

# The 200th Anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Delaware A.F. & A.M. The View from Philadelphia

*By Right Worshipful Grand Master Ronald A. Aungst, Sr.*

For centuries, Freemasons have acknowledged the power of a handshake. Whether it represents the inherent trust between Brethren or one hand extended to another in a time of need, it symbolizes Masons helping Masons. The strength of Freemasonry lies with our ability to serve our Masonic family and those in our communities through charity, education and the bonds of brotherhood. In this spirit, representing the Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Pennsylvania and all Pennsylvania Masons, I congratulate the Grand Lodge of Delaware A.F. & A.M. and all Delaware Masons on the occasion of their 200th Anniversary with this historical sketch, which is based upon my remarks at Old Town Hall on June 10, 2006.

The provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, including its twelve lodges, (five of which – Nos. 5, 14, 18, 33 and 44 – were in Delaware), under the Grand Lodge of England, had been closed September 25, 1786. On the following day, the independent Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania constituted itself. In his address on the occasion of the 170th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Delaware, Past Grand Master Paul D. Ellis (Grand Master 1972), Grand Secretary (1974-1978) provided some more essential back-



ground information: “On October 26, 1786, just a month after the formation of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, a convention was called at Cantwell’s Bridge to discuss forming a Grand Lodge of Delaware. Only three lodges were represented – Nos. 5, 14 and 44, and with the absence of Nos. 18 and 33, they adjourned to meet on November 30th. There are no records of this meeting except for a letter dated December 27, 1786 written by the Master of Lodge No. 5 (at Cantwell’s Bridge) to

the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania advising it of the convention with all five lodges present and requesting instructions and information in a “kind and brotherly manner” on the nature for constituting a Grand Lodge in Delaware. There is no record of a reply. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, perhaps feeling that “the three lower counties” – New Castle, Kent and Sussex – were still part of Pennsylvania, as they had been until 1776, did not look upon the idea of a Grand Lodge in Delaware in a “kind and brotherly manner”!

Nevertheless, nine Brethren, said to represent Lodges No. 31 Laurel Town, Sussex County (under the Grand Lodge of Maryland), No. 33, New Castle, New Castle County; No. 96 New Ark (sic), New Castle County and No. 14 Wilmington, New Castle County (all under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania). “...Resolved, unanimously (sic), “that the several Lodges of Ancient Masons in the State of Delaware... consider it as a matter of right and for the general benefit of Masonry that they ought to form a Grand Lodge within the said State; and now do proceed to form and organize themselves into a Grand Lodge accordingly to be known and distinguished by the name of The