

Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge No. 45 F.A.A.M. Washington, DC



*Chartered December 16, 1925
Constituted January 26, 1926
Consolidated June 14, 1983*

2010 Officers

David B. Torchinsky, P.P.
Worshipful Master

Burton Penn, P.M.
Assistant to the Worshipful Master

Joshua L. Rubin
Senior Warden

Erik F. Milman
Junior Warden

Robert H. Starr, P.G.M.
Secretary

Ronald B. Daub, P.P.
Assistant Secretary

Walter F. Simon, P.M., D.S.M.
Secretary Emeritus

Allen J. Wright, P.M.
Treasurer

Max Beloff, P.M., Fid.M.
G.L. Gold Fid. M.
Treasurer Emeritus

Joel Shulman, P.M.
Chaplain

D.G.C. Rabbi Randall A. Schoch, P.M.
Assistant Chaplain

Jonathan M. Binstock, P.M.
Master-of-Ceremonies

Max D. Brandy
Senior Deacon

Harold I. Henig
Junior Deacon

Chester N. Katz
Senior Steward

Rabbi Kenneth L. Cohen
Junior Steward

John R. Garrison, P.M.
Tiler

Sheldon I. Rappeport, P.M.
Degree Director

Jerome M. Bauman, P.M.
Trustee

William D. Boker, P.M.
Trustee

Julien P. Hofberg, P.M.
Trustee

Walter F. Simon, P.M., D.S.M.
Historian

Harry Hofberg, M.A., P.P. (Deceased)
Historian Emeritus

Allan J. Porter
Fellowcraft Club President

SAMUEL GOMPERS-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN LODGE #45

HISTORY

BY

ERIK MILMAN

Junior Warden

Samuel Gompers #45

Samuel Gompers Lodge # 45 was chartered on December 16, 1925 and constituted on January 16, 1926 with 182 Members. The newly constituted Lodge met at the Masonic Temple on New York Ave and 13 Street.

After the passing of Brother Samuel Gompers, the late president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), his sons, Brothers Henry J. and Samuel Gompers, petitioned National Lodge #12 to allow for the formation of a new lodge bearing their father's name. A member of Dawson Lodge #16, Samuel Gompers had died on December 13, 1924.

National Lodge #12 agreed, and the first meeting of the proposed Samuel Gompers Lodge was held at the home of Harry Coleman, 1321 7th St., N.W., on February 24, 1925. John F. Kimmerling, Past Master of National Lodge # 12, opened the meeting. Thirty-one men, all Masons in good standing, were present. This was the crystallization of the idea of memorializing Samuel Gompers by naming a new Masonic Lodge for him, and the first manifestation of a definite plan. After weeks of consideration and discussion, of investigating and examining the rules and requirements, of making decisions and plans, things were beginning to come together. The chair was turned over to Henry J. Gompers, who was acting chairman, while Louis Rosenberg was acting Secretary. It was determined by motion to form a new Masonic Lodge and to name it "Samuel Gompers Lodge."

Contact Information

Robert H. Starr, P.G.M., Secretary, 5400 Amberwood Lane, Rockville, MD 20853, 202-498-2021

The following were nominated and elected as the officers: Master, Henry J. Gompers; Sr. Warden, William P. Jacobs; Jr. Warden, Maurice Blum; Secretary, Louis Rosenberg; Treasurer, Frank Foer; Sr. Deacon, Samuel J. Feldman; Jr. Deacon, A. Kenneth Armstrong; Sr. Steward, Joseph Schrot; Jr. Steward, Isadore A. Peake; Master of Ceremonies, Harry Lewis; Trustees, Joseph A. Wilner, Jacque Heidenheimer and Clay A. Armstrong.

After four additional meetings, where the newly proposed lodge formulated its plans, and the officers passed their proficiency examinations before the Grand Lodge Committee on Works and Lecture on April 29, 1925.

Grand Master Roe Fulkerson granted a dispensation on the petition of 130 brethren recommended by National Lodge #12 for the forming of a new lodge to be known as Samuel Gompers Lodge. The charter named Henry J. Gompers as Master, Maurice Blum as Senior Warden, and Samuel J Feldman as Junior Warden.

For the first time, Samuel Gompers Lodge, U.D., met at the Masonic Temple building at 13th and New York Ave., N.W. The meeting was held in Lodge Room No. 3, on Tuesday, May 26, 1925. The officers wore jewels and aprons borrowed from Hiram Lodge No. 10, and members' aprons had been made by several of the wives of the officers from material presented by Grand Lecturer Bert V. Wolfe. The Grand Master was present, accompanied by Senior Grand Warden Gratz E. Dunkum, Grand Chaplain John C. Palmer, and Past Grand Master Charles C. Coombs (1922).

Also present was Frank Morrison, longtime Secretary of the American Federation of Labor and co-worker of Samuel Gompers. Nineteen petitions were presented that night, among which were two from applicants who were to become future Masters: Maurice A. Goldberg and Alfred L. Bennett. The first petition was read by the Grand Master. It was from Alexander Gompers, son of the Master, and grandson of Samuel Gompers.

During the succeeding months the Lodge was busily engaged in ritual work. The first Entered Apprentice Degree was conferred on June 29, 1925, the first Fellowcraft Degree on July 28, 1925, and the first Master Mason Degree on August 25, 1925. Sixty-nine petitions were received before the Lodge was chartered, of which there were seven rejections. Thirty-five were Initiated, twenty-nine were Passed, and twenty-four members were Raised . Among the petitioners was another who was to become a Master in the future, Milton D. Korman. The Grotto presented the Lodge with a set of resolutions commemorating the passing of Samuel Gompers, and William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, presented the Lodge with a gavel used by Samuel Gompers. The Lodge held its first Memorial Service on Sunday, December 13, 1925, at the Elks Club Auditorium, on the first anniversary of the passing of Samuel Gompers.

At a meeting held December 16, 1925, the Grand Lodge granted Samuel Gompers Lodge its Charter. After the Grand Secretary certified that the affairs of the lodge were in order, Past Grand Master George W. Baird moved that the prayer of the petitioners be granted, with the exception that the proposed name of the new lodge be changed to Simon Wolfe Lodge. There being no second to the motion, the Grand Master recognized Brother Henry C. Stein who, with Brother John A Colborn as second, moved that the charter prayed for by the petitioners be granted and the Lodge enrolled on the register of the Grand Lodge as Samuel Gompers Lodge #45. This motion was adopted.

Samuel Gompers Lodge #45 held its first meeting as a duly constituted Lodge on January 26, 1926 at the Masonic Temple. For the occasion, the large Lodge room, number one, was borrowed, and the room still overflowed. Grand Master Sydney R. Jacobs, accompanied by all of the officers of the Grand Lodge, three Past Grand Masters, seven Past Masters, and the entire Masters Association were present. The Charter was read by Grand Secretary J. Claude Keiper, and the officers of the Lodge were installed by the Grand Master. Worshipful Master Judd presented the Lodge with a set of Jewels on behalf of National Lodge, # 12. P.M. Haas presented the Seal to the Lodge. On behalf of Mrs. Henry Gompers and the Gompers family, Samuel J. Gompers presented a set of Working Tools. P.M. Babcock presented a 24-inch gauge on behalf of Theodore Roosevelt Lodge, # 44.

P.G.M. Roe Fulkerson presented the Lodge with a case for the Charter, and the Masters Association presented the Master with a basket of flowers. The Lodge voted the following Honorary members: P.G.M. Roe Fulkerson, P.G.M. Charles C. Coombs, Grand Secretary J. Claude Keiper, Grand Lecturer Bert V. Wolfe, Past Masters Harry Sherby, Marquis T. Albertson, Edward Burkholder, Dan C. Vaughan, Albert Haas, John W. Tiffany, Henry Stein, John A. Colburn, Grand Master Sydney R. Jacobs, and Brothers Christian Hansen and Samuel J. Gompers.

Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50

Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50 was chartered on May 12, 1937 and constituted on May 19, 1937 with 150 Members. The newly constituted Lodge met at the Masonic Temple on New York Ave and 13th Street.

Grand Master Paul Cromelin granted a dispensation on the petition of 107 brethren recommended by St. Johns Lodge #12 for the forming of a new lodge to be known as Benjamin Franklin Lodge. The charter named Joseph Fromberg as Master, Harry Ostrow as Senior Warden, and Loraine T Johnson as Junior Warden.

At a meeting held May 12 1937, the Grand Lodge granted Benjamin Franklin Lodge its Charter. After the Grand Secretary certified that the affairs of the lodge were in order. On a motion by Brothers Needham Turnage and John Lainhart, the charter prayed for by the petitioners be granted and the Lodge enrolled on the register of the Grand Lodge as Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50. This motion was adopted.

Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50 held its first meeting as a duly constituted Lodge on May 19, 1937 at the Masonic Temple. For the occasion, the large Lodge room, number one, was borrowed, and the Grand Master installed the officers. Remarks were delivered by M.W. Brothers Walter F Going, Grand Master and O. Frank Hart, Past Grand Master and Grand Secretary, of South Carolina. Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50 formed the Grand Lodge Blood Bank.

MERGER

After months of consideration and planning, Samuel Gompers Lodge #45 merged with Benjamin Franklin Lodge #50 under the leadership of Julien Hofberg who became Worshipful Master of the consolidated Lodge, Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge # 45 on June 14, 1983. It was a merger of two wonderful Lodges with rich and cherished histories.

LODGE MEETING SPACES (Samuel Gompers Lodge)

1. Masonic Temple at New York Ave and 13th Street
2. Stansbury Masonic Hall at Georgia Avenue, N.W
3. B'nai Israel at 16th and Crittenden
4. Beth Sholom at 13th and Eastern
5. Church across from Beth Sholom in 1970 Tifereth Israel at 16th & Juniper.
6. Takoma Masonic Hall

GRAND LODGE PARTICIPATION

Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge has been very active in the affairs of the Grand Lodge of District of Columbia and produced five Grand Masters. They are as follows:

Milton Korman (1969) (Samuel Gompers #45)

Norman Engleberg (1972) (Benjamin Franklin #50)

Theodore M Kahn (1985)

Robert H Starr (2002)

Jules S Tepper (2003)

Grand Lodge Officers during the 2010 Masonic Year include:

Joel Shulman, PM, Assistant Grand Chaplin

Burt Levy, PM, Grand Photographer

Norman Barshai, PM, Honorary aide to the Grand Master

Sheldon Rappeport, PM, Grand Lecturer Emeritus

Walter Simon, PM, Grand Chaplin Emeritus

For reasons of brevity, the other brethren of Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge #45 who served as Grand Lodge Officers are not mentioned, but we honor their service and dedication to the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia.

LODGE MILESTONES

25TH ANNIVERSARY

Samuel Gompers Lodge, in 25 years, grew from a small group of approximately 200 brethren, to 1,015. This phenomenal growth is attributed to an active membership in all aspects of the organization. The year started with a New Year's Party that was attended by over 700 brethren and their wives. The Birthday Party was held at the Statler Hotel and Kiddies Night was enjoyed at Turner's Arena. Ladies' Night was again at the Mayflower Hotel. An exchange of visits with St. John's Lodge of Baltimore took place. They were entertained with a Masonic play at the George Washington Memorial Lodge in Alexandria. We held two Master Mason Degrees in costume during the year. The annual picnic was held in Rock Creek Park. Fifty-one men were raised and in the blood drive, our Lodge donated 330 pints. Charter member night culminated the activities of the Silver Anniversary year.

50th ANNIVERSARY

To mark the start of the 50th year of our Lodge and with an Honor Guard of Fellowcraft Past Presidents, Worshipful Master Cornell was auspiciously installed in the East at the Scottish Rite Temple. Congresswoman Bella Abzug and radio announcer Joseph McCaffrey were our speakers during the year, and the Golden Anniversary Ladies' Night at Indian Spring Country Club was packed to capacity. The blood program yielded over 400 pints of blood and Gompers Grove in Israel had more than 1,350 trees planted. Fudda Nabi Grotto Night featured Carl Claudy's Masonic play, "To Entertain Strangers," and W.M. Paul Cornell was proud to see his son, Michael become Master Councilor of Samuel Gompers Chapter of DeMolay.

75TH ANNIVERSARY

Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge celebrated its 75th under the leadership of Worshipful Brother Billy Boker, who had the honor of serving as Worshipful Master on three separate occasions. It was thanks to Billy Boker's tireless efforts and leadership that the Lodge survived turbulent time and entered the new century with renewed vigor.

Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge #45 would not be as successful if it were not for the presence and active participation of the Past Masters who provided the guidance and experience to the current line of officers.

LODGE FUTURE

The Pillar Officers for Samuel Gompers-Benjamin Franklin Lodge in 2011 are expected to be:

Worshipful Master Joshua Rubin

Senior Warden Erik Milman

Junior Warden Max Brandy

Senior Warden Joshua Rubin is busy formulating his plans for 2011 including the 85th Anniversary celebration of the Lodge. The current line officer does not include Past Masters.