

# THE PRINCE HALL HERITAGE



The most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio has a historical background of great significance to all Masons in the State and to all who have the sense of history the awareness of Masonic heritage. A succession of Grand Masters, Worshipful Masters, leaders, and followers made contributions to the Masonic cause. Some have sacrificed themselves through dedicated service in the elective of the Craft, while others through individual initiative, and official appointment, have established or guided lodges of Freemasonry among colored Americans to greater heights of activity. These are the more immediate clouds of witnesses surround us. It is difficult to conceive what our Order would have been without these devoted men who braved dangers unknown to us, to found, build, and conduct this institution in which brotherhood and spiritual virtues would rule the and lives of men in dominant ways.

One of the values was the cause of physical freedom. No man who was a slave could be a Mason, for such a man was not free. A Mason was neither a slave to another nor to the desire of his own devising. Freedom was not only his condition but it was also his watchword and battle cry. In discussing the qualifications of candidates Mackey states, "We learn from them that the candidate for the mysteries of Masonry must be freeborn" - changed later to "free." While

the growth of Masonry among colored Americans as a population group had to await the dawn of freedom among them, and particularly among men of creative mind and activity, there were thousands who were free at the foundation of our government and their number increased rapidly with the passing years.

According to the First Census in 1790, there were 59,557 free colored persons in the United States and there were 9,602 in Massachusetts and mainly in Boston. They were 7.9 per cent of the total population of 157,181. The rate of increase for colored Americans in the decade 1790-1800, was 20.8 per cent, or more than one-fifth. The number of the free continued to increase so that in 1869, there were 488,070, and there were probably more who could not be located in these days of fugitive slavery.

Among the Founding Fathers of Freemasonry in the United States was Prince Hall, who in the midst of degraded and oppressed circumstances became the Founder of Freemasonry among the colored population in the United States. His leadership of Freemasonry began through his relationship with English Masonry. Great Britain, with its vast colonial empire, found it necessary to keep military forces in various parts of the globe where its flag was flying. British regiments in these places often had attached lodges, variously termed Camp Lodges Field Lodges, Traveling Lodges, Regimental Lodges, and Moveable Lodges. The Masons of this period were very active in maintaining military lodges, and through them Freemasonry was spread. The initiation of civilians was reported to be a common practice

in army lodges. After the existence of the British military forces, some of these civilians organized permanent lodges and received charters.

The leader of this movement among colored Americans was Prince Hall who was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, the son of an English father, Thomas Prince Hall, and a free colored woman of French descent. His birth year is variously given. One of these accepted dates is September 12, 1748. The pioneer Masonic historians, William H. Grimshaw and Harry E. Davis, agree on this date. His monument bears the dates, 1748-1807. However, Historian Harry A. Williamson suggests that the year of Hall's birth is 1735, since his death notice published on December 7, 1807, stated that he died at the age of 72 years. When Hall was twelve years of age, he was placed as an apprentice to a master workman in leather.

Prince Hall arrived in Boston in March, 1765, after working his passage on a sailing vessel. Having a trade as a leather worker and as a soap maker by avocation, these activities secured for him a good livelihood, and by thrift and sobriety, he became the owner of real estate which qualified him as a freeman, a taxpayer, and a voter. The old records of Boston show that he voted for Governor and for members of the General Court. Realizing that his early education was deficient he devoted himself to studies by night and day when free from daily activities. He was a student of the Bible, joined the Methodist Church, became one of its ministers with a congregation at Cambridge, and soon assembled what Grimshaw calls, "A prosperous congregation." It is also of interest to observe that his favorite hymn was,

"O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
and our eternal home."

Hall's natural talent and ambition, his self-education won by application to available books, and his connection with Methodism soon marked him as a leader of the small group of the free colored population in the city of Boston. Illustrious George W. Crawford writes in his *Prince Hall and His Followers* (New York, 1914) "Besides affording him the chance to display his unusual gifts as a Priest, the ministry gave Prince Hall an opportunity for the larger public activities which made him the recognized leader and spokesman for his people."

Further evidence of the wide range of Prince Hall's activities is shown in an excerpt from the *Diary of William Bentley* (Salem, 1907). This shows that Prince Hall was a useful worker in still another avocation and that he was highly regarded: "July 11, 1801, The Turtle Feast of the Marine Society at Osgood's. The Turtle was given by a gentleman in Havana. The clergy was invited. Our chief cook was Prince Hall, an African, and a person of great influence among his color in great Boston, being Master of the African Lodge and a person to whom they refer with confidence their principal affairs. The clergy were introduced to him and the principal gentlemen took notice of him. Brother Freeman of Boston pronounced him a very useful man and that the Masonic Negroes were evidently many grades above the common blacks of Boston."

Hall was an opponent of slavery, an abolitionist, and an advocate of citizenship, and was equally insistent that his people should also be free from discrimination and indignity. There

were petitions and protests sponsored by him which were addressed to the Massachusetts legislature between 1773 and 1778, protesting against slavery, the abuses and the discriminations practiced against the Negro people. His activity included the effort to open a school for Negro children in Boston by its Selectmen, since there was no school for them and schools were privately controlled.

Prince Hall urged Hancock and Warren, members of the Committee of Safety in 1775, to enlist Negroes in the Colonial Army. Later he served also as chairman of a delegation which conferred with General Washington on the same purpose. Washington was doubtful of his authority to make such a radical innovation, and referred the matter to the Continental Congress. An order was issued by him permitting the enlistment of freemen in the army at Cambridge. The enlistment records of Massachusetts show that Prince Hall was one of these volunteers, who was admitted to the army in February, 1776, joining Dillingham '5 Company and Welbor's Company and in 1778, Thatcher's Regiment.

On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and fourteen other freemen of Boston were initiated at Castle William, Boston Harbor - now Fort Independence - in Masonry in the British Military Lodge No. 441, working under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. This initiation and raising of them as Master Masons was before Lexington, Concord, and the battles of the Revolution. This record is contained in an old minute book of the lodge, still in existence, which says in a brief note:

"March 6, 1775, Master Batt made these Masons: Prince Hall, Cyrus Jonbus, Peter Best, Cuff Bufform, John Carter, Peter Freeman, Forten Howard, Prince Rees, Thomas Sanderson, Boston Smith, Cato Spears, Prince Taylor, Benjamin Tiber, Richard Tilley."

The mention of John Batt as the Master presiding at this ceremony identified the lodge which conferred the degrees. John Batt was a Sergeant in the 38th Foot Regiment, serving from his enlistment in 1759 until his discharge at Staten Island in 1777. The Lodge attached to the 38th Foot Regiment was No. 441 Irish Registry and the old register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland carried Brother Batt as a member of No. 441 as of May 2, 1771.

This regiment was stationed in the West Indies from 1706 to 1765, and was first located in the Islands of Antigua, Guadaloupe, and Martinique. Colored men in these islands were recruited for its ranks from time to time. These soldiers were sent first to England, then to Nova Scotia, and to the American colonies. It is quite probable that Prince Hall being from Barbados, either he or some of his associates were acquainted with the soldiers of this regiment who were also Masons. Mutual interests and relationships brought them into closer contacts and the initiation of Prince Hall and the fourteen others became a milestone in Masonic history.

Of this event, Grand Master Samuel W. Clark of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio wrote in his *The Negro Mason in Equity*, "The record of the initiation supplemented with testimony of such an eminent Mason and scholar, as William Sewall Gardner, who probably has given more study and research to this particular question than any other white Mason in America, should be sufficient to establish the falsity of the first objection and to remove all doubts

about our origin, and especially so when it is remembered that historical researchers are not for our benefit but our destruction."

When the British evacuated Boston on March 17, 1775, the 38th Foot Regiment left for Halifax. At the time of departure, the Master of Lodge No. 441, Brother Batt, gave to their Colored brethren a "Permit" to meet as a lodge. This authority was granted under an established custom and one frequently used by military lodges. Harold Van Buren Voorhis observes that the lodge met during these years and was active, with an increase in members but that "The lodge has no record of conferring any degrees until 1787, which would indicate that they held to the terms of the 'Permit'."

Under this "Permet" African Lodge No. 1 was formed July 3, 1775, and there is ample evidence of its regular meetings until 1787. This is corroborated by the secretary's notes, newspaper notices, St. John's Day celebrations, and the adoption of a Code of Regulations in 1779. Prince Hall's Letter Book, found in 1899, together with the minutes of African Lodge No. 1, show that Prince Hall was in close touch with the officers of the Grand Lodge of England. Effort was made to have the lodge enrolled in the regular Massachusetts establishments without result, although correspondence indicates that a second "Permet" or license was issued by Provincial Grand Master John Rowe.

Other evidence of activity is given in the following paragraph in a Boston paper, viz Draper and Folsom, Monday, December 31, 1782, as given in Prince Hall's Letter Book:

"On Friday last, the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, was celebrated by St. Black's Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, who went in procession preceded by a band of music, dressed in their aprons and jewels from Brother G.....pions up State Street and thro Cornhill to the House of the Right Worshipful Grand Master in Water Street where an elegant and splendid entertainment was given upon this occasion."

Prince Hall, the Master of African Lodge gave answer to this statement as follows:

"MR. WILLIS,  
Sir: Observing a sketch in Monday's paper printed by Mess. Draper and Folsom relative to the celebration of the feast of St. John, the Evangelist by the African Lodge, the Master of said Lodge being possessed of a charitable disposition to all mankind, does therefore hope the publisher of the said sketch meant to give as candid description of the procession, &c. Therefore, with due submission to the public our title is not St. Black's Lodge; neither do we aspire after high titles. But our only desire is that the Great Architect of the Universe would diffuse in our hearts the true spirit of Masonry, which is love of God and universal love to all mankind. These I humbly conceive to be the two grand pillars of Masonry. Instead of a splendid entertainment, we had an agreeable one in brotherly love.

With humble submission to the above publishers and the public, I beg have leave to subscribe myself, your humble servant.

**PRINCE** **HALL**  
**Master** **of** **African** **Lodge** **No.** **1,**  
**Dedicated to St. John**

There has been a persistent belief across the years that Prince Hall and his followers endeavored to secure approval for their work as a lodge and a warrant from American Masons. In this connection, a report in the New York Dispatch, March 1, 1868, edited by Past Grand Master Holmes, and quoted by Samuel W. Clark in his Negro Mason in Equity states that this group of colored Masons had requested a dispensation for a lodge. It was reported "This request was refused upon which the petitioners addressed the Grand Lodge of England and their request was complied with."

Prince Hall had also sought enrollment in St. Andrews Provincial Grand Lodge of which General Warren was Grand Master. The volume, Lodge of St. Andrews: Bi-Centennial Memorial, 1756-1956, (Boston, 1958) states that "it was only Joseph Warren's untimely death which prevented him from issuing, as Provincial Grand Master, the charter which was to establish the first lodge of colored Masons in this country. That honor then fell to St. John's Grand Lodge, whose Master, John Rowe (also, by affiliation, a member of our own Lodge) issued a limited "permet" which entitled the colored group to meet as a Lodge, to 'walk on St. John's Day,' and to bury their dead in manner and form. This permit of 1775, did not allow African Lodge, as it was then called, to make Masons, although it gave the Lodge regular and lawful Masonic status. Not until hostilities had ceased, in 1784, was the full charter issued, this time by the Grand Lodge of England (Modern), confirming the legitimacy of, and permanently establishing, African Lodge, as No. 459 in the Registry of England."

This permit of the Army Lodge was intended for temporary use until a formal warrant could be secured from London. The Revolution delayed the receipt of this request. It was not until peace was established in 1783, and relations with England were renewed that the Grand Lodge could be approached for a warrant.

On March 2nd and June 30th, 1784, Prince Hall addressed his application to William Moody, Master of Brotherly Love Lodge No. 55, London, asking him to present the application to the Grand Lodge. These two letters cover almost the same ground. The first one, dated March 2, 1784, addressed to William Moody of London and signed by Prince Hall, stated, "Dear Brother, I would inform you that this Lodge hath been founded almost eight years ago and we have had only a Permit to Walk on St. John's Day and to Bury our Dead in manner and form. We have had no opportunity to apply for a Warrant before now, though we have been importuned to send to France for one, yet we thought it best to send to the Fountain from whence we received the Light, for a Warrant: and now Dear Br. we must make you our advocate at the Grand Lodge, hoping you will be so good (in our name and Stead) to Lay this Before the Royal Grand Master and the Grand Wardens and the rest of the Grand Lodge who we hope will not deny us nor treat us Beneath the rest of our fellowmen, although Poor yet Sincere Brethren of the Craft."

A letter of Prince Spooner, a member of the African Lodge, to Prince Hall dated April 8, 1784, directed attention to the fact that "the warrant for African Lodge was lying in the Grand Secretary's office." It was stated also that the charter for the lodge had been taken away and the writer believed that the fee should be paid and the charter issued. Subsequently, the fee was paid and acknowledged.

A letter of application, dated June 30, 1784, was signed Prince Hall, Master of the African Lodge No. 1, and is attested by Cato Underwood, the Lodge secretary, whereas the first letter is merely signed "Prince Hall." This letter is found in Masonic Textbook by Dr. H. L. Harris (1902) and is from the London Archives. This second letter also contained a reference to Grand Master John Hancock. William Moody probably did not consider the first letter a sufficient application on behalf of the lodge and the second was sent. The warrant was issued and bore the date of September 29, 1784, but was not delivered until 1787. A notice was sent by Moody to Hall on March 10, 1787, that the Charter was taken from the Grand Lodge and delivered to Captain James Scott, Master of the ship Neptune, and with it he had sent "some good advice" on how to conduct the lodge. Captain Scott was the brother-in-law of John Hancock. The Warrant reached Boston on April 29, 1787.

Prince Hall had requested Captain Scott to secure the charter and on March 16, 1787, William Moody, Master of Prezuvence Lodge, and earlier of Brotherly Love Lodge No. 55, wrote Hall, sending an acknowledge of the payment as follows:

"Received 28 February, 1787, of Captain James Scott, five pounds, fifteen shillings and six pence, being the fee on the Warrant of Constitution of African Lodge at Boston, for the Grand Lodge of the Society of Free and Accepted Masons. WM. White, Grand Secretary."

Prince Hall wrote to the Massachusetts Centennial, May 2, 1787, the following which was found in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts for 1870:

"By Captain Scott; from London, came the charter, etc., which his Royal Highness, the Duke of Cumberland, and the Grand Lodge have been graciously pleased to grant to the African Lodge in Boston. As the Brethren have a desire to acknowledge all favors shown them, they, in this public manner, return particular thanks to a certain number of the fraternity, who offered the so generous reward in this paper some time since, for the charter supposed to be lost; and to assure him, though they doubt of his friendship, that he has made them good friends.

**PRINCE HALL"**

This warrant constituted Prince Hall and his associates into a regular Lodge entitled African Lodge No. 459, which was organized formally under its charter on May 6, 1787, with Prince Hall as Worshipful Master, Boston Smith as Senior Warden, and Thomas Sanderson as Junior Warden. This act of charter-granting and lodge organization has been called "one of the great events in the history of the colored American."

Prince Hall acknowledged the receipt of the constitution and gave the reason for the delay in the transfer of the fees. He wrote that he would send later a copy of the by-laws of the lodge and also that, "By the Grace of God, I shall endeavor to fulfill all that is required of me in the charter and as I shall make the constitution my guide. I hope we shall adorn our profession as Masons." On the same date he wrote Rowland Holt, Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, and sent him a copy of the by-laws of the lodge and a list of its members. Hall referred to contributions by African Lodge to the Grand Charity Fund. William Upton states that these contributions were sent in 1787, 1789, 1792, 1793, and 1797. Upton also adds that he was "not aware that any other New England Lodge ever contributed to it at all." Copies of the original charter of African Lodge which is in the possession of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts have been published. This charter is the only extant original eighteenth century charter issued to any American lodge by the Grand Lodge of England. It is as follows:

ORIGINAL Warrant of Constitution, A.G.M. of African Lodge, CHARTER No.469

TO ALL AND EVERY:

Our Right Worshipful & Loving Brethren:

We, Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, Lord Howard, etc., etc., etc., Acting Grand Master under the authority of His Royal Highness, Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, etc., etc., etc., Grand Master of the Most Ancient & Honorable Society of Free & Accepted Masons, send Greeting:

KNOW YE, THAT, we, at the humble petition of our Right Trusty and well loved Brethren Prince Hall, Boston Smith, Thomas Sanderson, and several other Brethren residing at Boston, New England, in North America, Do hereby Constitute the said Brethren into a regular Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons, under the Title or Denomination of the African Lodge, to be opened in Boston, aforesaid. And do further, at their said Petition and of the great Trust and Confidence reposed in each of the said above named Brethren, hereby appoint the said Prince Hall to be Master; Boston Smith, Senior Warden, and Thomas Sanderson, Junior Warden, for the opening of 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 officers of the Lodge, 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 the Lodge as shall be consistent 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 Constitutions. 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, Esquire, our Deputy Grand Master, for the time being, an account in Writing 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 Sum of Money as may suit the circumstances of the Lodge and reasonably be expected towards the Grand Charity. Moreover, we hereby will and require of you, the said Prince Hall, as soon as conveniently may be, to send an Account in Writing of what may be done by virtue of these Presents.

Given at London, under Our Hand & Seal of Masonry this 29th day of Sept. A. L. 5784, A. D. 1784.

By the Grand Master's Command.

WITNESS:                    Wm.                    White,                    Grand                    Secretary.  
(SIGNED) R. Holt, Deputy Grand Master

Among other documents of historic importance in the activities of Prince Hall, there was a letter written by him to Governor James Bowdoin on November 26, 1786. This letter presents the public purpose of this first of the lodges of Negro-Americans:

"To His Excellency, James Bowdoin,

We, by the Providence of God, are members of a fraternity that not only enjoins upon us to be peaceable subjects to the Civil powers where we reside, but it also forbids our having concern in any plot or conspiracies against the present date, and as the meanest of its members must feel that want of a lawful and good government, and as we have been protected for many years under this once happy constitution, we do hope, by the blessing of God, we may enjoy that blessing; therefore, we, though unworthy members of this Commonwealth are willing to help and support, so far as our weak and feeble abilities may become necessary in this time of trouble and confusion, as you in your wisdom shall direct us. That we may, under just and lawful authority, live peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, is the hearty wish of your humble servants, the members of the African Lodge; and in their names I subscribe myself your most humble servant.

(SIGNED) PRINCE HALL."

Boston,  
November 26, 1786.

This reference is to Shay's Rebellion and the expressions of the letter are indications of the loyalty of the Lodge. When related to Prince Hall's service as a soldier, in the American Revolution, this is additional evidence of loyalty and patriotic zeal.

Prince Hall was also interested in education. On October 17, 1787, he sent a petition to the Senate and House of Representatives of Massachusetts asking that "means be provided for

the education of colored children." Again on October 4, 1796, he petitioned the Selectmen of Boston requesting "a school house for colored children." At this time there was no provision for the education of colored youth and Prince Hall took the initiative in seeking to correct this deficiency.

All important step in Masonry was taken by Prince Hall in the organization of a Grand Lodge with the call for an assembly of Masons in Boston, June 24, 1791, in Mason's Hall in the Golden Fleece on Water Street. The purpose of this meeting was to organize a Grand Lodge of Masons. Under the leadership of Prince Hall, African Grand Lodge No. 459, according to Grand Master William S. Gardner of Massachusetts, assumed the "powers, duties and responsibilities of a Grand Lodge, and became free, independent and sovereign."

The following Grand Officers were elected by this Grand Lodge; Prince Hall, Grand Master; Nero Prince, Deputy Grand Master, Cyrus-Forbs, Senior Grand Warden; George Middleton, Junior Grand Warden; Prince Taylor, Grand Secretary and Peter Best, Grand Treasurer. The appointive officers were: Peter Freeman, Grand Chaplain, Forten Howard, Senior Grand Deacon; Richard Lilly, Junior Grand Deacon; Boston Smith, Senior Grand Steward; Cato Spears, Junior Grand Steward; Thomas Sanderson, Grand Marshal; John Cantine, Grand Pursuivant; Benjamin Tiber, Grand Sword Bearer; Lancaster Hill, Grand Sword Bearer; Prince Reece, Grand Tyler. Historian Grimshaw stated that these Grand Officers were installed by Grand Master Prince Hall, assisted by members of St. Andrews Lodge (white). This statement is confirmed by the author of Lodge of St. Andrews, Bicentennial Memorial, 1756-1956, when he states that according to tradition, their members had assisted in this installation of Prince Hall and the other officers of African Grand Lodge.

It is valuable at this point to note that the Grand Lodge of England was organized in this same way in 1717. Robert Freke Gould in his The History of Free Masonry notes that the great Masonic event of the Eighteenth Century was an Assembly of Masons in 1717, out of which came the Grand Lodge of England, the Mother of Grand Lodges. On St. John the Baptist Day, June 24, 1717, the four lodges at the Goose and Gridiron ale-house in St. Paul's Church yard, the Crown ale-house in Parker's Lane, the Apple Tree Tavern on Charles Street, the Rummer and Grapes Tavern met and placed the oldest Master Mason in the chair and constituted themselves a Grand Lodge pro tempore in due form.

The narrative of this event is as follows:

"And after the Rebellion was over A. D. 1716, the few lodges at London finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren, through fit to cement under a Grand Master as the Center of Union and Harmony, viz. the Lodges that met,

1. At the Goose and Gridiron Ale-House in St. Paul's Church-Yard.
2. At the Crown Ale-house in Parker's-Lane near Drury-Lane.
3. At the Apple-Tree Tavern in Charles-street, Covent-Garden.
4. At the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel-Row, Westminster.

They and some old Brothers met at the said Apple-Tree, and having put into the Chair the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge), they constituted themselves a Grand

Lodge pro tempore in Due Form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the Officers of Lodges (called the Grand Lodge) resolved to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast, and then "to chose a Grand Master from among themselves, till they should have the Honor of a Noble Brother at their Head.

Accordingly

"On St. John Baptist's Day, in the 3d year of King George J, A. P.1717, the ASSEMBLY and Feast of the Free and Accepted Masons was held at the foresaid Goose and Gridiron Ale-house.

Before Dinner, the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge) in the Chair, proposed a List of proper Candidates; and the Brethren by a Majority of Hands elected Mr. Antony Sayer, Gentleman, Grand Master of Masons, who being forthwith invested with the Badges of Office and Power by the said oldest Master, and installed, was duly congratulated by the Assembly who pay 'd him the Homage.

Mr. JACOB LAMBALL, Carpenter  
CAPT. JOSEPH ELLIOT - Grand Wardens.

"Sayer, Grand Master, commanded the Masters and Wardens of Lodges to meet the Grand Officers every Quarter in Communication, at the Place that he should appoint in his Summons sent by the Tyler."

This procedure was similar to the one which was adopted by African Lodge No. 459, constituting itself into "African Grand Lodge of North America" with Prince Hall as first Grand Master of any Masonic Jurisdiction composed of men of color in the Western Hemisphere. There was at this period in the 18th century no definite regulations governing the operation of lodges even in foreign areas. There are several illustrations in Europe. One of these is in the record of the Grand Lodge of Scotland as it relates to Mother Tiling Lodge of Edinburg. Similar procedures were found among lodges in France and Germany during this same period. There have been several instances when Provincial Grand Lodges were formed from an original lodge. With the 1717 assembly as a precedent, it was not unusual for three or more lodges to send representatives to an assembly to form a Grand Lodge.

The Masonic authority for Prince Hall to serve as the Provincial Grand Master is derived from a copy of a dispensation to Prince Hall. The authority for this dispensation is Grimshaw who published the first copy in his history. This authority was issued through the same Grand Lodge which had in 1733, appointed the Provincial Grand Master of St. John's Lodge also in Massachusetts. The source of power and authority were the same for both Masonic bodies. The appointment of Provincial Grand Masters and Deputies was the method used for the development of Masonic work in early America.

However, the fact of this appointment of Prince Hall as Provincial Grand Master has been questioned, because the original has not been found and Grimshaw is the only source for the dispensation. While Historian Harry Davis raises doubt about it, he finally reasons that it

could have taken place and that there is evidence for it. The fact of its issuance is not too important and it neither makes nor mars the legality of Prince Hall's Grand Mastership.

This appointment of Prince Hall as a Provincial Grand Master is given prominence by Masonic Historian W. H. Grimshaw in the following document which he states was found among the manuscripts of African Lodge No.459 in Pennsylvania:

"H. R. H., The Prince of Wales (L.S.) G. M.

"To all and every our Right Worshipful and Loving Brother flow residing or who may hereafter reside in New England or North America, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, Gr8nd Master of the Free and Accepted Masons of England:

"Send Greeting:

Now Know Ye, that we have nominated, ordained, constituted, and appointed by these presents, our said Worshipful and well beloved Brother, Prince Hall, Provincial Grand Master of North America and dominion and territory thereunto belonging, with full power and authority to nominate and appoint his Deputy Grand Master and Grand Wardens, and we do also hereby empower our said Provincial Grand Master for the time being for us and in our place instead to constitute the Brethren (Free and Accepted Masons) now residing or who shall hereafter reside in those parts, into one or more regular lodge or lodges as he shall think fit, and as often as the occasion shall arise. He, the said Prince Hall taking special care that all and every member of any lodge or lodges so to be constituted have been, or shall be made regular Masons, and that they do cause all and every the Regulations contained in the Printed Book of Constitutions (except so far as they have been altered by the Grand Lodge at their quarterly meetings) to be kept and observed and also all such other rules and instruction that shall be from time to time transmitted to him or them by us, or by Peter Parker, Esquire; Our Deputy Grand Master and to the Grand Master of England, or his Deputy, for the time being annually an account in writing the number of lodges so constituted with the names of the several members of each particular lodge or lodges, together with such other matters and such things that he shall think fit to communicate for the prosperity of the Craft. And lastly, we will require that our said Provincial Grand Master, for the time being his Deputy, do annual cause their Brethren to keep the feast of St. John, the Evangelist, and dine toether on that day, or (in case any accident should happen to prevent their tinting together on that date) on any other day near that time as Provincial Grand Master for the time being shall judge most fit, as is done here and to be established for the Relief of Poor Brethren.

Given unto our hand seal of office in London, at the 27th day of January, 1791 and of Masonry 5791 by the Grand Master's Command.

ROWDAN, Acting Grand Master"

Further indication of the fact that Prince Hall was Grand Master was given by the Historian Belknap in writing in 1795 to Judge Tucker, Professor in the University of Virginia:

**"Prince Hall, a very intelligent black man, age 57 years, I must inform you that he is the Grand Master of the Lodge of Masons composed largely of blacks and distinguished by the name of African Lodge. It was begun in 1775, while this town was garrisoned by British troops, some of whom held a lodge and initiated a large number of Negroes. The lodge at present consists of thirty persons and care is taken that none but those of good moral character are admitted."**

**It was also reported in the American Freemason, April 18, that, "on the call for papers, by a Commission of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, it has been proven that Prince Hall was duly appointed Provincial Grand Master for Lodges of black men in America by exactly the same English Grand Lodge which appointed Henry Prince, sixty years Deviously, a Provincial Grand Master for Lodges of white men in America; and that he was corresponded with by the authorities of such English Grand Lodge, recognized in that official capacity as long as was any other English appointed Grand Master for any portion of the United States."**

**Prince Hall manifested his knowledge of Masonry and his leadership of Negro -Americans in 1797. This evidence was revealed in his A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge, June 24, 1797, at Nenotomy. On the reverse of its title page, Rev. William Bentley of Salem, Massachusetts has written a personal estimation of Prince Hall, "The Prince Hall was a worthy African whom I well knew. He had no advantages, except such as he gained by his own diligence and his excellent moral habits."**

**On August 30, 1792, William White, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, sent to Prince Hall a letter in which there were the printed Proceedings of the Grand Lodge and the calendar for the year. he asked, "If you would let me know if the lodges in the enclosed list which are constituted by the Grand Lodge of England are yet in being, as we have never heard from them since the commencement of the last war in America, or indeed long before; and in case they have ceased to meet, which I rather apprehend, they ought to be erased from our list of lodges." This letter also acknowledged the receipt of his sermon and the Lodge's contribution to Charity of November 24, 1787, and April 18, 1792. The letter was closed with the sentence, "I remain with fraternal regard, Right Worshipful Brother, Your Obedient servant  
and  
Brother."**

**This correspondence showed that dependence was being placed upon Prince Hall for information about the lodges in his area. It was known that Prince Hall was the only correspondent at this time in the United States from whom the Grand Secretary William White of the Grand Lodge of England was seeking information concerning the lodges in America. It is also of value to note that Hall signed himself, "Prince Hall, Grand Master."**

**The reply by Prince Hall to the letter of inquiry from William White was sent on the same date, August 20, 1792. He stated that he had made inquiry concerning the lodges of which information was requested. He reported that "the Lodge No. 42, which used to meet at the Royal Exchange and kept at the Assembly House at the head of Orange Tree Lane, has kept a regular Lodge, and was joined last year by one or two more lodges. Their present Grand Master is John Cutler, chosen last year, and walked to Trinity Church, where a sermon was delivered by the Rev. Walter, D. D., June 25th. The lodge No. 88 hath joined the above Lodge**

ever since the death of their Grand Master, Henry Prince, Esquire, for he is long since dead - a worthy Mason.

"As for the Marble Head Lodge No. 11, I cannot get any information of it whether it keeps or not, but I believe they don't for, if they do I should have heard from her. As for the Lodge No. 93, in New Haven, Connecticut, I hear they keep a regular Lodge, and I have reason to believe it. The Lodge No. 142 does keep the same as some of them hath visited our Lodge, and heard it from their own mouths. I am happy you approve the sermon. I have sent you a charge I delivered at Charleston on the 25th of June last. I have sent one to your Royal Grand Master, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, and another to his Deputy, and three for the Grand Lodge, which I hope will meet your approval.

#### PRINCE HALL"

This letter shows the relationship of Prince Hall with the leadership of the Grand Lodge of England, its recognition of African Lodge as a legal and regular working lodge, and the dependence placed in him for information concerning American Masonry in this last decade of the 18th century. In referring to this incident, Samuel W. Clark observes, "That is more, very much more, than can be said of many white lodges that formed a constituent part of some of the Grand Lodge that are loudest in their charges of dormancy and consequent loss of life against us."

With Negro-Americans organized as Masons in Boston, the next step was expansion to other areas. Nine Masons at Providence, Rhode Island, who had been members of Boston's African Lodge, were set apart under the designation of Hiram Lodge No. 4. Its warrant was dated June 25, 1797. Organized activity along many lines had been typical of Philadelphia. March 2, 1797, Peter Mantore (also Mantone) of this city, wrote Prince Hall about the establishment of a lodge. He had gathered a group of colored Masons all of whom had received their degrees in Europe into a lodge with himself as acting Worshipful Master. He stated of himself that he was "elevated a super excellent and was Arch and Royal Knights Templar of Ireland, Carri Fergus Lodge Trueblues No. 253." In his letter to Prince Hall he requested a warrant to open a Lodge in Philadelphia. He said that there were eleven of them, five of whom were Masters as Ancient York Masons, and six others were made in London in the Golden Lodge No.22. They had been "try 'd by five Royal Arch Masons," he wrote. He stated that a request had been made to white Masons in Philadelphia for assistance but that they would rather be "under their dear brethren in Boston than the Pennsylvania Lodge." He wrote that "The white Masons here say that they are afraid to grant us a warrant for fear the black man living in Virginia would get to be Free Masons, too." Request was also made by Mantore that the warrant should be sent by a member of the Lodge, which meant that a brother would make the difficult journey in that day from Boston to Philadelphia.

On March 22, 1797, Prince Hall wrote his reply: "I receive your letter of the two which informs me that there are a number of blacks in your city who have received the light Masonry, and I hope they got it in a just and lawful manner. If so, dear Brother, we are willing to set you at work under our charter and Lodge No. 459 from London; under that authority and by the name of the African Lodge, we hereby and herein give you license to

assemble and work as aforesaid, under that denomination as in the sight and fear of God. I would advise you not to take any in at present until your officers and Master be installed in the Grand Lodge, which we are willing to (do) when he thinks convenient, and he may receive a full warrant instead of a permit. Prince Hall."

The grant of this warrant has been described by one writer as an invasion of the exclusive jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. It should be known that there were no lodges

nor a Grand Lodge which were "regular" lodges in relation to the Grand Lodge of England. These lodges were "ancient." ones, including African Lodges and other American Lodges. It is also well known that in this period, territorial jurisdiction was not an active doctrine.

During this period, Prince Hall continued his correspondence with the Grand Lodge of England. Letters were sent back and forth but there were periods when Hall complained of neglect from the London office. One of these instances was dated June 15, 1792, and stated, after sending an account of African Lodge, the following: "I have sent a number of letters to the Grand Lodge and money for the Grand Charity and by faithful brethren as I thought, but I have not received one letter from the Grand Lodge for this five years, which I felt somewhat strange at first, but when I heard so many were taken by the French, I thought otherwise and prudent not so to send." In this letter he gives the names of eight Masons lost by death since his last letter and "eighteen who were entered since 1797." He also referred in the above letter to the French war with Great Britain, which resulted in the excitement over the X.Y.Z. papers.

Prince Hall died on December 7, 1807. The Boston Gazette on this date carried this item, "On Friday morning, Mr. Prince Hall died, aged 72, Master of the African Lodge. Funeral this afternoon at 3:00 o'clock from his late dwelling house in Lendell's Lane; which his friends and relatives are MCI requested to attend without a more formal invitation."

Prince Hall passed into the Great Beyond, but his work went marching on. It was, as Samuel W. Clark has written, that "with the death of Prince Hall, the warrant to African Lodge No.459 lost none of its validity." From 1807 to 1826, there were eighty candidates initiated. The first step in the continuance of this heritage was the work of a convention of colored Masons in Boston, July 24, 1808, with representatives from the lodges in Boston, Philadelphia, and Providence. The Deputy Grand Master, Nero Prince, was elected Grand Master. His parents were Russian-Jews. Grimshaw said, "he identified himself with colored people and did everything to perpetuate Freemasonry among them."

The Lodge was reorganized and its name changed from African Grand Lodge to Prince Hall Grand Lodge in honor of its first Grand Master. Nero Prince succeeded Prince Hall as Master of African Lodge and served as Grand Master from 1807 to 1808. Peter Lew was the fourth Grand Master and served from 1811 to 1817. He issued warrants in 1811 for the establishment of Laurel Lodge No. 5 and Phoenix Lodge No. 6 in Philadelphia and in 1812, for Boyer Lodge No.1 in New York.

An attack has been made upon the legitimacy of Prince Hall Masonry through the action of the bodies of Masonry in America because the Grand Lodge of England dropped African Lodge No. 370, which was a new title given to this Lodge by the Grand Lodge of England in 1792. It should be observed that other lodges in the United States were also erased from the rolls. There were seven such lodges in New York, nine in Massachusetts, three in Michigan, two in North Carolina, one in Rhode Island, four in Virginia, and two in Pennsylvania.

It should be further observed that African Lodge was already constituted as an independent Grand Lodge and it could be easily deduced that the Grand Lodge of England could not change the status of this Grand Lodge by an erasure any more than it changed the status of another Grand Lodge within the United States which had declared its independence and constituted itself as a Grand Lodge. It is of further interest to observe that Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in 1827, declared "that we are and ought of right to be free and independent of other lodges." This action has been called "a Declaration of Independence," and that African Lodge terminated its existence as a Masonic Lodge by such action. However, by this action, Masonry among colored Americans established itself as a legal entity for the propagation of the principles of Masonry.

It should be recalled that the Massachusetts Grand Lodge adopted a resolution in 1782, to assume the powers and prerogatives of an independent Grand Lodge, but it was also agreed that this action did not sever all ties with the Grand Lodge of Scotland. A division of sentiment occurred in this Lodge, and the result was a double alliance to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and to the Massachusetts Grand Lodge. St. Andrews Lodge continued to hold its allegiance for a quarter of a century to the Scotland Grand Lodge. There were the following Grand Lodges in Massachusetts, the St. John's Grand Lodge (1733-1792) which suspended its activities during the American Revolution and the Massachusetts Grand Lodge (1769-1792) and the St. Andrews Grand Lodge operating under its Scottish Charter. Finally these two Grand bodies united and formed "The Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." This Grand Lodge adopted a resolution denying the right of Masons to assemble in Massachusetts under warrant of any foreign power.

This action was a denial not only of the continuances of St. Andrew's allegiance to Scotland, but also the action of African Lodge under Prince Hall in its relation with the Grand Lodge of England, for both lodges had received their Charters from Scotland and England respectively. Finally in 1809, St. Andrew Lodge transferred a part of its allegiance to the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, but the original charter is still regarded as the basis of its history and operations. African Lodge and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge have moved along the same historical pathway as these Massachusetts lodges and the question of legitimacy has had similar differences in their lodge histories.

Prince Hall Masonry continued its march forward in Pennsylvania as it had in Massachusetts, with the Lodges chartered by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, Union Lodge No. 1 in 1810, Laurel Lodge No. 2 in 1811, and Phoenix Lodge No. 3 in 1814.

On December 27, St. John's Day, 1815, a convention of these three Pennsylvania Lodges of Master Masons was held at Masonic Hall, 155 Lombard Street, and the Grand Lodge for the State of Pennsylvania was constituted. The Grand officers included, Rev. Absalom Jones, Grand Master; Richard Parker, Deputy Grand Master; Thomas Depree, Senior Grand Warden; Prim Clover, Junior Grand War den; Peter Richmond, Grand Secretary. The original warrants were surrendered to the Mother Lodge of Massachusetts and new warrants were received from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania by the subordinate lodges. The title of the Grand Lodge was decided upon as "The First African Independent Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of North America for the State of Pennsylvania." This was the second Negro Grand Lodge in the United States which was a direct descendant of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

Animosities developed among some members of the lodges and there were expulsions from Union Lodge No. 1 and the lodge was ordered to be expelled. This action led to the formation of what was known as Hiram Grand Lodge in July, 1819.

These persons joined with other Masons to accomplish this purpose. Then Harmony Lodge No. 5, had some of its members expelled by the Independent African Grand Lodge and it was reported that Harmony Lodge had secured a charter from the Grand Lodge of Ohio (white) in 1833.

A third state, Rhode Island, as has been noted, was the next area where Prince Hall Masonry began its operations. In 1797, Prince Hall granted a warrant to nine Masons who were made in African Lodge, Boston, Massachusetts, to establish a lodge in Providence. This lodge was established as Hiram Lodge No. 4 on June 25, 1797, and was the third lodge established for colored Masons in the United States. Another lodge was established in 1825 known as Providence Lodge.

New York was the fourth state in which Prince Hall Masonry was established. Peter Lew, Grand Master of Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Boston, Massachusetts, granted a warrant in 1812, to nine Master Masons to establish a lodge to be known as Boyer Lodge No. 1, and on February 16, 1812, this lodge was established. Other lodges established in New York in 1812, were Celestial Lodge No. 2; Rising Sun No. 3: and Hiram Lodge No. 4. These lodges were under the jurisdiction of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts for many years. On March 14, 1845, A Grand Lodge for the State of New York was formed under the title of Boyer Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York. The other areas in which Prince Hall Masonry established lodges prior to Ohio were the District of Columbia in 1825, Maryland in 1825, Delaware in 1838, New Jersey in 1845, and Virginia in 1845.

Prior to 1847, there were four Grand Lodges in the United States; two in Pennsylvania, one in Massachusetts, and one in New York. It was through the African Independent Grand Lodge of North America in Pennsylvania that the first Lodge for Negro Masons West of the Alleghenies was set apart, St. Cyprian Lodge No.13 at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was from this lodge that the State of Ohio had its origins in Prince Hall Masonry.

Free Masons of Color claim their heritage through Prince Hall as the only legitimate and regular Masonic fraternity. This authentic heritage is deserving of American recognition, but this has been continuously withheld although this legitimacy has been acknowledged by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. There have been, on occasions, friendly relations between lodges which have been both corporate and individual. The attitude of a portion of the membership of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts is shown by the historian of the Lodge of St. Andrews who writes, "While we continue to maintain a cordial and friendly attitude toward Prince Hall and his group, with our entry into the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, official intercourse terminated. Our foster parent would not recognize the colored Masons because they hail from a foreign Grand Lodge, nor would it invite them to join by endorsement, as we were urged to do."

It has been claimed that following the death of Prince Hall, African Lodge became inactive and held no meetings until 1824. These claims have been found to be untrue. Historian Harry A. Williamson of New York quotes Jacob Northern of Massachusetts as saying, "That an examination of the records show that African Lodge had held 235 meetings between 1808 and 1824." He also quotes William H. Upton as stating that between December, 1807 and June, 1846, African Lodge held 400 meetings. Brother Williamson adds that he has micro-films which show this fact in the lodge minutes for 1808, 1811, 1815, 1817, 1824, and 1827, with 166 degrees conferred.

The Grand Masters who succeeded Prince Hall were Nero Prince, as previously mentioned; George Middleton, 1808-1811; Peter Lew, 1811-1817; Samuel H. Moody, 1817-1826; John T. Hilton, 1825-1826; C. A. Derandamie, 1827-1829; Walker Lewis, 1829-1831; Thomas Dalton, 1831; George Gaul, 1832; James H. Howe, 1833-1834; and John T. Hilton, 1836-1947. It was in the works of Prince Hall's successors as well as in his own that his achievements and his heritage lived and expanded.

An imposing monument has been erected above the grave of Prince Hall. It is made of Vermont granite at the head of the grave and stands as a broken column. This monument was erected through the initiative of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts with donations from Grand Lodges of Prince Hall Masons. Ohio contributed to this fund. His greatest monument, however, is in the hearts of Prince Hall Masons, and in this respect his soul goes marching on through the years in the work of his followers.

Paralleling its beginning in Ohio, Prince Hall Masonry also began its march from Massachusetts into thirty-seven states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and Liberia, West Africa. This expansion was initiated by entering Pennsylvania and Rhode Island in 1797; New York in 1812; the District of Columbia and Maryland in 1825; Delaware in 1838; New Jersey and Virginia in 1845, and Ohio and its Jurisdiction in 1847.

This stream of history in Masonry moved continuously. It advanced and expanded and did not stand still. Prince Hall lived and wrought well a work which his followers carried westward with the American frontier, and southward after the Civil War. It was not only westward went the course of empire in history, but also westward and southward went the Masonic spirit in the footprints of Prince Hall.

**The Prince Hall heritage has become a priceless one for all colored American Masons and has abiding significance for the history of American Masonry. The contemporaries of Prince Hall's day could have had no awareness of the value of their struggles and their small victories. However, it is now known that although they now belong to the past, their works follow them into the present, and the future can learn best from their past, as this heritage becomes better known, more widely understood and appreciated by all Americans without reference to their group affiliations and population relationships.**