

Federal Lodge #5

Dover, NH

According to *Symbolic Freemasonry in New Hampshire*, authored by MWGM, Brother Harry Morrison Cheney, he notes that a petition was presented on April 8, 1790 “praying that a Lodge be established at Dover, to be known as Federal Lodge”. It should be noted that in *Three Centuries of Freemasonry in New Hampshire*, authored by Rt. Worshipful Brother Gerald Foss, Grand Historian, notes that following the formation of the Grand Lodge in July of 1789, that petitions were presented at a quarterly meeting of the New Hampshire Grand Lodge on April 28, 1790 at Mr. Whidden’s in Portsmouth receiving a petition from St. John’s Lodge for a charter, and further asking that its charter be recorded as 1736 due to its formation prior to the formation of The New Hampshire Grand Lodge. This request was granted.

Interestingly, at this same meeting both Nottingham and Dover presented petitions. Nottingham became Columbian #2. While it is documented that the request from Dover was granted by Grand Lodge at this meeting, there is a lapse of almost two years whereupon the same petition was presented on October 24, 1792. This petition was also granted and the Charter for Federal Lodge # 5 is dated October 24, 1792. According to Rt. Worshipful Foss, Dover was actually the second petition to be presented. Let me repeat that, Dover WAS the 2nd to present a petition to the newly formed Grand Lodge of New Hampshire! The third petition was Nottingham. For some unknown reason, according to Rt. Worshipful Cheney, it took Dover longer to organize so Columbian in Nottingham became #2. Rising Sun at Keene became #3. Jerusalem Lodge at Walpole became #4. Rt. Worshipful Foss notes that Lodges Nos. 2,3,4 & 5 “ultimately ceased to exist for one reason or another”.

As previously noted for some unknown reason Federal #5 was finally granted a charter on October 24, 1792. The following four years suggests that all was not well with Federal Lodge # 5 and though noticed

on April 27th, 1796 that it was not complying with the laws and its charter was in “danger of being arrested”, it appears that the difficulties were corrected by July 27th, 1796. Some two years later on April 25th, 1798 the charter was returned to Grand Lodge with a “request that it be cancelled, which was done.”

We should now turn to the petitioners who were Theodore Dame, Amos Cogswell, Samuel Place, Henry Mellen, William King, James Taylor, Jonathan Rawson and Nathan Hoit.

Of these, Henry Mellen was prominent as both an attorney and an ardent Federalist. He was also Harvard educated, and was known as a man of much literary ability. Briefly the Federalist Party were followers of Alexander Hamilton policies and called for strong national government that promoted economic growth and encouraged a strong relationship with Great Britain as well as opposition to revolutionary France. It should be noted that the majority of the Founding Fathers were in fact Federalists. The Federalist party controlled the federal government until 1801. Perhaps this is why the name Federal Lodge was chosen.

On a less serious note, Henry Mellen built a house on what is now Silver Street in Dover in 1786. Silver Street was originally known as the Barrington Trail, later Barrington Road. His home was at 51-53 Silver Street and legend has it that the road was renamed Silver Street as Brother Mellen owned a silver service other silver pieces that many people came to look at. Thus the name Silver Street.

It should also be noted that upon Brother Mellen’s death, a special session was called of the Grand Lodge to attend the funeral services of the Honorable Henry Mellen, a “prominent lawyer and Mason from Dover”. This some thirteen years following the return of Federal Lodge # 5’s Charter.

This house was later purchased following Brother Mellen’s death by Col. Andrew Pierce. Pierce was a prominent local businessman who served as Moderator for the Town of Dover, the legislature and one term as Speaker of the House. He served as Dover’s first Mayor upon becoming a City. Masonically,

Brother Pierce was member of Strafford Lodge #29 and delivered the address at the laying of the cornerstone at Mill #2 in Dover which was laid on July 4, 1821. Brother Pierce was known for his excellent oratory. I should also note the Agent of the mill was John William's, a charter member of Strafford Lodge #29 and whose nephew, Moses Paul, was a member of Strafford Lodge, Grand Master of The Grand Lodge of New Hampshire and namesake of Moses Paul Lodge #96. But I digress.

While not absolutely certain, it would appear that Theodore Dame would have been a descendant of John Dam of Newington and one of the original settlers at Dame's Point in Newington.

Colonel Amos Cogswell served during the Revolutionary War and joined Washington at Whitemarsh. Brother Cogswell served in the NH House of Representatives and the State Senate. He served as a Presidential elector in 1816. He is buried in Pine Hill Cemetery. The Colonel Amos Cogswell home was torn down and in 1820 the New Hampshire Hotel was built. That was torn down and is now the site of St. Mary's School. He was an original incorporator of Dover's first bank, Strafford National Bank.

No information could be found on William King. However, William King Atkinson served as the first President of Strafford National Bank and it is conceivable that William King is really William King Atkinson. He also served as a Justice on the NH Supreme Court and was Attorney General for the State of New Hampshire.

James Taylor was serving in the NH Legislature in 1790 whether this is our James Taylor or not I cannot affirmatively say. The Census for 1790 does show a James Taylor residing in Dover, NH.

Jonathan Rawson served in the Revolutionary war. He studied the law with Peter Green of Concord as did Henry Mellen. He settled in Dover in 1785 and practiced until his death in 1794.

Nathan Hoit cannot be found in Dover. There is a Nathan Hoit that was in the Legislature serving Moultonborough and also served in the military with General John Sullivan. I cannot affirm that this is

the same Nathan Hoit that was on the Federal #5 petition. It would appear that in the early days of the New Hampshire Grand Lodge, it was not uncommon for members of others lodges to sign the petition in the formation of new Lodges. Given his place in politics, this seems a possible scenario.

As in all of the leaps of logic, some of my suppositions bears further investigation and where a logical opinion is stated, it should not be accepted until proven.

What is clear from those that we have affirmative detail is that they were lawyers, politically active and in most cases veterans. We know that there were only eight signatures on the petition. We know that the Grand Lodge had concerns in 1794. Jonathan Rawson died in 1794.

It appears that their political leaning was that of the Federalist Party and again may be the reason for Federal Lodge. It could also be that Dover was premature in being able to sustain a Lodge or that its original petitioners professional and political life just did not allow the time.

We know today, that shortly thereafter, Strafford Lodge #29 was formed and a Charter issued on July 23, 1817. As mentioned previously the former home of Brother Mellen was now the Pierce home. We know that he was the orator during the cornerstone ceremony of Mill # 2, which John Williams, also an original petitioner, and the Agent for the Dover Cotton Factory and the uncle of Moses Paul, a past master of Strafford Lodge and Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of NH.

A charter was issued on May 21, 1891 for the establishment of Moses Paul Lodge #96.

Much has been made that Moses Paul Lodge #96 was the blue -collar Lodge and Strafford was the affluent, white collar Lodge. I have also heard the opposite position. A review of the original petitioners suggests this is not the case of either Lodge. Channing Folsom was the Superintendent of Schools in Dover, Robert G. Pike was a Judge, Lawyer, educator and civil engineer, Marshall B Hammond , Irwin Tapley and Fred Frary owned businesses, many in education, William D. Foss was a Civil War Veteran,

Henry Redfield was a Doctor. If one reviews the excellent Dover Public Library records on the walking tour, Silver, Lexington, Cushing, W. Concord, and Arch are sprinkled with the early brethren of Federal, Strafford and Moses Paul Lodges.

The original petitioners of Moses Paul Lodge were diverse as well. Channing Folsom took a demit from Strafford Lodge #29.

In any event, blue collar, white collar, etc. have no place in Masonry as we all meet on the level. Accordingly, I choose not to search for the answer.

There you have it. A brief history of Federal Lodge #5 and the later period of the two Lodges in Dover following Federal #5.

Today we meet to talk of resuming our Work under Federal #5 where the combined membership would be close to 180 members and a core group of some 20-25 members.

As I mentioned early on, the petition for Federal Lodge # 5 was second to St. John's Lodge #1 two hundred and twenty -eight years ago. I personally find it exciting that we have the opportunity to resurrect Federal Lodge's place in history. We can embrace the short history of Federal #5 and its Brethren, support and maintain the rich heritage of both Strafford Lodge # 29 and Moses Paul Lodge # 96 by inserting each of its respective histories from 1817 and 1891 respectively through 2018 and move forward. In short, all of the Masonic history in the City of Dover will be traced back to the original second petition in the history of the New Hampshire Grand Lodge. I know that both our Lodges over the course of the last few years have moved away from membership, money and buildings and have instead embraced Masonry as it was intended. Let's consider strongly doing that together and return to Masonry of old as Federal Lodge #5.