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Article Summary: Prince Hall Masonry is an African American fraternal organization that arose because blacks were excluded from white Masonic lodges. The Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska (PHGLN) nearly died out in the 1930s and then soared to new heights during the 1950s. This article details the turbulent thirty years between the onset of the Great Depression and the dawn of the 1960s.

Part three of a series: see also "[Boom-Bust: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska during the 1920s](#)" (Summer 1998) and "World War I, the Great Migration, and the Formation of the Grand Bodies of Prince Hall Masonry (Spring 1997). See also, "[The Origins of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska](#)" (Spring 1995)

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Photographs / Images: Special dispensation issued by the Grand Master; Grand Master Edward R Fletcher; Officers and Rosters sheet 1933; the Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, affiliate of the PHGLN, 1939; small inset photo of Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter; Nathaniel Hunter photograph in the early 1920s; the Omaha temple during the 1930s

FROM THE DEPTHS PRINCE HALL MASONRY IN NEBRASKA 1930 – 1960

BY DENNIS N. MIHELICH

THE PRINCE HALL MASON GRAND LODGE of Nebraska (PHGLN) entered the Great Depression in a vulnerable position. The stagnant Nebraska economy of the late 1920s had already increased unemployment among black residents and stifled African American migration to the state. The Grand Lodge had a sound budget, but its membership was in decline.¹ The disastrous economic downturn of the 1930s nearly destroyed the organization—it lost more than two-thirds of its membership, several blue lodges and auxiliaries ceased to exist, and financial obligations went unmet. World War II ignited economic recovery and job opportunities that sparked renewed African American migration to Nebraska. Prince Hall Masonry's membership increased, new lodges were formed, and finances stabilized. Subsequently, the institution soared to new heights during the relative prosperity of the 1950s, mimicking the halcyon days of the early 1920s. Thus, in a thirty-year period, the vicissitudes of the American economy plunged the PHGLN to the brink of bankruptcy, helped it recover, and propelled it to its zenith.

The stock market crash in 1929 delivered a devastating blow to an already suffering agricultural economy in Nebraska. Low crop prices deflated to extremely meager levels. Persistent drought added a vicious burden that affected even farmers who carried no debt. In turn, the urban economy directly related to agriculture—finance, transportation and processing—suffered immediately, and all others eventually, as consumer spending declined. In an era permeated with racial prejudice, blacks usually were the last hired and the first fired. An already disproportionately high unemployment rate among African Americans skyrocketed.

For someone trying to make ends meet, lodge dues became a frivolous expense. The PHGLN entered the decade with approximately five hundred members. That number declined drastically and rapidly. In 1931, for example, the Grand Lodge lost forty-six members, only fourteen by death. By 1937 membership had slipped to 190 and remained well below 200 for the balance of the decade.²

No. 7

M. W. GRAND LODGE

OF

Nebraska and

Its Jurisdiction



DISPENSATION

BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY IN ME VESTED,

I, Nathaniel Hunter Grand Master of Masons of the State of Nebraska and its Jurisdiction, do this day grant this a Special Dispensation empowering

Alliance Lodge No 7. To reinstate all members dropped from their roll for
no non-payment of dues, for the sum not less than \$3.00.
in conformity with the usages of the Order and regulations of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Nebraska.

This Dispensation is granted at the request of Grand Master
and it must be returned with a complete report within 180 days. Six months.
during which time there will be no re-estoration fee charged by the Grand Master.
Fee, \$ *****

Omaha, Neb., Aug 30th 1938, Nathaniel Hunter GRAND MASTER

Those who maintained membership in the fraternity represented the economically fortunate who had provided well for their retirement, or those who fortuitously clung to employment. Grand Lodge rosters do not exist for the mid-1930s, but officer lists are extant. While officers may not exemplify a lodge's membership, their occupations nonetheless give some indication of employment opportunities for Prince Hall Masons during the nadir of the Great Depression. Of the twenty-nine officers of the Grand Lodge and the five blue lodges who listed themselves in the 1935 *Omaha City Directory*, only four were entrepreneurs—two auto mechanics, a pool hall operator, and a tailor. Seven worked as janitors, three as porters in retail establishments, three as laborers (one “common” and two car washers, the latter at the Union Pacific Railroad and Peterson Baking Company, respectively), and two each of civil servants, printing

press operators, and butchers (at the Armour Company packing plant).³

The PHGLN went to extraordinary lengths to reverse the membership decline. In 1934 the Grand Master issued a “free dispensation ... to bring back to our folds [*sic*] those that were lost due to the past conditions and are now desirous of returning.” The special exemption would have allowed former fraternity brothers to return without paying debts or initiation fees. At the same time, other dispensations granted the conferring of degrees at discount prices. The Grand Lodge desperately struggled to acquire dues-paying members to regain solvency, at one point ignoring its bylaws to induct underage applicants. Unfortunately, the membership descent continued as the blue lodges usually returned unused the several dispensations issued during the decade, resulting in the demise of individual lodges.⁴

Special dispensations issued by the Grand Master authorized subordinate lodges to reinstate members by discounting dues or forgiving debts. NSHS RG4244

EDITOR'S NOTE *Nebraska History has published three previous articles by Dennis Mitchell about Nebraska's Prince Hall Masons. Black Masonry first came to Nebraska in 1875 and its formative years are reviewed in "The Origins of the Prince Hall Mason Grand Lodge of Nebraska," which appeared in volume 76, spring 1995. The second article, "World War I, The Great Migration, and the Formation of the Grand Bodies of Prince Hall Masonry," was published in volume 78, spring 1997. The immediate post-World War I activities of the fraternity are the subject of "Boom-Bust: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska During the 1920s," volume 79, summer 1998. The following essay tells the story of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska from the Great Depression through the 1950s. Together, the articles rescue from near obscurity an important aspect of the African American experience in Nebraska and place it in historical context.*



Grand Master Edward R. Fletcher presided over the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska from 1933 to 1938, as it struggled to survive the Great Depression.
NSHS RG4244

The small town lodges of central and western Nebraska felt the strain of hard times immediately. Lodge No. 7 in Alliance entered the decade with seventeen members, none of whom remained "square" on their blue lodge dues. It maintained its roster by not suspending indebted members and by falling in arrears to the Grand Lodge. Alliance survived by filling a bare minimum of functions, inducting twenty-year-olds, and dribbling small payments to the PHGLN. In the late 1930s, two former members who had migrated to Chicago returned, and a Civilian Conservation Corps worker at a nearby project joined, guaranteeing the lodge's momentary salvation.⁵

In comparison, Marvin Lodge No. 5 at Hastings entered the 1930s with ten paid-up members. In 1933, however, it returned a dispensation for reduced-rate initiations because it could not attract any applicants, although it did reinstate two former members from the town of Holdrege. By 1938 it clung to life with only six members; a trip to Grand Island to recruit former members of the defunct True American Lodge No. 6 had failed.

By 1933 True American had only eight members and ceased to hold monthly meetings because it could not afford to rent a hall. Moreover, its long-serving Worshipful Master had died and the lodge had stopped forwarding reports to the Grand Lodge because it could not entice anyone to serve as secretary. Therefore, Grand Master Edward Fletcher encouraged True American to unite with Marvin Lodge. After a year of negotiations, Deputy District Grand Master I. B. Smith proclaimed that "small town jealousy and personal animosity" had scuttled the proposed merger. Thus, in July 1934, because most of the brothers had no jobs, True American surrendered its warrant and ceased to exist. Attempts to revive it in the better economic times of 1939 floundered because of small numbers and the advanced age of former members.⁶

Despite Lincoln's far larger black population, Prince Hall Masonry there also slipped to a terminal level. Auxiliary bodies, such as the Islam Temple No. 65 Shrine and the Robert Henry Huckles Consistory disappeared. Although Lebanon Lodge No. 3 began the depression era with forty-five brothers in good standing, it quickly suspended seven for nonpayment of dues during the last six months of 1932. The lodge changed its meeting place to a less expensive hall and undertook hosting "seasonal entertainments" to raise funds. Yet by 1934 Grand Master Fletcher threatened to revoke its warrant because of unacceptably high indebtedness. The records do not reveal how Lebanon staved off the injunction, but eventually Fletcher's successor, Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter, arrested its warrant in August 1938, reorganized the lodge with new officers, and forgave its debt. It took until December 20 before the lodge could muster a quorum from its eleven members to hold a meeting. Six months later Lebanon was again in debt and disarray.⁷

Even Omaha lodges suffered significant stress. The youngest, Hiram No. 10 with twenty-eight members in 1930, began merger discussions three years later. Its roster halved, it approached Excelsior No. 2 and Omaha No. 9 to discuss consolidation. Grand Master Fletcher thought the move was premature, but agreed not to prevent it. Omaha No. 9 (eleven members) accepted the proposal as long as Hiram was not in arrears to the Grand Lodge. Ultimately indebtedness forestalled the unification; by functioning at a minimally acceptable level, those Omaha lodges persevered. The fiscal struggles of the blue lodges and the severely diminished membership, however, created a monumental financial crisis for the PHGLN.⁸

OFFICERS AND ROSTER

**Most Worshipful Grand Lodge
A. F. & A. M.
of Nebraska
(Prince Hall Affiliation)**

GRAND LODGE OFFICERS 1933

Edward Fletcher..... Grand Master
H. L. Anderson..... Deputy Grand Master
Herman Smith..... Senior Grand Warden
W. M. Hightower..... Junior Grand Warden
J. H. Wakefield..... Grand Treasurer
Robert Harris..... Grand Secretary
C. C. Dudley..... Grand Lecturer
H. B. Rhodes..... Grand Chaplain
Charles D. Early..... Grand Marshal
R. C. Stewart..... Senior Grand Deacon
George Griffin..... Junior Grand Deacon
Charles M. Simmons..... Senior Grand Steward
M. E. Williams..... Junior Grand Steward
C. Lewis..... Grand Standard Bearer
Edmond King..... Grand Paragonist
Bruce Johnson..... Grand Sword Bearer
I. B. Smith..... Grand Registrar
C. H. Johnson..... Grand Tyler

DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTERS

District No. 1..... P. H. Jenkins
District No. 2..... George B. Evans
District No. 3..... I. B. Smith

GRAND RELIEF BOARD MEMBERS

Trago T. McWilliams..... Lincoln
Walter L. Seals..... Omaha

GRAND TRUSTEE BOARD MEMBERS

H. L. Anderson..... Omaha
Charles D. Early..... Omaha
W. M. Wood..... Lincoln

COMMITTEES AND CHAIRMEN

Credentials..... Robert Harris
Rules and Orders of Business..... W. P. Wade
(Charities and Dispositions)
Foreign..... C. C. P. C.
Finance..... Trago T. McWilliams
Necrology..... Walter L. Seals
By-Laws of Subordinate Lodges..... H. B. Rhodes
Appeals and Grievances..... Herman Smith
Returns of Subordinate Lodges..... W. M. Hightower
Grand Master's Address..... A. R. Goodlett
Auditing..... L. F. McIntosh
Jurisprudence..... Walter L. Seals

SUBORDINATE LODGES

W. Masters, Wardens and Secretaries for 1933

ROUGH ASHLER, NO. 1—OMAHA

Meets First and Third Tuesdays

George Griffin..... Worshipful Master
J. S. McPherson..... Senior Warden
Walter Carter..... Junior Warden
Randall Roberts..... Secretary

EXCELSIOR NO. 2—OMAHA

Meets First and Third Mondays

Edgar Lee, 2417 Maple St..... Worshipful Master
Bert Johnson..... Senior Warden
George Blodgett..... Junior Warden
J. N. Thomas, 2223 Franklin St..... Secretary

LEBANON, NO. 3—LINCOLN

Meets Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Clayton Lewis..... Worshipful Master
C. H. Johnson..... Senior Warden
J. C. Wilson..... Junior Warden
George B. Evans, 2138 T. St..... Secretary

RESCUE, NO. 4—OMAHA

Meets First and Third Wednesdays

Edmond King, 3012 Pinkney St..... Worshipful Master
P. W. Murray..... Senior Warden
J. H. Glover, 1820 North 27th St..... Secretary

MARVIN, NO. 5—HASTINGS

Meets First Monday

C. E. Hill..... Worshipful Master
James Riley..... Senior Warden
Berford Coleman..... Junior Warden
D. A. Horton..... Acting Secretary

TRUE AMERICA, NO. 6—GRAND ISLAND

Meets First Friday

Bruce Johnson..... Worshipful Master
L. L. Johnson..... Senior Warden
W. M. Lebern..... Junior Warden
John Baker..... Secretary

ALLIANCE, NO. 7—ALLIANCE

Meets Second and Fourth Saturdays

Louis Maupin..... Worshipful Master
James Thornton..... Senior Warden
M. E. Woolley..... Junior Warden
Bert Harris..... Secretary

OMAHA, NO. 8—OMAHA

Meets First and Third Thursdays

Herman Smith, 2623 Hamilton St..... Worshipful Master
L. F. McIntosh..... Senior Warden
W. M. Downing..... Junior Warden
Fred W. Starns, 2415 Caldwell St..... Secretary

HIRAM, NO. 10—OMAHA

Meets First and Third Fridays

R. C. Stewart..... Worshipful Master
A. F. Hamblen..... Senior Warden
J. L. Rickardson..... Junior Warden
Charles D. Early..... Secretary

the Grand Lodge to obtain credit, but it also deepened the financial crisis because the building failed to serve as a dependable source of revenue. Newly renovated just before the onset of the Great Depression, maintenance at first was minimal.

Deferred maintenance during the decade, however, soon took its toll on the building. Revenue shrank as Omaha blue lodges and auxiliary organizations cut their meeting schedules because they could not afford to rent the hall from the Grand Lodge.

When the Trustee Board, which managed the facility, began renting to non-Masonic groups, Grand Master Fletcher warned the board not to “commercialize on the building.” Yet subsequently the board refused a request from the Matrons’ Council of the Order of the Eastern Star (OES) because the established rental fee would not cover the cost of coal and lighting used during the meeting. A balance seemingly emerged when Prince

Hall Masons gained the right to rent the building for other groups with which they were associated. For example, the Protective Order of Dining Car Waiters, Local No. 465, held a conference there. Ultimately, most lodges remained in arrears for hall rental, although the Trustee Board finally broke even for 1938.¹⁰

The perilous financial position obviously resulted from the high unemployment that slashed the blue lodge rosters. Bank failures and malfeasance exacerbated the situation. For example, Marvin No. 5 lost its savings and checking account money when the First National Bank of Hastings went under, and Alliance No. 7 suffered the same consequences when its local bank failed. Alliance lost another \$22.50 when its secretary absconded with the money. Over the decade several other blue lodges experienced similar disheartening episodes that kept the grand masters busy “arresting jewels,” that is, relieving fiduciary officers of their positions. In 1933 the Grand Lodge began

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When this roster was printed in 1933, several of the subordinate lodges were teetering on the brink of financial insolvency. NSHS RG4244

The Great Depression began its assault on a fraternity that was collecting about \$5,000 and disbursing about \$2,500 annually. In the late 1920s it had paid cash for a \$7,500 building and \$3,300 worth of renovations, and still maintained an annual budget balance of more than \$10,000. Ten years later (1939) it was mustering income of less than \$2,000 annually; it had not paid death benefits in more than two years; and it was \$4,000 in debt. It had mortgaged the building and did not have the ability to pay on the principal; by that time it had invested more than \$12,000 in a structure then assessed for property taxes at only about \$4,000. Unfortunately, the dismal circumstance mirrored the situation of many other Prince Hall grand lodges. Luckily, the PHGLN owned its building outright; the Acacia Grand Lodge of Washington, D. C., was locked out of its temple by the insurance company proprietor because it could not keep up on the rent.⁹

The PHGLN temple was an asset that allowed



The Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, affiliate of the PHGLN, was photographed during its Annual Communication, about 1939. NSHS RG4244

bonding blue lodge officers (each lodge paid \$7.50 per annum for \$1,000 coverage) and in 1937 it purchased a \$10,000 bond to cover Grand Lodge officers. The bond was purchased through the H.A. Wolfe Company, which employed the Grand Master and two other Prince Hall masons as janitors.¹¹

To combat the dwindling funds, the PHGLN undertook cost cutting initiatives. Publication of the proceedings of the Annual Communications ceased in 1929, and within five years, the official record of the Grand Lodge meeting had deteriorated from a glossy, fifty-page pamphlet to a few pages of handwritten notes titled "minutes." Correspondence increased significantly because telephone and railroad travel became unaffordable. By the early 1930s the Grand Master communicated on outdated stationery. It seemed wasteful for each new Grand Master to dispose of a useable commodity and order new letterhead. By the mid-1930s many letters went out on plain paper. Frugality was further demonstrated when the notice for the "Annual Communication for 1936" consisted of a two-year-old announcement with new names and dates written in by hand.

The Annual Communications themselves were abbreviated from three to two days, and other traditional functions atrophied, such as the Annual Visit by the Grand Master. Most blue lodges could not afford to host the ritual event. The Annual Communication in 1936 shifted from the third week in August to the third week in July. While the change did not cut costs, it eliminated an awkward, month-long, lame duck period for Grand Lodge officers and obviously was modeled on the

recently adopted Twentieth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which moved the President's inauguration from March to January.¹²

The most consequential budget modification came in the area of "relief," that is, death benefits, which consisted of a \$75 stipend paid directly to a funeral director and a \$200 bequest to a beneficiary. With steeply declining income, the PHGLN rapidly depleted its savings and, in 1931, instituted the guideline that it would pay claims only to those who were "square," that is, paid-up members. It quickly applied the new policy to the ailing True American Lodge, suspending all burial and relief benefits, which unfortunately caused further grief among elderly members who had paid dues for years or decades but now found themselves unemployed and in arrears. Even those not in debt soon sustained a penalty. The fraternity experienced fourteen deaths during 1931, the highest in its history, forcing it to begin making only partial relief payments and establishing a list to deal with the claims in chronological order. The anguish became universal the following year, when the Grand Lodge instituted a one-year moratorium on relief. When partial payments resumed, they came at a reduced maximum benefit of \$100.¹³

The situation produced a steady flow of pleas from anxious widows. Indicating the depth of the emergency and the absence of cronyism, the Grand Matron of the OES petitioned:

I am writing to you concerning my Endowment . . . I am very disappointed as I am in dire need of money. I kept my husbands dues so if the worst happened, I would have some

thing to tide my many expenses over. I can get no roomers during this awful depression; as men are not working. There is little traveling. [During the era of segregation few hotels catered to blacks, who had to stay in rooming houses]... Now if I could get enough of my Endowment to buy my coal for winter and pay on my taxes, I would be grateful to you for interceding for me. It has been a year and 4 months since I lost my husband and to have to worry so about the Endowment is wrecking my nerves. Please answer this and explain why I am neglected.¹⁴

By comparison, at the same time another widow had just received a second payment of \$25; eventually, after three years, she received the final payment.¹⁵

Ultimately the stress led to the courts in the mid-1930s, which had the unintended consequence of a further two-year moratorium on relief payments. J. Noah Thomas, a retired police sergeant, master of Excelsior No. 2, and chairman of the Trustee Board, refused to forward lodge dues and hall rental money to the Grand Lodge treasurer and initiated two lawsuits. In the first Thomas charged that a clique controlled the distribution of Grand Lodge offices (he had twice lost elections for Grand Master); he sought a restraining order to prevent the current officers from presiding at the upcoming Annual Communication. In the second he claimed that the officers had unconstitutionally transferred money from the relief fund to the general fund, and used it to purchase the temple. The Grand Master, who could not "tolerate the continual propounding of rebellious propaganda," expelled Thomas from Prince Hall Masonry. Thomas recanted and agreed to drop the suits if he gained reinstatement. Eventually he abandoned only the first lawsuit (the restraining order) and the PHGLN sued Thomas for the dues and rental money he had impounded. Recriminations abounded for two years until the Grand Lodge prevailed in court. In response to legal fees reaching \$300 and rising, the Annual Communication in 1938 elected W. B. Bryant to the newly created office of Grand Attorney. It was assumed that a fraternal brother would charge a lower retainer.¹⁶

When the court decided the Thomas case in favor of the PHGLN, the Grand Lodge undertook to clear the backlog of "30-odd" relief claims, some consisting of only small amounts that remained on petitions pending for as long as a decade. Arguing the impossibility of the blue lodges paying indebtedness and current obligations simultaneously, the 1939 Annual Communication passed a resolution

suspending the constitutional provisions on relief for a year, whereby the Grand Lodge would pay \$75 to the beneficiary. A second resolution authorized the temple to be used as collateral for another loan to pay the relief debts and asked members to subscribe to "certificates of participation" sold in \$10 increments. In 1939 the Grand Master proudly proclaimed that the PHGLN disbursed \$900 to widows after two years of no distributions.¹⁷

Benefit payments were just one indication that the PHGLN had survived the Great Depression and had regained a semblance of financial stability. In 1938 it installed a telephone at the temple. The following year it compiled a list of all fifty-year members and purchased a jewel to be worn by the brother with the longest membership. This led to the creation of the Nebraska Veteran Freemasons Association, which gave thirty-year members of the various lodges an opportunity to congregate semi-annually.

Other Masonic organizations also began to exhibit new life. In 1939 the Prince Hall Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Masonry began to encourage a revival of the Nebraska affiliate. Grand Master Hunter explained that the previous two grand masters had not joined the Scottish Rite. They "were not inclined to show them [the Scottish Rite] much consideration" and "would throw cold water on every effort we put forward to help build up" the organization. Obviously the added expenses of initiation fees for passing degrees fourteen through thirty-two, plus annual dues to other units, limited Scottish Rite membership during the 1930s. Hunter did belong, gained appointment as the Illustrious Commander and Chief of Nebraska, and with better times on the horizon, convened a Council of Deliberation on March 12, 1939. Thirteen new "Sublime Princes" joined in 1940, and annual gatherings ensued. Subsequently the Robert H. Huckles Consistory No. 32 in Lincoln reorganized in the mid-1940s. Similarly, Hunter accepted appointment as the Prince Hall Imperial Deputy for the Omaha Oasis of the Shrine and began to rejuvenate that auxiliary. While the order grew slowly, by the end of the 1940s it had established an annual beauty pageant and dance, with the money raised going to the Tuberculosis and Cancer Fund. It also had inaugurated a Christmas charity event; in 1949 it hosted a party and distributed gifts at the Oak View Farm for homeless children regardless of race or religion.¹⁸

Grand Master Hunter provided decisive leadership in other areas as well. In 1934, with Lebanon



Lodge No.3 in Lincoln in disarray, it undertook joint fundraising efforts with local Eastern Star chapters. Then Grand Master Fletcher counseled against “entangling alliances” with the OES. Hunter, in 1939, promoted closer contacts with the OES and, at the suggestion of Brother J. Scott, a combined St. John the Baptist [feast day] and Esther Celebration ensued. Before he left office in July 1938, however, Fletcher had also demonstrated futuristic leadership when he spearheaded the creation of a credit union. He chaired a Masonic committee that decided to recruit the Centralized Commonwealth Civic Club (the 4C) to administer the institution and to establish a policy limiting the maximum number of shares per person to twenty. He then headed a group of eighteen Prince Hall Masons who subscribed for the upper limit and he joined the board of directors of the credit union located at 2001 Lake Street in Omaha.¹⁹

That sort of vigorous leadership and the traditional prestige of Prince Hall Masonry made its support a valuable commodity in the African American community. When the Omaha Urban League needed a new executive secretary, two local candidates petitioned Hunter for his support. Subsequently the new executive secretary enlisted the aid of the PHGLN in a new public housing initiative that the league pursued in 1940. The 4C, a new Community Clearing Council, and the Omaha Negro Chamber of Commerce each sought and received support. Moreover, the Grand Lodge backed a twenty-one-group civil rights effort aimed at the passage of LB504 prohibiting discriminatory collective bargaining agreements. Hunter strongly encouraged the revitalized Grand Lodge and its affiliates to take an active role in community affairs.²⁰

For his fraternal community, Hunter had the pleasure of burning the mortgage to the temple. First, he discovered that the Trustee Board had paid more than \$400 in plate-glass insurance in the eight years the PHGLN owned the building. The windows stretched across the front of the first story, which formerly housed retail establishments. In 1938 he ordered the windows removed and bricked in at a cost of \$200, arguing that the renovation saved on insurance and heating costs, as well as improving the ventilation and the appearance of the structure. Moreover, he launched a redecoration of the auditorium and encouraged its rental by non-Masonic organizations to increase revenue. Subsequently the PHGLN made its last payment on the depression-induced equity loan in January 1940 and began preparations for a two-day

“Victory Celebration.” Hunter arranged for Prince Hall Scottish Rite Masons from neighboring states to attend the event that began on Sunday, April 21, with a public reception, speeches and songs, and a Victory Tea (fifteen cents per person). The next day they burned the mortgage in the afternoon, followed by an evening banquet (fifty cents per person) and a “frolic” hosted by the Prince Hall Shriners.²¹

Later that year the Trustee Board purchased an inexpensive piano for the temple. It added a musical dimension to special occasions, such as the depression-delayed laying of the building’s cornerstone on May 18, 1941. For the event each member was responsible for a minimum \$4 donation; \$1 had to be a personal contribution, which allowed him to sign a slip that was inserted into the cornerstone. The affair also marked the kickoff of a \$1,000 fundraiser. The campaign, however, demonstrated the difficulties associated with the economic transition from New Deal public works to wartime full employment. A few Prince Hall Masons lost their jobs because of cutbacks by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and several widows became unemployed when the agency terminated a sewing project in Omaha. This setback rapidly depleted the Grand Lodge charity budget and the fund drive garnered only \$235. Similarly, in 1940 the Trustee Board paid all expenses, made several repairs to the temple, donated \$120 to the general fund, and maintained a positive balance. Receipts then plummeted for the next three years until wartime employment stabilized the situation. Obviously blacks in general and Prince Hall Masons specifically, suffered from historic job discrimination and felt the strain of the evolution from New Deal jobs programs to the war-induced economic boom (effective enforcement of the federal fair employment mandate did not occur in Nebraska until 1943).²²

The impact of the conversion also contributed to the failure of a revived bond drive. In 1933 Grand Master Fletcher had originated the First Mortgage Real Estate Coupon Bond, paying three percent interest, the revenue pledged toward the lien on the temple. Seemingly, he made the only purchase. In 1940 Hunter tried the same device, hoping to sell three hundred bonds at \$10 each, bearing no interest, to raise \$3,000. Again, however, few buyers availed themselves of the offer. The next year he presented a three-pronged plan to clear all indebtedness to widows in two years. It included 100 percent collection of obligations from all lodges, hosting one or two entertainments



Although the PHGLN purchased its Omaha temple in 1927, the depression stalled laying the cornerstone until May 18, 1941, when Grand Master Nathaniel Hunter presided. NSHS RG4244

per year, and a penny meal-card system, whereby each mason deposited a penny in a bowl for each meal he ate for sixty days. While a Masonic Improvement Club formed to host fundraising parties, the overall scheme failed to attain the desired success. Therefore, the provision that had lowered the death benefit to \$75 continued, and a dispensation for reduced rate initiations and reinstatements was renewed.²³

Thus, at the close of 1943, the Grand Lodge carried a balance of only \$1,300 and still owed \$2,950 in widows' claims and \$650 in mortgage bonds sold to the membership. By the end of the decade, however, it had paid all claims and bonds, increased the death benefit to \$150, created a reserve fund to aid members in need, and made substantial renovations on the temple. Annual receipts stood at almost \$4,000, the balance topped \$7,000, and the PHGLN resumed paying the railroad fare and a per diem to those attending the Annual Communication as well as "donating \$100 to the Grand Master for his service." The turnaround resulted from the war-induced opportunities that virtually eliminated unemployment and once again enticed African American migrants to Nebraska. Membership climbed rapidly, dues and assessments arrived punctually, fundraisers succeeded, and Masonic and non-Masonic groups rented the temple, producing extra revenue.²⁴

In 1940 PHGLN membership hovered around two hundred. It climbed to 288 four years later, despite major problems outside of Douglas County. Marvin No. 5 in Hastings had only four members, fewer than needed for a quorum to open a lodge. Accordingly, it lost its charter the following year and the temporary influx of six hundred black sailors stationed at the Hastings Naval Ammunition Depot did not rejuvenate it (the depot closed in October 1945). Similarly, Alliance No. 7 scraped by with eight members, although it did not meet regularly. A reorganization attempt in 1949 failed; subsequently a few months later it surrendered its charter. Lebanon No. 3 in Lincoln had to endure a second restructuring in a decade. It fell into arrears in 1941, and met irregularly because only five members actually lived in the city. In July of that year Grand Master Hunter traveled to Lincoln to reorder the lodge, initiating new members, reinstating suspended ones (nineteen total), electing new officers, and ultimately saving the capital city lodge.²⁵

By comparison Omaha experienced a steady growth because of enhanced employment opportunities that, in turn, attracted African American

migrants, increasing the membership pool. Only a handful of lodge rosters exist for the 1940s, but they provide a glimpse at the type of jobs that the return of prosperity opened to blacks. Waiters, porters, custodians, musicians, and Pullman porters abounded, mirroring the traditional areas of black employment. Industrial jobs remained



Nathaniel Hunter, photographed during a previous term as Grand Master of the PHGLN in the early 1920s. NSHS RG4244

largely unattainable for blacks, with the important exception of work in the meatpacking plants that burgeoned during World War II and the postwar era. Existing lodges expanded by reinstating reemployed suspended members and by initiating black migrants looking for camaraderie and prestigious community connections. For example, Omaha No. 9 increased from fifty-five members in 1941 to ninety-four in 1947.

New lodges also formed. On December 1, 1941, a combined meeting of Omaha lodges initiated

twenty-seven candidates who, five days later, established Progressive Lodge No. 12. The next year the lodge changed its name to Nat Hunter No. 12 in honor of the recently deceased Grand Master. By 1944 it had forty-eight members, and even with that substantial growth, yet another lodge, Anchor No. 14, formed in 1945 (superstitiously, the PHGLN avoided using the number thirteen). Anchor No. 14 was located in the South Omaha neighborhood and comprised mostly packinghouse workers. By the decade's end, total Grand Lodge membership had doubled, but with some disturbing consequences relating to the quality of members. The Grand Master complained that the lodges did not properly prepare candidates, who then did not know the ritual and who exhibited "un-Masonic" behavior such as profanity and "gossiping."²⁶

The 1950s brought spectacular gains and losses, reminiscent of the "roaring twenties." The fraternity mirrored major characteristics of the decade—prosperity, the anti-communism and civil rights causes, and a propensity for scandal. In 1950 the national Grand Masters' Conference resolved that Prince Hall Masonry had to fight the spread of communism among blacks. It proclaimed January 22 as American Day, and encouraged each of the thirty-eight Grand Lodges to fashion an appropriate celebration. While reports of a Nebraska commemoration are lacking, Grand Master Clayton Lewis did speak out publicly, urging "communism be fought diligently wherever it appears."²⁷

The civil rights crusade was another fight that exhibited an increased intensity. Prince Hall Masonry had always endeavored to promote racial equality. The Great Depression, however, stifled the ability of the PHGLN to support civil rights organizations financially. Yet even in the worst of times individual Prince Hall Masons acted assertively. For example, D. A. Horton, treasurer of Marvin No. 5 in Hastings, petitioned the police chief, the mayor, and the city council for the removal of "insulting and discriminatory" signs displayed at several restaurants and saloons. Rebuffed, he then approached the county attorney, who ordered the sheriff to remove the odious signs, which read "Colored Trade Not Solicited." World War II invigorated the civil rights movement and prosperity funded it. The national Grand Masters' Conference urged support for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the PHGLN eagerly complied. It purchased a lifetime membership in the organization, and Grand Master Robert Harris asked each Nebraska Prince Hall Mason to donate \$100 indi-

vidually (no record of the response). Throughout the decade Grand Lodge officers frequently addressed the topic, demanding recognition for the valorous service of blacks during World War II, equal voting rights, and support for the NAACP.²⁸

Obviously the monetary support for the NAACP was an indication of the general prosperity of the era. Another manifestation was the reorganization of defunct lodges, the organization of a new lodge, and the overall increase in blue lodge membership. On March 19, 1950, U. D. No. 15 ("under dispensation," terminology used until a name was allotted) formed in Grand Island and subsequently received its former designation as True American No. 6. Two years later Marvin Lodge No. 5 in Hastings had its charter restored. It could not maintain a sufficient membership, however, and in 1953 merged with its neighbor in Grand Island. In the meantime Prince Hall Masons in the South Sioux City area established a new lodge, U. D. No. 16, briefly named Loving Star. Ultimately it entered the PHGLN on September 4, 1950, as St. John No. 15. The area, however, did not attract many African American migrants, the lodge could not lure a sustaining membership, and its charter was revoked in 1958.²⁹

The total membership of the PHGLN demonstrated a similar volatility. In 1950 it added 101 new members, although just three blue lodges in Omaha (Rough Ashler No. 1; Omaha No. 9 and Nat Hunter No. 12) each recruited more than twenty apprentices. While the annual figures presented by various officers did not always tally equal totals, the following two years the Grand Lodge added 54 and 23 new recruits to reach a maximum enrollment of approximately 650. Once again, only a few blue lodge rosters exist for the 1950s. They indicate general expansion of traditional jobs, especially in meatpacking and a significant increase in professionals. The total African American population in Omaha had reached a level that could support a few more physicians, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. By the end of the decade, however, the total Grand Lodge membership retreated to 515 and the Grand Master issued a special dispensation to all lodges to initiate apprentices at less than the standard fee. The recession of the late 1950s obviously contributed to the decrease.³⁰

The instability caused concern, yet the total membership remained large enough to keep Grand Lodge finances sound. Malfeasance reared its ugly head again, but the PHGLN entered and exited the decade with a surplus. In between time,



The Omaha temple was heavily mortgaged during the 1930s. The mortgage burning on April 21, 1940, signaled that the PHGLN was recovering from the financial hardships brought on by the depression. From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection, owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to The Durham Museum, Omaha

it expended generous sums on the temple, installing new gutters, awnings, and window air conditioners, and converting to gas heat. At the same time it initiated a fundraising campaign to construct a new \$200,000 building that would include recreation facilities. It also began paying the Grand Master between \$200 and \$600 annually for his services, and sending him and other officers to the national Grand Masters' Conference. In 1954 the Grand Lodge annually began celebrating Prince Hall Day on September 12, the birthday of the "Father of Negro Masonry." Three years later, the ceremony included presenting awards to the public for citizenship, service, and achievement. Other new outreach endeavors included becoming involved in charity efforts in behalf of non-Masons, such as support for the March of Dimes. Similarly, in 1950 the Grand Lodge awarded its first college scholarship for \$50. The scholarship was not issued annually, but by 1959, it granted one for \$150.³¹

The burgeoning membership and the general prosperity also contributed to more elaborate and well-attended public ceremonies. The 1952 St. John-Esther Day celebration included a breakfast and lunch, with 920 Masons and Eastern Star members participating. The Annual Communications attracted increased attendance and, for the first time since acquiring the temple, they were

held outside Omaha. In 1954 Lebanon No. 3 hosted the event in Lincoln, and the following year, the business meetings took place in the Municipal Auditorium in Grand Island. Of particular note, the two-day affair received generous press coverage from the *Grand Island Daily Independent*.

Moreover, Prince Hall Shriner activity mushroomed. While the annual beauty pageant continued, the female auxiliary, the Daughters of Isis, introduced a Miss Popularity contest, and the two groups jointly began to sponsor a youth festival that chose a king and queen and their court. The Shrine began to hold an annual dance, commemorate a Jubilee Service, and participate in Gala Days. The Jubilee, held yearly on June 3, honored the U.S. Supreme Court decision rendered on that date in 1929, which established the legality of the Prince Hall affiliated Shrine. Gala Days brought together black Shriners from states between the Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains for two days of parades, banquets, dances, and religious services. Finally, in 1957 the Shrine initiated an annual Christmas party, the first one entertaining ninety-five children, twelve and younger, with games, movies, and gifts.³²

The roller coaster ride from the depths of the Great Depression to the heights of the prosperous 1950s left the constitution and bylaws of the PHGLN in disarray. As early as 1933 the Grand

Lodge declared all blue lodge bylaws null and void, and ordered them rewritten, but the records do not reveal compliance. A decade later, a lawyer informed the Grand Master that the several depression-era changes to the relief and burial fund defied legality. Nonetheless, even more changes ensued during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Following the lead of other grand lodges, in 1951 the fraternity changed its name to the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Nebraska. In 1944, on a recommendation from the national Grand Masters' Conference, it had dropped "Ancient" from "Ancient Free & Accepted Masons," and now it deleted the other terms.

Finally, in 1956, after several failed attempts, the Grand Lodge appointed a constitutional revision committee chaired by Past Grand Master Edward Fletcher. The Constitution of 1957 did not reinvent the wheel; it retained most of the provisions from its 1927 predecessor, and incorporated thirty years of amendments. The significant changes included lessening the powers of the Grand Master by reducing the number of his committee assignments and his powers of appointment. It toughened the amendment process, demanding a two-thirds vote. Finally, it revised the system of relief taxes and payments. Quarterly payments were eliminated in favor of a \$1 donation by each brother upon notification of the death of a brother; and the stratified system of bequest payments was replaced by a terse statement, "there may be donated a sum not to exceed \$300."³³

The ink had hardly dried on the document before a major scandal required its amendment. As early as 1953 the Masters and Wardens Council introduced a resolution at the Annual Communication contesting the expenses of the Grand Master regarding his trip to the national Grand Masters' Conference. That same year other resolutions demanding itemized reports from the Grand Treasurer and the Trustee Board failed to carry. In his report the Grand Treasurer cajoled the members to ignore "idle gossip about his office." Controversy simmered until both grand officers lost reelection bids in 1956, and the depths of the malfeasance surfaced. In contrast to the financial report of the Grand Treasurer, which showed a surplus, the PHGLN actually stood approximately \$14,000 in debt, including almost \$6,000 in unpaid death benefits. Three offending officers were banished and subsequent lawsuits recovered a portion of the missing funds. Fortunately prosperity and the sizeable membership allowed the Grand Lodge to recuperate quickly. As Grand Master Robert

Harris explained in 1959:

Once again I must reiterate that once everything was dark and our very existence was in doubt—the picture is now changed and everything is rosy. We have restored confidence in the managing and administration of your finance. The books, bank statements, etc. are open for your inspection at all times. . . . All extravagance has been eliminated.

That same year the PHGLN amended its constitution to provide for the election of even more grand officers and to limit the tenure of the Grand Master to four years.³⁴

The thirty years between the onset of the Great Depression and the dawn of the 1960s was a turbulent era for the PHGLN. It survived the worst economic debacle in American history, and weathered the theft of funds by desperate, unemployed officers and the squandering of funds by unethical officers in prosperous times. It witnessed record low then record high membership. The changing economic climate buffeted it about. When good times provided jobs, they essentially came in traditional areas determined by the rules of de facto segregation. Despite the frustrating tribulations, the PHGLN ended the era with its size and stature intact. The segregated fraternity continued to serve important functions in the African American community. It provided a philosophy that many members embraced as the source of the basic values of a moral life. It offered camaraderie, entertainment, and social prestige (many events included parades in full regalia). It extended death benefits and welfare (usually) in times of need. In the post-World War II era it began to bestow charity to non-members. Finally, it acted as a major promoter of an integrationist civil rights philosophy. However, just as the state of the economy during the past three decades had determined the fraternity's vitality, the new cultural attitudes of the 1960s stood poised to present radical new challenges that would test the viability of the PHGLN. ■

NOTES

¹ See my previous article, "Boom-Bust: Prince Hall Masonry in Nebraska During the 1920s," *Nebraska History* 79 (Summer 1998): 74–84.

² Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1931; Grand Secretary's Report, 1937; Nathaniel Hunter to John C. Ellis, May 17, 1918, all in Prince Hall Mason Manuscripts, microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter cited as PHM MSS).

³ Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1936, PHM MSS.

⁴ D.A. Horton to Edward Fletcher, May 7, 1933; Lewis Maupin to Fletcher, May 17, 1933; Fletcher to Maupin, May 23, 1933; Fletcher memorandum to all lodges, Apr. 1, 1934, PHM MSS.

⁵ Minutes of the Annual Communication, roster of lodges [n.d., 1930]; Maupin to Fletcher, May 17, 1933; Fletcher to Maupin, May 23, 1933; Sollie Woods to Hunter, Sept. 14, 1938; John Glass to Hunter, Feb. 20, 1939; Hunter to Glass, Mar. 3, 1939; PHM MSS.

⁶ Minutes of the Annual Communication, roster of lodges [n.d., 1930]; Dick Blanchard to Fletcher, Jan. 14, 1933; Bruce Johnson to Fletcher, Apr. 10, 1933; Fletcher to I. B. Smith, Apr. 25, 1933; Johnson to Fletcher, June 15, 1933; Horton to Fletcher, July 7, 1933; Smith to Fletcher, Apr. 29, 1934; Johnson to Fletcher, July 4, 1934; Horton to Hunter, Nov. 20, 1938; Horton to Isaac Trice, Mar. 30, 1939; Trice to Hunter, May 5, 1939, PHM MSS.

⁷ Minutes of the Annual Communication, roster of lodges [n.d., 1930]; George B. Evans to Fletcher, Feb. 18 and Nov. 10, 1933; Fletcher to Evans, May 21, 1934; Evans to Fletcher, Aug. 10, 1934; unsigned memorandum, Aug. 14, 1939; Evans to Hunter, Sept. 23 and Dec. 24, 1938; Evans to Hunter, June 29, 1939; Hunter to W.T. Poole, July 28, 1941, PHM MSS.

⁸ Minutes of the Annual Communication, roster of lodges [n.d., 1930] R. C. Stewart to Fletcher, Apr. 8, 1931; Fletcher to Stewart, Apr. 21, 1933; Herman Smith to Fletcher, Oct. 20, 1933; Burial and Relief Report, Apr. 15, 1938, PHM MSS.

⁹ Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Communication, 1927; Grand Secretary's Report, 1937; Fred Armbrust to P. H. Jenkins, Feb. 4, 1938; typed statement [n.d., 1939], PHM MSS; *Omaha Guide*, June 3, 1933.

¹⁰ Stewart to Fletcher, Jan. 8, 1932; Fletcher to Walter Seals, June 21, 1934; L. F. McIntosh to president of the Matrons' Council, Sept. 21, 1937; memorandum, Protective Order of Dining Car Waiters, Oct. 25–28, 1937; Board of Trustees Report, July 5, 1938, PHM MSS.

¹¹ Maupin to Fletcher, Dec. 31, 1931; Horton to Fletcher, Jan. 10, 1932; McIntosh to Fletcher, Mar. 12, 1932; Fletcher to Maupin, Oct. 16, 1933; Fletcher to Jenkins, Mar. 22, 1934; H. A. Wolfe Co. to Seals, Jan. 14, 1937, PHM MSS.

¹² Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1936; Fletcher to A. W. Gates, Jan. 4, 1932; Herman Smith to Fletcher, Sept. 10, 1933; Grand Lodge Proclamation, May 27, 1935; PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, July 23, 1938.

¹³ Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1931; Relief Department, resolutions, Aug. 19, 1931, Aug. 18, 1932; Fletcher to Gates, June 9, 1932; Fletcher to lodges, Oct. 11, 1932; Fletcher to Maupin, Jan. 5, 1932; Fletcher to lodges [n.d. 1934]; Robert Harris to Jack Marer, Apr. 14, 1936, PHM MSS.

¹⁴ Lulu B. Alexander to Fletcher, Oct. 14, 1933, PHM MSS.

¹⁵ Robert Harris to Mrs. Ed Hill, Feb. 6, 1936, PHM MSS.

¹⁶ Marer to J. Noah Thomas, Aug. 21, 1935; Marer to Fletcher, Apr. 21, 1936; Marer to Ray Williams, May 2, 1936; Seals to Thomas, Jan. 11, 1937; Marer to Donald S. Krause, Nov. 9, 1937; Seals to Mrs. Narcisissus Burch, Nov. 15, 1937; Marer to Seals, Nov. 26, 1937; Marer to A. R. Goodlett, June 6, 1938, PHM MSS; *Omaha World-Herald*, July 16, 1937, Feb. 1, 1938, clipping file, Douglas County Historical Society; *Omaha Guide*, Oct. 15, 1938.

¹⁷ Hunter to Amaranthus Grand Chapter, Aug. 18, 1938; Proclamation No. 1, Aug. 4, 1939; Hunter to Sumner A. Furniss, Oct. 16, 1939; Miscellany, Grand Master's Report, Jan. 15, 1939, PHM MSS.

¹⁸ Proclamation No. 2, Aug. 25, 1939; Hunter to Furniss, Oct. 16, 1939; Hunter to Raymond E. Jackson, Nov. 8, 1939; Hunter to Smith, May 27, 1940; Financial Records, V.2, Trustee Board, 1938; Council of Deliberation, meeting announcement, 1939; Mis-

cellany, Constitution of Veteran Freemasons Association [n.d. 1940]; D. Kelley Consistory, PHM MSS; *The Voice* (Lincoln), Mar. 7, 1947; *Omaha Star*, May 14, 1948, January 6, 1950.

¹⁹ Evans to Fletcher, May 5, 1934; Russell E. Reese to Hunter, Aug. 19, 1939; Credit Union Committee minutes, May 17 and June 2, 1938, PHM MSS.

²⁰ J. Westbrook McPherson to Dear Sir, May 8, 1939; Trago T. McWilliams to Hunter, May 15, 1939; Raymond R. Brown to Dear Friend [n.d. Feb. 1940]; Saybert C. Hanger, et al. to Hunter, Mar. 13, 1940; Fletcher to Dear Member, Mar. 29, 1940; Membership letter, Mar. 11, 1941, PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, May 30, 1941.

²¹ Miscellany, Grand Master's Report, Jan. 15, 1939; Hunter memorandum [n.d. 1940]; Hunter to Smith, Jan. 25 1940; Building File, 1940, PHM MSS.

²² Financial Records, V.2, Trustee Board, 1933–55; Grand Master's Report, 1941; Harris to Dear Friend, Apr. 1941; Hunter to Evans, May 26, 1941; Proclamation No. 3, Apr. 15, 1941, PHM MSS.

²³ Legal Documents, 1933, 1940; Proclamation No. 1, Dec. 1, 1940; Proclamation No. 2, Oct. 15, 1941; Hunter to Evans [n.d., 1942], PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, Aug. 13, 1943.

²⁴ Proclamation No. 1, Aug. 1, 1941; Minutes of the Annual Communication, Grand Master's Address, 1949; PHM MSS; *Omaha Guide*, Aug. 24 and Sept. 14, 1946.

²⁵ Hunter to Smith, May 27, 1940; Evans to Hunter, Jan. 31 and May 25, 1941; Horton to Hunter, Feb. 6, 1941; Ben Nelson to Hunter, July 2, 1941; Evans to Harris, July 1, 1941; Evans to Hunter, Jan. 23, 1942; Jenkins to Grand Lodge, Sept. 14, 1942; Minutes of the Annual Communication, Grand Master's Address, 1949 and 1950, PHM MSS; Dorothy Creigh, *Adams County: A Story of the Great Plains* (Hastings, Nebr.: Adams County-Hastings Centennial Commission, 1972), 212, 227.

²⁶ Minutes of the Annual Communication, Grand Master's Address, 1949; Hunter memorandum, Dec. 1, 1941; Lodge files, History (founding of Nat Hunter No. 12); author's interview of the Rev. Charles Tyler, Aug. 19, 1992; Rosters, 1941–46, PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, June 21 and Nov. 16, 1946; *Omaha City Directory*, 1941, 1942, 1944, and 1946.

²⁷ *The Voice*, Jan. 29, 1950; *Omaha Star*, July 20, 1951.

²⁸ Creigh, *Adams County*, 180–81; *Omaha Star*, Aug. 10, 1951, Jan. 30, 1953, July 4, 1958, July 24, 1959; Proceedings of the Annual Communication, 1959, PHM MSS.

²⁹ Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1950, 1952, and 1953; Proceedings of the Annual Communication, 1959; PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, Sept. 8, 1950.

³⁰ Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953; Proceedings of the Annual Communication, 1959; Rosters, PHM MSS; *Omaha City Directory*, 1959.

³¹ Stewart, et al. memorandum, July 19, 1950; Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1950 and 1952; Proceedings of the Annual Communication, 1959, PHM MSS; *Omaha Star*, Jan. 12, 1951, May 15, 1953, June 11, Aug. 27, 1954, Sept. 13, 1957; *Omaha Guide*, Apr. 2, 1954, Sept. 2, 1955; *Omaha World-Herald*, Apr. 23, 1955, clipping file, DCHS.

³² *Omaha Star*, Feb. 17 and Nov. 24, 1950, May 31 and Nov. 30, 1951, June 20, 1952, June 5, 1953, May 21 and July 16, 1954, Jan. 11, 1957, Sept. 26 and Dec. 26, 1958, May 22, 1959; *Grand Island Daily Independent*, July 16, 1955.

³³ Herman Smith memorandum to all lodges, Oct. 28, 1933; H. J. Pinkett to Fletcher, [n.d., 1943]; Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1950 and 1951; Constitution and Bylaws, 1957, PHM MSS.

³⁴ Minutes of the Annual Communication, 1953 and 1956; Proceedings of the Annual Communication, 1959, PHM MSS.