

African Lodge No. 459

On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and 14 men of color (The historical record reflects that the others were: Cyrus Johnston, Bueston Slinger, Prince Rees, John Canton, Peter Freeman, Benjamin Tiler, Duff Ruform, Thomas Santerson, Prince Rayden, Cato Speain, Boston Smith, Peter Best, Fortune Howard, and Richard Titley.) were made masons in Lodge #441 of the Irish Registry attached to the 38th British Foot Infantry at Castle William Island in Boston Harbor, Massachusetts. It marked the first time that Black men were made Freemasons in America.

About a year later, since the conflict between England and America had commenced, the British Foot Infantry left Boston, along with its lodge, leaving Prince Hall and his associates without a lodge. Before the lodge left, Worshipful Master Batt, gave them a "permit" to meet as a lodge and bury their dead in manner and form. This permit, however, did not allow them to do any "masonic work" or to take in any new members.

Under the permit, African Lodge #1 was organized on July 3, 1776, with Prince Hall as the Worshipful Master. It wasn't long before this lodge received an additional "permit" from Provincial Grand Master John Rowe to walk in procession on St. John's Day.

On March 2, 1784, Prince Hall and African Lodge #1 petitioned the Grand Lodge of England, via a letter to William Moody, Worshipful Master of Brotherly Love Lodge #55 in London, England, for a warrant (or charter), to organize a regular masonic lodge, with all the rights and privileges thereunto prescribed. This Warrant or Charter was prepared by the Grand Lodge of England that same year. Issued and signed by Thomas Howard Lord of Effingham acting Grandmaster, R. Holt Deputy Grand Master, witnessed William White Grand Secretary under the Authority Royal Highness Henry Frederick Duke of Cumberland. However, the charter was held up on return, when the fees sent by Prince Hall never arrived. Hall then entrusted another fee to Captain James Scott of Boston, brother-in-law of Governor John Hancock of Massachusetts, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Captain Scott delivered the letter and the money to the Grand Lodge of England, and received the Charter Warrant, which he duly delivered to Prince Hall in Boston, Massachusetts in September of 1787; though the original date (September 29, 1784) of issuance by the Grand Lodge of England remained on the charter.

According to record, the Charter naming and numbering African Lodge No. 459, which was later changed to 371 on the English Grand Lodge Register, has been and is in the exclusive possession of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Massachusetts, and it is secured between heavy plate glass and is kept in a fire-proof vault in the First National Bank of Boston. It is brought out and displayed during the African Lodge 459 biennial celebration.

African Lodge #459 grew and prospered to such a degree that Worshipful Master Prince Hall was appointed a Provincial Grand Master, in 1791, and out of this grew the first Black Provincial Grand Lodge.

In 1797 he organized a lodge in Philadelphia and one in Rhode Island. These lodges were designated to work under the charter of African Lodge #459.

In December 1808, one year after the death of Prince Hall, African Lodge #459 (Boston), African Lodge #459 (Philadelphia) and Hiram Lodge #3 (Providence) met in a general assembly of the craft and organized African Grand Lodge (sometime referred to as African Grand Lodge #1).

In 1847, out of respect for their founding father and first Grand Master, Prince Hall, they changed their name to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, the name it carries today. In 1848 Union Lodge #2, Rising Sons of St. John #3 and Celestial Lodge #4 became the first lodges organized under the name Prince Hall Grand Lodge.

Who Was Prince Hall?

At the time of his death December 4, 1807 Prince Hall was age 72, putting his year of birth at 1735. Due to minimal records kept for blacks in that time, few facts are known about his early life, including place of birth and vocation. Historians and authors have claimed his place of birth as Barbados, West Indies, his arrival in Boston from Africa in 1765, and his vocation of a leather-dresser and minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, at some point in his life. There are unsubstantiated claims that Prince Hall, was a freed man in 1770, by William Hall who filed manumission papers for a "Prince Hall" stating that "he is no longer to be reckoned a slave". Records indicate in his later life he became a property owner, voter, and community activist in the Cambridge-Boston Colony.

When he lived, he was an ordinary man, but, one who was revered and esteemed by his contemporaries, white and black that knew him. After he died on December 4, 1807, he grew in the esteem of his people as the years passed. One of the first references to Prince Hall came seventeen years after his death. Very little information was known of him or written about him between his death in 1807 and 1824. Reference to Prince Hall was presented in the Centennial Celebration of African Lodge on September 29, 1884.

Prince Hall was an active leader of the colonial blacks in Massachusetts. He was an advocate and an activist in the termination of the slave trade and slavery. A leader in four petitions in 1773, 1774, 1777 and 1778.

He petitioned General George Washington to admit men of color into the Continental Army. Of further note Hall distinguished himself at Bunker Hill. He led the entire Lodge membership in support of Governor Bowdoin during the rebellion of Daniel Shay and his group.

He petitioned the Massachusetts state legislature for the funds to educate children of color. He also opened his home as a school to provide an education to adults of color.

He petitioned the state legislature to grant to all citizens of color the right to own real property and to vote in all elections.

He served as a "Special Deputy" to the Grand Lodge of England at the end of the Revolutionary War and was armed with the charge to travel throughout the colonies to determine the number of Subordinate Caucasian Lodges still operating as such in the new world.

A broken-column monument marks the gravesite of Prince Hall in Copps Hill Cemetery in Boston.

Progression of Prince Hall Masonry throughout the U.S.

During the most significant period of Masonic growth and development in the 19th century, Freemasonry African Lodges spread from Massachusetts, through New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Ohio, and Virginia. Many lodges and

Grand Lodges were founded under the authority of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge. From these beginnings, there now are some 5,000 lodges and 47 grand lodges who trace their lineage to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Jurisdiction of Massachusetts. This includes many active "military lodges" chartered abroad, in many countries.

In 1849, the Ohio Grand Lodge (African) now the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio, was established. Among the Ohio lodges created under its charge, the first Prince Hall Lodge in Indiana was chartered. On August 1, 1849 Union Lodge No.5 was chartered in Indianapolis.

At the formation of "The Independent Union Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons" of the State of Indiana on September 13, 1856, the number of Union Lodge was changed from Number 5 to Number 1.

A convention was held on June 25, 1873, under the leadership of Grand Master William H. Russell where the name of the Grand Lodge was changed to the "The Most Worshipful Independent Union Grand Lodge of the State of Indiana"; and, Union Lodge Number .1 of Indianapolis was consolidated with Gleaves Lodge Number .2 of Indianapolis; and, was renamed as Central Lodge. No.1 to avoid conflict with the name of the Grand Lodge.

In 1857, M.W. John G. Britton, Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Independent Union Grand Lodge of the State of Indiana granted a dispensation to his Deputy Grand Master, John W. Harrison and a group of masons residing in the City of Niles, Michigan to open the first lodge of colored masons in this State. To be known as Harrison Lodge, U.D., which was granted a charter-January 13, 1859; and became Harrison Lodge No. 6 on the list of Indiana Lodges. Hart Lodge No. 10, of the City of Ypsilanti, Michigan was granted a Charter by the same authority and was dedicated and Constituted by James S. Hinton, Grand Master of Indiana, with J. W. Harrison, D.G.M.

At present day in 2019, the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Jurisdiction of Indiana, under the leadership of Eugene Anderson, Jr (our 46th Most Worshipful Grand Master), has under its charge 34 Prince Hall Masonic Lodges located throughout the state. Currently, eight (8) Prince Hall lodges reside and fellowship, as well serve and support the Indianapolis community.

In an effort to realize true Brotherly Love and Fellowship among Freemasons in our state, a joint and historic effort between Indiana Grand Lodge and Indiana Prince Hall Grand Lodge began the process of "Recognition" in Indiana in 1998. Indiana continues to work and grow in its recognition and fellowship among Masons, regardless of color, in the true spirit of Freemasonry.

Note: This brief history of Prince Hall and the birth and growth of Prince Hall Masonry throughout the U.S. and abroad, is not intended to be all inclusive of extenuating circumstances, detailed facts or complete history of Prince Hall Masonry.

References: www.africanlodge459.info; www.MWPHGLIN.org; www.MWPHGLOH.org; www.centralldodge1.org; Charter of African Lodge 459 (exhibit 2); Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F&AM Michigan; Prince Hall Life and Legacy Wesley, Charles H. 1977

Exhibit 1 - FAMOUS PRINCE HALL AFFILIATED FREEMASONS

Bro. Garrett A. Morgan, Sr. inventor traffic light and gas mask

Bro. Robert Abbot - Founder of the Chicago Defender

Bro. Richard Allen - Founder/first Bishop of the A.M.E. Church

Bro. Alexander T. Augusta - First African-American to head a hospital in the U.S.

Bro. Marion Barry - Former Mayor of Washington, D.C.

Bro. William "Count" Basie - Orchestra leader/composer

Bro. James J.G. Bias - Founder of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee

Bro. Henry Blair - First Black to receive a U.S. patent

Bro. James Herbert "Eubie" Blake - Composer/Pianist

Bro. Edward Bouchet - First Black to be elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society

Bro. William Wells Brown - First Black to publish a novel

Bro. Nathaniel "Nat King" Cole - Singer

Bro. Ossie Davis - Actor/Director/Playwright

Bro. Martin R. Delany - First Black to matriculate from Harvard Medical School/First Black Major in the U.S. Army

Bro. W.E.B. DuBois - Educator/author/historian

Bro. Alexander Dumas - Author

Bro. Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington - Orchestra leader/composer

Bro. Medgar Wiley Evers - Civil Rights leader

Bro. James Forten - Abolitionist/manufacturer

Bro. Timothy Thomas Fortune - Journalist

Bro. Alex Haley - Author

Bro. William C. Handy - Composer

Bro. Matthew Henson - Explorer

Bro. Benjamin L. Hooks - Former Executive Director of the N.A.A.C.P.

Bro. Jesse Jackson - Founder of the Rainbow Coalition and Operation Push

Bro. Maynard Jackson - First black mayor of Atlanta

Bro. John H. Johnson - Publisher of Ebony and Jet magazines

Bro. Jack Johnson - First Black heavyweight boxing champion in U.S.

Bro. Absalom Jones - First Black Priest in the Episcopal Church in U.S.

Bro. Dr. Ernest Everett Just - One of the founders of Omega Psi Phi and renowned zoologist

Bro. Don King - Boxing promotor

Bro. Lewis Howard Latimer - Inventor of the carbon filament for light

Bro. Thurgood Marshall - Former Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court

Bro. Benjamin E. Mays - Former President of Morehouse College

Bro. Leon M'Ba - First President of the Republic of Gabon

Bro. Kweisi Mfume - Executive Director of the N.A.A.C.P.

Bro. Richard Pryor - Comedian/Actor

Bro. Alexander Pushkin - Poet/Novelist/Playwright

Bro. A. Philip Randolph - Founder and First President of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

Bro. Charles Rangel - U.S. Congressman

Bro. Joseph Jenkins Roberts - First President of the Republic of Liberia

Bro. "Sugar" Ray Robinson - Former mid/light heavyweight boxing champion

Bro. Arthur A. Schomburg - Historian/Author

Bro. Rev. Al Sharpton - Civil Rights Advocate

Bro. Carl B. Stokes - First Black Mayor of Cleveland, OH

Bro. Louis Stokes - Former U.S. Congressman

Bro. David Walker - Author of "David Walker's Appeal

Bro. Booker T. Washington - Educator and Fonder of the Tuskegee University/Institute

Bro. Daniel Hale Williams - First surgeon to perform open heart surgery

Bro. Bert Williams - Actor/Comedian

Bro. Granville T. Woods - Inventor

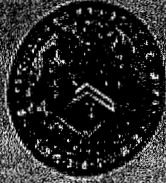
Bro. Andrew Young - Former Mayor of Atlanta and U.N. Ambassador

Bro. Lawrence Douglass Wilder - The First Black elected Governor in this country from Virginia.

Bro Dr. Charles H Wesley - Author "The History of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of Ohio 1849-1971".

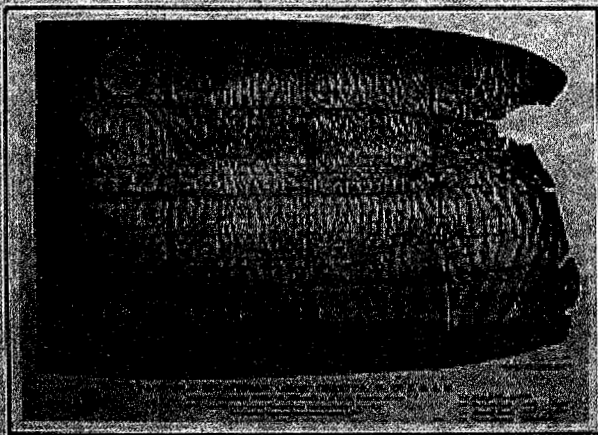
Bro. Eugene Charlie Allen - Head White House Butler for 34 years under 8 Presidents

READING OF THE ORIGINAL CHARTER 459



To all and every our Right Worshipful loving Brethren
we Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, Lord Howard, &c. &c. &c. &c.
Grand Master, under the authority of His Royal Highness Henry
Frederick Duke of Cumberland &c. &c. &c. Grand Master of the Most
Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, send
greeting:

Know Ye, that we, at the humble petition of our right trusty and well-beloved Brethren
Prince Hall, Boston Smith, Thomas Sanderson and several other Brethren residing in Boston New
England in North America do hereby constitute the said Brethren into a regular Lodge of Free
and Accepted Masons, under the title or denomination of the African Lodge, to be opened in
Boston aforesaid, and do further at their said petition, hereby appoint the said Prince
Hall to be Master Boston Smith, Senior Warden, and Thomas Sanderson, Junior Warden
for opening the said Lodge, and for such further time only as shall be thought proper
by the Brethren thereof, it being our will that this our appointment of the above of-
ficers shall in no wise affect any future election of officers of the Lodge, but that such
election shall be regulated agreeable to such by laws of said Lodge as shall be consist-
ent with the general laws of the society, contained in the Book of Constitutions, and
we hereby will and require you, the said Prince Hall, to take special care that all
and every the said Brethren are or have been regularly made Masons, and that they
do observe, perform, and keep all the rules and orders contained in the Book of Consti-
tutions, and further, that you do, from time to time, cause to be entered in a book kept for
that purpose, an account of your proceedings in the Lodge, together with all such rules, orders
and regulations, as shall be made for the good government of the same, that in no wise
you omit once in every year to send to us, or our successors, Grand Masters, or to
Rowland Holt, Esq, our Deputy Grand Master, for the time being an account in writ-
ing of your said proceedings, and copies of all such rules, orders, and regulations as
shall be made as aforesaid, together with a list of the members of the Lodge, and
such a sum of money as may suit the circumstances of the Lodge and reasonably
be expected, toward the Grand Charity. Moreover, we hereby will and require you,
the said Prince Hall, as soon as conveniently may be, to send an account in writ-
ing of what may be done by virtue of these presents.



Given at London, under our hand
and seal of Masonry, this 29th
day of September, A.D. 1784,
A.D. 1784.

By the Grand Master's Command,
R. Holt, G. L. M.

"Witness
Thos. White, G. L."