

# Hidden in Plain Sight: Kansas Masonic Resources for the Historian, a Presentation to Kansas Association of Historians 29 March, 2014

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## **Introduction**

I am Daniel G. Anderson, Executive Director of the Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association, Inc. in Wichita, Kansas. We are a group of Masons and Masonic-related organizations focused on bringing the history of Freemasonry (within the limits of our oaths) to public light. Our history, much like our organizations, is “Hidden in Plain Sight” but unlike our ‘secrets’ deserves to be available to the public.

## **Caveats**

These are my personal views based on experience and discussions with other Masons concerning history. There is a focus on the Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association, Inc., and on the “Blue Lodges” of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (AF&AM). Recommendations to access to the “Blue Lodges” of Prince Hall Masons and other Masonic organizations is similar to what is held in this basic approach.

No effort is made to include “Clandestine” organizations – those organizations that claim to be ‘Masonic’ but are not recognized by the Grand Lodge of Kansas, AF&AM and/or Grand Lodge of Kansas Prince Hall.

## **Scope of Information Available**

The Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM was established in 1854. Therefore records may be available from the early 1850’s to present.

When studying the local community it is understood that primary resources such as court records and newspapers contain key points of history. However these sources are focused on the ‘scoundrels’, public officials, commercial leaders, social leaders and religious leaders. Although these microcosms are critical to understand the flow of history, they do not provide insight into the workings of the ‘every-day’ workings of the community. Masonic records document men (and women in the case of the Order of the Eastern Star) in the community from all social, economic, religious and cultural strata and therefore help to fill that void.

Masonic records include the minutes of meetings, financial records, membership records and (hopefully) historic correspondence with members and organizations.

## What can be found in the records?

Meeting minutes were kept and reviewed for all scheduled and special meeting as a permanent record. Major community events and concerns may be discussed in the organization meeting minutes. This will often include a discussion of actions taken or contemplated by the lodge members and who was involved in the event.

Each organization kept records on when members joined, when they moved, what their occupation was, what their level of activity was, what their home address was, who were family members, what their health concerns were, and when they died. Members who moved can be tracked through the 'Demit' process which records where Masons came from and where they moved to. These are also permanent records.

The financial health of the organization tracked in the financial records parallels the financial health of the communities. As a community evolved so did the Masonic organizations. Once again, these are permanent records.

In some organizations the communications from members has been kept, which can provide first-person historical information of local, state, region, national and international importance. Unfortunately, these are not permanent records and may have been discarded. However, if they exist this is where the 'historic gold' can be found because these records include the first-hand impressions of what was happening, where, and why it happened. Often correspondence records include information from those members who have moved or who are living away from the local lodge area.

Many lodges and Masonic organizations maintained libraries that included both general and Masonic works. Many of the materials provide insight into the events of the time from a near-term perspective.

## Where do I find these records?

So how do you know where to start? The first step is to identify if there is a Masonic lodge in the community during the study timeframe. Map 1 shows the locations of Kansas AF&AM lodges from 1854 to present.

Where there was a lodge there were often other Masonic organizations in the immediate area. Meeting and location information for all of these 'Secret' organizations was published in the local business directories and newspapers. Primary related organizations that may be in the area include Order of the Eastern Star and York Rite Bodies (Royal Arch Chapters, Cryptic Councils and Knights Templar). Regional organizations with related information include Scottish Rite and Shrine. Starting in the 1920's the youth groups developed locally including Job's Daughters, Rainbow for Girls and DeMolay. Also starting in the 1920's, the National Sojourners was organized for Masons who were in the military or were veterans.

The Grand Lodge of Kansas, AF&AM and the Grand Lodge of Kansas Prince Hall can provide specific locations and dates of operation for lodges, as well as provide contact information for other organizations.

Masonic lodges either thrived or failed. If they thrived the lodge will have the records. If they failed the lodges either merged with other local lodges or were closed. If the lodges merged the records went to the new combined lodge. If the lodge was closed the records were

sent to the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM. All of these organization changes are recorded by the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM.

All Masonic lodge records are under the direct control of the Secretary with an overview provided by the Master of the Lodge. Once the likelihood of records has been identified the Secretary should be contacted.

Now comes the hard part of locating the records. All of the records are private and are not generally available to the public so access must be coordinated with the Secretary and probably with the Master of the Lodge. Both of these men fill these rolls as volunteers, these are not their 'full-time jobs'. Historic research may be very low on the priority for the demand on their time and resources. The priority will be even lower if the researcher may require additional assistance to find and understand the records – if he or she is not a Mason. Access times will probably not be normal 'business hours' and may require special access coordination or non-business timeframes. Additionally non-Masons will probably be denied access simply because they are not 'knowledgeable brothers'. Therefore it may be critical to have a Mason on the research team before contacting the Secretary.

## Understanding the records

Masonic organizations have complicated relationships with other organizations. This is reflected in their records.

The language of Masonry reflects its teaching method – symbolic philosophy. Many details are recorded in Masonic language. For example dates are recorded in relation to traditional Masonic events and differ between organizations. Abbreviations and titles are distinctly Masonic. Events may be described in relation to Masonic symbols not be easily understood or translatable by non-Masons. The significance of an event may not be clear to a non-Mason. Two references to start understanding Freemasonry are The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry and Freemasonry for Dummies (see References).

Being a Mason or having a Mason on the research team will significantly help understand the details, context and significance of these records.

## Key supporting Masonic organizations

Nationally and internationally the Masonic Library and Museum Association (MLMA) is organized to support researchers working with Masonic information.

In Kansas the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM, the Grand Lodge of Kansas Prince Hall and the Scottish Rite of Kansas support research. As in many states, the Kansas Lodge of Research is charged by the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM to develop and publish historic information of the organization. Additionally, the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM maintains a library and museum and is continuing to develop them. The Wichita Scottish Rite Center has an extensive library open for research. The Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association in coordination with Wichita Lodge #99 is developing an archive of lodge records covering 1870 to present.

Regionally the Grand Lodge of Colorado AF&AM, the Colorado Lodge of Research AF&AM, as well as the Grand Lodges of Nebraska, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Montana and Utah have research efforts with archives, libraries and museums.

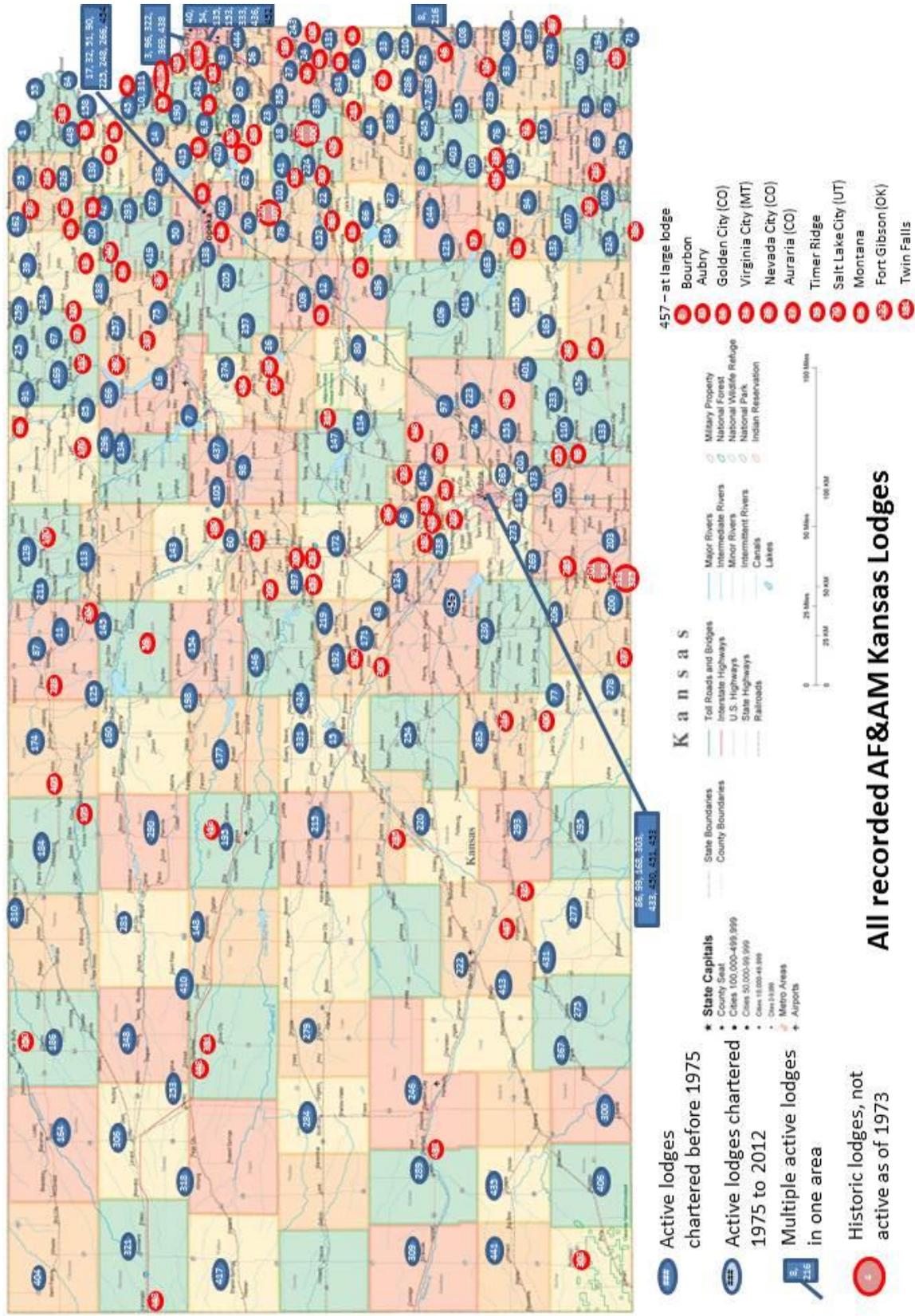
## Conclusion

- Organized Masonic history resources in Kansas cover the entire state from before 1854 to present
- Masonic records cover many areas of historic interest:
  - who was in the community during a time period (name, age, where from, family structure, occupation, family history, etc.)
  - 'hidden' social history, connection and communications
  - community leaders – actual and emerging
  - financial and economic health of the community
  - area and regional forces of and on the community and the lodge
  - known frauds and fakes
- There are many repositories for Masonic history available, if you
  - know how where to look
  - know who to contact
  - can gain access
  - have the knowledge to read and understand the material
- Key Masonic organizations:
  - 'Blue' Lodge
  - Eastern Star
  - York Rite
  - Scottish Rite
  - Shrine
- Other related groups:
  - Job's Daughters
  - Rainbow for Girls
  - DeMolay
  - National Sojourners
- Why should you have a Mason assist in the research?
  - Masonic records are not usually open to the general public
  - Secretaries are volunteers with limited time and resources
  - Gain access
  - Translate dates and titles
  - Interpret 'Masonic' terms and understand the context of the records.
  - To coordinate with the organization, the Grand Lodge, Research Lodge and Masonic organizations
- Supporting organizations
  - Kansas
    - Grand Lodge of Kansas, AF&AM
    - Grand Lodge of Kansas, Prince Hall
    - Scottish Rite of Kansas
    - Wichita Scottish Rite
    - Kansas Lodge of Research
  - Regional

- Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association
- Grand Lodge of Colorado, AF&AM
- Grand Lodge of Colorado, Prince Hall
- Research Lodge of Colorado
- Grand Lodge of Nebraska, AF&AM
- Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, AF&AM
- Grand Lodge of Wyoming, AF&AM
- Grand Lodge of Montana, AF&AM
- Grand Lodge of Utah, AF&AM
- Colorado Scottish Rite
- National and International
  - Masonic Library and Museum Association

## **Closing Note**

A primary goal of the Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association is to facilitate the access to and development of Masonic history to enhance the public appreciation of the Masonic bodies. Our area of interest includes Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Utah. We have active contacts in Kansas (our initial area) and Colorado with all Masonic bodies recognized by the Grand Lodge of Kansas AF&AM and Grand Lodge of Kansas Prince Hall. We are expanding our contacts throughout the region to support academic historical research.



Map 1 – Locations of Kansas Lodges 1854 to present.

## DISCUSSION NOTES

### How to gain access to and understand the records

Contact the organization secretary. Best if Mason on research team. If the organization is no longer active the records will either be with the merged organization or with the Grand Lodge, Grand York Rite, or Grand Eastern Star, etc. which are normally state-level organizations.

### Discussion Points

- There are many repositories for Masonic history available
  - if you know how where to look
  - if you know who to contact
  - if you have the knowledge to read and understand the material
- Organized Masonic history in Kansas covers the time period from before 1854
- Masonic history covers many areas of historic interest:
  - who was in the community during a time period (name, age, where from, family structure, occupation, family history, etc.)
  - what 'hidden' social history, connection and communications were happening
  - who were the community leaders – actual and emerging
  - what was the financial and economic health of the community
  - what were area and regional forces of and on the community and the lodge
  - who were the known frauds and fakes
- Key Masonic groups:
  - Lodges and Grand Lodges of AF&AM and Prince Hall
  - Eastern Star
  - Scottish Rite
  - York Rite
- Related groups include:
  - Shrine
  - Job's Daughters
  - Rainbow for Girls
  - DeMolay
  - Appendant and related organizations
- The following organizations should be contacted for

### Closing Note

Having a Mason on the research team may help gain access as well as to help understand the language and structure of the records as well as 'translate' the Masonic 'language'. The Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association can help coordinate or find a Mason who can fill this role.

## References

Personal discussions and correspondence with:

- Michael A Holleran, Grand Master, GL of Kansas AF&AM
- Michael L. McMillan, Grand Master, GL of Colorado AF&AM
- Jesse L. Hill Jr., Grand Master, GL of Kansas PH
- Hugh W. Gill, III, SGIG, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Orient of Kansas
- Rick Reichert, PGM, GL of Kansas AF&AM
- Tracy L. Bloom, PGM and Secretary, GL of Kansas
- Jeffrey L. Sowder, PGM, GL of Kansas
- Kansas Lodge of Research
- Warren Glover, PM, Colorado Lodge of Research
- Andy Bayles, PM Wichita 99
- Masters, Secretaries and members of Masonry throughout Kansas and Colorado

History of Kansas Masonry; Graybill, Ben W.; Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Kansas; Topeka, KS; 1975.

Advance Report for the 157<sup>th</sup> Annual Communication of the MW Grand Lodge of AF&AM of Kansas; Topeka, KS; 2013.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry; Morris, S. Brent, Ph. D., 33<sup>o</sup>; Alpha Books; ISBN: 1-59257-490-4; 2006.

Freemasons for Dummies; Hodapp, Christopher, 33<sup>o</sup>; Second Edition; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Hoboken, NJ; ISBN 978-1-118-41208-4; 2013.

## **Biographic information of Daniel G. Anderson**

Dan has a BA in Political Science from Montana State University and an MA in Computer and Information Systems from Webster University. He and his wife Margaret moved from Colorado Springs, CO to Wichita, KS in 2009 where he retired in 2012 after a career in Project Management and a parallel career in the US Army (active and reserves) as a Lieutenant Colonel. He joined El Paso Lodge #13 AF&AM, Colorado Springs in 1995 where he was Master in 2001. He was Master of Memorial Lodge #2 AF&AM in 2007 and was active in several Masonic organizations in Colorado. Upon moving to Wichita he joined Wichita Lodge #99, AF&AM and is active in several organizations there. Since retiring he has merged two passions for history and Masonry to lead the Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association, Inc. in the effort to bring the rich history of Freemasonry to the general public. At present he is a member of El Paso lodge #13, CO (Life Member); Pyramid Lodge #415 AF&AM; Denver Consistory A&ASR, CO (Life Member); Research Lodge of Colorado (Life Member); Wichita; Reno Royal Arch Chapter 34, Hutchinson Cryptic Council #13, and Reno Knights Templar Commandery #26 of the Grand York Rite of Kansas; Wichita Scottish Rite Consistory (Elmo Lodge of Perfection); Allied Masonic Degrees (Past Sovereign Master); Knight Masons; Royal Order of Scotland (Life Member); Masonic Society; and Masonic Library and Museum Association. He is a Past Master (twice), Past Illustrious Master, Past Commander, Past Sovereign Master, Junior Deacon of Pyramid Lodge #451, King of Reno Chapter 34 and Secretary of Sunflower Council #383 of the Allied Masonic Degrees. His passion for history lead him to publish "The Project Manager and the Genealogist: A 'How To' for the Genealogist and Historian". He was VP for Programs for Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society in Wichita from 2012 to 2014. He helped found the Midwest Historic Masonic Lodge Association, Inc. (MHMLA) in Wichita during 2012 where he is the Executive Director. That effort has also lead him to be a volunteer historical interpreter at Old Cowtown Museum where he portrays Charles W. Hill, successful druggist and secretary of the first Masonic lodge in Wichita. Three additional historic projects include a history of a home and it occupants in Wichita, a detailed neighborhood history in Wichita, and a study of the early history of St. Bernard Lodge #222 in Dodge City, KS with a critical evaluation of the relationship to the 'Dodge City Saloon War'. Dan can be contacted through the MHMLA at [www.historicmasonry.org](http://www.historicmasonry.org).

## Distribution

MWHML Web Site  
Grand Lodge Kansas AF&AM  
Grand Lodge Kansas PH  
Grand Lodge of Colorado AF&AM  
Grand Lodge of Nebraska AF&AM  
Grand Lodge of Oklahoma AF&AM  
Grand Lodge of Wyoming AF&AM  
Grand Lodge of Montana AF&AM  
Grand Lodge of Utah AF&AM  
Masonic Library and Museum Association  
Wichita Scottish Rite  
Kansas Grand York Rite  
Kansas Lodge of Research  
Colorado Lodge of Research  
Oklahoma Lodge of Research  
Utah Lodge of Research  
Kansas Mason  
Scottish Rite Journal  
York Rite Journal  
Knight's Templar Journal  
Order of the Eastern Star of Kansas Grand Chapter  
Grand Chapter of Colorado Order of the Eastern Star  
Membership of MHMLA  
El Paso Lodge #13  
Kansas Association of Historians  
Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society  
Old Cowtown  
Wichita Eagle – Becky Tanner  
Tom Eagle  
Phil Moran  
Members of MHMLA  
Kansas Historical Journal  
MHGS