

NATIONAL

Four great national organizations serve American Freemasonry. In alphabetical order these are:

The Conference of Grand Masters,

The George Washington National Memorial Association,

The Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada and

The Masonic Service Association of the United States.

No single Short Talk Bulletin is large enough adequately to set forth all the aims, ideals and accomplishments of any one of these national movements, but a short general outline may be of interest to brethren not closely in touch with their activities.

THE CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS, as at present organized is of recent origin, although the need for such annual meetings has been recognized for many years. Due probably to the rather desultory methods which prevailed in connection with the early Conferences, no records of the dates on which they were held, nor minutes of their proceedings are available.

During the past twenty-five years, a number of Conferences have been held, beginning with those at Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1909, followed by gatherings in Indianapolis in 1913, and in St. Louis the following year. Commencing with 1925, the Conferences have been held annually, in 1925 and 1926 in conjunction with the meetings of the Masonic Service Association of the United States; in Chicago, and from 1927 to the present, in Washington, D.C., immediately preceding or following the annual meetings of the George Washington National Memorial Association and the Masonic Service Association.

The organization of each Conference includes a Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, elected annually. Since 1927, M.W. J. Claude Keiper, P.G.M., District of Columbia, has been annually elected Secretary-Treasurer. The present Chairman is M.W. Richard Priest Dietzman, P.G.M., Kentucky. With three other members appointed by the Chairman, these officers constitute the Committee on Agenda. Each of the appointed members serve for three years, the period of service ensuring a continuity of program.

Under the present plan of operation, the Committee on Agenda selects the topics to be considered by the Conference, and assigns the opening of each discussion to a Grand Master who is regarded as especially qualified in the topic assigned. To obtain views of brethren from different parts of the country, in some instances two or more Grand Masters are given the same assignment.

Subjects cover matters of general interest to the Fraternity, the problems which everywhere confront it and those questions which involve interjurisdictional relations and procedure. Examples are: "Interjurisdictional relief;" what are the best methods of procedure to secure effective and uniform action in extending such relief: "Service and Employment;" (a) Masonic Service Bureaus, (b) Masonic Employment Bureaus: "Educational Programs;" (a) for Lodges or larger groups, (b) for individuals; "Recognition of Grand Lodges;" are general standards desirable and can uniformity of such standards be attained by Grand Lodges?

A general discussion follows the presentation of the formal paper, delegates asking questions regarding the methods adopted in the various Jurisdictions, which are answered by those having facts to offer.

The value of these Conferences of Grand Masters is now widely recognized. That the Conferences have won an assured place in the national activities of the Fraternity is proved by the large attendance of Grand Masters or their representatives, the number of Grand Jurisdictions represented varying from 41 to 46 out of 49, during the past three years. Their educational value to those in attendance cannot be measured and the broadened vision of the problems, the activities and the possibilities of the Fraternity, which are obtained by those who participate, is universally regarded as worth many times the individual sacrifice of the time required of those who attend, not to mention the benefit derived by the personal contacts which cement the ties between Grand Jurisdictions and promote the unity and universality of Freemasonry.

The GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC NATIONAL MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION had its inception on February 22, 1910, when the Grand Masters, or their representatives, from eighteen Grand Jurisdictions met in Alexandria, Virginia, on the invitation of the Grand Master of that State, to consider the erection of a fireproof structure in which to house the Washington relics belonging to Alexandria-Washington Lodge No.22. At this meeting resolutions approving and endorsing the erection of a Masonic Memorial to Washington were adopted, and a committee on permanent organization was appointed.

One year later, pursuant to the agreement adopted in 1910, a second meeting was held at which a permanent organization, The George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association, was formed. A constitution and by-laws were adopted and officers elected; M.W. Thomas J Shryock, Grand Master of Maryland, being the first President. Since 1911, the association has met annually, either in the old Lodge Room of Alexandria-Washington Lodge No.22, or in the Auditorium of the Washington Masonic Memorial. Grand Master Shryock served as President until his death in 1917; his successor, elected in 1918, is R.W. Louis A. Watres, P.G.M., Pennsylvania.

The present organization of the Association provides for a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Secretary-Treasurer, twenty-one Directors and an Executive Committee of five chosen from the Board of Directors. The objects of the Association, as set forth in its Constitution, are to erect and maintain in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, "A Suitable Memorial Temple to George Washington, the Mason, one which shall express in durability and beauty the exalted and undying esteem of the Freemasons of the United States for him in whose memory it shall stand through the coming years." It is also provided that the Memorial Temple shall furnish

accommodations for the safekeeping and exhibition of the Washington relics and a place where the several Grand Jurisdictions may place memorials to their distinguished brethren. Another object is “to create, foster and diffuse a more intimate fraternal spirit, understanding and intercourse between the several Grand Jurisdictions and sovereign Grand Bodies throughout the United States and her Insular possessions.”

Under the constitution, the active members of the Association are the Grand Lodges of the United States and her Insular Possessions, so that the ultimate direction of its affairs is vested in the Grand Lodges.

Believing that every Freemason in the United States should have a part in the erection of this great Memorial, the plan for raising funds provided for the payment by each Grand Lodge of an amount equal to \$1.00 per capita of its membership, which amount was later increased to \$1.70. Sustained effort to bring the matter prominently before the brethren of each Grand Jurisdiction were made. A Chairman for each State was appointed and efforts met with such success that many of the Grand Jurisdictions have over subscribed the original quota, some even exceeding the one later adopted. To date, almost \$4,000,000.00 have been contributed to the erection of the Memorial. On June 5, 1922, ground was broken for the Memorial on Shooters Hill, Alexandria, Virginia, and on November 1, 1923, the corner-stone was laid in the presence of the largest gathering of Masons the country has ever seen. Since then, with the exception of the last year, when financial conditions prevented, building operations have been carried forward continuously. The exterior structure is completed and the Auditorium finished and furnished. Under the policy early adopted, no contracts for work are made unless funds to meet them are in the treasury of the association. While this course has perhaps resulted in slower construction, but, it has also placed the project in the enviable position of being absolutely free of debt.

On May 12, 1932, although uncompleted, the Memorial was dedicated, so that the ceremonies might be held during the year devoted to the commemoration of the bicentennial of the anniversary of Washington's birth. Notwithstanding the inclement weather a great assembly of brethren participated in the ceremonies, which were attended by the then President of the United States, the Honorable Herbert Hoover, and distinguished Masons from the United States and abroad.

With the return of normal financial conditions, it is confidently expected that contributions to the Memorial funds will be resumed and that this outstanding Masonic project will be completed. When this has been accomplished, Freemasons of the United States may well take pride in their achievement. They will not only have erected a Memorial to the greatest Mason of his time, but will have built an enduring monument to Masonry, and to the influence which it has exerted in so marked a degree in the foundation, maintenance, and preservation of our free Government.

THE MASONIC RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA, a non-profit making organization operated exclusively for information and protection against imposition on the Fraternity, and was organized in 1884. The aims and objectives are: First, the detection and publication in the Bulletin of unworthy Masons and impostors preying upon the Fraternity; Second, the coordinating and correlating of the various forms of Masonic relief throughout the United States and Canada; third, the promotion of prompt and effective methods

of handling cases of interjurisdictional relief; fourth, to act as an agency in organizing Masonic relief in times of National disaster when such services are requested by any Grand Lodge or group of Grand Lodges; and, fifth, to provide a meeting place for the discussion of all these varied problems of Masonic relief, which in these days are so pressing, and bring together those who are active and interested in Masonic relief of every form and character. Nine thousand eight hundred and forty-five Masonic crooks and impostors are recorded in the office of the Association.

The Association's Conventions are held biannually. Its officers are a President and Chairman of the Executive Board (Present incumbent is W.M. Lewis E. Smith, P.G.M., Nebraska), First and Second Vice Presidents, Treasurer, and Secretary (present incumbent is E. Earle Axtell, 43 Niagara Street, Buffalo, N.Y.) The Executive Board is composed of all officers and an Advisory Council of five.

THE BULLETIN, official publication of the Association, is published six times a year, and mailed to all Grand Secretaries in the United States and Canada; and to the Secretaries of all Lodges, Boards of Relief, and other active organizations within Grand Jurisdictions which are supporting members of the Association.

It is the largest organization in the world composed exclusively of Masons, with membership of approximately two million; while those who are eligible but not members, aggregate approximately one million more.

THE MASONIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES, was formed as the result of the distressing need, seen in the Great War, of an adequate method by which American Freemasonry could function unitedly, instead of as forty-nine separate units. in relief and aid for the distressed.

No honest man insures his house against fire with the belief that the morrow will see it in flames. He pays a little over a term of years, so that in the unlikely event of conflagration the money value of his destroyed home will be at his disposal that he may rebuild. The Masonic Service Association is an insurance policy issued to American Freemason insuring that, when disaster comes, the Fraternity will not be bound and helpless to move and give from its great heart to those who need, as it was in the Great War.

The tool, forged in the fires of bitterness and conflict of war, was tempered and ready for decisive and successful action when disasters came. During the Association's fifteen years, five disasters of national proportions have tested the ability of American Freemasonry to act unitedly in "restoring peace to the troubled minds" of those who suffered by convulsions of nature. These were the Japanese earthquake of September 1, 1923, the Florida hurricane of September 18, 1926, the Puerto Rico hurricane of September 13, 1928, and the Florida hurricane of September 16, 1928.

The Masonic Service Association was able to speak for the afflicted brethren without the excitement and distress under which those who suffered, necessarily labored. It made an impersonal survey of four of these five disasters and its duty accredited representatives advised

from first-hand investigations of the extent of the devastation and the relief imperatively needed. By its suggestions and its plans it assisted the Grand Jurisdictions involved in setting up and starting in motion the necessary relief machinery. By acting as a clearing house for information, a disseminator of appeals and a central agency through which contributions were sent, it expedited both the collection of funds and their application where most needed. That there might be a permanent and concise record of its relief activities, in 1931 the Association published "United Masonic Relief," a fifty-three page bound volume, in which the finances of all five disasters were set forth in detail; twelve hundred copies were distributed to Grand Lodges, Grand and Past Grand Officers, the Masonic Press, and Masonic and Public Libraries.

ALL RELIEF, ALL DISASTERS

Japanese Earthquake Relief, 1923 \$15,777.25

Florida Hurricane, 1926 \$114,236.97

Mississippi Valley Flood, 1927 \$608,291.91

Puerto Rico Hurricane, 1928 \$86,316.58

Florida Hurricane, 1928 \$107,622.14

Total \$932,244.85

ALL EXPENSES, ALL DISASTERS

Japanese Earthquake, 1923 (No Expense)

Florida Hurricane, 1926 \$1,130.95

Mississippi Valley Flood, 1927 \$7,202.21

Puerto Rico Hurricane, 1928 \$3,078.08

Florida Hurricane, 1928 \$527.35

Total \$11,938.59

Percentage, All Expenses to All Relief 1.28%

Inquiries and offers of help in disasters ranging from floods in New England, an earthquake in the West, a storm in Mexico and hurricanes in Central America, have been made whenever damage was of large proportions; happily, since 1928, no flood, fire, hurricane, earthquake or other natural calamity has been beyond the power of the afflicted Grand Lodge to handle alone.

The Association early realized that, vital as is cooperative effort between Grand Jurisdictions in time of stress, in the merciful providence of the Great Architect war and disasters come seldom, so that an Association of Masons devoted to service should also have peacetime work to do.

That field was found in developing programs of Masonic education, forming Craft Libraries, issuing a Masonic magazine ("The Master Mason") and the publication of modern, well printed, authoritative and readable Masonic books. The Masonic world is forever the debtor to the Association for the National Masonic Library and the Little Masonic Library, thirty-two volumes of primary importance.

In 1928 the delegates from member Grand Lodges decided to enlarge the educational activities of the association. To that end, and to meet the criticism of some who thought publishing books (even if sold to Craftsmen at unusually low prices) a work which secular publishers might the better do, the Association sold its publishing business and retired from the book field.

Since then the association has developed a program of investigation into, and digestion and dissemination of, facts showing national trends in Freemasonry. No other organization duplicates this work, the uniqueness and interest of which has won countless expressions of interest and praise from high Masonic authorities the nation over.

Such Digests as those on Masonic Employment Bureaus, Masonic Funeral Services, Ancient Landmarks, Masonic Educational Activities, Who May Confer Degrees, Taxation of Masonic Properties, Masonic Advisory and Executive Boards, The Bible on the Altar, Light on the N.P.D. Problem, Masonic Trial Methods, Masonic Finances and Charity, Grand Lodge Standards of Recognition, Masonic Law Relative to Liquor and Beer, "What They Think," American Masonic Petitions, etc. have proved of inestimable value, not only in spreading knowledge of the laws, practices and ideas of all Grand Jurisdictions to each of them, but as permanent contributions to source material for students and historians of the future.

The Association has not neglected the Masonic educational work for constituent Lodges; Four Programs" and later, "Three Evenings of Masonic Inspiration," a number of Masonic Contests to be held in Lodge, a one act Masonic Play which requires neither costumes, accessories or stage, and similar material have won instant acclaim from the Masonic world.

Frequent broadcasts of interesting Masonic ideas and material are made, such as z Reconsecration Address of unusual caliber, sent to all Grand Jurisdictions; a unique system of Lodge accounting, an Armistice Day Address by Reverend Brother and Doctor Joseph Fort Newton, Chaplain of the Association, etc.

Beginning in 1923 a monthly Short Talk Bulletin (of which this is the one hundred and forty third) has been issued. It goes to every Lodge of Member Grand Jurisdictions. Begun at the suggestion of M.W. W.L. Eagleton, P.G.M., Oklahoma, of sainted and unforgettable memory, as a contribution to Lodge interest, it has become a library of Masonic addresses, a concise and authoritative encyclopedia of facts on interesting Masonic subjects, a reference collection of value to all Masonic students. All these Short Talk Bulletins are still in print.

(The catalog both classifies and lists them alphabetically To catalog all the activities of the Association is impossible in a short space; in brief, it is a servant of American Grand Lodges, a patient and tireless investigator into Grand Jurisdiction law, custom, practices. ideas; which it digests and issues in permanent form for the benefit of all, an insurance policy against disaster, a weapon to fight flood, famine, pestilence, kept sharp and ready for the brotherly hands of all The Ancient Craft.

Its officers are an Executive Commission, elected annually, a Chairman of the Commission, elected annually by delegates to the annual meeting; and an Executive Secretary and staff with offices in Washington, D.C. M.W. George R. Sturgis, P.G.M., Connecticut, is Chairman, and W. Carl H Claudy, P.M. District of Columbia, is Executive Secretary.