

## HISTORY OF MONARCH LODGE NO. 73

By Bro. Michael Essien, Junior Steward

Monarch Lodge #73 began in the mind of a Master Mason, Brother M. Robinson Baker, a member of Good Hope Lodge. It is said that he had a dream of becoming a Past Master so that he could participate in Grand Lodge activities of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the States of California and Hawaii Incorporated. At that time, Brother Baker was one of the most controversial members of Prince Hall Masonry, because of his progressive thinking, in particular, his desire to emphasize use of more modern administrative procedures in managing a Lodge. It was felt that there was a concerted effort in Good Hope Lodge to keep him from becoming Master of the Lodge, mainly because of his progressive thinking, which necessarily excluded him from becoming a Past Master and voting in Grand Lodge proceedings.

As Brother Baker's frustrations grew, a Grand Lodge Officer by the name of Brother Treese suggested that if he wanted to become a Past Master and participate in Grand Lodge proceedings, he should form his own lodge. Brother Baker then set about doing his work to form a lodge. Being an insurance agent, Brother Baker was able to gather all the agents in the area to form a U.D. Masonic Club, known as Crown Club, that met in Jewel Mann's back room.

It takes 7 Master Masons to form a Masonic Club and 35 to form a Lodge. The original 7 Master Masons that demitted to Crown Club U.D. were, from Good Hope Lodge No. 29, Brother M. Robinson Baker, Reverend William B. Smith, Brother Rederick Wilkinson, Brother Emerald Smith, Brother James R. Campbell, and Brother Gilbert P. Jones. Brother Clarence Brown demitted from Adonis No. 25.

These Brothers had to recruit 28 men before they could petition Grand Lodge to become duly constituted, and they had a captive audience in the Golden State Insurance Agency. The Brothers were able to acquire the 35 members necessary and Crown Club petitioned the Grand Lodge to become regularly constituted.

The real fight to form Monarch Lodge began when Crown Club U.D. petitioned the Grand Lodge to be regularly constituted. There were many people active in Masonry at the time of the petition that did not want to see a "special" or an elite Lodge formed with only insurance agents as its members. This might seem trivial today, but if one was to travel back in time some 40 years, a person's job carried more social status, and the Brothers of Crown Club were white collar workers at a time when the majority of people in Prince Hall Freemasonry were blue collar workers at the Army Base or the Navy Base. Envy and jealousy seemed now to have been added to the battle against Brother Baker's dream of forming a Lodge. After all, why could not these fine men join the already existing Lodges instead of forming their own?

Once the smoke cleared from the battle, Crown Club was granted a Constitution in Woodland, California on October 25, 1952 by Sterling Hopkins, Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the States of California and

Hawaii Incorporated.

The duly formed lodge was called "*Monarch*" which contained a dual significance. First, Monarch is defined as a person who is a king or of royalty. Secondly, Monarch was the title of the highest achievement award one could receive in the Golden State Mutual Insurance Company. Such a lofty name meant that Monarch was not going to settle for being a second rate Lodge but aspired to be the number one Lodge in the state and the jurisdiction.

The Lodge Officers consisted of the original 7 Master Masons: Worshipful Master M. Robinson Baker, Senior Warden Reverend William Smith, Junior Warden Rederick Wilkinson, Treasurer Emerald Smith, Secretary James Campbell, Senior Deacon Clarence Brown, and Junior Deacon G.P. Jones. These Brothers had one goal in mind and that was to become the best Lodge in the jurisdiction.

Since Monarch's formation, it has been active in all areas of Masonic life. The Brothers of Monarch have aided and assisted the development of Regina Chapter No. 67, Order of the Eastern Star, as well as the Neddie B. Pergeson Court No. 36, Heroines of Jericho, as well as providing scholarships for students entering college. Also, Monarch has reached its goal of being one of the best Lodges in the jurisdiction and the State and boasts of having the YMCA on Brockhurst and Market Street named after its founder and charter member, Brother M. Robinson Baker. Furthermore, Brother Baker went on to become Chairman of the Board of Directors for Prince Hall Grand Lodge.

In addition to the above accomplishments, Monarch has produced a Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the States of California and Hawaii Incorporated, Past Grand Master Harold D. Mure and currently has several members serving as Grand Lodge Officers.

The dream that began in the mind of our Brother, the late Past Master M. Robinson Baker, has come to fruition and his legacy continues. It is only fitting that its story close with a favorite saying of Past Master M. Robinson Baker:

*"He that looketh not after his own is worse than an infidel"*