

## **History of Early Lebanon Lodge #26**

**Researched and  
Compiled  
by  
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33°**

The Masonic fraternity came into Lebanon within a few years after its settlement.

Lebanon Lodge was organized under dispensation in 1814, the date unknown, that it was probably early in that year is evident from the statement of its Historian, Brother Charles A. Hough, M. D., that its first meeting was on May 14, 1814, and that within that year seven meetings were held.

In 1815 the lodge was represented in Grand Lodge by "Brother Daniel Roe, representative." The Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge commenced on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. On January 4th the Grand Lodge "ordered that the Grand Secretary" prepare a charter for Lebanon Lodge No. 26, and a charter dated January 5, 1815, was granted to Lebanon Lodge No. 26. Its charter members, according to the old Grand Lodge Minutes, were Brothers Thomas R. Ross, John Sheets, Nathan Kelly, Daniel Roe Martin Earhart, Daniel Cushing, George Kesling, and Charles Stone.

The record furnished by Brother Hough omits some of the above, and has instead of them the names of Abner B. Hunt, William Snook, R. C. Talbot, and W. M. Wiles. The Charter was signed by Most Worshipful Brother Henry Brush, as Grand Master and attested by Right Worshipful Brother Robert Kercheval, Grand Secretary.

The first initiates of Lebanon Lodge were Phineas Ross and Oliver Cock; the initiation fee was twenty dollars; twenty-five cents was paid at each meeting by the members.

Lebanon Lodge was frequently honored by the election of its members to offices in Grand Lodge.

In 1817 Brother Thomas R. Ross was elected Junior Warden; in 1821, Phineas Ross, Deputy Grand Master; in 1818, Brother Thomas B. Van Horn was elected Junior Warden; in 1823, Brother Thomas Corwin was elected Deputy Grand Master, and in subsequent years to other offices, until in 1828 he was elected Grand Master. In 1831 Brother John Satterthwaite of Waynesville, a member of Lebanon Lodge No. 26, was elected Grand Master, and later Brother Horace M. Stokes was an honored Grand Master of Masons in Ohio, and departed this life while serving as such. Brother J. Kelley O'Neal, another member of Lebanon Lodge No. 26, was Grand High Priest in the Grand Chapter of Ohio, and Grand Commander of Knights Templars in Ohio.

From 1815 to 1831 inclusive Lebanon Lodge No. 26 was represented at every Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge. In 1832 it was not represented, but in 1833 it was represented by Brother S. R. Miller.!

The Annual Communication of 1830 held at Worthington, Ohio, commencing on January 4th, with the Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother John Snow presiding and an attendance of representatives from fifty-nine subordinate lodges. As an interesting incident it may be mentioned that at this session one hundred dollars was voted to be sent to the widow of Past Grand Master Judge Charles R. Sherman and asking her to "receive it as a token of the respect this grand Lodge entertains for the memory and public services of her departed husband, and of the sympathy which is felt in her bereavement."

At this period in the history of the Grand Lodge the animosity of the anti-Masonic political party and the relentless and bitter denunciation and persecution of Freemasons by its fanatical following had become very serious in Ohio, as in other States. In some instances lodge rooms were defaced and stoned; sticks and stones were thrown at Masonic processions, with hoots and yells, even upon the occasion of funeral processions.

The fanaticism also of weak-minded, disloyal converts to their pharisaical pretense of the wickedness of secrecy and Masonic obligations and a religious duty requiring their renunciation, was apparent in many lodges. As an instance, at the Annual Communication in 1830 on motion of the distinguished Brother Joshua R. Giddings it was "Ordered, That the Grand Secretary be and he is hereby directed to issue a new charter to Jefferson Lodge No. 87, the former charter having been mutilated by the violence of some evil-disposed and weak-minded person unknown."

The anti-Masonic spirit prevailing, however, in that locality was of such character that in 1835 Brother Giddings enclosed the charter of Jefferson Lodge No. 87 in a letter to the Grand Lodge, and on recommendation of the Committee on Charters and Dispensations, it was "Resolved, That the Grand Lodge rescind said charter, and the Secretary be ordered to place the same on file."<sup>2</sup>

Over one hundred seventy years has now elapsed since the occurrences mentioned, a brief statement of their origin may be of interest.

In 1826 one William Morgan of Batavia, New York, a mason by trade, a man about fifty years of age, and of dissolute habits and loose principles and at times very intemperate, but of good address when sober, having been, it is claimed, incensed at being excluded from membership in a Masonic body, and being desirous of both money and revenge, proposed the publication of an "Exposition of the Secrets of Freemasonry," and for its publication entered into a partnership with David C. Miller, a printer, who also claimed to be a Mason, the publisher of a newspaper in Batavia and an impecunious politician of intemperate habits, who claimed that Masonic influence had caused his paper to become unprofitable.

Both believed that the scheme, if sufficiently advertised, would prove a matter of great pecuniary profit. Miller subsequently claimed that an attempt had been made to burn his printing office. Morgan having been arrested and jailed in an adjoining town for petit larceny and for debt, it was claimed that a party of three or more persons who had compromised the suit and settled

the claim against Morgan secured his liberation from jail, and that after his entering into a carriage with these persons he was abducted, taken to Canada, and afterwards murdered, as from that time it was said that William Morgan was never again seen, although an officer of the American Embassy at Constantinople claimed to have seen him in that city, and another man claimed to have seen him in central America.

For the purpose of carrying out the designs of the nefarious political tricksters, it was alleged that the abductors of Morgan were Freemasons and that the Fraternity was responsible for his disappearance.

When it is considered that Morgan himself was too shrewd to have placed himself in the hands of those whom he would have considered his enemies; and that although there were doubtless fools in all associations, yet it would be difficult to conceive of any such shallow-minded and ignorant Freemason as would have given any serious attention to the pretensions of Morgan, much less to have entered into a conspiracy for taking his life.

The absurdity of the charge is more apparent also when it is considered that Miller, who was the responsible one for the publication of the book, was unmolested. The book when published proved to be unremunerative. Books of the same character previously published in England were doubtless its prototypes.

Although every effort was made for political purposes to substantiate the charge, its flimsy character is apparent in the many fruitless trials had in that connection.

Miller, the publisher, was later elected clerk of the county, as one of the first fruits of the anti-Masonic movement, on the wave of which Alfred H. Tracy in 1829 was elected State Senator in the Eighth New York District and Millard Fillmore was elected to the state assembly. In that and other states many politicians of the period, among its promoters, became prominent and successful in their aspirations in state and national affairs. The nomination of Wirt, however, for President, on the anti-Masonic ticket, did not prove to be the success anticipated, one State only, Vermont, voting in his favor. After that election the anti-Masonic party influence waned rapidly. A few of its political promoters, however, subsequently became prominent in national affairs.<sup>3</sup>

In 1831 Brother John Satterthwaite of Waynesville, a member of Lebanon Lodge No. 26, was elected Grand Master, and in later years Brother Horace M. Stokes was honored Grand Master of Masons in Ohio, and departed this life whilst serving as such. Brother J. Kelley O'Neal, another member of Lebanon Lodge No. 26, was Grand High Priest in the Grand Chapter of Ohio, and Grand Commander of Knights Templars in Ohio.<sup>4</sup>

From 1834 to 1838 Lebanon Lodge No. 26 was not represented in Grand Lodge.

In 1838 Brother Allen Wright, as proxy of Samuel Glenny, submitted his credentials as the representative of that lodge, and "a number of Brethren of Lebanon having manifested a laudable desire to resume their Masonic labors," the Committee on Charters and Dispensations, to whom the matter

had been referred, reported that no dues had been received from Lebanon Lodge since 1830, but that "under the circumstances of trying embarrassment, in which they have been placed during the last five years, your committee are induced to propose, for the consideration of the Grand Lodge, the following resolution:

"Resolved, That Lebanon Lodge No.26 be authorized to resume labor under its charter; that Brother Wright be admitted to a seat in the present Grand Lodge, as its representative; and that its dues be remitted up to the present date, except so much as may be necessary to defray the expenses of its representative at this Grand Communication."

The resolution was adopted, and Lebanon Lodge No.26 was rehabilitated under its charter.

Since that period named Freemasonry in that locality has resumed its honored position.<sup>5</sup>

From the first the lodge's membership numbered the leading men of the community. All Masonic bodies (in Lebanon) suspended meetings during the anti-Masonic period in the eighteen thirties but resumed them in 1842.

The great Tom Corwin, John Satterthwaite and Horace M. Stokes all went from the local lodge to be grand master of the Grand Lodge of Ohio.

Lebanon Chapter No.5, Royal Arch Masons, was the first chartered by the Grand Chapter of Ohio after its organization. The chapter was instituted June 24, 1817, and its charter dated December 30, 1818.

Grand High Priests from the chapter include Phineas Ross, the first High Priest of the local chapter, Horace M. Stokes and J. Kelly O'Neill.

Miami Commandery No.22, K. T., was chartered October 15, 1869 and gave to the Grand Commander of Ohio a Grand Commander in J. Kelley O'Neill, first Eminent Commander of Miami Commandery.

Lebanon Council No.134, Royal and Select Masters, was instituted February 27, 1951, and chartered October 10, 1951. A council was previously formed in 1855, but was suspended in 1891.

The Masonic Temple in which all the Masonic bodies meet was erected in 1859. Previously the Masons met for many years in a second-story added to the Town Hall for that purpose.<sup>6</sup>

#### **References:**

1. History of Freemasonry in Ohio from 1791 by W. M. Cunningham, M.A., Cincinnati, Ohio 1909, pp. 243-244.
2. *ibid*, pp. 326-327.
3. *ibid*, pp. 328-330.
4. *ibid*, p. 244.
5. *ibid*, pp. 244-245.
6. History of Lebanon Lodges, Shows Masonic Oldest, by Marion Snyder, taken from an undated newspaper article, June 29, 2000.

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