

Early Leaders of the Grand Council of Missouri- Pt. III

Jacob W. Thompson, KYCH

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri Education Committee

Most Ill. Comp. John R. Parson PIGM, PGM, PGHP, PGC

Our Fourteenth Grand Master- 1881

Past Grand Master Grand Lodge of Missouri-

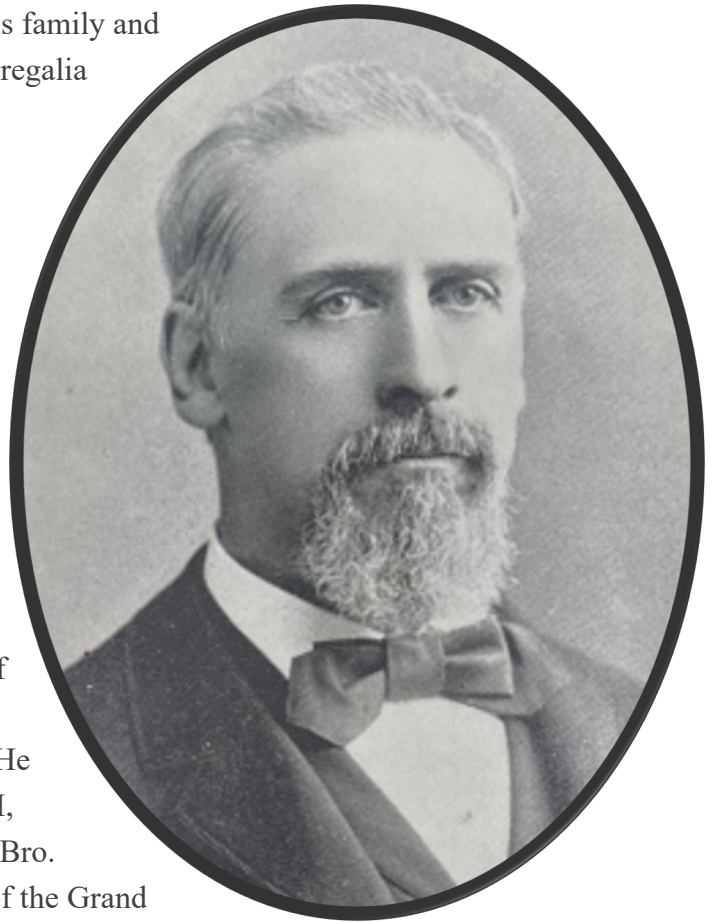
Past Grand High Priest-Grand Chapter, R.A.M. of Missouri- 1892

Past Grand Commander- Grand Commandery of Missouri, Knights Templar- 1888

born in 1839 in Buffalo, New York & moved to St. Louis in 1859 at the age of 20. Through the majority of his life he worked with his family and retiring in 1895, he opened a masonic furniture & regalia supply company which flourished.

He was raised in Aurora Lodge No. 267 in 1869, serving as Master in 1878, followed that with a stint of 15 years as it's Treasurer. In 1878 & '79 he served the Grand Lodge as Grand Marshal, and in 1889 he was elected Junior Grand Warden, he subsequently advance & was elected Grand Master in 1892. This was followed by two terms (1903-04) as Grand Treasurer, & 1904 being appointed Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge (a role he held till 1916.)

1871 marked a strong year for the future of St. Louis York Rite, as in that year Bro. Parsons joined the Royal Arch, Council, & Commandery. He was exalted in Bellefontaine Chapter No.25, RAM, serving as it's High Priest in 1878, '82, '83, & '88. Bro. Parsons went on to be elected Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Missouri in 1892 (the same year as his term as Grand Master, only the second such instance in Missouri's history, and the last since then.) Later service to the Grand Chapter included being Grand Treasurer (1878-1880). He passed the Circle and was greeted at Hiram Council No. 1 and went on to be its Thrice Illustrious Master (now known as Illustrious Master in Missouri Council work) in 1878 & 1879. He was then elected Deputy Grand Master of



the Grand Council in 1880 and Most Illustrious Grand Master of that body in 1881. Bro. Parsons received the Templar Orders in St. Aldemar Commandery No. 18, serving as it's Commander in 1874. In 1877 he was elected Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Missouri. He later served the Grand Encampment USA as a Grand Standard Bearer.

It would be important to note then that John R. Parson holds the distinction that very few Missouri masons can claim. He presided over every major body in Missouri existent at that time, as the Grand High Priest, Grand Illustrious Master, Grand Commander, and Grand Master,. Further he went on to also be active in the Grand Chapter of Eastern Star and filled various state level officers including Grand Secretary, and Grand Patron in 1888-1889

Ill. Parson's career within the Ancient & Accepted Rite is no less distinguished. He received the 4°-32° by communication from Ill. Albert Mackey (famed Masonic Scholar and then Secretary General of the Supreme Council). His service to the Valley of St. Louis and Missouri (now St. Louis) Consistory is perhaps the most prominent though, serving 9 years as Master of Kadosh (1884-1894). In 1884 Parsons was invested as a Knight Commander of the Court of Honor and in 1890 was coroneted an Inspector General Honorary.

Illustrious Grand Master, Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri- 1881; Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Missouri- 1892; Grand Treasurer, Grand Lodge of Missouri, 1893-1904; Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Missouri- 1904-1921; Grand High Priest, Grand Chapter, RAM of Missouri-1892; Grand Commander, Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Missouri- 1877; Grand Patron, Grand Chapter of Missouri, Order of Eastern Star -1888; Venerable Master of Kadosh, Missouri (now St. Louis) Consistory 1884-1894

Most Ill. Comp. George Belt PIGM, PGC, PGGCG-GEKT

Our Third Grand Master- 1868

Past Grand Captain General, Grand Encampment of Knight Templar, USA- 1868

Past Grand Commander- Grand Commandery of Missouri, Knights Templar- 1860-1864-

Longest Serving

was born at Fleming County, Kentucky on July 23rd 1825. Belts parents died when he was young and at the age of 15 he moved west to Missouri. Bro. Belt moved to live with his older Brother Dr. Alfred Belt, then living in Weston, Platte County. After arriving his Brother headed west on the Oregon Trail, and George stayed put, working for Owens& Aull's Store,



which primarily sold and worked with Native Americans in the area. In 1846 he set off on his own going into business in merchandising. Further he owned and served as the proprietor of the International Hotel, which by one account was said to be among the best furnished hotels in the West. The hotel itself burned down in 1858. Locally he was Mayor of Weston four times over. In 1862 Belt was appointed Clerk of the Circuit Court, and later held government office as Country Treasurer, being elected in 1866, and reelected twice over, later being elected Sherriff. Switching professions again he spent 2 years (1872-74) as a banker. In 1871 he moved to St. Joesph and purchased a newspaper there, the *St. Joseph Gazette*. Again involved in politics in 1878 he was elected City Treasurer and in 1880 Police Judge. Governor of Missouri, Morehouse appointed him the State Coal Oil Inspector

for Kansas City, and later Clerk of the Circuit

Court of Jackson County. Life progress ed and he moved south to Texas, first stopping in Cleburne and then in El Paso where he passed on January 2nd. 1912.

In 1846 He was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master mason in Weston Lodge No. 53, and in 1851 elected Master of said Lodge. He was exalted in Weston Chapter No. 4 RAM in 1847 and served as High Priest in 1855. Belt went on to assist in the chartering of Chapters in

Platte City and Barry. Belt attended and participated in the formation of the Grand council of Missouri and was elected Grand Marshal at that time. His own council, Weston had been organized by Illinois. In 1868 he was elected Grand Master of the Council but did not appear to preside at his session. In 1853 he was made a Templar in Weston Commandery Np. 2. And served as commander in 1860. At the organization of the Grand commandery of Missouri, Belt was elected Grand Commander, and reelected in 1861,63,64.¹ Later he affiliated with Belt Commander No. 9 in Platt City and then St. Joseph Commandery No. 29 in St. Joe Moving to Texas he shifted and affiliated with Cleburne Commandery No. 12 in 1892, and later El Paso Commandery No. 18 in 1899.

Bro. Belt passed at the age of 80 in El Paso, Texas and is interred in the Masonic Section of Concordia Cemetery in El Paseo Texas.

**Illustrious Grand Master, Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri- 1868;
Grand Commander, Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Missouri- 1860-64;
General Grand Captain General- Grand Encampment of Knights Templar US- 1868**

¹ No session was held in 1862 on account of the Civil War.

Most Ill. Comp. William A. Prall, PIGM
Our Fifth Grand Master- 1871

was born at Fleming, Cayuga County, New York, October 26, 1832.

He was made a Master Mason in Waverly Lodge No. 50, Appleton, Wisconsin, but affiliated with Missouri Lodge No. 1, St. Louis, February 3, 1859, serving as master in 1868. He was exalted in St. Louis Chapter No. 1 in 1865, demitting to affiliate with Kilwinning Chapter No. 50 in 1869, and serving as High Priest of that chapter in 1891. He passed the circle in and was a member of St. Louis Council No. 1, serving as master in 1871. Comp. Prall later affiliated with Tyrian Council No. 13 (now defunct) before returning his membership in 1884 to St. Louis Council No. 1. Our Companion was elected Grand Master of the Grand Council in 1871 and served as the Grand Council's fifth leader. In 1868 Comp. Prall was knighted in St. Louis Commandery No. 1, and it was this commandery which later served as an escort at his funeral. Beyond those basic facts little else is known of his Brother Pralls life outside the Craft or in business.

Prall died in St. Louis on February 17, 1885. He is interred in Bellefontaine Cemetery

Most Ill. Comp. Joseph S. Browne, PIGM, PGM, PGHP, PGC

Our Seventh Grand Master- 1873

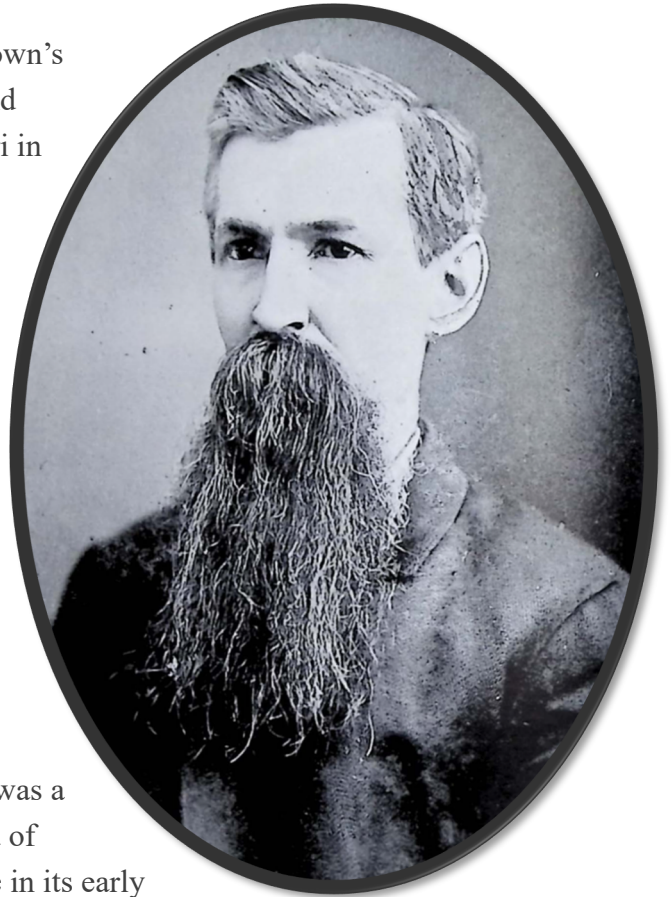
Past Grand Master Grand Lodge of Missouri-1879

Past Grand High Priest-Grand Chapter, R.A.M. of Missouri- 1876

Past Grand Commander- Grand Commandery of Missouri, Knights Templar- 1886

Born in Washington D.C. on August 23rd, 1836 Brown's family that same year moved to Hissboroh Ohio and remained there till relocating to St. Joseph Missouri in 1857. Brown served as Deputy Postmaster of St. Joseph for quite some time. In 1863 Browne married Miss Mary E. Sligers and to that union one son and three daughters were born.

He was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason at St. Joseph Lodge No. 78 on December 11th, 1858. Over time Browne went on to serve as master of that lodge at least 5 time. Later our brother served as District deputy Grand Master and District Deputy Grand Lecturer in 1873. In 1877 he was elected Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge, and that followed in 1879 with his election to be Grand Master of Missouri. Browne was a member of the Masonic Home of Missouri's Board of Directors from its organization and was very active in its early promotion.



He was exalted in St. Joseph Chapter No. 14 in 1858, and later served the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Missouri as Grand High Priest in 1876. Prior to that point Browne had served as Deputy Grand Lecturer and did so for several years. Comp. Brown passed the circle in St. Joseph Council No. 9 while it was being organized in March of 1871 and was master in 1873, interestingly serving as Grand Master of the rand Council in that same year. Our Companion was knighted in Weston Commandery No. 2 in 1857, later demitting to Hugh de Payens Commandery No. 4, and then affiliating with St. Joseph Commandery No. 4 when it was organized at chartering. By 1877 he served as its Commander, and just under a decade later, in 1886 was elected and served as Grand Commander of Missouri.

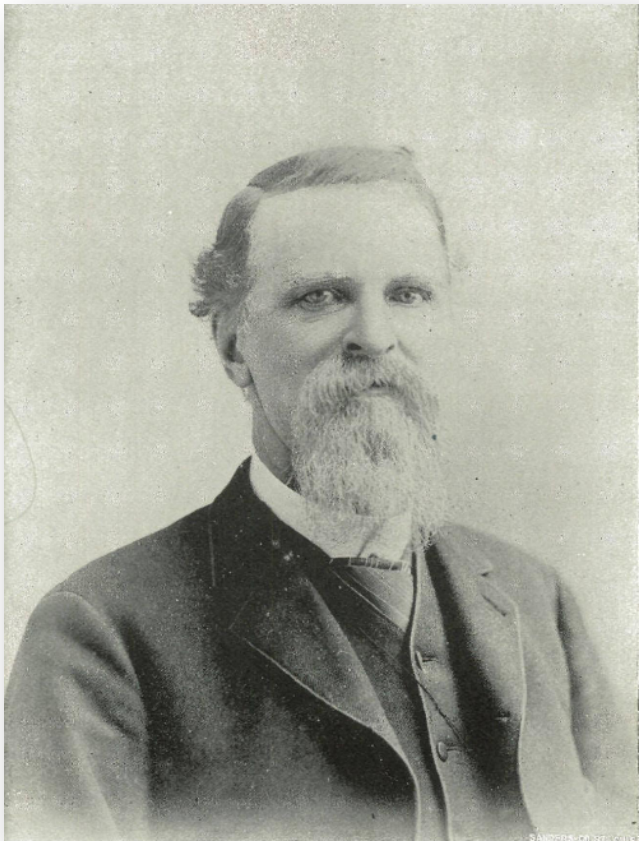
Bro. Browne received his initial work in the Scottish Rite, including the 4th through 18th Degrees locally in 1865 and was a member of the St. Joseph Lodge of Perfection and Council of Princes of Jerusalem. On October 17th, 1879, Browne received the 19th-32nd degrees through the efforts of Ill. Albert Mackey.

Browne passed on February 12, 1906 in St. Joseph, Mo, at the age of 70. Like MIC Parsons, he is one of the rare few Brethren to preside over all the Grand Bodies of Missouri.

**Illustrious Grand Master, Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri- 1873;
Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Missouri- 1879; Grand High Priest, Grand Chapter, RAM
of Missouri-1876; Grand Commander, Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of
Missouri- 1886;**

**Most Ill. Comp. William R. Stubblefield, PIGM, PGM, PGHP,
*Our Tenth Grand Master- 1876***

Was born at Greenfield, Illinois, May 8, 1835, the son of a Methodist minister, and died at the home of his daughter in St. Louis January 10, 1908; he became a resident of St. Louis in 1856. He was given a common school education, and at the age of seventeen began clerking in a store, by 21 he had engaged in the mercantile business personally, operating in Carrolton, Il. In 1865 he secured a position in a St. Louis wholesale house, but three years later became a clothing salesman, later he spent the balance of his life connected with the Street Railway System



He was made a Master Mason in Occidental Lodge No. 163 in 1859, was master in 1873. In 1874 he first appears as a Grand Lodge officer, being appointed Grand Marshal. In 1877 he was elected Grand Junior Warden and thus regularly elected until 1880 when he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge.

Stubblefield was exalted in Lafayette Chapter No. 2, Illinois, in 1864, affiliating with Kilwinning Chapter No. 50, St. Louis, in 1871, and serving as high priest in 1872-74, 1891; he was grand high priest of the Grand Chapter in 1877; for ten years he served as grand lecturer of the Grand Chapter. He was made a Royal and Select Master in Chicago Council No. 4, Illinois in 1864; returning to St. Louis, he assisted in organizing Tyrian Council No. 13 in 1871 (now defunct), and served as master, demitting to Hiram Council No. 1 in 1903; he was grand master of the Grand Council in 1876. He was

knighted in Apollo Commandery No. 1, Illinois, in 1864, affiliating with Ivanhoe Commandery No. 8, St. Louis, in 1871, and was commander in 1875.

He received the Scottish Rite degrees in Chicago and then affiliated with the bodies in St. Louis. He was the first grand patron of the Order of the Eastern Star in Missouri.

MIC. Stubblefield died in St. Louis on January 10th, 1908 at the age of 73. He is interred at Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis.

**Illustrious Grand Master, Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri- 1876;
Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Missouri- 1880; Grand High Priest, Grand Chapter, RAM
of Missouri-1877; Grand Patron, Grand Chapter of Missouri, Order of Eastern Star**

Most Ill. Comp. Walter H. Niestrath, PIGM

Our Seventy Eighth Grand Master- 1946

was born in St. Louis, February 19, 1884, and was educated in the public schools of that city. For many years he represented an industrial concern in St. Louis as purchasing agent, finally engaging in business for himself selling heating supplies.

He was a member of George Washington Lodge No. 9, and master in 1918. Exalted in Oriental Chapter No. 78, he became high priest in 1922. He was greeted in Hiram Council No. 1 in 1925, was master in 1930, and in 1946 elected Grand Master of the Grand Council. He was knighted in Ascalon Commander No 16 in 1942, He was Captain General Elect at the time of his death, December 12, 1947. He taught Sunday School class in the Centenary Methodist Church and his death occurred in the church immediately after addressing the class. He was a member of the Order of High Priesthood, and had received the Scottish Rite Degrees in 1911, and the 33rd Degree in 1923



Illustrious Grand Master, Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri- 1946