

Early Origins of Marion Council No. 3, Royal & Select Masters

Jacob W. Thompson, KYCH

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Missouri Education Committee

The third oldest council in the state of Missouri, Marion Council No. 3 flourished in Hannibal, Mo yet like it's counterpart Weston Council No. 2 later found demise in 1876 (Weston saw their charter arrested two years later.) Marion Council's origins and initial years have some shadows as is common with the Cryptic Rite in Missouri, yet we do have much which offers a reasonable glimpse into their labors for the American Rite.

Hannibal was your quintennial 1800s Missouri Town built on commerce, and in particular the vibrant river trade of the Mississippi that lapped against its banks. The city and region flourished and in the local community some of Missouri's most prominent early masons resided- men who went on to serve as Grand Masters, establish the Masonic College of Missouri, and serve as the sages and organizers of much of Missouri Masonry's great bodies and efforts.

Hannibal's cryptic origins find similar soil as those of Hiram No. 1 in St. Louis, both of which received their initial dispensations and charters from the hands of the Grand Council of Illinois. The Companions in Hannibal applied to the Illinois Grand Council with the backing of Alton Council No. 3 and were originally chartered on the 1st of October 1857 as Marion Council No. 13. Yet this initial setting to work is clouded with some small uncertainty. Thomas S. Miller, a successful forwarding and commission merchant,¹ seems to have led the charge for Marion Council and applied to that body. Miller reached out in February of that year regarding the fee's incumbent upon their endeavor, and following a reply in February of 1857, did not receive a reply thereafter. The Grand Master of Illinois thus noted that he "presumed the formation of a council at Hannibal has, for the present, been deferred."² Inevitably Ray Denslow in his *The Story of Missouri Councils* comes to the conclusion that Marion must have been chartered on October 6, 1863, as that would afford it the precedence it received over Weston Council which was No. 15 on their rolls.

The organization of the Grand Council of Missouri saw Marion Council No. 13 renumbered and accepting its place in the Grand Council of Missouri from that point on as Marion Council No. 3. Attending the convention where the principal officers at the time, James McDaniel, Jesse M. Armstrong, and Benjamin N. Crump. Armstrong was named the Grand Captain of the Guard and thus served to helping to fan the first flames of the slowly growing movement of Missouri Cryptic Masonry.

Among the early members, Thomas Miller while involved in the initial establishment seems to have not been long for its labors nor did he survived to see his membership under the Grand Council of Missouri. We find that Miller died in quite an untimely fashion. He died following being hit in the head with a rock during a Political Rally.³ 1859, the result of being hit in the forehead by a rock during a political rally in Palmyra.

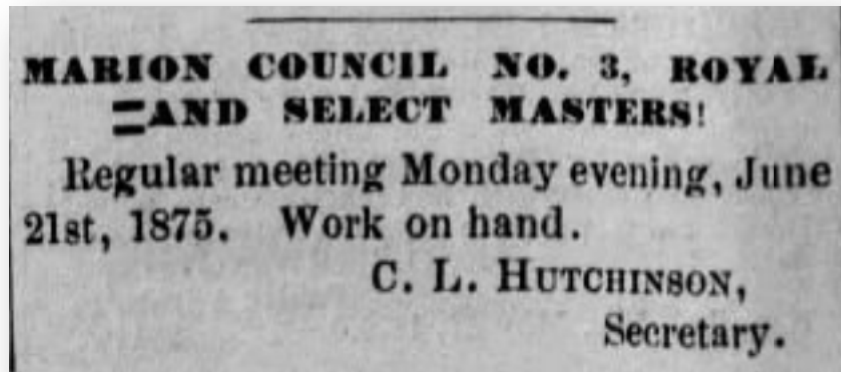
¹ Miller dealt in lumber, dry goods, general groceries, produce and acted as a Steamboat Agent

² *The Story of Missouri Councils*, R. Denslow, Pg. 7c

³ *The Weekly West*, St. Joseph, Mo. August 14, 1859

James McDaniel, the Master representing Marion Council at the Missouri's Grand Council organization was a Hannibal contemporary of Sam Clemens (better known as Mark Twain). Jesse Armstrong also had acquaintance with Hannibal's favorite son. Armstrong was a prominent dry good merchant and later assistant cashier and a director of the newly formed (at that time) Farmers and Merchants Bank based in Hannibal. Armstrong's link to Clemens was perhaps a tad more distant and Clemens own confusion included Armstrong in the story confusing him for another local and situation.

The early machinations of the Grand council showed a time of growth and coming of age in many ways. The business of Marion Council seemingly is no different and provides a good example from 1867. Marion Council contacted the Grand Recorder, George F. Gouley, and informed him that while they seemingly were under obligation to the Grand Council of Missouri, and had been paying fees, per capita, etc to them since the Grand council's constitution- they did not have a charter from said Grand Council, rather they were seemingly operating under the authority of the Grand council of Illinois and their Illinois number, 13. The Council raised concern on this situation and the fact that they could in a way be called on by Illinois to pay homage in a sense and fees, etc. due them over their actual Grand Council. In answer to this situation the Grand Council issued a so-called duplicate Charter to Marion No. 3 and settled the matter.⁴



The Council, while seemingly built on interested and dedicated soil struggled in the 1870s as many Councils in Missouri did, inevitably Marion Council's charter was arrested on October 6, 1876 and the given reason attributed to inactivity and lack of interest.⁵

Interestingly in 2015 Most Puissant Companion William G. Snyder during his term as Grand Master saw legislation brought before the Grand Council to create a holding Council for members in transition, this Council was to be named Council No. "0". Snyder recommended during his address that term the adoption of the legislation and that it be renamed as a revived Marion Council in honor of that council's distinct history.

⁴ There could be some debate to the word "duplicate" in regards to a charter if Marion Council's claim of never having received a replacement from the initial organization of the Grand Council in 1864 is correct.

⁵ *The Story of Missouri Councils*, R. Denslow, Pg. 8c