

I: Introduction

I hold before you this evening a ledger with a crumbling leather cover, which has passed from Secretary to Secretary, been placed in storage in this building, was thrown into a dumpster and retrieved by a Past Master, to reside in a in a Con Edison office, until I became their caretaker. Contained within these covers are the minutes of Mariners Lodge, from its first meeting in 1825 to 1842. It is a rare thing, even in our district that a Lodge is in possession of all its records, as we are. They contain an accounting of the work of the Brothers which precede us.

However, were you to sit down and read them cover to cover, you would soon be asleep. The same could be said of a great number of primary sources from which a historical narrative is created. What I hope to do tonight is provide you with a context that will breathe some life into the first five years of Mariners.

New York in 1825 was, at this time, a city of 120,000 people, which extended to 14th St. Already a bustling port, it would soon surpass both Boston and Philadelphia. Trinity Church was the tallest building on the skyline, there was no municipal water system, and Canal Street still functioned as a storm drain. Where there were sidewalks, they were boardwalks about two feet off the ground level, and on Williams Street was the largest manure pile in the city.

The better class of people was moving north, and would soon inhabit Georgian townhouses surrounding what was once a potter's field and property owned by The Mariners Society of New York, soon to move their accommodations to Staten Island, to provide our W.M. a place to be married 170 years later. This field became Washington Square.

In the previous year the Marquis de Lafayette and his son had made a triumphant visit. Governor De Witt Clinton was no longer Grand Master of New York, but was keeping busy, preparing for the official opening of the Erie Canal, of which he was a major investor, and whose

opening would funnel all the products of the western territories to the City. A patent was filed for the tin can in New York.

Slavery still existed in New York; the 1820 census registered 69 black freemen with voting privileges. The Barber of Seville premiered in March. And across the ocean, Salieri died in May. John Quincy Adams was still president. And the New York Gas Co. was formed, to bring street lights and interior lighting to the city.

II: The start of Mariners

On August 15th, 1825 the first Master of Mariners, George Arnold called a meeting at Union Hall, for the purpose of petitioning a Grand Lodge of New York for a charter. This was a bit more complicated than you might imagine. In 1822, the Lodges in the city and surrounding districts, unhappy with the way dues were being handled by the Grand Lodge, broke away and formed a separate City Grand Lodge. So it was that M. W. Martin Hoffman issued our charter on the basis of 23 Brothers signing the request and installed W. George Arnold as Master. Mt. Moriah had their warrant signed at the same meeting.

Union Hall, at Oliver and Henry St, stood on or across from the site of the Oliver St. Church, later named Mariners Temple. Either is possible, as the whole neighborhood was rebuilt in 1844, roads were moved, and a row of townhouses placed on the south side of the street. The prosperous Irish gathered around St. James church, and formed the Ancient order of the Hibernians. All the streets led to the wharves, chandleries and warehouses employing many of our early Brothers. Other Lodges, such as German Union Lodge # 54 and Manhattan Lodge # 62 also met there. It would have been, at most, three stories, with both public and private spaces to rent.

To the South were the sugar refineries and the mercantile row of Pearl Street, just North of Canal were the infamous slums of Five Points, depicted in the Gangs of New York

Within the four remaining months of 1825, the Lodge met 21 times, arranging for notices to be printed by a Brother of St. Johns 9, (500 with Hope and Anchor, 500 with Ship and pilot boat) aprons with a ship in full sail on the flap, officers jewels, books and stationary, and other equipment.

The main business of the Lodge was making new Brothers. A total of 16 were raised. In general, two degrees were conferred an evening; when it was all three, a dispensation from the Grand Master was required. Travel documents were frequently bestowed after the degrees, presumably because the Brothers were about to ship off, though the minutes do not contain glad tidings or apologies for absence at that time, and we cannot be sure of their particular comings and goings.

You might wonder whether the Brothers of Mariners Lodge were indeed Mariners. The easy answer is yes, as shown by the information from the minutes noted below.

1825: Brothers nominated and raised

Oliver Barrow shipmaster

Dudley Gillet shipmaster

Jacob Mull Sail maker

Joseph Hickman Mariner

Sacket Leveredge Grocer

John Mc Intosh Jeweler

Thomas Darnton Rigger 305 Front St.

Elizer Foster Rigger Lombardy St.

Captain Mathew Reeves, ship Louisa

Captain Adolphus La Corte Shipmaster

Ariel Gerard Shipmaster

Benjamin Tunis Shipmaster 319 Pearl St.

Samuel D. Jones Mariner, Brig Day Elephant's Wharf

John Waydell Cooper 31 Pell St. (Master 1841)
Matthew Thompson Mariner
Henry Benney Mariner

1826: Brothers nominated and raised

Captain Elizah Townsend New Jersey
Ian Gainer Pilot
Harvey Blimm Shipmaster
Gardner Briggs Mariner Lombardy St.
Issac Rikeman Shipwright
William Cascaden Shoemaker 18 Mulberry St.
Alexander Denny Shipmaster (2nd & 3rd)
George Heald Mariner 280 front St.
Henry Persale Mariner 195 Broome St.

(Have tried doing online search on these men, but noting has yet come to hand, to provide any biographies).

Written communication was frequent from other Lodges, generally to keep everyone apprised of who had been suspended, restored, or expelled. An equal number of affiliations (adjoining members) were nominated, from Lodges as far as Connecticut. In December, the elected officers were installed by the grand Master.

The Lodge also joined with Franklin and Hiram Lodge to march in procession for the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27th, along with other Lodges. They carried a banner, and wore black crepe armbands in honor of Br. George Hazelton, whose ship went down with all hands off Georgia earlier in the year. (still researching, there was a tropical storm June 2&3 1825 which might have been responsible).

III Finances

A word about money: comparing costs and values over a long time is difficult. One dollar today would have roughly the buying power of \$17.00 in 1825, but salaries were not comparable to today's, and the relative costs of goods and services are not comparable to ours.

In 1825, wages were declining while commodity prices were spiking. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1826, food costs collapsed in 1826. If you were lucky, a workday was only 10 hours, and so, the Masonic ideal of dividing the day into three equal parts was utopian. The minutes give no hint to the yearly income of our Brothers.

However, we do know the pay scale of the U.S. Navy for this period.

Able Seaman \$12.00 a month

Ordinary Seaman \$10.00 a month

Boy \$7.00 a month

Men working commercial vessels, whether hauling goods up and down the coast or on more extensive voyages would have earned more. Additionally, signing bonuses were often available.

At the low end of wages, porters were paid 12 ½ c to 18c per load; a store clerk would earn around \$50.00 a year; Minister's salaries were about \$300.00 a year

The actual money circulating in New York City was a complex business. While the Mint had been active since 1792, the government couldn't supply enough coinage. There was no national paper currency. Silver and gold from the Spanish colonies was legal tender, at par with the dollar, and would be accepted by the government for fees and duties. The eight reale, silver, would be cut into quarters or eighths valued at 12 ½ c (a bit, thus a quarter being two bits).

Paper currency was issued by state chartered banks, who were supposed to have gold and silver assets sufficient to back them, but this was not always the case. Regular listings of the various banks, bills, and their accepted value were published in the papers, consulted by all. So, payments to the Lodge must have been a varied basket of currency.

W. Arnold and the others must have had fairly comfortable incomes.
The early fees were;

Proposal fee	\$2.00
Affiliation	\$5.00
Initiation	\$20.00
Dues	\$18.00

At the same time, tuition at an Upstate College (Colgate) was \$16.00 a year, board \$1.50 a week: Columbia was \$90.00 (21 graduated in 1825). New townhouses on Bleeker Street rented out for \$300.00 a year. Wood was \$1.50 a cord
Candles 15c to 16 2/3 c a lb.
Chicken 1.00
Turkey 2.50
Tobacco .25c a lb.
Flour .02 lb
Coffee .10 lb
Steamboat to New York to New Haven 3.00

Some of the expenses in the first few years:

Refreshments	\$12.23, \$8.29
Stationary	\$28.75
Jewels	\$55.00
Pearl brooch	\$10.00 Br. McIntosh (1828) no mention of purpose
Books and Ledger	\$25.94
Candles	\$ 2.50
Master's hat, banner and tridents	\$12.15 (for Processions.)
Silver trowel	\$3.00 to Br. McIntosh (1826)
200 copies of bylaws	\$8.00 (1826)
Canvas catch cloth	\$5.00
Gavel	\$1.75 (1826)

Chest (for equipment of the Lodge) \$13.00 (1826)
 Cabletow and trimming \$3.00
 Jack ensign and pennant (1827)
 Sword for Tyler \$8.00 (1827)

Br. O'Leary to put the books in order \$5.00
 Tyler quarterly \$44.50 \$19.00 (1826) \$11.50 (1826)
 \$26.50 (1826) \$17.00 (1827)
 Quarterly rent for room at Union Hall \$11.25 (1826)

1826

First Webster's Dictionary published, Erie Canal completed, with a grand parade through the streets of New York, various trade organizations marching in allegorical costumes.

Books reported April 20 1826 balance of \$23.94. Mariners continued its round of acquiring more members and must have become something of a beacon to seafaring men when visiting New York, as petitions for charity for Masons not affiliated with Mariners begin to appear in the records.

Keep in mind, that this was a time before most of the government agencies we are accustomed to helping the distressed were around, and the bond of the Fraternity carried real benefits in providing a helping hand, wherever you found yourself among Brothers. This also required the Lodge to form committees to examine these visitors to see if they were, in fact members of a regular Lodge. Some were not.

Petitions for charity paid out \$4.00 \$5.00, \$10.00 for Brothers, other Masons, Widows.

At the same time, the Mariners Society, founded for “the relief of Sailors, their Widows and Children” assessed dues of \$2.00 a year for membership, which were too much for many of the seamen in New York, again showing that the Brothers or Mariners were in a much better financial position, and were paying out the same amounts as the Society. In both, if your dues weren’t current, you received no aid.

On June 24, the Lodge went to Washington Hall, for the installation of the Grand Line of the Unified Grand Lodge, then to the corner of Broadway and Pearl St. to lay a cornerstone for the Masonic Hall (Neo-Gothic, torn down in 1856). The building was completed in 1827, but Mariners never met there.

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both died July 4 1826

In the fall a cluster of dispensations were required to perform, in effect, one day classes. The need to confer them on one sudden group of candidates led to \$1.00 being spent to go and get one by hired carriage. Several donations were made to the Lodge. W. Arnold bought a Masonic chart, and a dirk was donated. Some of these candidates were residing in the City, others were Mariners from as far away as Maine.

Books reported October 3 1826 balance \$126.15

Sometime in the fall, “Let there be light” took on new meaning, as Union Hall was furnished with gaslight. This section of the city was provided with gas lines (hollowed wooden trunks) in the early Autumn. The first bill, Nov. 22, was \$4.17. Just as well, as the Lodge ended the year with another flurry of Initiations, every few days. W. Arnold was replaced by W. Samuel Morton. The Lodge voted for a medal to be awarded to W. Arnold.

1827

The Greek battle for Independence still raged against the Turks, the wooden match was invented in England, and on July 4th, all slaves in New York were freed; however, to qualify for the vote, a freeman had to

have \$250.00 in real property a 50% increase over the previous requirement.. Beethoven died. In Palmyra N.Y., Joseph Smith Jr. discovered the Book of Mormon.

Mariner's new Master, Samuel Morton, presided over a larger, more fractious, and needy group of Brothers. Several were disaffiliated for non-payment of dues. All newly made Brothers were seamen. Requests for charity were coming in almost every meeting, and so, a charitable committee was formed to field these requests in 1828; widows and orphans begin to appear in the records.

In these early years, the Treasurer and Charity Committee members were the physical bank for the Lodge, in physical possession of the actual monies. This led to some problems when another Brother would step in as Secretary, and leave at the end of the meeting with the funds. Delegations would have to cross the city to retrieve funds which inadvertently walked away. This was the Case when Br. Pritchard acted as Secretary, collected \$52.25 in funds, and never turned them in. Several attempts were made to get the money back, but it was never collected, and Br. Pritchard was asked to leave the Lodge in 1829, two years later.

March 20

“W.M. stated that Br. Knapp having made use of insulting and foul language to Master on the evening of the 19th (illegible) that he wished to resign the chair until Br. Knapp came forward and made an explanation to him. On motion resolved the W.M. continues in the chair until the next regular meeting when the business should be investigated.”

May 11

“”A petition was read from Br. Amos House and a number of Brethren for a recommendation for a charter for a new Lodge. On motion resolved that the Lodge cannot conscientiously sign the above petition.”

“W.P.M Arnold informed the Lodge of the death of Br. Peter Schuyler of Union Lodge London having six helpless orphans in the greatest distress. On motion resolved that a Committee be appointed to wait on the children and grant them a sum not to exceed ten dollars”

November 28:

The Lodge wanted to change the bylaws to allow Brothers who were going to be at sea to cast absentee ballots. This was withdrawn next meeting, which is just as well, as the Grand Lodge did not allow proxy voting. One does wonder if this had something to do with the stewardship of the Lodge under W. Morton.

The Morgan Affair

The Life, disappearance and possible demise of William Morgan by Masons in Batavia NY fueled a popular frenzy against the Craft, invective being hurled at Brothers from the pulpit and the campaign stump. Lodges turned in their Charters and disbanded with such speed that, by 1830 there were only 82 Lodges left in New York State. There were no withdrawals from Mariners during this period, but the Lodge was called upon to assist some “traveling men”.

December 12

“W.P.M. Hoxie having represented the sufferings of the Lodges in the Western part of this State, on motion resolved that this Lodge grant them a sum of \$25.00.”

“Resolved that the donation granted for the relief of our Western Brethren be withheld until we ascertain for what purpose this money is to be appropriated.”

A committee questioned the W.P.M., found that the money was for relief, and granted the money.

George Arnold was voted back into office as Master. The Lodge, in the previous year, had made a present to him as Past Master of a lever action watch, with a gold chain, key and seal fob, totaling \$97.00. W. Morton received a P.M. jewel \$30.00 at the start of 1828. As the Lodge had \$195.48 in funds at the close of the year, it would seem that the Brothers were less pleased with W. Mortons stewardship

The Secretary received a silver plate, valued at \$10.00. There seems to be an affinity between Secretaries and sterling silver in this Lodge.

1828

George Arnold Master

Not a big news year.

February 22

“Br. Hinckley having made a representation of Br. Edward S. Card’s mal-conduct and breach of fidelity while in his employ. On motion it was resolved that a committee of three be appointed to investigate into the character of Br. Card and make a report at the next regular meeting.”

The committee reported back March 12, unfavorably, and Br. Card was suspended for a year. There were further investigations made in May (tabled)

February 27

The Lodge took on a new role, being asked to loan to the wife of Br. Richard Evans \$25.00 until such time as he should return. A committee walked it over.

February 29

Extra meeting, to confer 3 degrees for Mr. James Clendinning, which he paid for with a promissory note.

In April, it was decided to furnish the Master with a new hat (\$14.00), and the officers with aprons “emblematical of their different stations (\$55.00.)” These were made by Br. Mavenek, who was then suggested as an adjoining member of the Lodge. Change is not always welcome, as shown

“By a motion regularly made and seconded it was resolved that the Tyler be compelled to wear the Master’s old cocked hat of this Lodge on every night that this Lodge meets under penalty of forfeiting his night’s tiling fee for every time he neglects to do so.”

It seems that one of the rooms at Union Hall was set aside specifically for Masonic activities, as Mariners was asked to pay for part of the expense of painting “the room”, along with other Lodges meeting

there. It would seem that Br. Andrews was doing decorative work, not house painting

“Requesting the Lodge pay part of the expense of painting the cham (sic) & G. On motion resolved that the Lodge pay a proportion. On motion resolved that we grant Br. Andrews \$5.00 towards painting the room & G.”

June 28 So many reports of suspended Masons that the Lodge wanted to start a book of suspended and expelled.

July 9 Letter of thanks to Mobile Lodge for hosting our Brothers.

Mariners sailing from New York Harbor had strong ties with the ports of New Orleans and Mobile, as the city was the main Northern destination for Southern cotton.

January 2 1829

\$246.18 \$30.00 Charity Committee

1829

James F. Harding Master

Andrew Jackson becomes President, an early form of the typewriter is patented, and James Smithson leaves a bequest of 100,000 sterling to increase the sum of knowledge. Greece achieves it's independence from the Ottoman Empire

Things were not always harmonious among the Brothers of the Lodge.

January 28 “a communication was received from Br. Trumball setting forth that Br. Slatter owed him money and refused him payment, and praying that the Lodge may appoint a committee to investigate the affair”

Several committees were formed and investigated, and were undecided of the facts.

May 27 “A letter from Br. Francis Arnold speaking rather disrespectfully of Br. Slatter was read.” and tabled. Finally, on August 12, Br. Slatter asked for his dues back, and withdrew from the Lodge.

Several other Brothers filed grievances against others for speaking ill of Masonry, and other personal piques.

Numerous requests were made for charity, at least one a meeting; many were refused

September 23 “Br Luther Pratt soliciting that this body would purchase of him some of his books entitled “The Defense of Freemasonry” or otherwise assist him. On motion it was resolved that the body take three dozen of his books (\$12.00).

With the quantities of cash being held by the Lodge, its first bank account was opened with \$200.00 deposited at the Old Savings Bank in October. The account was in the Master’s name, as the bank wouldn’t open on in the name of Mariners.

Finances:

January 2	\$ 246.18	due bills \$60.00
September 23	\$238.14	due bills \$75

So, to sum up. The first five years of Mariner’s Lodge were a resounding success by any measure. It fulfilled a Lodge’s primary function of making new Masons, but also served the needs of a specific, self organizing community of professionals. They were able to amass a quantity of capital equal to an individual’s yearly income, extending outright charity and loans in sums that might seem insignificant to us, but made a difference to those receiving it. The bonds of the Fraternity, no doubt enhanced by dealing with life at sea held strong.

1830

Jacob Moore Master

Future topics:

James Fenimore Cooper was writing novels about seamen

Cholera 1832 11 July to 28th September no meetings.

April 25 was the last meeting the Lodge moving to Br. Barnes Hall at
33 Canal St.

1833 massive influx of Mexican silver

1834 1950 vessels entered harbor

1837 100 boarding houses for sailors in City

Croton reservoir 1842 celebration

1854 1874 insane secretary destroyed records. No

Letter rates: 12 ½ to Philadelphia, \$1.48 Boston, .25 c New Orleans