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Article Summary: The focus and status of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska changed as World War I was ending. The African-American fraternity began to provide community service and to seek to expand civil rights. The Great Migration brought additional members into the state's lodges and made it possible for them to form the independent Prince Hall Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star of Nebraska.

This article is one of a series about the Nebraska Prince Hall Masons by Dennis N Michelich that includes:

["The Origins of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska,"](#) Spring, 1995;

["Boom-Bust: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska during the 1920s,"](#) Summer, 1998;

["From the Depths: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska, 1930-1960,"](#) Spring, 2008.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Nathaniel Hunter, Trago T McWilliams, Laura Johnson, Kathryn Wilson, Holland Harrold

Prince Hall Lodges in Nebraska: Rough Ashler #74, renumbered #1; Excelsior #110 (#2); Lebanon #126 (#3); Rescue #25 (#4); Marvin #38 (#5); True American #40 (#6); Alliance #7; Platte Valley #8; Omaha #146 (#9); St. John's #31, later Boaz Lodge #37 Under Dispensation; Marvin #36, later Marvin Lodge #38 UD

Order of the Eastern Star Chapters in Nebraska: Shaffer #42, renumbered #1; Nebraska #42 (#2); Amaranth #54 (#3); Star of Bethlehem #56, Kansas/Colorado Jurisdiction; Hiawatha #57 (#4); Alliance #59 (#5); Omaha #80 (#6); Victory #22 (#7); Princess Hattipha, original number unreported, renumbered #8; Ruth #61 (#9); Princess Oziel #69 (#11)

Keywords: Prince Hall Masons, World War I, Great Migration, teamsters' strike, race riot, Laura Johnson, Holland Harrold, Will Brown, Grand Lodge of Nebraska, Order of the Eastern Star, Nathaniel Hunter, YMCA, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), death and burial insurance, Shriners, Kathryn Wilson, Heroines of Jericho

Photographs / Images: Nathaniel Hunter, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska, probably at a national Masonic gathering; Figure 1: Voting Members of the Temporary Organization, July 19, 1919; Figure 2: First Cabinet of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska; Rev Trago T McWilliams, first Grand Secretary of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska; inset advertisement for M W Grand Lodge of Nebraska functions (*The Monitor*, August 4, 1921); Prince Hall Mason and orchestra leader Dan Desdunes; Laura Johnson, first Worthy Grand Matron, Amaranthus Grand Chapter of Nebraska, Order of the Eastern Star (*Proceedings of the 27th Annual Communication, OES*, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1917); Figure 3: Voting Members of the Temporary Organization, Order of the Eastern Star, October 15, 1921; Figure 4: First Cabinet of the Amaranthus Grand Chapter of Nebraska, OES; Figure 5: Charter Membership Numbers and Worshipful Masters/Worthy Matrons

World War I, the Great Migration, and the Formation of

The Grand Bodies of Prince Hall Masonry

By Dennis N. Mihelich

World War I had a significant impact on Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska. It prompted some Masonic groups to look beyond intramural charity and to initiate social service activities, especially in behalf of black servicemen. The conflagration also precipitated the growth of new civil rights, self-help, and uplift organizations in which Masons played important roles because many individual members occupied positions of high status in the racial community. The Great War, as it was known to contemporaries, also sparked the Great Migration, which dramatically altered Northern urban demographics, and in its wake, white-black race relations. The black population explosion also significantly affected African American institutions. In the case of black Masonry in Nebraska, it contributed a rapidly expanding membership, which soon decided that the state of Nebraska deserved an independent sovereign Grand Lodge, which in turn would sponsor a Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star and sundry other affiliates.

The occasional press reports gave the impression that the various black Masonic institutions grew and prospered during the war years. The blue lodges continued their regularly scheduled spectacles, which fulfilled ceremonial obligations and reinforced self esteem, as well as attracting applicants to join a fraternity that conducted such an impressive public ceremony. Annual sermons in a designated church, for example, gave the lodges the opportunity

to parade before the public in full regalia. The Omaha lodges, possibly because of prosperity, no longer advertised the sponsorship of fundraising entertainments. Compared to previous activity, Rough Ashler #74, in one of the few press invitations of the period, invited "all Masons" to meet at its hall (a rented meeting space) at Twenty-second and Cuming to hear a lecture by Dr. N. H. B. Cassell, a native of Africa and the president of Liberia University. Similarly, Lebanon #126 in Lincoln in 1916 instituted an annual St. John's banquet celebrated during the Christmas holiday, but the brief articles describing the event did not mention public participation. Rapidly rising memberships probably produced financial stability. New lodges appeared and existing lodges initiated many new members. While precise figures for all lodges cannot be determined for all years, Rescue #25 in Omaha welcomed nine new apprentices between August 1916 and May 1917, a representative amount.¹

This dramatic expansion of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska contrasted sharply with Allan Spear's frequently cited assessment of the situation in Chicago:

But by the first decade of the twentieth century, the lodges were waning. Geared primarily for small, relatively homogeneous communities, the lodges found it difficult to compete for membership and prestige in a city with a wide variety of other institutions and activities and an increasingly differentiated social structure.²

However, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations reported in 1922 that fraternity membership remained "large" and interest "strong." That assessment

corresponds to Floretta Henri's judgment that in the wake of the Great Migration, "no phase of Negro life grew so rapidly as the fraternal society."³ The Nebraska membership figures support the latter appraisal.

In addition to prompting the northward migration of blacks that enlarged lodge membership, World War I, according to Lynn Dumenil, gave impetus to a shift "from ritual to service" among white Masons:

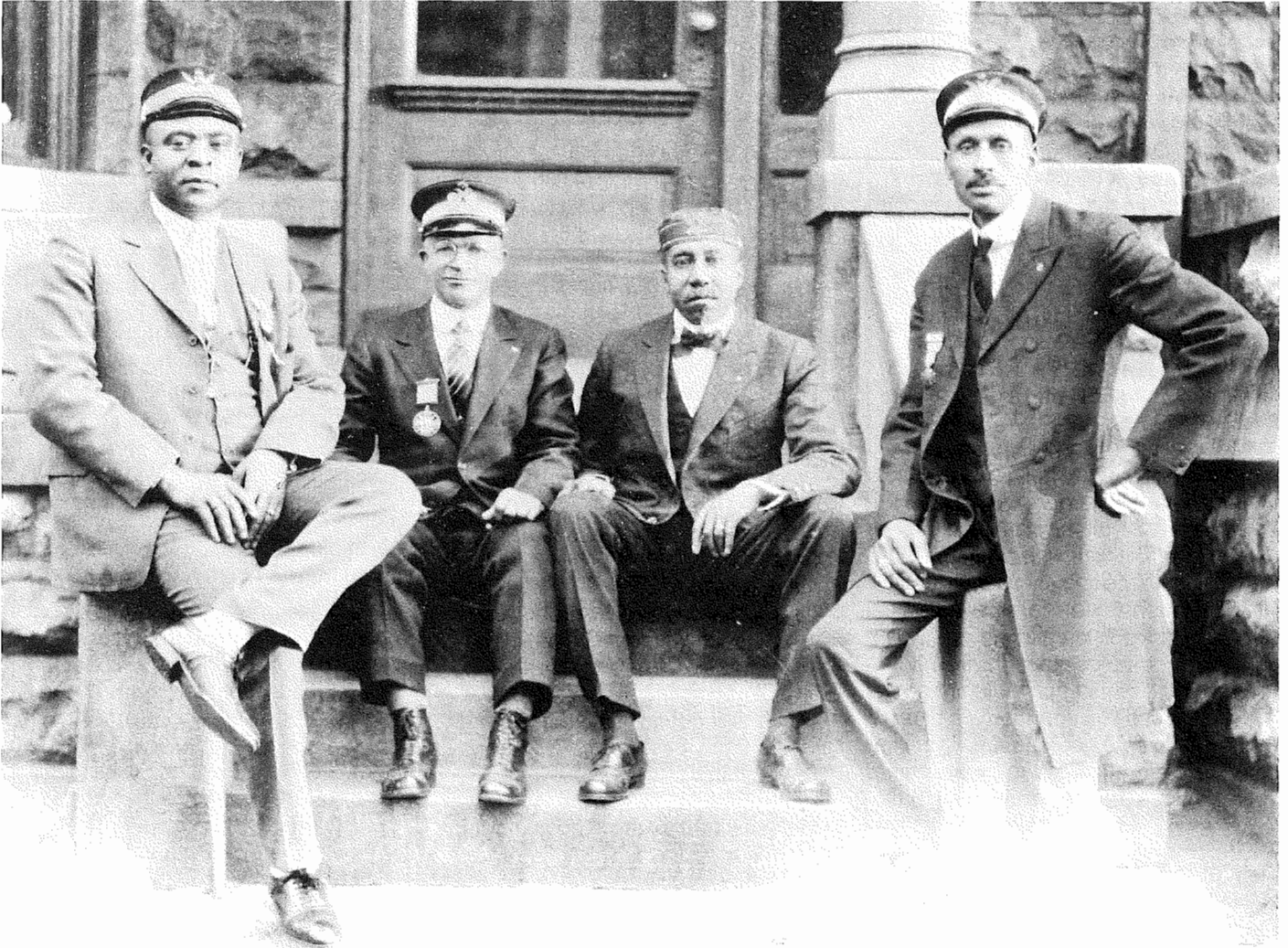
The ideals embodied in Service—the concepts of sacrifice and responsibility—were hardly new in the 1920s. Undoubtedly the years of inculcation of moral and civic duty by Progressives and proponents of the Social Gospel had helped to shape the tone of service. In addition, the enthusiasm for service in the postwar years can be seen in part as an outgrowth of war propaganda and rhetoric, as the Great Cause glorified the prospect of group effort and sacrifice.⁴

Prince Hall Masons followed this trend along racial lines. While the sporadic news coverage produced no articles pertaining to social service by a lodge as a unit, two examples of Order of Eastern Star activity did make it into print. In 1917 Hiawatha chapter prepared to send Christmas packages to black soldiers at Camp Funston, a segregated United States Army post at Ft. Riley, by devoting its second meeting of each month to knitting garments. Similarly, on December 7, 1917, Amaranth #54 gave "a program in honor of all colored soldiers" in Lincoln.⁵

Individual Prince Hall Masons did, however, display the Progressive "tone of service" identified by Dumenil in their prime role in the pursuit of civil rights and self-help institutions.

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Prince Hall Masonry



Nathaniel Hunter, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska, at right, with Masons from Illinois and Massachusetts, probably at a national Masonic gathering. NSHS-P955.1:2

Nathaniel Hunter of Rough Ashlar #74, for example, chaired a committee that included several other Masons, which formed in order to petition for the establishment of a separate YMCA for African Americans in Omaha. That institution seemingly joined the ranks of the segregationists around 1900. In Omaha its presence dated from 1893 and during the later part of the decade *The Enterprise* covered its activities and programs in a manner that indicated that the YMCA welcomed black participants.⁶ In 1916, however, *The Monitor* claimed the Omaha YMCA banned blacks.⁷ There-

fore, the paper began to advocate that Omaha and Lincoln follow the example of other large cities and demand a separate facility to satisfy the needs of the black community.

Historian Nina Mjagkij explained that the YMCA was segregated from its inception, but that many black leaders espoused its "character-building programs as a means for racial advancement and led in the establishment of separate black associations under black leadership."⁸ *The Enterprise* stories infer that the Omaha YMCA did not follow standard racial policy before the turn of the

century. Perhaps the small nineteenth-century black population in Omaha disarmed local YMCA officials, while the rapidly increasing number of African Americans that arrived during the Great Migration jarred them into instituting the national YMCA policy. Regardless of the historical precedent, the committee, led by Prince Hall Masons, generated some publicity in 1919, but failed to get the desired branch building.⁹

Some African American scholars criticize the actions of leaders such as the Prince Hall members of the YMCA campaign. Those scholars label them as

“accommodationists,” arguing that they acquiesced in segregation. They may have been merely pragmatic, however, viewing the situation as one of getting segregated service versus getting no service at all. On the other hand, those same individuals could demonstrate militancy in the realm of civil rights. For example, Holland Harrold, a musician in a theater and a member of Omaha #146, pursued litigation that demonstrated that the Nebraska civil rights statute still carried the weight of law and that some black Omaha citizens were determined to apply it. He continued the tradition of the educated who knew the law, of the proud who would not suffer a slight, and of those who had the time and the money to use the courts. In 1918 a jury agreed that McCrory’s 5 & 10 store had violated the state civil rights law by refusing to serve Harrold at its fountain. The judge summarily fined the establishment \$50.

This type of militancy also spawned the formation of chapters of the nascent National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Lincoln and Omaha. Several years of interest came to fruition first in the capital city in May 1918. Prince Hall Masons led the organizing committee and then four members of Lebanon Lodge #126 were elected to serve as the officer corps: Clyde Malone, president; Harry M. Hill, vice president; Trago T. McWilliams, secretary; and the Rev. I. B. Smith, treasurer.

The following July the new affiliate invited Mary White Ovington, vice president of the national NAACP, to speak in Lincoln at the Temple Theater. The next week she traveled to Omaha to encourage the establishment of a branch there. Again, local Masons played a major role in satisfying her wish and also in filling the charter officer positions: Mrs. Cecelia Jewel, Shaffer #42, president; William T. Ransome, vice president, and Thomas Reece, treasurer, both of Rough Ashler #74; and Harrison J. Pinkett, Excelsior #110, who served as legal counsel.¹⁰

This war-bred militancy, combined

with the doubling of the black population of Nebraska (the historic pattern of settlement persisted, with Omaha absorbing the vast majority of the migrants), also resurrected the desire for an independent Prince Hall grand lodge for the state. A turn-of-the-century effort had failed because the relatively small number of Nebraska members would not have been able to fund the death and burial insurance at an adequate level. Now, at the Fifty-first Annual Communication of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri at Jefferson City in 1917, Grand Master W. W. Fields revealed the impact of the tumultuous times. Because of “war, riots, high cost of living, etc.,” he decided not to make his annual visit to the subordinate lodges of the jurisdiction. Those problems, he claimed, retarded “the increase of membership throughout the jurisdiction.” Membership figures for Nebraska however, conflicted with that assessment and, in fact, Fields contradicted himself by revealing that prospects existed to create three new lodges in Montana, five in Missouri, and one in Nebraska, but that “owing to [the] above reasons it was decided by all concerned to postpone the organization until a more opportune time.”¹¹

In March 1917, however, Fields did have to visit lodges in Nebraska to postpone the organization of yet another prospect, a grand lodge for the state. After visiting all the lodges he found that R. H. Young of Lebanon #126, Nathaniel Hunter of Rough Ashler #74, and George Flippin of St. John’s #31 (Grand Island) spearheaded the drive for independence, while Excelsior #110 and Omaha #146 refused to participate. During the visit, Fields boasted, each lodge “went on record by unanimous vote to remain with the Missouri Jurisdiction, and to never again take part in the formation of a Grand Lodge in the State of Nebraska.” According to Fields, the “Grand Lodge of Missouri had no objection” to independence, “but did object to the manner in which the attempt was made. Think of Masons in rebellion against

their own Grand Lodge,” he stated rhetorically. It constituted “treason,” he argued. “The Grand Lodge of Nebraska,” Fields concluded, “died aborning.”¹²

The adage “never say never” applied in this situation. The historical forces promoting self-government combined with continued confrontation to induce separation. The Iowa Grand Lodge, which had experienced similar discomfort in disconnecting itself from the Missouri jurisdiction, interpreted the situation differently than Fields. It recognized the desire and the right of Rescue #25, its only subordinate lodge in Nebraska, to join a new grand lodge for that state. Grand Master W. W. Gross explained:

Seeing nothing irregular in such a proceeding, and realizing the disadvantage these brethren were suffering from being so far from the center of their jurisdiction, I replied, approving of the movement, and offering any assistance that I could consistently render in making the movement a success.¹³

Gross’s assistance was immediate, substantial, and controversial. In conjunction with stifling the separation in 1917, the Grand Master of Missouri attempted to discipline some of the upstarts by arresting the charters of St. John’s #31 at Grand Island and Marvin #36 at Hastings. Apparently, the population increase associated with the war allowed for a reconstitution of the defunct nineteenth-century lodge at Hastings with its original name but a new number. Obviously not in the mood to repent, in May both lodges responded to Fields’s suspension by applying for membership in the Iowa jurisdiction. Gross obliged and on June 20 issued a dispensation authorizing Isaac Trice as Worshipful Master, George A. Flippin as Senior Warden, and G. W. Buxton as Junior Warden, “to open and operate a lodge of Master Masons at Grand Island, Neb., to be known as Boaz Lodge U. D.” [under dispensation, a period until the Grand Lodge Annual Communication could ratify the action of the Grand Master, subsequently assigned #37]. Ten days later he repeated the action for

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Marvin Lodge U. D. [#38] with J. S. Craig as Worshipful Master, John Huff as Senior Warden, and A. J. Hughes as Junior Warden.¹⁴

Grand Master Fields of Missouri escalated the conflict by terminating "fraternal relations" with the Grand Lodge of Iowa. In "justice to a sister Grand Lodge" and in "the interest of regularity" Grand Master Gross compromised and accepted a request from Fields to suspend the work of Boaz #37. A few months later the Iowa Prince Hall Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication of 1918 revoked the new lodge's warrant, restoring "perfect" relations with the Grand Lodge of Missouri. Seemingly, the actions of members of the Grand Island lodge, which had been in the Missouri jurisdiction for decades, especially angered Grand Master Fields. He seemed unconcerned about the defection of the recently reconstituted Hastings lodge. Therefore, the Iowa Grand Master trod carefully in entertaining a new request from the unattached Prince Hall Masons in Grand Island. This time he issued a dispensation for a lodge composed only of Masons not previously attached to another jurisdiction (i.e., Missouri), which resulted in the formation of True American U. D. [#40], C. A. Flippin, Worshipful Master, Wheeler [sic] Blair, Senior Warden, and Edward Gibson, Junior Warden.¹⁵

The maneuvering did not provide a long-term solution; it merely served as a very short-term way station towards independence. The jurisdictional switch did not divide Masons in Nebraska. *The Monitor* reported that nine Masons from Lincoln (Lebanon #126, Missouri jurisdiction) attended "a beautiful and stirring St. John's celebration" conducted by Marvin #38 (Iowa jurisdiction) in Hastings on June 22, 1919.¹⁶ Obviously, Masonic brotherhood, the additional bond among a small number of African Americans in a predominantly white state, and the well-established precedent of sovereign grand lodges in most of the other states, drew Nebraska Prince Hall Masons together and fueled

their quest for self-government. It was a matter of pride, of state patriotism. Probably, informal conversation at the Hastings celebration included expressions of a continued desire for a Nebraska grand lodge. Not merely coincidental, three weeks later those two lodges joined four others to turn ambition into reality. Four meetings between July 19 and September 20, 1919, accomplished the task.

According to brief (one page and four page) institutional histories, the organizers deferred to Rough Ashler as the oldest blue lodge in Nebraska; therefore, Walter L. Seals, its Worshipful Master, received the honor of issuing the call for a meeting "to discuss the feasibility of the formation of a Grand Lodge of Masons in the State of Nebraska." Six lodges sent representatives, who immediately voted to go into "a temporary organization" and elected Nathaniel Hunter of Rough Ashler temporary chairman and Trago T. McWilliams of Lebanon temporary secretary. Not surprisingly, two years earlier, Missouri Grand Master Fields had identified both of them as "ringleaders" of the independence movement. Now they led a "serious and varied discussion from many angles" which led "all present" to express a "strong and enthusiastic desire" for a separate grand lodge.

The "varied discussion" included "some interesting statistics on the government and financial affairs of the Missouri jurisdiction," and frequent complaints about the lack of protection from "clandestines"; that is, competitive masonic lodges not recognized by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of that jurisdiction. Filled with Nebraska patriotism, and with the prospect of a score of prestigious offices that would open for them alone, those concerns carried great weight. After invoking "the blessings and guidance of the Supreme Architect of the Universe" and reciting the Lord's Prayer, the assembly voted to establish a grand lodge. "It was moved by Brother J. Noah Thomas (Worshipful Master Excelsior Lodge # 110) and seconded by

Rough Ashler #74, Missouri Jurisdiction

Past Master R. B. Rhodes
Past Master J. H. Williams
Past Master Nathaniel Hunter
Past Master J. H. Wakefield
Worshipful Master Walter L. Seals
Senior Warden Charles C. Dudley
Junior Warden W. O. Dunn

Excelsior #110, Missouri Jurisdiction

Worshipful Master J. Noah Thomas
Senior Warden John Crawford
Junior Warden Charles Hicks

Lebanon #126, Missouri Jurisdiction

Past Master R. H. Young
Past Master John C. Galbraith
Worshipful Master Trago T. McWilliams
Senior Warden William Woods
Junior Warden David Nichols

Rescue #25, Iowa Jurisdiction

Past Master F. L. Barnett
Past Master Charles W. Dickerson
Past Master C. M. Simmons
Past Master W. H. Washington
Worshipful Master Perry R. Warner
Senior Warden G. D. Gordon
Junior Warden S. E. Ward

Marvin #38, Iowa Jurisdiction

Past Master R. P. Booth (proxy for Worshipful Master)

True American #40, Iowa Jurisdiction

Worshipful Master Dr. C. A. Flippin
(see note 17)

Figure 1. **Voting Members of the Temporary Organization, July 19, 1919**

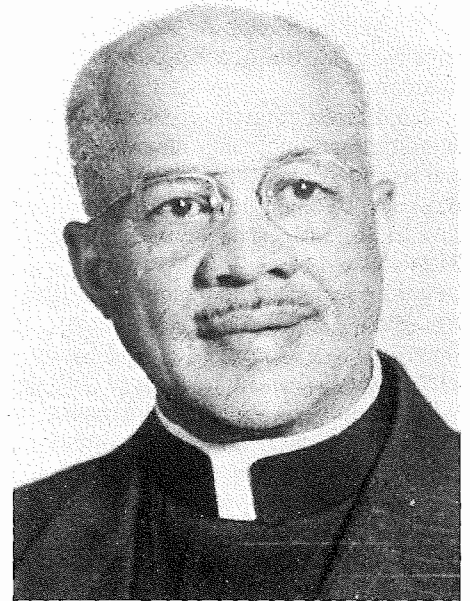
Brother George A. Flippin¹⁷ (Past Master True American Lodge # 40) that we form a permanent organization under the corporate name 'the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, A. F. & A. M. of Nebraska and its Masonic Jurisdiction' (fig. 1). The motion passed unanimously." Before adjourning, the new Nebraska Grand Lodge elected officers (fig. 2), and called for a second convention to convene in Lincoln on August 2, 1919.

The second meeting began with a banquet at the white Masonic Hall, 143 South Eleventh Street. This event, and

Most Worshipful Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter, Rough Ashler #1
 Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master Perry R. Warner, Rescue #4
 R. W. Senior Grand Warden R. P. Booth, Marvin #5
 R. W. Junior Grand Warden J. Noah Thomas, Excelsior #2
 R. W. Grand Treasurer Richard H. Young, Lebanon #3
 R. W. Grand Secretary Trago T. McWilliams, Lebanon #3
 R. W. Grand Chaplain John H. Wakefield, Rough Ashler #1
 R. W. Grand Auditor I. B. Smith, Lebanon #3
 Grand Senior Deacon Charles W. Dickerson, Rescue #4
 Grand Junior Deacon John H. Crawford, Excelsior #2
 Grand Marshal William Woods, Lebanon #3
 Grand Lecturer Walter L. Seals, Rough Ashler #1
 Grand Standard Bearer Charles Hicks, Excelsior #2
 Grand Sword Bearer F. L. Barnett, Rescue #4
 Grand Senior Steward Wheeler Blair,* True American #6
 Grand Junior Steward John C. Galbraith,* Lebanon #3
 Grand Tyler C. A. Flippin, True American #6
 Grand Pursuivant John Gates, Marvin #5

**List from Charter and Constitution, PMH MSS. The institutional histories have the two names with asterisks reversed in terms of offices held, and did not list a Grand Auditor.*

Figure 2. First Cabinet of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska



Rev. Trago T. McWilliams, shown here later in life, was the first Grand Secretary of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska. NSHS-P853

the many Prince Hall functions held in that building over the preceding years, demonstrated the tacit acceptance of Prince Hall Masonry by white Masons, at least in Lincoln, despite the official position branding it illegitimate. Laura Johnson, Past Associate Grand Conduress, Past District Grand Matron, Past Grand Lecturer of the Grand Chapter of Missouri OES, and organizer of Amaranth #54, and Fanny Young, Past Matron of Amaranth and president of the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of Nebraska, hosted the banquet that served nearly one hundred delegates and guests. After dining, Trago T. McWilliams opened an occasional meeting of Lebanon Lodge and turned over the gavel to Walter L. Seals for the honor of installing the Grand Lodge officers. The "principal guest," Iowa Grand Master W. W. Gross, assured the assembled of the legitimacy of the new grand lodge, while cautioning them not to surrender any charters until completion of the organizational process. "Someone suggested that an Occasional

Grand Lodge be opened for the purpose of installation [of officers], but Grand Master Gross did not believe this to be necessary. He said that the Master of the oldest lodge in the state had opened an occasional lodge, and that the installation should be done in said lodge and so recorded in the minutes." Little other business was conducted, although the Grand Secretary was instructed to write to all lodges in the state, inviting them to join the new grand lodge.

News coverage of the organizational meetings consisted of one short article in *The Monitor*. Again, in the confused and changing pattern of race relations in Nebraska, the white press no longer considered Prince Hall Masonry newsworthy. In this particular instance, of course, stories from the Versailles peace conference, the nationwide railroad strike, and the race riots in Washington, D. C. and Chicago crowded the pages of the publications. Nonetheless, the editors found space to cover events relating to the white fraternities. Thus, unknown to all but the participants, the

Nebraska Grand Lodge officially incorporated on August 13, 1919, and held its first Annual Communication three weeks later on September 6. By that date lodges in Alliance (Missouri jurisdiction) and Scottsbluff (jurisdiction unrecorded) accepted the invitation to join and Grand Master Hunter outlined the new numbering system:

Rough Ashler #1 (Omaha)
 Excelsior #2 (Omaha)
 Lebanon #3 (Lincoln)
 Rescue #4 (Omaha)
 Marvin #5 (Hastings)
 True American #6 (Grand Island)
 Alliance #7 (Alliance)
 Platte Valley #8 (Scottsbluff)

The delegates accepted a minor revision to the recently filed constitution and bylaws, voted to bond the Grand Secretary and the Grand Treasurer at \$500 each, and agreed to publish in book form one hundred copies of the proceedings, including the picture of all elected officers, who furnished their own cuts. The printed version also included a full-page picture of Iowa Grand

Prince Hall Masonry

Master W. W. Gross and a facing full-page tribute stating:

In our darkest hour, when we were groping for light, and wisdom in trying to perfect the organization of a Grand Lodge in the state of Nebraska, he came to us like a guardian angel; and his kindly interest, his full knowledge and pure conceptions of Masonry, his patience and forbearance in guiding this infant organization, shall ever be held dear and sacred in the hearts of all Nebraska Masons.

The records are unclear, but it seems that at an Occasional Grand Lodge held on September 20, 1919, Omaha #146 (Missouri jurisdiction) was admitted to the Nebraska Grand Lodge as Omaha #9. It is clear, and without any special mention or notation, that Omaha #9 participated as a regular member at the second Annual Communication. Finally, *The Monitor* reported the completion of the organizational process. Missouri Grand Master Crittenden Clark and several members of his cabinet came to Omaha September 18-20, 1919, to close fraternal affairs in Nebraska. Clark called an Occasional Grand Lodge (Missouri Jurisdiction) to release formally the lodges holding charters from the Grand Lodge of Missouri. Clark then turned the gavel over to a guest, Nebraska Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter, who called an Occasional Grand Lodge of Nebraska into simultaneous session. A joint meeting ensued (probably on September 20) with much "flow of oratory," and Nebraska Prince Hall Masonry celebrated its independence, officially joining the list of sovereign Grand Lodges.¹⁸

The constitution established that the Grand Lodge would annually choose the site of the subsequent Annual Communication, but that it would always convene on the third Wednesday in August at ten o'clock in the morning. The Grand Lodge would subsist on revenue generated by one-time fees associated with the formation of new subordinate lodges, from more frequent fees assessed for each new member initiated and his completion of each of the three degrees, and from an annual tax of \$1 per member. Sixty percent of that

money went into the general fund, with the remainder deposited into a sinking fund. Separate funds were established for "relief" (a monetary bequest), and burial. Thus, The Grand Lodge levied two additional annual taxes of \$4 for relief and \$1.60 for burial, collected in quarterly installments. At the death of a Master Mason the Grand Lodge paid the undertaker \$75 and the beneficiary a maximum of \$200. A member had to be a Master Mason for more than three years to be eligible for the maximum bequest and it was paid either to the widow, the children, the mother, the father, the sister, the brother, or those dependent upon the deceased in that prescribed order. While the bequest may seem minimal, it fell within the general range of fraternal insurance that originated in the post-Civil War era in order to bring \$100-\$500 life insurance policies to workers who could not afford the larger policies sold by commercial companies.¹⁹

Subordinate lodges were required to frame their own constitutions and by-laws, and to "assemble for work at least once in every calendar month." Moreover, they had to "charge not less than \$25 for the conferring of three degrees," unless the Grand Master issued a dispensation allowing a reduction. With the recommendation from "the nearest subordinate lodge" a minimum of seven Master Masons could form a new blue lodge. The constitution also provided for secrecy, stipulating that "no brother shall print or publish or cause to be printed or published any work or discourse relative to Masonry without the approbation of the Grand Lodge." Finally, the bylaws sought to maintain proper conduct by asserting the "no private dispute about nations, religions, or politics shall be brought into the lodge," and by clarifying specific "Masonic Offenses-Penalties." Section 31 declared, "Profanity, gambling, drunkenness, the keeping or frequenting of wineshops and other disreputable houses are offenses against good morals." The first offense brought suspension, "persistence"

resulted in expulsion.²⁰

While the Prince Hall Masons tried to control the behavior of their members, the city of Omaha momentarily found it impossible to control the irrational fury of some of its citizens. The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska (PHGLN) was only a week old when Omaha joined the ranks of over sixty other cities to experience a race riot in 1919. The Great Migration caused racial competition for housing, employment, and recreation at a time when the ideas of "racialism" and the practices of discrimination were on the rise in the North. The demobilization of World War I servicemen exacerbated the situation. Furthermore, and particularly related to the Omaha situation, the yellow journalistic press inundated its readers with lurid stories of "black man rapes white woman."

One such alleged episode in Omaha led to the arrest of a black named Will Brown. On the night of September 28 and the morning of September 29, 1919, a mob, possibly numbering 6,000, torched the courthouse, almost killed the mayor, plundered downtown stores, removed Brown from jail, shot and hanged him, then mutilated and burned his lifeless body. Troops quickly restored order, but a new pattern of race relations rapidly emerged. By the end of the year *The Monitor* began to warn its readers about an organized effort to segregate blacks in the city. In December it reported that the Central Park Men's Club, a white North Omaha businessmen's group, passed a resolution advocating such a plan.²¹

The Great Migration, which doubled the African American population in Omaha, and the riot contributed mightily to intensified discrimination and segregation in the city in the following decade. The new PHGLN, as a major urban black institution, had to adjust to the changing situation. The conditions, however, did not change with revolutionary speed, but evolved at a consistent pace. Thus, with the restoration of calm following a twenty-four hour outburst of irrational violence, people

eased back to the mundane concerns of everyday life.

The other societies associated with Prince Hall Masonry also flourished in the World War I era. The archival records in Nebraska for most of these groups consist of only a few documents relating almost exclusively to the era after the creation of the Grand Lodge of Nebraska. Occasionally *The Monitor* reported on an activity of the Joshua David Kelly Consistory, such as its annual Maundy Thursday feast, or a visit by some of the Omaha members to a recent addition (charter date unknown), the Henry Huckles Consistory in Lincoln.

The few sources produced the same disconnected history for the Shriners. In 1916 Omaha Shriners from blue lodges of the Missouri jurisdiction organized Zaha Grotto as a booster club and elected E. C. Underwood, Grand Caliph, and Walter Seals, Recording Knight. That same year Nathaniel Hunter served as Illustrious Potentate and Charles W. Dickerson, Chief Rabban, of Zaha Temple #52 in Omaha, which boasted forty-five members. By that date, Lincoln also had its own Prince Hall Shrine organization, Islam Temple #65, with thirty-five members, P. L. Moore, Illustrious Potentate, and Trago McWilliams, Chief Rabban. Two years later the Shriners held their sixth annual ball at The Mecca in Omaha.²²

Similarly, few membership records exist in the state that pertained to the Order of the Eastern Star prior to the formation of the Grand Chapter of Nebraska in 1920. Therefore, considering the bloodline rule (members had to be related to a Prince Hall Mason), the OES increase may not have matched that of the blue lodges and other allied or higher-degree societies. The number of single apprentices and the number of uninterested wives and adult sisters and daughters may have curtailed OES expansion somewhat, but the affiliate definitely experienced a proportional growth. In 1917 *The Monitor* mentioned two previously unrecognized chapters in Omaha, neither of which appeared in

Third Annual Communication OF THE M. W. Grand Lodge of Nebraska AND JURISDICTION A. F. & A. M.

WILL BE HELD AT

Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 17-18-19

Guest of Lebanon Lodge, No. 3

Public Reception

Wednesday Evening, August 17

A. M. E. Church, 9th and C Streets, 8:00 p. m.

Address of Welcome—Hon. D. M. Amsberry, Secretary of State.

Response—The R. W. Charles Dickerson, Deputy Grand Master.

Engagement De Luxe

The Patrol, Islam Temple, No. 65, A. E. A. O. N. M. S. presents DESDUNE'S CONCERT ORCHESTRA with Mr. Andrew M. Harrold, of Omaha. The Public Cordially Invited. 8:30 p. m.

Birdseye View of LINCOLN

Airplane furnished by Nebraska Aircraft Corporation

Band Concert 7:15 P. M.

Lodge of Sorrow

Thursday Evening, August 18

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 12th & F Sts., 8:00 p. m. Conducted by The R. W. A. W. Gates, Grand Lecturer.

Engagement Extraordinary

The Big Day, Friday, August 19th

Meet your Delegates and Friends at the Old Fashioned Picnic to be held at the

Nebraska State Fair Grounds

Dan Desdune's Famous Concert Band. Parade will leave at 1:30 p. m. Concert Auditorium—Fair Grounds—3:00 p. m.

Barbecued Meats Served All Day!

Refreshments of All Kinds

THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

Luther J. Allen Harry M. Hill C. R. Johnson M. E. Williams
Charles E. Haynes John L. Wright T. T. McWilliams
R. H. Young, Chm. 1315 Wash. L. T. Carter, Secy. Box 1469

The Monitor, August 4, 1921.

Prince Hall Masonry

the City Directory during the few pre-World War I years that it listed "colored fraternities." The paper reported that Princess Oziel Chapter #69 [sic] hosted a party at the residence of Mrs. R. Severe, 4421 South Twenty-sixth Street, in the recently annexed suburb of South Omaha. Two years later an obituary noted that the deceased, Mrs. Rebecca Lindsey, had belonged to the Heroines of Jericho and to the Star of Bethlehem (OES) Chapter #56. Moreover, an undated OES document from the mid-1950s indicated that at that time chapters also bloomed in Alliance and Grand Island.²³

While new chapters emerged, established chapters matured. Amaranth #54 in Lincoln celebrated its ninth anniversary in 1918 with a banquet at the white Masonic Hall (an indication of the continuation of the relatively amorphous nineteenth-century pattern of race relations before the onset of rigorous segregation during the 1920s) and the next year its ritual drill team exemplified the floral degree at the Grand Chapter meeting at Carrollton, Missouri. OES chapters in Nebraska not only demonstrated proficiency within their own jurisdiction, but produced a sister of national repute. Mrs. Kathryn Wilson founded the highly successful California Beauty School in Omaha and in 1925 edited the nationally distributed *Successful Hairdressing*. Fraternally she served as a lecturer for the OES and in 1916 she made a speaking tour through the eastern United States.²⁴

The Order of the Eastern Star, despite increasing numbers, continued fundraising events. Perhaps the lower OES dues structure necessitated continued fundraising by some chapters to ensure their ability to meet obligations. On the other hand, it may have indicated the proclivities of particular Worthy Matrons. Whatever the reason(s), the two regularly newsworthy chapters in Omaha—Shaffer #42 and Hiawatha #57—continued to sponsor entertainments, musicals, card parties, and lawn socials, such as one on June 28, 1916.

According to *The Monitor* the soiree

was a delightful affair, largely attended and pronounced a success from every point of view. . . . The First Regiment band, under the leadership of Mr. J. N. Thomas, gave a concert from 9 until 10 o'clock. A. Florindo, a visitor to the city and the soloist of a world-renown musical aggregation, graciously contributed three numbers on the baritone horn.²⁵



Prince Hall Mason Dan Desdunes led a popular Omaha orchestra that played at many Masonic functions. NSHS-5336

Several other guests and the Mozart Mandolin Club presented musical pieces and three women completed the program with recitations. The evening's entertainment demonstrated that many members of Prince Hall Masonry had fully assimilated into the "refined" Victorian cultural standards of the era.

While the entertainments continued, the entry of the United States into World War I brought new concerns to the OES. Shortly after the country assumed the status of a belligerent, the Missouri Grand Chapter (OES) Annual Session convened in Lincoln. Compared to earlier grand meetings that received some

notice, none of the white papers in the state capital covered the event. In evaluating newsworthiness, Prince Hall Masonry obviously paled before the war, but also significant, the order subsequently remained absent from the columns of the white press until the civil rights era. Unfortunately, the editor of the only black paper in the state gave only cursory coverage to fraternal societies because he deemed them superfluous. Thus, *The Monitor* simply recounted that Amaranth #54 sponsored a public entertainment to open the Grand Chapter session and realized \$25 for its effort.²⁶

Lincoln Mayor J. E. Miller officially welcomed the delegates and they conducted their business July 18-20, 1917, in the Grand Army of the Republic Hall. The mayoral greeting and the ownership of the meeting hall again demonstrated the civil nature of race relations in Nebraska, at least in the "political" realm, in the pre-World War I era. This Annual Session elected two Nebraskans to Grand Chapter offices: Kathryn Wilson of Nebraska #42 as Burial and Relief Secretary and Laura Johnson of Amaranth #54 as Grand Lecturer. The membership list revealed that the three subordinate chapters of the Missouri jurisdiction did indeed experience growth commensurate with their compatriot blue lodges. Between the Annual Communications in 1916 and 1917, Hiawatha #57 welcomed nine new members, while Shaffer added eight and Amaranth followed with six. Unfortunately, pre-World War I materials relating to the other existing chapters do not appear in the Nebraska manuscript collection—Nebraska #42, Star of Bethlehem #56, Ruth #61, Princess Oziel #69, all at Omaha and in the Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction; Alliance #59 of Alliance, Victory #22 of Grand Island, Princess Hattipha of Lincoln (jurisdictions unrecorded).²⁷

The significant growth of the OES, and the potential for more, led the Grand Matron to admonish the membership in her 1917 annual address. "The

one great drawback to our beautiful order," she complained, was "the habit of black-balling." The OES, like the Masons, voted by each member depositing a white (yea) or black (nay) marble in a jar. A single black marble denied a candidate entry to the Order. The Grand Matron chastised the delegates for allowing spite or malice to guide their decision and asked them to eliminate such pettiness. She also criticized "church quarrels" and other "bickerings" that crossed the threshold of chapter rooms. The histories of most fraternities and sororities are littered with cases of internal feuding, but the rapid growth of the Great Migration era probably produced extra tension, especially between the firmly established and the recent migrant.

Moreover, revealing the impact of the contemporary women's movement, the Grand Matron reproached overbearing grand patrons:

A good patron is the life and strength of a chapter. . . . [but] So many Patrons are inclined to look with displeasure upon the Matrons. They assume a little too much authority and instead of helping and strengthening the work as they should, [sic] they are somewhat a menace. Now Honorable Sir Knights, we thank you for adopting us and giving us this beautiful privilege but please be a little more considerate and indulgent with the ladies. Honorable Ladies see that only helpful and congenial Patrons are elected.²⁸

In comparison to their white counterparts, the Prince Hall Masons maintained a close, official, patriarchal relationship with their adoptive sisters. Obviously, depending on personalities and interests, the potential for gender-based leadership confrontations always loomed on the horizon. Notably, the Grand Matron placed the ultimate responsibility with the women, because they elected the Patrons. As her remarks above demonstrated, the "liberated" sister of the 1970s had an understanding predecessor in the "emancipated" sister of the pre-World War I era.

Beyond the dynamics of internal politics, however, the grand officers agreed on the despicable and demoralizing nature of the East St. Louis race

riot that occurred only two weeks before the 1917 Grand Chapter session. The Grand Patron lamented:

The other day we read of the landing of the vanguard of the American army in Europe to assist the Allies in putting down the Germans and almost identical with the landing of the army in Europe came the horrifying news of the murder, lynching, and slaughtering of our people in East St. Louis, Ill. in the 'Land of the Free and the



Laura Johnson, first Worthy Grand Matron, Amaranthus Grand Chapter of Nebraska, Order of the Eastern Star. *Proceedings of the 27th Annual Communication, OES, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1917*

Home of the Brave,' . . . As Negroes we stand ready as American citizens to uphold the law and to defend the flag, but today the affair of East St. Louis, Ill., has crushed out of our hearts and minds the patriotism we should have and we are filled with the spirit of vengeance, but let us wait on gentle Mercy, and remember the Biblical teaching that 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' sayeth the Lord. God has appointed a day when the white man shall suffer tenfold for the wrongs and injustice he has heaped upon the Negro.

The Grand Matron echoed the disgust

over "that worst of Demons—Mob-law." She also proudly provided numerous examples of black support for the war effort. However, in a "blame the victim" interpretation, ultimately she argued that only racial uplift would prevent a reoccurrence of the tragedy:

Oh my people, I beg, I implore, I beseech you, let us lay aside some of the frivolities of life and place our minds on sterner things and our trust in God who has never lost a battle, work to each other's interest and be a race. Be a people as was Esther in her time and uplift the standard of our race until we demand the respect and courtesy due us. Be a people of which any country would be proud to call us its citizens. And until we do this I fear for our safety.²⁹

Local dignitaries added their voices to the concern expressed by the grand officers. In a front-page story *The Monitor* urged calm when rumors spread that a teamsters' strike in Omaha would spark a riot. The editor praised the *Omaha World-Herald* condemnation of the East St. Louis violence and Mayor James Dahlman's proclamation against rumormongering. In one such rumor the "residents of the negro districts of Omaha were 'buying up' all the ammunition they could purchase, apparently preparing for a siege."³⁰ A mysterious explosion the previous evening on North Twenty-fourth Street unnerved the African American population. Tension caused by the importation of black labor by the packing plants, by complaints from white teamsters that blacks were taking their jobs, and by the East St. Louis riot obviously made many in the minority community wary. The Omaha police chief had already ordered his officers to "search and remove all firearms from unemployed negroes in the city."³¹ Dahlman responded to the rising anxiety by asking all citizens to remain calm and by urging munitions dealers to "exercise discretion in the matter of the sale of firearms to the end that they may not be placed in the hands of the irresponsible or unduly agitated persons."³² The lingering impact of the incident revealed itself months later when *The Monitor* re-

Prince Hall Masonry

Shaffer #42, Missouri Jurisdiction

(Renumbered #1 in the Nebraska Grand Chapter)

Worthy Matron Ella Hunter
Past Worthy Matron Kathryn Wilson
Past Worthy Matron Myrtle Metcalf
Worthy Patron Nathaniel Hunter

Nebraska #42, Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #2)

Worthy Matron Mary Sheldon
Associate Matron Elizabeth Wright
Worthy Patron Brother Jones
Past Worthy Matron Mary Wade

Amaranth #54, Missouri Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #3)

Worthy Matron Lulu B. Alexander
Past Worthy Matron Laura Johnson
Past Worthy Matron Maude Johnson
Past Worthy Patron I. B. Smith
Past Worthy Patron Richard Young
Past Worthy Matron Fannie Young
Past Worthy Matron Elizabeth Woods

Star of Bethlehem #56, Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction

(Did not enter Nebraska jurisdiction)

Worthy Matron Mary Spahn
Associate Matron Sister Steele
Past Worthy Matron Laura Hillion
Past Worthy Matron Elizabeth Howard
Past Worthy Patron E. Rayford
Past Worthy Matron Georgia Allen
Past Worthy Matron Edna Adams

Hiawatha #57, Missouri Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #4)

Worthy Matron Willa Green
Worthy Patron Brother Saunders
Past Worthy Matron Sister Wheatley
Past Worthy Matron Cleota Ferguson

Hiawatha #57, Missouri Jurisdiction. (Cont.)

Past Worthy Patron Joseph Carr
Past Worthy Matron Sister Jones
Past Worth Patron Emory Smith

Alliance #59, jurisdiction unreported. (Since the Masons of Alliance #7 had been Missouri, the OES probably was also. Renumbered #5)

Worthy Matron Cora Julius
Past Worthy Matron Mary Kays [sic]

Omaha #80, Missouri Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #6)

Worthy Matron Mabel Mills
Associate Matron Amanda Jenkins

Victory #22, jurisdiction unreported. (Renumbered #7)

Worthy Matron Grace Alexander
Worthy Patron George A. Flippin

Princess Hattipha, chapter number and jurisdiction unreported. (Worthy Patron Harry Hill was a member of Lebanon #126, suggesting Missouri jurisdiction. Renumbered #8)

Worthy Matron Ida McWilliams
Worthy Patron Harry Hill

Ruth #61, Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #9, it did not become a charter member, entering in 1923)

Worthy Matron Sister Bradford
Worthy Patron Brother Bradford
Associate Matron Viola Cole

Princess Oziel, #69, Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction. (Renumbered #11, it did not become a charter member, entering in 1925)

Worthy Matron Lydia Wilson
Past Worthy Patron W. O. Dunn
Past Worthy Matron Sister Woodson
Past Worthy Matron Hattie Brownlee
Past Worthy Patron Brother Samuels

Figure 3. Voting Members of the Temporary Organization, Order of the Eastern Star, October 15, 1921

proached as "racist" the *Bee* and the *Daily News* for carrying stories it considered capable of igniting violence. As a rejoinder it reprinted the earlier *Omaha World-Herald* editorial.³³

Omaha managed to avoid racial violence until the accumulated tension ruptured the uneasy peace in September 1919. Like their Prince Hall Mason sponsors, OES members gradually returned to Masonic activities shortly after the 1919 riot. The sisters of three Omaha chapters channeled their efforts towards arranging for the Thirty-seventh Annual Communication of the Prince Hall Grand Chapter of the Order of the East-

ern Star, Kansas-Colorado Jurisdiction. Nebraska #42, Star of Bethlehem #56, and Princess Oziel #69 hosted the August 11-13, 1920, conclave at their usual meeting hall at Twenty-fourth and Parker. *The Monitor* announced the advent of the gathering, but did not cover its proceedings. The delegates elected one Nebraskan to a grand office, Elizabeth Howard, Star of Bethlehem, Grand Conductress.³⁴ The honor, however, proved to be fleeting. By that time many of the sisters wished to follow the lead of their male relatives in establishing an independent grand chapter for Nebraska.

Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter re-

vealed that some Eastern Stars had criticized him in 1919 for not supporting the formation of a grand chapter. He explained that he thought such an action would have been premature; he wished to wait until the PHGLN proved its own viability. Obviously, maturity came rapidly because Hunter made precisely that recommendation to the Grand Lodge officers and the Past Masters Council in 1920; both endorsed his proposal unanimously. Hunter then visited existing chapters in Alliance, Hastings, Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha encouraging the formation of an OES grand chapter for Nebraska.³⁵ Subsequently, he re-

Worthy Grand Matron Laura Johnson, Amaranth #3
 Worthy Grand Patron Joseph Carr, Hiawatha #4
 Associate Grand Matron M. A. Shelton, Nebraska #2
 Worthy Grand Treasurer Ella Hunter, Shaffer #1
 Worthy Grand Secretary Maude Johnson, Amaranth #3
 Grand Relief and Burial Secretary Lulu Wheeler, Hiawatha #4
 Worthy Grand Conductress Mary Kaya, Alliance #5
 Worthy Grand Associate Conductress Johnson (not identified)
 Worthy Grand Lecturer Elizabeth M. Woods, Amaranth #3

Worthy Grand Matron Appointments

Grand Adah Ida McWilliams, Princess Hattipha #8
 Grand Ruth Myrtle Metcalf, Shaffer #1
 Grand Esther Birdie Swain, Ruth #9
 Grand Martha Maggie Ransom, Shaffer #1
 Grand Eleta Cora Julius, Alliance #5
 Grand Chaplain Fannie Young, Amaranth #3
 Grand Sentinel Austin P. Curtis, Alliance #7
 Grand Warden Mary Wade, Nebraska #2
 Marshal in East Lillian Frierson, Omaha #6
 Marshal in West Mary Nichols, Amaranth #3

Figure 4. First Cabinet of the Amaranthus Grand Chapter of Nebraska, OES

ported to the Grand Lodge Annual Communication that there were ten chapters with nearly 400 members in the state and that they had initiated his recommendation. Hunter asked all Grand Lodge members to support the Eastern Star effort.³⁶

In comparison, the Heroines of Jericho had only two chapters, quite insufficient to form a grand chapter of that adoptive right. In the early twentieth century the OES had supplanted the Heroines as the much more popular women's Masonic organization in Nebraska, and locally the Heroines did not survive the economic peril of the 1930s.

OES members leading the independence drive met in Lincoln in September 1920 (one month after the Kansas-Colorado Grand Chapter Annual Communication) to establish a temporary organization, which elected Laura Johnson as chairman and Lelia G. Flippin as secretary. Johnson then appointed Nathaniel Hunter, A. A. Jenkins, and Kathryn Wilson to the constitution and bylaws committee. One year later *The Monitor* reported that A. P. Curtis and a Mrs. Yule from Alliance met with

Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, Mrs. P. H. Jenkins, a Mrs. Metcalf, and Mrs. Kathryn Wilson at the Masonic Hall in Lincoln for a consultation, probably going over the final draft of the constitution and bylaws.³⁷ On October 15, 1921, delegates (fig. 3) gathered at a hall at Twenty-second and Cuming in Omaha and at 8:30 P. M. Laura Johnson gaveled the convention to order. Symbolically, the assembled sang "Blest Be the Tie that Binds," the Rev. I. B. Smith offered "a fervent and impressive prayer," and then Nathaniel Hunter presented a motion, seconded by Kathryn Wilson, to create the Nebraska Grand Chapter O. E. S. [Prince Hall Affiliation]. Compared to the Masons unanimous vote in that situation, the Eastern Stars divided with thirty-four yeas and eleven nays. Nonetheless, the three-to-one majority ruled and the new, subsequently named, Amaranthus Grand Chapter proceeded to amend and accept the constitution and bylaws, as well as to elect officers (fig. 4). The representatives decided to convene the Annual Communications on the first Wednesday of October and to hold the first one in Omaha the following year.

Lodges	OES Chapters
Rough Ashler #1 Walter L. Seals, 129	Shaffer #1 Ella Hunter, 46 women, 8 men*
Excelsior #2 Noah J. Thomas, 50	Nebraska #2 Mary A. Shelton, 16 W, 1 M
Lebanon #3 H. M. Hill, 78	Amaranth #3 Katherine Moore, 47 W, 10 M
Rescue #4 Perry R. Warner, 74	Hiawatha #4 F. Johnson, 36 W, 7 M
Marvin #5 R. P. Booth, 24	Alliance #5 Cora Julius, 13 W, 3 M
True American #6 A. G. Gaeria, 23	Omaha #6 Lillian Frierson, 31 W, 3 M
Alliance #7 Austin P. Curtis, 26	Victory #7 Birdie Swain, 9 W, 2 M
Platte Valley #8 George Evans, 13	Princess Hattipha #8 Joanna Spann, 15 W, 1 M
Omaha #9 Prophet H. Jenkins, 97	

*Several names on each chapter's roster listed only initials and surname. It is possible a few more men were charter members.

Figure 5. Charter Membership Numbers and Worshipful Masters/Worthy Matrons

The constituent conference ended with Jennie Moore, Past Grand Matron of Kansas and Jurisdiction, installing the grand officers.³⁸

Historical forces associated with World War I transformed Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska. The patriotic spirit gave impetus to looking beyond the fraternity and to providing limited forms of community service. The democratic spirit invigorated the commitment to joining the drive to protect and expand civil rights, although the legacy of the riot of 1919 made that an increasingly difficult task. The Great Migration provided many new recruits for Masonry, until by the war's end the lodges of Nebraska had the numbers to bring to fruition an independence drive that had originated twenty years earlier. The men's higher-degree societies and the OES quickly followed that lead, officially breaking with their former jurisdictions and creating Nebraska governing bodies affiliated with the PHGLN. Since then the history of Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska has been determined by Nebraskans.

Prince Hall Masonry

Notes

¹ *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa*, 1917, 80, in author's possession. *The Monitor*, Dec. 16, 1916; Jan. 11, 1918; May 3, 1919; June 19, 1919.

² Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 108.

³ The Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 141. Floretta Henri, *Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975), 117.

⁴ Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 171.

⁵ *The Monitor*, Nov. 17, Dec. 8, 1917.

⁶ The Nebraska State Historical Society has only a few microfilm copies of this Omaha black newspaper. See the issues dated August 1895 to July 1897.

⁷ *The Monitor*, Mar. 18, 1916.

⁸ Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 1.

⁹ *The Monitor*, Mar. 15, July 17, 1919.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 13, 20, 1919. David R. McMahon, "The Origins of the NAACP in Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska, 1913-1926," Master's thesis, Creighton University, 1993, 49-55.

¹¹ *Proceedings of the Fifty-first Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri, 1917*, 3-8, in author's possession.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³ *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1917*, 19-20, in author's possession.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20, 56-57, 66.

¹⁵ *Proceedings of the Thirty-second Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1919*, 12-5, 36, 49. Handwritten copy of part of the Grand Master's address, *Proceedings of the Thirty-first Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1918*, both in author's possession.

¹⁶ *The Monitor*, July 3, 1919.

¹⁷ Charles Albert Flippin was a seventy-seven-year-old physician practicing in Grand Island. His son George Albert Flippin, also became a physician and practiced in Stromsburg. Iowa Grand Lodge Proceedings listed George as a member and Past Master of Boaz U.D., meaning he had served as Worshipful Master of St. John's before it switched jurisdictions. He was not listed as a member of True American #40 in 1919. Nebraska Grand Lodge Proceedings list George as joining True American in 1920. He may have been prevented from joining earlier because of the compromise worked out between the Grand Lodges of Iowa and Missouri. Thus, if it was not name confusion and George Flippin was at the July 19, 1919, meeting, he seconded the motion to create the Nebraska Grand Lodge as an unattached participant, not as the Past Master of True American.

¹⁸ *Proceedings of the First Annual Communication, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska, 1919* (includes minutes of all three meetings); "Historical Data," one typed page included with the *Proceedings of the Fifty-seventh Annual Communication, 1976*; "Limited Grand Lodge History," by Past Grand Master Wright P. Robinson, n.d. [1980s], Prince Hall Mason Manuscripts (hereafter cited as PHM MSS). The microfilmed records are at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, and at the Historical Society of Douglas County, Omaha. *The Monitor*, Aug. 7, Sept. 25, 1919. Most likely *The Monitor*, which reported that the joint Occasional Grand Lodge session occurred September 19, 1919, got the date wrong and it actually took place the next day, which conforms with the dates used earlier in the news story.

¹⁹ Richard De Raismes Kip, *Fraternal Life Insurance in America* (Philadelphia: College Offset Press, 1953), 26-40.

²⁰ Charter and constitution (includes bylaws), PHM MSS.

²¹ Arthur V. Age, "The Omaha Riot of 1919," Master's thesis, Creighton University, 1964. See also Orville D. Menard, "Tom Dennison, *The Omaha Bee*, and the 1919 Omaha Race Riot, *Nebraska History* 68 (Winter 1987): 152-65. *The Monitor*, Dec. 18, 1919.

²² *The Monitor*, Apr. 29, May 13, 1916; Feb. 2, Mar. 31, 1917; June 8, 1918. *Transactions of the*

Eighteenth Annual Communication of the Imperial Council of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, 1916, 39-40, 116-17, 124-25, 134, in author's possession.

²³ *The Monitor*, May 12, 1917; Feb. 8, 1919. OES files, PHM MSS.

²⁴ *The Monitor*, June 10, 1916; June 8, 1918; July 21, 1919.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, June 17, July 1, 1916.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1917; July 28, 1919.

²⁷ *Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Communication, United Grand Lodge of Missouri, 1917*, 61, 69. "Constituent Chapters," typescript, 1957, both in author's possession.

²⁸ *Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Communication, United Grand Chapter of Missouri, 1917*, 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 18.

³⁰ *Omaha World-Herald*, July 19, 1917. Note the lack of capitalization of the word "negro." The quest to have whites capitalize the word to give stature to the race did not succeed for more than a decade. Also pertinent, the rumor concerning the stockpiling of ammunition had credibility because pre-World War I race riots usually consisted of white mobs invading black neighborhoods and causing mayhem.

³¹ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1917.

³² *Ibid.*, July 19, 1917.

³³ *The Monitor*, July 21, Sept. 1, 1917.

³⁴ *The Monitor*, Aug. 5, 1920; *Report of the Prince Hall Grand Chapter O.E.S., Kansas, Colorado, and Jurisdiction, 1920*, in author's possession. It did not list chapter designations for officers, nor did it contain chapter rosters.

³⁵ Hunter address, typed ms, 1941, PHM MSS.

³⁶ *Proceedings of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska, Third Annual Communication, 1921*, 17, PHM MSS.

³⁷ *The Monitor*, Oct. 6, 1921.

³⁸ *Proceedings of the First Annual Communication, Amaranthus Grand Chapter, 1922*, 2-4, PHM MSS.