

**Washington Lodge, no. 21, F. & A.M., and some of its members** By Robert W. Reid (M.D.)

JOHN P. BESSONETT. The Bessonetts were originally seated in the Province of Dauphiny, France, several of the name being prominent in the Reformation. At the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), a branch of the family fled to Ireland and from thence to America.

The writer obtained the following account from one of the family: "Three brothers (Bessonett) became involved in some political difficulty and were compelled to flee from France. Two of the brothers, being Roman Catholics, went to Canada, the third being a

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Huguenot, came to New York." The story was told by a descendant of one of the Canadian refugees who came to New York and joined the Masonic order. The records of the Old Huguenot Church show the presence of families of this name in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania a few years after the Revocation. It is from these Huguenot Bessonetts that our charter member was descended.

Bro. Bessonett was born in New York in June, 1767. In 1789 he was one of the leading jewelers and watchmakers in the city. His place of business was at "The Sign of the Dial," No. 32 Maiden Lane, at which stand he was for many years, at first under the firm name of Bessonett & Merkles, and later under his own name. In the same year, he was commissioned an Ensign in Morgan Lewis' Regiment, and probably participated in the military exercises at the first inauguration of George Washington as President of the United States. He continued in the militia until 1813 when he resigned as Captain in the Ninth Artillery, participating for a time in the early military preparation for the defense of New York. In 1792 he was one of the incorporating members of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen.

Bro. Bessonett died December 7, 1841, and was buried in the "Friends Cemetery." He left a widow, Mary Bessonett, but no surviving descendants.

Bro. Bessonett was raised in Phoenix Lodge in 1799. He did not hold any office in that or Washington Lodge.