

THE STORY OF EQUITY LODGE NO. 106. HALIFAX.

by

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From time to time colored men have been initiated in regular white lodges in the U.S.A., Canada and elsewhere in the British Empire. In the U.S.A. there are instances in lodges in Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina(sic) and many other states.

Let me mention one case, Joshua B. Smith, raised in St. Andrew's Lodge., Boston in 1861 and affiliated with Adelpia Lodge, South Boston. Smith was renowned as a caterer. He became warden in his Lodge and was also a member of the R.A. Chapter, K T Commandery and the Scottish Rite bodies including the Thirty-Second Degree. From 1873-4, he represented the City of Cambridge in the Massachusetts Legislature.

Alpha Lodge: In New Jersey we find a lodge of colored men working under a white Grand Lodge, Alpha Lodge, Newark, N.J., chartered in 1871 as No. 116.

In 1871 a petition was presented signed by nine white brethren and a charter was issued by Grand Lodge on January 19, 1871. Ten days afterward petitions from twelve colored men and one white man were presented. At the next meeting the white man and eleven of the twelve men were elected.

Although for a year or two there was much agitation among the white lodges, GL declared that the lodge and its officers had proceeded "in exact accordance with Masonic law and usage."

Gradually colored men were elected to office and in 1878 Abram T. Cooke the first Negro initiate became the first W.M. From that time on nearly all candidates were colored men and by 1929 the last white man withdrew from the Lodge leaving it a lodge composed entirely of colored men and so it is today.

Elsewhere in the British Commonwealth: There are numerous lodges under England and Scotland in all parts of the world composed largely of colored brethren or which admit colored petitioners into mixed lodges. In Jamaica there are nine lodges with English warrants three with Scottish and one with an Irish warrant. In the 12 under English and Scottish warrants the great majority of the brethren belong to the colored race, one of them Royal Lodge No. 207 EC, Kingston has very few white brethren among its 85 members. The same is true of the lodges in Barbados, Antigua, Grenada, Trinidad and other West Indian Islands, and in British Guiana, British Honduras and elsewhere in this region.

In India all the lodges particularly the Scottish lodges have admitted Indian brethren to their privileges. There is no color bar of any kind.

Another instance is to be found in the records of Waverly Lodge No. 591, Edinburgh, Scotland where we find ten colored brethren receiving all the degrees in May and June 1904. Six of these hailed from New York City, one from Alabama, one from Indiana, one from Illinois, and one from Ontario, All members of a travelling theatrical Company.

Union Lodge No.18, Halifax N S: In 1855 five colored men were initiated in Royal Sussex Lodge No. 6, Halifax. They subsequently applied for and obtained a dispensation from Hon. Alexander Keith and on December 3, 1856 (nearly 100 years ago) they, and several white brethren were granted a warrant as Union Lodge No. 994 by the Grand Lodge of England. In 1969 the Lodge along with the other English lodges in the Province joined the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia and were assigned No. 18.

For many years Union Lodge did good work. About 1910, they started accepting petitions from any man of color no matter where he resided whether in Nova Scotia or British Columbia or the U.S.A. About this time the Secretary got careless in recording the minutes. As a consequence of this and of other irregularities, Grand Lodge forfeited the charter in June 1916 and those in good standing were given demits at large. Several later affiliated with other lodges. One of them The Rev. Dr. W.A. White, pastor of Cornwallis Street Baptist Church, raised in Union Lodge, October 16, 1905, later affiliated with St. George's No. 20, Wolfville, May 25, 1931 continuing a member until his death.

James H. Skinner of New Glasgow was a member of Albion Lodge No.5 for many years and was buried with Masonic honours in 1916.

Joseph Thompson was a member of Keith Lodge No. 17, Halifax for some years between 1895 and 1915, and there are at least a dozen other instances.

In passing, it will be noted that until 1946 Prince Hall Masonry has never existed in Nova Scotia, and that apart from Ontario, it has not existed anywhere in the British Commonwealth. Furthermore, white Masonry in this area that is outside of Ontario has never established a color bar. At the present time the popular Grand Master (Dr. C.L. Roman) of Quebec, is of negro descent and there are several lodges in Montreal which number colored brethren among their members.

Efforts To Revive Union Lodge: Following the forfeiture of the warrant of Union Lodge in 1916, there was little or no effort made to revive the Lodge during the next fifteen years. One of the chief difficulties was the confused and untrustworthy state of the records, the few members in good standing remaining and the scattered area of their residence.

A strong effort to obtain the restoration of the warrant was made in the period of my Grand Mastership (1932-35). It had the support of the Rev. Dr. W.A. White and others, but the opposition manipulated matters so that a committee appointed in 1935 never reported. The death of Bro. White on September 9th, 1936, ended efforts to revive the Lodge.

In 1945 when I became Grand Secretary only three members in good standing remained. The judgment of these brethren was that efforts to revive Union Lodge would prove futile.

Prince Hall: About this time the critical examination of the origin of Prince Hall Masonry by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was undertaken and in 1946, I prepared two addresses on the subject of Negro Freemasonry (as part of an educational series of 12 addresses by myself during the winter of 1946-47). Although I was convinced of the regularity of the origin of Prince Hall Masonry, I came to the conclusion that formal recognition by the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia would lead to the withdrawal of fraternal relations by other white Grand Lodges in the United States and Canada and to other complications and to misunderstandings.

It was clear that the racial situation in the U.S.A. was chiefly responsible for the organic separation of the white and coloured Masons and the existence of P.H. Masonry. This was a social question beyond our power to solve and it would seem necessary and advisable to proceed on parallel lines without formal "recognition" as that word is understood. The Masonic family of Grand Lodges to which we belong may someday reach an understanding with P.H. Masonry by which we can with or without formal recognition, co-operate with them in the objectives of Freemasonry.

A New Lodge: The third course was to start a new Lodge under our own auspices on the lines of Alpha Lodge, New Jersey, with a mixed membership of white P.M.'s and the survivors of Union Lodge No. 18. This seemed to those most interested the wisest course. Applications by individuals to white lodges did not hold any promise of their advancement to the Chair. Many said they were reluctant to run the gauntlet of the white brethren of some lodges, any one of whom might be prejudiced against them on the ground of colour.

A survey of the situation indicated that there was ample suitable material available in Halifax to enable a Lodge of coloured brethren to carry on. It was also pointed out that 30 years had elapsed since Union Lodge had ceased to function and that the survivors had had no real experience in Masonic administration. For these reasons, the association with the new Lodge of P.M.'s of Halifax Lodges, would be most desirable in its earlier years, acting as a sort of Advisory Committee which would see that the Constitution was fully complied with.

Mt. Messiah Lodge: While these deliberations were going on, negotiations (as we afterwards learned) were going on between Arthur M. Callender (PH) and Beresford A. Husbands, a survivor of old Union Lodge with the P.H., Grand Lodge in New York for the formation of PH Lodge in Halifax. . They made several trips to New York and eventually succeeded in persuading the Grand Master, Louis Fair, to visit

Halifax. He arrived in Halifax on Saturday, July 27th, 1944, accompanied by some 20 brethren and their ladies (34 in all). He called on myself at the Grand Secretary's office, explained his purpose and asked the consent of our Grand Lodge to form a Lodge in Halifax under P.H. auspices. He was fully informed of our plans and told that there was no need to be concerned about our attitude towards the problem, that our whole history proved favourable and that we had it in mind to form a lodge of coloured and white brethren in Halifax and that we could not give our consent to his proposal. Also that if he went ahead with his plans, we would have to regard his act as an invasion of our Jurisdiction and would be obliged to issue an edict of non-intercourse with any Lodge which we might form. We urged him not to proceed with his plan, but in the true interest of our coloured people in Halifax to put his support behind one strong Lodge under our auspices in place of two weak lodges under rival Grand Lodges. The field was too small for more than one Lodge. He promised to consult those who had invited him to Halifax and would report back to us before he left a few days later.

That afternoon and evening a Prince Hall Lodge to be known as Mt. Messiah Lodge was formed under a dispensation by Bro. Fair and his associates. It was later reported to us that between 9:00 p.m. Saturday night and 6:00 a.m. Sunday morning 31 applicants (one report said 35), had been balloted for, elected, initiated, passed and raised and that the new Lodge had been instituted and officers appointed and installed. The new Master was Arthur M. Callender, and the Secretary, Joseph W. Johnson.

As explained to Bro. Fair, our Grand Lodge felt obliged to take the position that if there is to be a Masonic Lodge in this jurisdiction, whether of white or coloured men, it must work under a Warrant from our Grand Lodge, and no other. To recognize the existence of a Lodge formed by outside authority whether New Brunswick or England, or New York, was to recognize that every other Grand Lodge in the world might, if it so wished, invade this territory and establish lodges. In 1925, we declared that we had exclusive jurisdiction over Nova Scotia in all Masonic matters, and that declaration would stand.

Because of this invasion of our territory we were obliged to issue an edict stating the facts and forbidding Masonic intercourse by our members, of any kind, with members of the new Lodge, by visitation or otherwise. That meant their members could not be admitted to our Lodges, as visitors nor could our members visit the new P.H. Lodge. Furthermore our Lodges could not receive a petition for affiliation from any member of the new lodge or any other P.H. Mason.

This edict was issued on July 31st, 1946, not, because of any racial discrimination, but solely because of the invasion of the territory of this Grand Lodge.

Further Negotiations: During the winter and spring of 1946-47, I delivered my course of lectures including two on Negro Masonry, to which I invited Bro. Callender and the members of his Lodge.

On Feb.3, 1947, Bro. Fair wrote me thanking me for inviting Bro. Callender and his associates to attend my course of lectures. He said:

"I believe the time is not far distant when a better understanding of each others problems will be achieved between our respective bodies. Then difficulties and misunderstandings, which arose in the setting up of our Lodge in Halifax, will not longer occur."

He also invited me to visit the P.H. Temple, when in New York, which would "afford us our opportunity of discussing any problems, which may have arisen in connection with the setting up of our Lodge, so that they may be amicably settled in time for your Grand Lodge In June 1947.

This letter arrived in Halifax when I was in New York on Feb.10th, 1947. On that date, I called Bro. Fair, on the phone, asking for an appointment with him. He told me that as a result of a recent call on him by Br's. Callender and Bowen in New York, reporting on Mt. Messiah Lodge, it was his intention to visit Halifax in a few weeks time when he would confer with me and that it was not convenient to meet while I was in New York. Each expressed himself as anxious to iron out the Halifax situation

On my arrival home on Feb. 20th, I found Bro. Fair's letter and wrote him inviting him to confer with us on his next visit to Halifax. He replied March 19th, and wired me that he would arrive on April 21st, and asking for a conference on that afternoon and on the 22nd I wired that these dates were satisfactory.

On April 21st, 1947, Bro Fair arrived in Halifax with a view to dealing with a bad situation which had developed in his local lodge. While here he made a call on the Grand Master and myself and proposed to withdraw the dispensation issued by him in Jul 1946, provided, we should take over his lodge and all its members. He was frankly told that we could not do so under any circumstances and that in the event of our establishing a lodge under our jurisdiction, the members of his lodge would have to be balloted for and initiated, passed and raised just as in the case of petitioners desirous of joining any Lodge in our registry. He promised to discuss our attitude with his lodge and report, back to us. The same evening he met his lodge, deposed Bro. Callender, the Master, and made some very desirable changes for the Lodge's improvement, including the appointment of Rev. W.P. Oliver as Master. Bro Fair left the City without conferring with us again and leaving much to be desired and done.

Equity Lodge: This course of action on the part of Bro. Fair, obliged us to proceed at once with our plans which we in good faith had held up and to form a new lodge under our own auspices. Our first objective was to unite all our forces behind this project. In the course of our enquiries we learned that a considerable number of members of the colored community in Halifax declined to have anything whatever to do with the P.H Lodge and expressed a desire to have a lodge for themselves on our register and subject to our control A petition signed by two of the surviving members of Union Lodge No: 18 still in good standing and by a number of white brethren all well skilled and influential Past Masters' was filed with the Grand Secretary in April 1942, praying for a dispensation and warrant under which they might work. It was then brought before our Grand Lodge in June 1947 (Proc. p.119) given general approval and referred to the Advisory Board with power to act. The Board unanimously agreed that a dispensation should be issued.

Immediately thereafter the petitioners met, adopted the appropriate name of "Equity," elected officers, fixed fees and dues and adopted other necessary regulations.

The petition was personally presented by myself to all twelve lodges in the District and all of them unanimously recommended the issue of a dispensation. To this the D.D.G.M. added his recommendation, the Grand Master issued his dispensation and on March 11th, 1948, Equity Lodge was instituted by the Dep. Grand Master, at the request of the Grand Master who was absent through illness.

The first officers included the two survivors of Union Lodge also three P.G. Masters of' the craft and other brethren desirous of seeing the new Lodge prosper. The interest and good will of other lodges was evidenced by the very considerable number of presentations made to the Lodge. Fifteen petitions for initiation and one for affiliation, all from colored residents of Halifax were received.

During these early months the Lodge officers were exceedingly active and at the Grand Lodge meeting in 1948, the dispensation was continued until the next Grand Lodge meeting (because of the shortness of time, which had elapsed since institution.).

More Negotiations: On April 13, 1948 Bros. Fair, Sidney E. Davis, (Grand. Trustee and Henry A. Rhodes, Grand Secretary, paid a visit to Halifax and called on me. No proposals were discussed, except that the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia intended going ahead with its plans. Equity Lodge had just been instituted and it would have been a most favorable time for a conference,

On April 14, 1948 Mt. Messiah Lodge No. 87 was constituted.

Following their departure, the Rev. W.P. Oliver, Master of the P.H. Lodge demitted from the Lodge and joined Equity Lodge. Bro. Oliver is a man of excellent attainments, the recognized leader of his people and man of standing in the Community.

Equity Lodge No. 106: During the year W. Bro. James Crosby, the first Master, died and Bro. A.B. Crook was appointed Master of Equity Lodge. The Lodge continued active, and was well represented at the District Meeting and District Church Service. The members were keenly interested in the educational side and ceremonial work and their attendance at their own meetings was almost 100%. The D.D.G.M. recommended the issue of a warrant, the committee on warrants concurred and on June 9th, 1949 a warrant was granted No. 106, and the Lodge constituted and consecrated on October 17th, by M.W. Bro. Rev. George R. Thompson, G.M. He was assisted by four P.G. Masters, in the presence of over 300 brethren, one, of the most notable occasions in the history of Masonry in Halifax, The Charter members

included three P.G. Masters, namely: Martin L. Fraser, Treasurer; R.V. Harris, Historian and A.H. MacMillan.

In July 1950, Bro. Fair again visited Halifax and called at my office at a time when I was out for an hour or so. I got into touch with him by telephone but he could not make any appointment with me. On writing him on July 11th, expressing my regret, he replied August 5th: "I am planning on returning again in September and as soon as I determine the exact date, will notify you so that we may discuss the matters referred to in your communication."

He did not return in September 1950, but did so in March 1951. He was accompanied by Bros. James MacFarlane and James R. Cole. A church service was held in Dartmouth on Sunday March 25th. On his arrival, I got into touch with him (Saturday morning) and asked for an interview, but he again said he could not meet with me. He agreed "that something should be done about the local situation". He arrived Friday night, March 23rd and left Monday morning March 26th. I followed up our conversation by writing him on March 24th and said "As I told you, Equity Lodge is prospering and progressing steadily. They have a very good group of members with good material coming along through the various offices. I feel however, there is room only for one such lodge in Halifax. The criticism that I hear most about your Lodge from those who know the situation is that it lacks supervision. You are too far away to give it the attention it should have, and if there is any idea in your mind of putting it under the Grand Lodge in Ontario, it would be still further away. For this reason, I feel that we should find some way by which we could unite the two groups. It would mean the surrender of your warrant. I have no information about the number of your members, nor their names, apart from one or two, but I feel sure that if I had this information I could go further in the matter of submitting some sort of proposition to you.

"Please understand that I am not in any way authorized to write you along these lines. Any proposals made by either of us would have to have the approval of my Grand Lodge and I assume yours as well." I never heard from him in reply to my letter nor since and on writing him on July 30, 1952, suggesting a conference with him on the occasion of a visit to New York in September 1952, I received a reply from M.W. Bro. Arthur T. Giddings, Jr., his successor. Our subsequent correspondence leading up to this present conference has been most amicable.

In the letter to him dated February 25th, 1953 I outlined briefly the background of the Halifax situation and suggested two alternatives, either that I should go to New York or that he should come to Halifax. Bro. Giddings was unable to arrange to come to Halifax, and on February 20th, 1954, an unofficial and informal conference took place in New York without prejudice to either Grand Lodge.

Progress Since 1948: Equity Lodge has since its institution in 1948 been a most welcome participant in all St. John's day Services and Grand Lodge meetings and services. One of its members, W.Bro. Maurice R. Earle (W.M. during 1953) has been a favourite soloist on many occasions. He has also been an active member of the Temple Choir. In 1950, along with Bro. Henry D. Nicholas he joined Royal Union R.A.. Chapter No.1, (formed previously to 1780) and is now serving as High Priest of the Chapter with the most cordial support of its members, a most significant fact. He has proved a most accomplished ritualist, both in the Lodge and Chapter.

Equity Lodge has paid visits to several lodges in and outside of Halifax. On one occasion they travelled to Digby (150 miles away) on a Saturday conferred the Third degree and sang as a choir on Sunday in one of the leading Church's of the town.

Four coloured brethren have now served as Masters, namely. W. Bros. Clarence H. Johnston, Henry D. Nicholas, Maurice H. Earle and Noel H. Johnston. The first two were members of Union Lodge No 18 and were largely responsible for organizing Equity Lodge. The other two were raised in the Lodge and Bro. Noel H. Johnston is the son of Bro. Clarence H. Johnston, now Secretary of the Lodge.

Summary:

(1) It is a fact that men of color if otherwise properly qualified, are not denied admission to Nova Scotia Lodges,

(2) It is evident that Equity Lodge has been received with very great favor by the members of all the Halifax Lodges and on an equal footing with other brethren.

(3) Now that several of the colored brethren have attained the Chair, it is very probable that they will in future share from time to time in the annual Grand Lodge honors

(4) The brethren of Equity have an assurance of a permanent voice in the affairs of Grand Lodge a chance of becoming Grand Officers, the benefit of the Grand Lodge's educational work.

(5) The brethren of Equity over the past five years have demonstrated' their capacity to regulate their own affairs and observe the Constitution and Principles of Masonry. Our Jurisdiction is very proud of the Lodge and its good works.

(6) The Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia has the only Home in Canada for aged Masons and their wives and widows. Established in 1909 it has been enlarged from time to time and now takes care of 47 guests at a cost of about \$1150 - \$1200 per guest, is full to the doors with a waiting list of another 10 or 12, and 15 to 20 other guests taken care of outside the Home.

This welfare work is maintained by an assessment of \$1.50 per year on all members of Nova Scotia lodges, from Old Age Pensions, income from Endowments (\$260,000) , donations and the produce of a farm,

Some Thoughts on the Situation: Let us now consider the position Mt. Messiah finds itself in:

(1) The isolation of the P.H. Lodge in Halifax is the chief hindrance and the most detrimental to its success. The nearest lodges which its members can visit are in Boston and Toronto. If they were members of Equity Lodge they could visit 109 lodges in Nova Scotia and every other Lodge in Canada. W. Bro. Maurice Earle of Equity Lodge is a frequent visitor to Lodges in Montreal and elsewhere in Eastern Canada.

(2) The distance of Mt. Messiah Lodge from New York makes it exceedingly difficult to supervise it. Toronto and Boston are headquarters of other P.H. Grand Lodges and the Halifax Lodge cannot be any better off even if transferred to their Jurisdictions. Every Lodge needs a D.D.G.M. or other G.L. officer within easy reach to consult, advise and supervise. It is submitted that the P.H. Lodge in Halifax is heavily handicapped by this lack of supervision.

(3) The existence of the two Lodges in Halifax has caused much confusion in the public mind and much explaining. This is indicated by newspaper items not only in Halifax papers, but in Toronto, and even New York. This confusion is good for neither lodge.

(4) The colored population of Halifax and neighbourhood includes a considerable number who cannot afford Freemasonry. A survey shows that there is only enough material for one good lodge, but not enough for two. Every care has to be taken on the economic side, to make sure that the petitioner is likely to be able to pay dues. To admit some of them would be to cheapen Freemasonry and undoubtedly lead to wholesale suspensions in future.

(5) The great majority of available material know they are not joining world Freemasonry if they join Mt. Messiah Lodge. They know that they will seldom meet another P.H. Brother in their travels in Eastern Canada. Only by joining Equity Lodge will they be enabled to visit other Lodges in Halifax or in Nova Scotia or elsewhere in Canada, and take part in the vigorous life and activity of Freemasonry in Halifax and Nova Scotia. When they come to fully realize all these disadvantages some will demit or be suspended and the number of candidates is bound to diminish in future. What is the advantage of joining such a Lodge?

(6) We are reliably informed that the lodge has been taking petitioners from Barbados, Jamaica, Bahamas, etc., who have no residence in Nova Scotia or Canada and who cannot possibly benefit the Lodge or themselves. They join under the belief that they are joining the kind of Masonry they have in the West Indies and are not told of the difference between it and Prince Hall Masonry. They find out the difference when it is too late. The same remarks apply to those Joining the Lodge from towns outside of Halifax. They not only have difficulty and expense in getting their degrees but the prospect of attending regularly, or of holding an office must lead eventually to their demission or suspension.

(7) Another urgent reason which demands consideration is that all the Halifax members of the two Lodges are members of the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church whose pastor is Rev. William P. Oliver' the Chaplain of Equity Lodge. Union of the two Lodges would be a great and harmonious achievement.

Comments:

(1) We are far from charging Bro. Fair with bad faith because we believe he was misled into this situation by Bros. Callender and Husbands and before he found that the attitude of our Grand Lodge had been grossly misrepresented to him.

(2) We do say that on learning the truth concerning our attitude, Bro. Fair should have conferred with us in an effort to find a way out in the interests of the coloured population of Halifax. While promising consultation with his associates and with us, he continued to "string us along" indefinitely and that knowing all the facts he must have also known that he had no legal or Masonic ground for invading our jurisdiction and that such invasion cannot be justified.

(3) We further claim that the wholesale mass production of new Masons carried out on the night of July 27-28., 1946. was a most irregular proceeding Masonically, not only for the cogent reasons already given., but because:

(a) The petition was not recommended by the nearest lodge, and if so, any recommendation as to the proficiency of the proposed officers was made blindly and without adequate information.

(b) The investigation by the three petitioners for the new Lodge must necessarily have been most perfunctory, one of the three being, we understand, a non-resident of Halifax and another not properly qualified to be a member of such a committee.

(c) While our knowledge of the provisions of your Grand Lodge Constitution respecting residence within the Grand Lodge Jurisdiction is deficient, we question the right of your Grand Lodge to initiate a person not resident in the State of New York.

(d) Any such proceeding on a Sunday has always been regarded as irregular and unMasonic in Masonic law, a prohibition which will be found in the Constitutions of numerous Grand Lodges.

(e) In many Grand Lodges the conferring of more than one degree on a candidate at the same meeting or on more than three (or five) candidates at a time, is prohibited, and dispensations to do so are never granted.

We should like to be informed whether such a proceeding was permissible or otherwise under your Constitution in July 1946.

(f) We submit that in carrying through the meeting of July 27-28, 1946, Brother Fair exceeded his constitutional powers as Grand Master, as defined by your Constitution and recognized Masonic law and that as a consequence the validity of the degrees conferred was questionable. True the Grand Lodge afterwards ratified the acts of Bro, Fair and issued a Charter, but it apparently did so without full knowledge of the facts or all of them.

Previous Negotiations

Up to this point this brief was as written and presented on February 20th, 1954 at an informal two-hour Conference held at the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, New York, at which the Prince Hall representatives were Arthur T. Giddings, Sr., Grand Master; William L. Jordan, Grand Secretary and Henry A. Rhodes, Past Grand Secretary, and the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia was represented by Dr. Perry S. Cochrane, its Grand Master; R. V. Harris, Grand Secretary and Norman T. Avard, Past Grand Master.

On April 22, 1954, Bro. Giddings wrote as follows:

"We do not find ourselves in agreement with the proposal of your committee that those Brothers who pass the ballot in Equity Lodge must have the Degrees conferred all over again. We feel that it would

be in order to accept these members by Affiliation. This seems to be the only serious difference that prevents my coming to Halifax to discuss with the Brothers of Mt. Messiah Lodge, the wisdom of their relinquishing the Warrant which they now hold from our Grand Lodge."

At this point (June 1954), a change in Grand Masters was made and Brother L. Ernest DuBois became Grand Master. Eventually our Grand Secretary obtained his address and wrote him (October 22nd 1954) as follows:

"As I understand his letter, our proposals are acceptable to your Grand Lodge but you do not see the necessity for conferring the degrees all over again. In our conference with Brother Giddings and his advisors', this point was not actually discussed but the statement was made by Bro. Giddings that when spurious bodies of Masons united with Prince Hall lodges., it is the practice of your Grand Lodge to require them to receive all three degrees. As I understand the proceedings adopted by you., the candidate is either required to go through each degree in full-or to witness the conferring of the degree on some other candidate, he himself taking the obligation along with such candidate. Also that the working tools are presented to such brother and also the lectures and charges and other important parts of the ceremony. Frankly, I do not think we are very far apart in this matter. If we can reach an understanding on this point, the matter would seem to be settled. I do hope that you and your advisors will give early consideration to this matter."

After hearing from W. Bro. J. C. Saunders of Mount Messiah Lodge, Bro. DuBois wrote our Grand Secretary (February 13, 1955) suggesting a conference when "all concerned can sit down and discuss it intelligently."

Later he wrote March 3rd, 1955:

"It is our opinion that until we have positive assurance that the members of this Lodge will be welcomed into your Grand Lodge without any strings attached the Charter of this Lodge will remain in force."

To this our Grand Secretary replied April 18, 1955:

"The most satisfactory step would be for you to come to Halifax and sit down in Conference with the officers of Mount Messiah Lodge and ourselves. We invited Bro. Fair on several occasions, but he avoided us (July 1946, April 1947, April 1948, July 1950, March 1951 when we know he came to Halifax), we invited Bro. Giddings to come and confer, but he declined. We shall greatly appreciate it if you can come to Halifax at our expense and settle this long-standing matter. I feel sure we can reach an agreement satisfactory to all concerned."

To this we received no reply, but on August 27., 1955, Bro. DuBois wrote:

"There is a very good possibility that we shall make a visit to Halifax either in the early fall or spring for the purpose of ascertaining just what steps might be taken in the best interest of all concerned."

Then on October 22, 1955, he wrote as follows:

"The situation between our Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia is still of interest to us, and with that thought in mind would you consider a conference with Bro. Saunders, the officers of the Lodge together with yourself and other officers of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia?

"I believe that a conference of this nature might be helpful in arriving at some understanding on the part of all concerned and when this has been done we might arrange to come to Halifax for final discussion. I shall write to Bro. Saunders and request that he contact you and make arrangements for such a conference."

To this we replied November 9th, 1955, accepting the proposal, and followed it up by writing again on December 7th, 1955, March 5th., 1956 and March 28th., 1956 but received no reply.

On learning of a change in Grand Masters, I wrote M. W. Brother Henry A. Rhodes August 6th, 1956 reviewing the situation and urging a Conference. To this Bro. Rhodes agreed.

At the suggestion of W. Bro, Saunders, a friendly conference was held in Halifax on November 29th, 1956 at which Mount Messiah Lodge was represented by R. W. Bro. J. C. Saunders, D.D.G.M. and seven of the officers and P. Ms and Equity Lodge by the Grand Secretary, R. W. Bro. Noel H. Johnston, D.D.G.M. and six of the officers and P.M.s.

The brief submitted in 1954 was read through and frankly discussed pro and con. It was generally agreed that the Conference had resulted in clearing away several misunderstandings and in creating a much better understanding of the facts.

Progress:

In the course of the Conference, it was brought out that since 1954, several members of Equity Lodge have been warmly welcomed as visitors in lodges in Montreal; one has joined another Lodge in Nova Scotia (dual membership); several have taken degrees in Royal Union R.A. Chapter, No. 1. Halifax, and Chebucto Council 1R. & S. M., No. 3, Halifax; that R. W. Brother Noel H. Johnston of Equity Lodge had been appointed District Deputy Grand Master, District No. 1A (Halifax City), the first such appointment in Canadian Masonic history; and that he had presided over a very large District Meeting on November 28th., 1956. Also that three most successful visits had been made by Equity Lodge to Nova Scotia Freemasons Home, at which Bro. Rev. W. P. Oliver, had conducted Divine Service for the guests of the Home.

Proposals:

Subject to formal confirmation by the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia in June next., and with a view to unifying Masonry among the coloured people in Halifax -and Nova Scotia and healing all rivalries and dissensions, we make the following proposals:

- (1) That the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New York withdraw the present warrant of Mount Messiah Lodge, No. 87, issued to it on April 14, 1948.
- (2) That all members in good standing be given their demits at large, paying their dues direct to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge until they may join another Prince Hall Lodge in New York or elsewhere, or Equity Lodge, No. 106., Halifax, or other Lodge in Nova Scotia.
- (3) That any member of Mount Messiah Lodge shall be free to apply to Equity Lodge, or any other Lodge in Nova Scotia, paying the minimum fee for his degrees in such Lodge.
- (4) Such petition shall be referred to an investigating committee and be dealt with exactly in the same way as the petitions of other applicants for degrees, and shall be balloted upon as required by our rules.
- (5) If elected the applicant shall sever his allegiance with Prince Hall Grand Lodge and accept the Masonic jurisdiction of Nova Scotia. If not elected, he may continue a member at large of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New York or affiliate with some other Prince Hall lodge.
- (6) On becoming a member of Equity Lodge, or other Lodge, in Nova Scotia, he shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of its members and equally with them.

As far as can be determined the great majority of the known members of Mount Messiah Lodge are acceptable to Equity Lodge.

As to this question of affiliation of Prince Hall Masons with Lodges in Nova Scotia, we have consulted a number of well-known Masonic leaders in the United States as to the course we should pursue and they unanimously agreed that under Masonic law all must pass the ballot and receive their degree in Equity Lodge and pledge allegiance to the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia.

This last proposal may at first sight seem unnecessary inasmuch as your Grand Lodge (as we are informed) practises a ritual very similar to the authorized work of our jurisdiction. We are advised, however, that in a case where we are not in fraternal relations with your Grand Lodge the conferral of the degrees all over again is the only proper course. To accept your members by affiliation might very well be in order, but to do so would be to open the door to accepting petitioners from the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, let us say, of Alabama or Michigan, about whose work we know nothing, or from some other white Grand Lodge whom we do not recognize and there are at least forty others. It is much better that all should be admitted in the same way and by the same procedure, and in this instance we have always regarded the wholesale admission of over 30 candidates without investigation in one night and without the usual instruction between degrees and the elevation of one of them to be Master without having previously served as Warden, and without proper installation, to have been most irregular from a Masonic viewpoint. Conferring the degrees in accordance with our work will forever silence those who do not know the facts. This was the procedure followed when Brother Rev. William F. Oliver joined Equity Lodge, No. 106.

We think that if you give serious consideration to these proposals you will realize that they are for the purpose of clearing up a situation which has been regarded as irregular, illegal and doubtful; they are equitable in principle, will unite in one harmonious body all the Masons of Nova Scotia, and forever the suggestion of segregation, will be applauded as generous on the part of Prince Hall jurisdictions, and in the best interest of Masonry everywhere.

. Our whole appeal to you is to take such steps as will benefit the coloured brethren and prospective brethren in Halifax and establish and promote the best of good will between our two Grand Lodges.

K, L. Crowell., Grand Master

R. V. Harris, Grand Secretary

of the GRAND LODGE of NOVA SCOTIA

January 1, 1957