

WASHINGTON POLITICAL GRAND MASTERS

How great the influence of the Masonic fraternity was on the early years of Washington, both as a Territory and as a State is an open debate. There can be little dispute that the Monticello Convention document sent Congress requesting the creation of a proposed Columbia Territory, reads like many Masonic documents but it is well to remember that the rhetoric and terminology used in this document was typical of nearly all official documents of the period. A caveat on the Masonic influence should be that a number of the early political leaders were also members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, an organization that in the 19th Century claimed more members than Masonry.

Masonic affiliation of many early politicians is noted in a number of biographical lists but without reference to lodge or location. So it may be reasonable to assume that a number of the early elected or appointed territory and state officials were members of the Craft. The first elected state governor [1889-1893] Elisha Peyre Ferry served as territorial governor [1872-1880] and also as Grand Master from 1878-1879. The third Grand Master Selucius Garfielde served two terms as Territorial Delegate [1869-1873]. The twenty-fifth Grand Master [1883-1884] Levi Ankeny served six years as U. S. Senator beginning 1903. In the first sixty years as a State only four Governors appear not to have been members of the Craft, in the last almost sixty years starting with Arthur B. Langley [1949] not a single Mason has been found in the Executive Offices in Olympia. There appears to have been one other Mason elected to office with Ferry, Thomas M. Reed as State Auditor. The other elected officers in Ferry's administration are not shown on Washington Grand Lodge records as Masons.

The Washington Territorial Legislature held its first 1853 meeting in the Olympia No. 5 Lodge building. Perhaps the real reason was not that it was a Masonic building but because it was the only building in the town that was large enough and could be adapted to the legislative needs. Never the less the Masonic Craft can point with pride to the fact that a Masonic hall was the home of the first legislative session. In 1928 Masons laid the cornerstone of the present legislative building so Washington both as a Territory and State can claim Masonry in its foundation.

Were these men political leaders because they were Masons or Masons because they were politicians? Did the Craft offer them some unwritten benefit? Just as today, it is a question that cannot be answered. Who knows what part Masonry played in their life as an office holder? Perhaps a more in depth research of their accomplishments in office and their activities in their respective lodges would answer this question but it can be easily seen and understandable that almost none were Masters.

Territorial Governors were Presidential appointees, most often appointed as political patronage; more than one had no permanent relationship with Washington. In the earliest years, with terms of office often but two years long and before the arrival of dependable railroad service they may have spent little or no time in the Territory. Territorial delegates were originally elected/appointed by the legislature as were Senators prior to the ratification of the 17th Amendment to the US Constitution.

It might be appropriate from a Masonic standpoint to make note of the fact that Ford Q. Elvidge, Grand Master 1944-1945 served as the Governor of Guam 1953-1956. He also has the distinction of being the only Deputy Grand Master to act as Grand Master when Grand Master Don E. Kizer died in office. Matthew W. Hill, Grand Master 1941-1942 was elected to the Washington State Supreme Court and served there for twenty some years.

Only three Past Grand Masters have served as Territorial or State governor or in Congress. What follows is a brief resume of the three, mostly of their political life serving the citizen of the Territory and State.

Elisha Peyre Ferry – R [1872-1880 – Territorial Governor, 1889-1893 State Governor] Member of Harmony Lodge No. 18 {Olympia} was Master 1873, 1874, 1875, Grand Master 1878-1879. He did not preside over the Grand Lodge session in 1879 because his gubernatorial duties took him to the east side of the territory at the same time.

Background: Born in Monroe County, Michigan, August 9, 1825, he spent his early life in Fort Wayne, Indiana where he studied law. He was admitted to practice before the Indiana Supreme Court at the age of twenty. He was Mayor of Waukegan, Illinois 1850, Presidential Elector for Illinois in 1852 [Franklin Pierce], a delegate to the Illinois State Constitutional Convention in 1862, and an assistant adjutant general on the Illinois governor's staff during the Civil War. President Ulysses Grant appointed him the Washington Territorial surveyor-general in 1869, an office that brought him to Olympia and in April 1872 Grant appointed him Territorial Governor, an office he filled until 1880. He was the first person to serve eight years, which would point to his influence in the Republican Party. After his eight years as Governor he went to Seattle to practice law and in 1887 became president of Puget Sound Bank. He was the first Governor of the State of Washington taking office on November 11, 1889 [1889-1893]. He died October 14, 1895 and is buried in Seattle's Historic Lake View Cemetery. Ferry County in Northeastern Washington is named for him. You might even say he was so popular that a whole Puget Sound fleet was named after him.

Selucius Garfield - R [1869-1873 – Territorial Representative to Congress - two terms] Olympia



Lodge #1 {Olympia}, elected to membership September 19, 1857, Grand Master 1860-1861. It would appear he had been made a Mason in Kentucky but there is no record of where or when nor of his ever having been Master or Warden of a lodge. He seems to have been rather controversial as a Grand Master. After he retired as Grand Master and at his request he was granted a demit from membership by the Grand Lodge itself, the Grand Lodge then turned around and said they were in error doing so because only a lodge could grant such a request. His Grand Lodge records show a note that leaves the entire matter unclear if he did or did not ever get a demit. There is no record of Masonic activities after about 1865. See the Grand Lodge history, "Not Made With Hands" for more information.

Background: Born December 8, 1822 in Shoreham, VT. Little is recorded about his early life, schooling or where he studied law. Later he moved to Gallipolis, Ohio and then Paris, Kentucky where he worked in newspapers and was a member of the Kentucky State constitutional convention in 1849. He immigrated to California in 1851 and within a year was a member of the State Assembly. The following year the legislature elected him to a committee to codify the State laws. He studied law and in all likelihood, as with many 19th Century lawyers, by apprenticing himself or as the term was used in the period, "read law" to a successful lawyer for a period of time possibly never passing a formal bar exam. After being admitted to the California bar in 1854 he simply set up his own practice. He returned to Kentucky in 1855 and the following year was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention when Worshipful Brother James Buchanan was nominated, later to be elected President. He moved to Washington Territory and was the receiver of public money from 1857 to 1860. In 1860 he was unsuccessful as a Democratic candidate to be the delegate to the Thirty-seventh Congress. He served as surveyor general of the territory from 1866 to 1869 and was elected as the Republican Territorial Delegate to the Forty-first and Forty-second Congress but was an unsuccessful candidate for re-election in 1872. He is reputed to have been quite renowned as an orator. He was appointed collector of customs for Puget Sound in 1873, moved to Seattle where he practiced law as well as in Washington DC where he spent much of his time until his death in that city April 13, 1881. He appears to have been buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Olympia but some records including the United States

Congressional Biographical Directory show his interment in Glenwood Cemetery in the District of Columbia.

Levi Ankeny – R [1903-1909] *Walla Walla County* – Walla Walla Lodge #7 {Walla Walla}, Grand Lodge records show that he affiliated with the lodge on February 28, 1879 and became its Master in 1882.. He had received his degrees in Willamette Lodge No. 2 in Portland in 1866. He was elected Grand Master in 1883 after having served the previous year as Senior Grand Warden.



Background: Born near St. Joseph, Missouri on August 1, 1844. Sometime in 1850 his parents took the Oregon Trail to Portland and there he attended the local rural schools and also the Kingsley Academy. As a young man he first became a pack train merchant in Orofino, Florence and other Idaho mining districts. In addition the mining endeavors, he engaged in different business ventures, and later the cattle business in South Eastern Washington, Lewiston and the surrounding area. Shortly after reaching voting age he was elected the first mayor of Lewiston. In 1873 he returned to Portland and in 1878 moved to Walla

Walla to engage in banking by opening the first national bank in Washington. It was his policy to encourage his debtor to do everything possible to keep their property their property, etc. during the "Panic of 1893" refusing to foreclose on loans unless he was forced to take action. In his 1921 obituary, *The Walla Walla Union* wrote, ". . . he aided many a farmer and businessman in financial distress, thus keeping his community free from the evils of bankruptcy and hardship." He was appointed a member of the Pan American Exposition Commission held in Chicago and became its chairman. After one term as Republican senator the legislature did not re-elect him. While in the Senate he was chairman of the Committee on Coast and Insular Survey [58th and 59th Congress], and served on the Committee on Irrigation [50th Congress] and the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation [60th Congress.] His father-in-law James Willis Nesmith who at one time was Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territories of Oregon and Washington, served as a Democratic Senator [1861-1867] and U. S. Representative [1873-1875] in Congress from Oregon. After his defeat for reelection Ankeny returned to Walla Walla and continued in the banking business until his death March 29, 1921. He is buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Walla Walla.

In 2002, The Honorable Sam Reed, Secretary of State for the State of Washington chaired a State Commission, *The Washington Territorial Sesquicentennial Commission* created to observe the 150th Anniversary of the 1853 establishment of the Territory of Washington. He asked the Grand Lodge of Washington to participate and select a Masonic representative to serve on the Commission. Grand Master M.:W.: James Reid recommended V.:W.: CoeTug Morgan to serve. The Commission functioned with little funds but urged the individual members and organizations to prepare research or other appropriate items and events to observe the Sesquicentennial. Repeated references to Masonry prompted the preparation of a larger paper from which this article was taken. Anyone having an interest in the more extensive pamphlet can contact Brother Morgan for a copy.