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A LIST OF JEWS WHO WERE GRAND MASTERS OF
MASONS IN VARIOUS STATES OF
THIS COUNTRY.

BY ALBERT M. FRIEDENBERG, B. S., LL. B.

Reprinted from
PUBLICATIONS OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTOBICAL SOCIETY,
No. 19, 1910.

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A LIST OF JEWS WHO WERE GRAND MASTERS OF MASONS IN VARIOUS STATES OF THIS COUNTRY.

BY ALBERT M. FRIEDENBERG, B. S., LL. B.¹

There have been up to date exactly twenty-four Jewish Grand Masters of Masons in various States of this country. The twenty-four names here listed are those of twenty-three men, for one filled the station of Grand Master in two Grand Lodges. The Jewish origin or affiliation of these persons is not to be doubted. Several of them occupied more or less prominent and distinguished positions in the general community and have already been referred to in the *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, "The Jewish Encyclopedia," and other historical works.

Four Jews at various times presided over the deliberations of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Montana, while two were at the head of the so-called Phillips Grand Lodge of New York. The latter had an independent existence from 1849 to 1858, finally being consolidated with the regular body and having its own acts and proceedings thereupon recognized as duly constituted and authoritative.

In Alabama Benjamin Moses Jacobs, a merchant of Birmingham, was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Alabama for the term 1906-1907. Previous to this he had at various seasons in 1905 and 1906 acted as Grand Master. A native of Quincy, Illinois, the son of Moses and Caroline Jacobs, he was born on August 21, 1859. In Lasker Lodge, No. 441, F. & A. M., of Alabama, he was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, on November 21, 1884.²

¹ Compare *The Reform Advocate*, April 16, 1910, p. 387 *et seq.*

² A complete biographical sketch may be found in the *Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge of Alabama for 1907.

The Grand Lodge of Arizona has been presided over by one Grand Master of the Jewish faith. Morris Goldwater, of Prescott, Arizona, of which he has been mayor, was Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge in 1882 and 1885, Senior Grand Warden in 1886, Deputy Grand Master in 1887, and Most Worshipful Grand Master in 1888. At the present time he is the secretary of Aztlan Lodge, No. 1, F. & A. M., of Prescott. It is of interest to note that when in 1886 Morris Goldwater was Senior Grand Warden of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Arizona, two of the other five elected Grand Officers were Jews. Abraham Meyer Cohn was Junior Grand Warden, while Abraham Marx was Grand Treasurer.

Arkansas, too, has had one Jewish Grand Master. From November, 1906, to November, 1907, Jacob Trieber, Judge of the District Court of the United States at Little Rock, was Grand Master. He was Senior Grand Warden for the term 1904-1905 and Deputy Grand Master in the period 1905-1906.

In the Masonic Grand Lodge of Florida, Marcus Endel was Senior Grand Warden from 1881 to 1883, Deputy Grand Master in 1892, and Most Worshipful Grand Master in 1893. For seven consecutive years the Grand Lodge of Georgia had a Jew at its supreme head: Max Meyerhardt, an attorney-at-law at Rome in that State, was Grand Master from 1900 to 1907. While he was the Grand Master, Meyerhardt was never present at Masonic ceremonies which took place on the Jewish Sabbath, he having remained ever faithful to the requirements of traditional Judaism. In 1898 and 1899 Meyerhardt was Deputy Grand Master, and for close to thirty successive years, was the Worshipful Master of the subordinate Cherokee Lodge at Rome.

Abraham Jonas, of Quincy, Illinois, noted as one of the early friends of President Abraham Lincoln, was the first Grand Master of Masons in Illinois. In 1840 and 1841 he presided over the Grand Lodge, founded in 1839, and the Masons of the State have suitably honored the memory of their

first leader. Before his removal to Illinois, Jonas resided at Williamstown in the neighboring State of Kentucky, and was Past Master of the local Grant Lodge, No. 85, F. & A. M. In the Grand Lodge of Masons of Kentucky, too, he reached the very highest rank. Its Junior Grand Warden *pro tem.*, in 1830, he filled this station by election in the following year. He was the Senior Grand Warden in 1832, Deputy Grand Master in 1833, and from August of 1833 to the following August Most Worshipful Grand Master.³

Edwin Marks, of New Orleans, at the present time a life-member of Perfect Union Lodge, No. 1, F. & A. M., of that city, was Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana in 1872, Senior Grand Warden for the term 1873-1874, Deputy Grand Master during the years 1877 and 1878, and Grand Master of Masons in the period 1879-1880.

One of the earliest Grand Masters of Masons in Massachusetts was the well-known Moses M. Hays, of Boston.⁴

In Mississippi Charles H. Blum was Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Ancient Craft Masons from February of 1906 to the same time in 1907. But this was not the first time he held office in the Grand Lodge. In 1902 he was its Junior Grand Deacon; two years later he became the Senior Grand Deacon. In 1905 he was the Junior Grand Warden, and was Senior Grand Warden when chosen for the most important office in the gift of his brethren.

Sol. Star, in 1909 a resident of Deadwood, South Dakota, was Grand Master of the Masons of Montana from October, 1873, to October, 1874. He had been Deputy Grand Master in 1871, in the very earliest days of this Masonic body. Moses Morris, Junior Grand Warden in 1889, and Deputy Grand Master in 1891, was Grand Master from September,

³ See *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, No. 17, p. 124.

⁴ See *supra*, p. 5, *et seq.*

1892, to October, 1893. H. S., or Sol., Hepner was Senior Grand Warden in 1901, Deputy Grand Master in 1902, and Most Worshipful Grand Master for the period 1903-1904. He was born on February 25, 1869, in the province of Astrakhan in Russia, the son of Barnett and Bertha (Maizel) Hepner. A graduate of the University of Michigan in the class of 1891, Hepner was a member of the legislature of Montana and county attorney for Helena, the capital of the State.⁸ Finally, Henry Lupin Frank was Grand Master for one year from September, 1905. A native of Ironton, Ohio, he received the third degree in Montana on February 19, 1874. From 1885 to 1887 he was the mayor of Butte, of which city he was a prominent business man. He was also the Republican presidential elector from Montana in 1896. Between 1902 and 1904 he was respectively Junior Grand Warden, Senior Grand Warden, and Deputy Grand Master in the Grand Lodge of Montana.⁹ He died in 1908 at the comparatively early age of fifty-one years.

The two Jews who have been Grand Masters of Masons in New York were, as has already been remarked, at the head of the Phillips Grand Lodge. The late Isaac Phillips, for many years the clerk of the vestry of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation in New York, and a prominent resident of the city for many years, was its Grand Master from 1849 to 1854. Previously he had been Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York for 1847-1848. Throughout the existence of the Phillips Grand Lodge, Isaac Phillips was its mentor and guiding spirit. He was a Past Master of the old and famous Albion Lodge, No. 26, F. & A. M., of New York, and had organized his Grand Lodge as a protest against the action of the Grand Lodge of New York in depriving Past Masters

⁸ His biography and portrait may be found in the *Proceedings of Grand Lodge for 1904*.

⁹ His biography and portrait are to be found in the *Proceedings for 1906*.

of their suffrages in Grand Lodge convocation. Associated with Isaac Phillips was Mordecai Myers, equally well-known in old New York. He was Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1829 to 1834, that is, during the height of the anti-Masonic frenzy, growing out of the Morgan episode, in this State. He was the Grand Master of the Phillips body from 1854 to 1857. On the consolidation both Phillips and Myers were received into the Grand Lodge of New York as Most Worshipful Past Grand Masters.⁷

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Oregon has had one Jew as its Grand Master. Jacob Mayer, a merchant of Portland, was Grand Treasurer from 1881 to 1883, and Grand Master in 1888. In later life he removed to New York City and there he died on the last day of 1908.

The Pennsylvania Grand Lodge, which has set other Masonic jurisdictions in this country an excellent example in the numerous interesting historical volumes and reprinted minutes it has issued, was fortunate enough to have the celebrated Henry M. Phillips of Philadelphia, a cousin of Isaac Phillips of New York, as its Junior Grand Warden for 1854-1855. He became Senior Grand Warden and served as such during 1856-1857. In 1858 he was Deputy Grand Master, and in the years 1859 and 1860 he was Right Worshipful Grand Master. Phillips was equally prominent in public life; he was, as a Democrat, a member of the National House of Representatives for the Congress of 1857-1859. Possessed of a princely fortune he bequeathed a part of it to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, the wealthiest Masonic power in this land.⁸

One of the earliest Grand Lodges of Masons to be presided over by a Jew was that of Rhode Island. Moses Seixas was

⁷ Isaac Phillips' son, Hon. N. Taylor Phillips, is ex-Deputy Comptroller of the City of New York, and I am indebted to him for some of these details concerning his distinguished father. And see *supra*, p. 28.

⁸ See *Jewish Comment*, April 29, 1910, p. 47.

Deputy Grand Master from 1800 to 1802 and the Grand Master from 1802 to his death in 1809.*

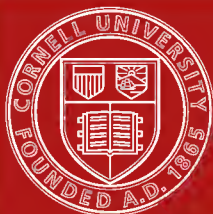
William Blatt was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason at Yankton, South Dakota, on April 28, 1869, and during 1885 and 1886 was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the latter State. In 1898 another Jew, Louis G. Levoy, of Webster, was Most Worshipful Grand Master.

The Masons of Texas have had two Jewish Grand Masters. In 1856 Henry Sampson was Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge. The next year saw him Senior Grand Warden, while from January to June of 1858 he was the Deputy Grand Master, the Grand Mastership being then unfilled. For one and one-half years from June, 1858, he was Grand Master of Masons in Texas. Again, N. M. Washer was Junior Grand Warden in 1897, and Senior Grand Warden, Deputy Grand Master and Grand Master in the three succeeding years.

Solomon Jacobs, of Richmond, was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 1812 and 1813.¹⁰

* See *supra*, p. 24.

¹⁰ See *supra*, p. 68. Compare "The Secret Cause of Jewish Importance in Early American Colonial Commerce," in *The Reform Advocate*, May 21, 1910, p. 655, *et seq.*



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