

# William O. Ware Lodge of Research

BOOK REVIEW - May 1, 2020

## *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky 1800 – 1900*

H. B. Grant - Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Kentucky

Publisher: Masonic Home Book and Job Office, 1900, 427 pages

Reviewed by William J. Lorenz, P. M.

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*“Under the instructions of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, I have entered upon the duties assigned me, but too late to hope the result will be much more than a compendium of the doings of the Grand Lodge. To give it a personal interest and relieve it, somewhat, of a stiffness of unadorned facts, a few extra copies will be bound separately. The written instructions of the Grand Master are as follows:*

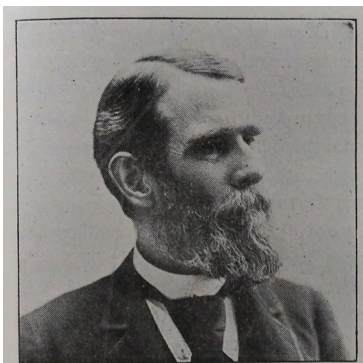
*Owingsville, Ky., March 3, 1900*

*H. B. Grant, Grand Secretary, Louisville,*

*R. W. Sir and Dear Brother:*

*Something ought to be done to appropriately notice the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky. The committee failed to report on the motion to publish a history. I, therefore, appointed you to prepare a history of our Grand Lodge, to be published by the Grand Secretary, with the Proceedings of 1900. You say truly that the time is short for such work, but I cannot relieve you of this task (and I realize it is a heavy one). Therefore, you will please prepare the matter and have it printed as an addenda, to be bound with the regular Proceedings, Halftone portraits of the Past Grand Masters, with suitable sketches and illustrations, you are authorized to cause to be printed in the history.*

*As ever your friend and brother,  
John A. Ramsey, Grand Master”*



H. B. GRANT.

Thus, the introduction page, in Henry Bannister Grant’s own words, with the instructions from Grand Master Ramsey, tells how, when, where and why, *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1800 to 1900* came about. H. B. Grant’s history first appeared by sections, in the 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1904 issues of Grand Lodge of Kentucky Proceedings while also being published in a book form.

H. B. Grant complemented his “history” with photos (sometimes drawings) of distinguished Kentucky Masons, along with other pictures. His brief biography of the Grand Masters would prove

valuable for future research, by presenting an understanding of each of the men who served in that office.

The first section of his *“Doings”* included several parts, including: “Early Masonic History,” “The Grand Lodge Preliminary Convention” and “Organization of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky,” which are then followed by interesting excerpts compiled from the Annual proceedings in a year by year fashion, ending October 1900.

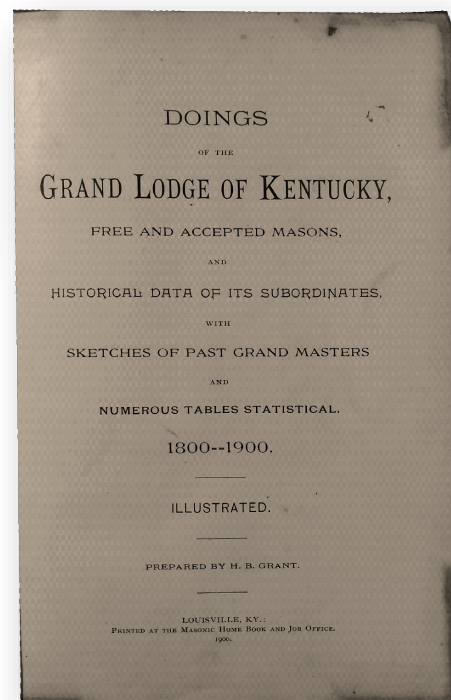
Rob Morris, PGM had published his *History of Freemasonry in Kentucky* in 1859 but his history had sold poorly, and the Grand Lodge voted to purchase the remainder of his *“History”* and send the books to the various Kentucky lodges. This, along with the Proceedings of 1901 through 1904 issues, already containing Grant’s history, may be the reason so few copies of *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky* were printed. Certainly, the book is rare but can be readily found in the existing Grand Lodge proceedings listed above.

I was pleasantly surprised by Grant’s “Early Masonic History.” If it had been dated 2000, instead of 1900, few students of Masonry, 100 years later, would have found fault with it. H.B. Grant was an early member of the Realistic School. He gives a very thoughtful definition of “Freemasonry” as well as “Free and Accepted Masons,” stating that it was the “first given as a name to the fraternity in the second edition of the Book of Constitutions, published by Rev. James Anderson, D.D. in 1738.”

On discussing the origins of Freemasonry, Grant notes the lacking of Masonic education throughout the Craft: “Tradition informs us that Freemasonry originated with the builders of King Solomon’s Temple, and a very large number of brethren, amounting almost to unanimity, give this unwritten history the fullest credence.”

Grant found fault with the Grand Lodge of Kentucky’s claim to be “Ancient York Masons,” as “a misnomer and misleading.” Kentucky issued charters with A.Y.M. while the by-laws used F. and A. M. He points out that Kentucky supported the Grand Lodge of A.Y.M. of South Carolina over the Grand Lodge of South Carolina in their dispute, through Kentucky’s refusal to “acknowledge or hold communication with any Grand Lodge in South Carolina, but the Grand Lodge of *Ancient York Masons*,” in disregard to Kentucky’s own by-laws. He did not object to Kentucky’s York Rite degrees, but since they differed from England’s degrees, Grant felt that the degrees of the Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commandery should be known as the American Rite.

Following his “Early Masonic History,” Grant gives a most interesting and detailed report on the organization of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, as formed by Lexington, Paris, Georgetown, Hiram (Frankfort), and Solomon U.D. (Shelbyville) Lodges and its election of Wm. Murray as Grand Master. He includes the letter written by William Murray requesting permission for the five Kentucky lodges to separate from the Grand Lodge of Virginia to form their own Grand Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Virginia’s response. The announcement letter written to other Grand Lodges, as well as other several other items of interest are also included.



The bulk of *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky 1800 – 1900* is an abbreviated compilation of the Annual Proceedings for the first 100 years of Kentucky Masonry, and is ideal for research. The casual reader will be most interested in Grant's commentary in the book. During this 100-year period a total of 730 lodges, plus 4 lodges U.D., would be chartered by the Grand Lodge of Kentucky!

Something should be said about the author and compiler. H. B. Grant was a very important member of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky. He served as Grand Secretary from 1877, until his death in September 1912. Besides his compiling the 100-year history, he wrote about Masonic trials, and Landmarks for the Grand Lodge and as part of the committee, revised the Grand Lodge Constitution on several occasions. He also was the first editor of "The Masonic Home Journal." As Grand Secretary, the closing, "Fraternal Thine" always preceded his signature. After his death, this phrase was adopted to be used on all Grand Lodge correspondence. H. B. Grant Lodge No. 610, at Etoile (Barren County), Kentucky, was named for him. H. B. Grant, in his 35 years as Grand Secretary, significantly influenced the character and machinations of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

Grant also authored "Tactic and Manual for Knights Templar;" "Drill Tactics for Patriarchs Militant, I.O.O.F.," (Odd Fellows); and "Drill Tactics for Select Knights, A.O.U.M.," (United Workman); in addition to his Grand Lodge writings. Today, H. B. Grant is best remembered as the author of the *Vest Pocket Trestle-Board*, an authorized ritual still in use by Kentucky Lodges.

H. B. Grant's *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1800 – 1900* is an important book written during the centennial period, to preserve the Grand Lodge's heritage and the brief biographies of the men who served as Grand Masters; as well as a quick reference book to the most important 'doings' gleaned from first 100 years of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

Long out of print, copies of *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1800 – 1900* are quite rare and are to be treated with great care when found. As noted above, the work can be found in installment form in the Proceedings of The Grand Lodge of Kentucky for the years 1901 through 1904. An original copy of *Doings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, 1800 – 1900*, along with the installments contained in the proceedings, may be found in the William O. Ware Library, Covington, Kentucky.

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**William J. Lorenz is a Past Master of Henry Barnes Lodge No. 607 (now Trinity Lodge No. 163). He is also a Past Master of William O. Ware Lodge of Research, Covington, Kentucky, and in 2018, Lorenz was named to the initial class of William O. Ware Research Fellows.**