

Centralized government for Freemasonry began with the creation of State grand lodges, and the earliest of which was that for Massachusetts in 1770. It was followed by that of Rhode Island in 1771, North Carolina in 1777, and Virginia in 1778. Beginning with Vermont in 1784, followed by Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Georgia in 1786; New York, Maryland, and South Carolina in 1787; New Hampshire and Connecticut in 1789, all except one of the original thirteen States had organized independent grand lodges before the close of the century; and when that one, Delaware, was organized in 1806, the system of State grand lodges may be said to have been completed, all except two under constitutions hardly to any extent varying in their respective provisions, and all recognizing State territory as co-extensive with their Masonic jurisdiction, and local lodge creation by, and subordination to, grand lodge centralization and government.

Such a form of State grand lodge government necessarily involved pecuniary support for the same; and this, in turn, involved lodge taxation of membership to provide such pecuniary support, and hence by-laws of lodges required annual dues to be added to cost of degrees and of admission, as the price of membership. Constitutional provision, consequent upon State grand lodge organization, in this manner changed the character of the Masonic institution in America, and established it on a level, and recognizing similar pecuniary provision, with those secret societies which first became known in this country within the present century.

The first of these societies, known as the Independent Order of Oddfellows, was indebted to the then organization of Masonry for its constitution as a whole, and adopted it, with only such changes as its nomenclature and varying operations required. Unlike Masonry, Odd-Fellowship was a relief society—this being its most salient feature—a quasi health-assurance association, with obligations entered into with each of its members which were unknown to Masonry, and of a character that required a lodge treasury as the principal requisite of its every lodge. Dues, or taxes, to provide such a treasury were, consequently, an absolute necessity with each lodge of Odd-Fellows; while with each lodge of Freemasons, there being no demand for a treasury to provide for the sick, the dying or the dead, involuntary or legal taxation to create such a treasury was, from the beginning, by those who chose to compare the respective institutions, regarded as an imposition, and inevitably, sooner or later, to be resisted, lawfully if possible, but at all events resisted. For this reason the lodges of Connecticut and Rhode Island never recognized the principle, and consequently have never suspended a member for non-payment of dues.

It is evident from the reports of the Grand Lodges, more especially in the Western and Southern States, within the past ten years, that this resistance has begun and unlawfully; for suspension for any cause is a punishment, and consequent upon the infraction of a law. In Ohio, in 1878, there were punished in this way 1,671 Freemasons, otherwise in good stand-