 1909.

⁴¹ Ibid., Mar. 12, July 16, 30, 1909.

⁴² Ibid., July 30, 1909.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Lincoln Daily Star*, Aug. 16, 1912; *The Monitor*, Aug. 28, 1915.

⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1914*, 14-15. Copy in author's possession.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the Twenty-sixth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1913*, 21, 53. Copy in author's possession. *Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Annual Communication*, quoted in Burrell interview, PHM MSS.

⁴⁷ *The Monitor*, Oct. 23, 1915.