



A Publication for Prince Hall Masons Who Seek Light & Have Light to Impart

The Phylaxis

VOL. LI No. 4/5

FOURTH QUARTER 2024/FIRST QUARTER 2025

DOUBLE ISSUE

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Damajo C. Smith, FPS (Life)**

Legitimacy & Law in the Scottish Rite

by: Joshua Feliciano, FPSH

POPE JOHN XXIII & FREEMASONRY

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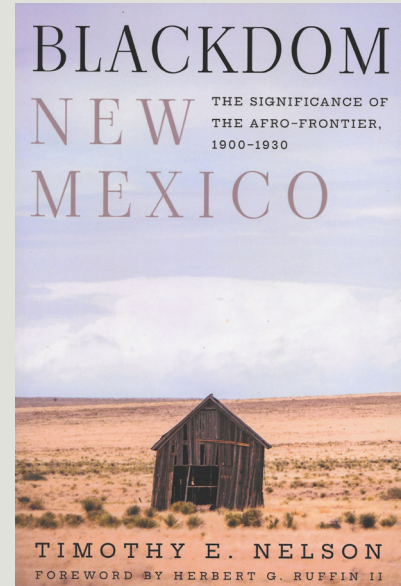
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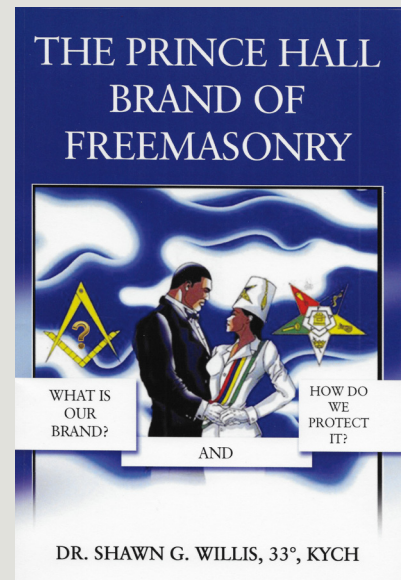
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Freemasons Who Seek More Light,
And Who Have Light To Impart

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Damajo C. Smith, FPS (Life)
President
The Phylaxis Society

Dear Members and Subscribers of the Phylaxis Society,
Greetings!

On behalf of the newly elected leadership team, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your trust and confidence. It is with deep respect and a strong sense of duty that we accept the challenge to carry forward the original mandates and proud traditions of the Phylaxis Society.

As we move forward together, our commitment is unwavering in ensuring the continued excellence of our magazine—its timeliness, professionalism, compelling content, and the rigor of its reviews and editing. Likewise, our annual convention will remain a cornerstone of our work, featuring distinguished presenters, meaningful topics, original research, and credible sources that reflect the high standards we uphold.

We reaffirm our dedication to maintaining the Phylaxis Society as the premier international historical and literary research organization devoted to perpetuating the memory and legacy of Prince Hall.

Our goals include creating new opportunities for engagement between our membership and leadership team, strengthening our internal communication, and cultivating a greater sense of community among all who are part of this vital mission.

To operate more effectively and with greater unity of purpose, we will be consolidating various departments and offices to implement a more streamlined, transparent, and efficient approach to our organization's operations.

Together, we will continue to honor the past, serve the present, and shape the future of the Phylaxis Society. We look forward to your active participation and continued support as we embark on this exciting new chapter.

With fraternal regards,

Hon. Damajo C. Smith, FPS (Life)
President, Phylaxis Society



The word Phylaxis is derived from the Greek word meaning to guard or to preserve, closely related to phylaktos, meaning protecting. This is more than just a name—it is a charge. Our purpose as members of the Phylaxis Society is to guard and preserve the integrity, history, and future of Prince Hall Freemasonry.

The Phylaxis Society was founded in 1973 by Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., a distinguished Prince Hall Mason, Masonic researcher, and author. Brother Walkes was deeply committed to Masonic education and scholarship, and it is through his vision that our Society was born. Our mission remains clear: To promote and encourage Masonic research, education, and publication within the Prince Hall tradition.

As we turn another page in the proud legacy of Prince Hall Freemasonry, we must ask: What are we doing today to ensure that this legacy thrives tomorrow?

The Phylaxis Society was built by visionaries—men of intellect, principle, and purpose—who laid a foundation rooted in enlightenment and truth. It is now our responsibility to ensure that this foundation remains not only strong, but also responsive to the evolving needs of our fraternity and our communities.

To do that, we must look to the next generation.

Bringing young Masons into the Phylaxis Society is not simply about boosting numbers. It is about passing the torch to those with fresh ideas, dynamic energy, and a sincere commitment to the values we hold dear. The youth of today are equipped with the tools of the modern age, and under our mentorship, they can help shape a future that is both deeply rooted in Masonic principles.

Let us commit to mentorship, outreach, and genuine engagement. Let us demonstrate to younger Brothers that Freemasonry is more than tradition—it is transformation. Let us listen to their voices, value their perspectives, and encourage their leadership.

We urge every member of the Phylaxis Society to reach out—not just to invite young Masons to join, but to inspire them to become involved. The future of Prince Hall Masonry is theirs, and it is our duty to help prepare them to carry it forward with pride, purpose, and passion.

The future of the Phylaxis Society is not something we wait for—it is something we build together.

Fraternally yours,
Jerry Urso
Editor, Phylaxis Magazine

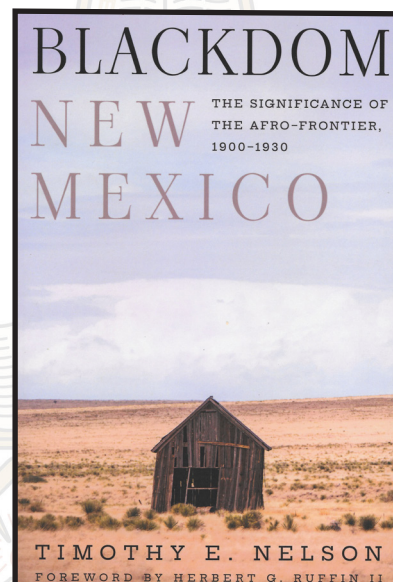
Book Review

BLACKDOM, NEW MEXICO

By Hon. Stephen Hill, FPS

"WANTED": 500 Negro families (farmers preferred) to settle on FREE Government Lands in Chaves County, New Mexico. Blackdom is a Negro Colony. Fertile soil, ideal climate. No "Jim Crow" Laws. For information write JAS. Harold Coleman, Blackdom, New Mexico.

Title: Blackdom, New Mexico: The Significance of the Afro-Frontier, 1900-1930
Author: Timothy E. Nelson
Publisher: Texas Tech University Press
Published: 2023



At the turn of the nineteenth century, in the dry, drought ridden desert prairies of the US-Mexico borderlands, a group of African Americans came together to form a town in the New Mexico Territory. The group took advantage of the Homestead Act of 1862, which granted Americans 160-acre plots of public land. For a \$10 filing fee the homesteader received a temporary claim on the land. To receive the final patent on the land required five years of continuous residence, building a home, farming the land and making improvements.

In September 1903 thirteen of those homesteaders signed the Blackdom Townsite Company's articles of incorporation, who's purpose was to form an "Exclusive Negro Settlement." Author, Timothy E. Nelson maintains that a trilogy of clergy, veterans and Freemasons spearheaded the Blackdom Afro-Frontier effort. The townsite company's first president, Francis (Frank) Marion Boyer was all three, a minister, a former Buffalo Soldier and a Freemason.

In Blackdom New Mexico, Nelson dispels the Boyer/Blackdom myths echoed by other scholars. Namely, that the Ku Klux Klan forced Frank Boyer to flee his home in Pelham, Georgia. Or that Frank walked the 2,000-plus-miles from Pelham to Roswell, New Mexico. More importantly, that Blackdom collapsed when Frank Boyer moved to Doña Ana County.

Nelson profiles some of the key residents of the community. George Malone, the first African American lawyer in New Mexico and the first Black man to argue before the New Mexico supreme court. Clinton Ragsdale who donated one hundred and sixty acres of his land to the National Baptist Publishing Board. Then there is the bootlegging, gun-slanging madam Mittie Moore who owned a square mile south of the town square and operated a "bawdy house" in the nearby town of Roswell.

According to Nelson most residents viewed Blackdom as an investment rather than a "Negro refuge." Their investments started to pay off during the New Mexico oil boom. To take Advantage of the boom the residents formed the Blackdom Oil Company to manage negotiations with competing oil exploration companies. The number of wells drilled in Blackdom or number of contacts the Blackdom Oil Company entered into is unknown, what is known is families received oil royalties into the late 1940s and beyond.

In 1922 the Artesia Advocate newspaper proclaimed "... the little village of Blackdom, has proven to be a failure." To the contrary, when viewed as an investment Blackdom was a success that created generational wealth.

Book Review

THE PRINCE HALL BRAND OF FREEMASONRY

By Hon. Stephen Hill, FPS

Title: The Prince Hall Brand of Freemasonry
Author: Dr. Shawn G. Willis, 33°, KYCH
Publisher: Independently published
Published: February 4, 2025

In *The Prince Hall Brand of Freemasonry* Dr. Shawn G. Willis addresses two questions. What is our brand and how do we protect it?

The Prince Hall brand is not what we say it is or think it is or some catchy slogan, but rather, how we are viewed by the public, what comes to their mind when they see the square and compass on the back of your car or on your lapel.

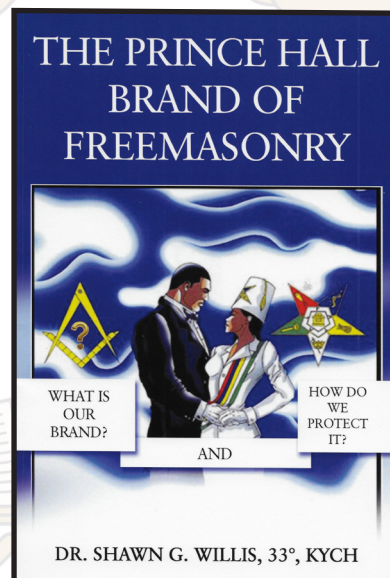
We must demonstrate Masonic values and tenets, as well as the principles of Freemasonry on a daily basis. Each of us must ask ourselves which type of member we are, for it is the behavior and character of our members that determine the public's perception of those men in the black suits that meet at night in that building with that emblem on the front.

Brother Willis believes that if Prince Hall Freemasonry is to remain a viable and respected fraternity, we must retain, regain, or recruit members. Each of these members must be able to speak confidently about Freemasonry, and not merely spout the tagline "make good men better." To protect the Prince Hall brand members must be accountable to each other, and be willing to identify and remove toxic members. Willis goes on to briefly discuss the six types of toxic members.

To stand out in a crowded field of charitable organizations, it is not enough to just be noticed, we must be remembered for the positive experiences we provide, for both our members and the community.

Furthermore, those experiences must align with our professed brand.

We must remember that the Prince Hall brand is something that is experienced. We must nurture the Prince Hall brand if we want to remain relevant in the future. We must rise to the occasion and take a thoughtful and strategic approach to identify and protect the Prince Hall brand.



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THE FACE OF PRINCE HALL

MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER GUS HARRIS

MOST WORSHIPFUL UNION GRAND LODGE OF FL



Introduction

A Life of Service and Leadership: The Masonic Journey of a Dedicated Prince Hall Mason

In the annals of Prince Hall Freemasonry, we are blessed with Brothers whose lives are so deeply woven into the fabric of our institution that their stories become part of our legacy. Such is the case with the distinguished Brother whose journey you are about to read.

From the rice fields of Southeast Asia to the altar of our sacred lodges, his path has embodied duty, humility, and leadership. This is not simply a Masonic biography, it is a chronicle of unwavering commitment to our fraternity, our nation, and our community. He is a Brother who climbed every station of responsibility not for title or prestige, but out of a calling to serve with excellence and uplift others in the process.

As the 20th Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, he follows in a rich tradition of veterans of the United States Armed Forces who rose to the highest station in Prince Hall Masonry. This tradition traces back to Grand Master H.H. Thompson and Grand Master Tillman Valentine, both veterans of the 3rd United States Colored Infantry (USCT), the same regiment formed in the wake of Frederick Douglass's call to arms. These trailblazers not only fought for freedom on the battlefield but laid the foundation for our Grand Lodge and its enduring legacy.

It is with great honor that I present this tribute to a man whose work and worth truly exemplify the very best of Prince Hall Masonry.

— Jerry Urso, FPS-Life
Grand Historian
Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, P.H.A.

The Face of Prince Hall

Born and raised in Augusta, Georgia, and a proud graduate of the historic Lucy Craft Laney High School in 1961, Gus Harris began his life of service by enlisting in the United States Air Force at a very young age. He went on to serve his country honorably for 28 years.

While on active duty and stationed at U-Tapao Air Base in Thailand, he was introduced to the Masonic Fraternity by a fellow serviceman he had known in Vietnam, Tom Bradley. Inspired by the ideals of the organization, he submitted his application and began his Masonic journey. He was initiated on February 28, 1976, passed on March 27, 1976, and raised to the degree of Master Mason on April 24, 1976, in Siam Military Lodge no. 30 in Bangkok, Thailand, under the Delaware Jurisdiction, Prince Hall Affiliation.

Shortly after, he was reassigned to Hurlburt Field in Mary Esther, Florida, where his Masonic journey accelerated under the guidance of J.R.L. Conyers, a respected leader who served as Grand Worthy Patron, District Deputy Grand Master, and High Priest of Maxwell Chapter no. 115, as well as Worshipful Master of Crestview Lodge no. 364 (later renamed in his honor). Moved by the commitment and integrity of its members, he demitted to the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge (MWUGL) of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated, in June of 1976. That same year, he joined Beulah First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach, Florida, cementing his ties to the local community.

By December 1976, his leadership abilities were recognized when he was appointed Junior Deacon. He quickly rose through the ranks, eventually being elected Worshipful Master of J.R.L. Conyers Lodge no. 364 in December of 1982. He served in that position until 1986. Even when reassigned to Lajes Air Base in the Azores for 15 months, he remained loyal to his home lodge and MWUGL of Florida.

Returning to Florida in 1988 and stationed at Eglin Air Force Base, he was again elected Worshipful Master of J.R.L. Conyers Lodge no. 364 in 1991, serving until 1996. Throughout his journey, he held numerous other positions that reflected the trust his brethren placed in him, including:

- High Priest of Maxwell Chapter no. 115 (1997–2000)
- Thrice Illustrious Master of C.P. Randolph Council no. 9, Royal & Select Masters (2002–2006)
- Eminent Commander of Frank Carter Commandery no. 103 (2000–2001)
- Assistant Rabban of Islam Temple no. 182
- Member of West Florida Consistory no. 252
- Honorary 33° (SJ-PHA)
- Member of the Knight York Cross of Honor

He also served in leadership roles as:

- **Worthy Patron of V.K. Conyers Chapter no. 7**
- **Worthy Joshua of E.L. Seawright Court no. 90**
- **President of the Conyers/Randolph Study Club**
- **Assistant District Deputy Grand Master**
- **District Deputy Grand Master under PGM Dr. Henry Simmons**
- **Chairman, Committee on Foreign Correspondence under PGM Bishop Dr. Michael R. Moore**

Among his most treasured milestones was his election as the 20th Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida.

In recognition of his enduring service and exemplary leadership, he was elevated on October 10, 2016, to the rank of Sovereign Grand Inspector General Emeritus, 33°, by the United Supreme Council, Prince Hall Affiliation, Southern Jurisdiction.

The Face of Prince Hall

He has had the honor of serving under four Grand Masters: the 15th MWGM Michael R. Moore, the 17th MWGM Anthony T. Stafford, the 18th MWGM Walter Gulley Jr., and the 19th MWGM Jeffery Jones. In his first address to Craft, he acknowledged working under such prestigious leadership and how their example paved the way to the Grand Master's chair.

He remains an active voice in the leadership of the jurisdiction and a respected presence among his peers. His first initiative as Grand Master focuses on securing the safety of the Craft and establishing comprehensive emergency preparedness. He plans to enact policies that prepare lodges for hurricane season and natural disasters, while also strengthening partnerships with the American Red Cross and other emergency response services. As Prince Hall Masons, he emphasizes the importance of being visible and engaged in the well-being of their communities.



INTRODUCING THE CENTURY & A QUARTER CREW

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Featured Spotlight **Alton G. Roundtree**



Alton G. Roundtree is a native of Vanceboro, North Carolina. His parents were tobacco sharecroppers. He attended Ula School (a one-room school for grades 1-7) for the first through the third grade. He attended Vanceboro Consolidated Elementary School for grades 4-8, and Newbold High School in Fort Barnwell, North Carolina, for grades 9-12.

After high school, Alton joined the United States Air Force, from which he retired after 20 years. His Air Force assignments included McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita, Kansas; Osan Air Base, Korea; Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Air Force ROTC at the University of Minnesota, Duluth; U.S. Training Mission to Saudi Arabia; Defense Nuclear Agency, Washington, DC; and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Bolling Air Force Base, DC.

After retiring from the U.S. Air Force, Alton worked for two Department of Defense contractors, Mitre Corporation and Northrop Grumman.

Alton received his B.A. from the University of Minnesota in Duluth and a Master's degree from Howard University in Washington, DC. He worked on a Ph.D. at American University in Washington, DC.

Alton G. Roundtree is a Past Master of Redemption Lodge No. 24 of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington, DC. He is the Past Grand Editor-in-Chief of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge. He is a 33° Mason. Alton is also a member of Mecca Temple No. 10 (Shriners), Mt. Vernon Chapter No. 1 (Holy Royal Arch Masons), and Henderson Commandery.

Alton held several key positions in the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, among them: Computer Systems Officer, Director of Public Relations, Chairman of the Information Management Committee, Assistant Grand Secretary, Director of the Computer Training Center, Editor of the Prince Hall Masonic Digest, and Vice Chairman of the Prince Hall Recognition Committee. He has received numerous awards from the Grand Lodge, including Master Mason of the Year, Journalistic Excellence Award, Perfect Ashlar Award, and many superior service awards.

In 2010, Alton received the Prince Hall Grand Lodge's highest award, the S. Matthew Hendershott Award. Alton was the founding Worshipful Master (2009-2012) of David A. McWilliams, Sr. Research; Education Lodge of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. Alton is a member of two distinguished Masonic Groups, the Society of Blue Friars (2011) and the Masonic Brotherhood of the Blue Forget-Me-Not (2008). Other affiliations include the Philalethes Society (Fellow), the Masonic Society (Fellow), and the Phylaxis Society (Fellow).

Alton G. Roundtree is the most prolific writer ever of works about Prince Hall Freemasonry. A bibliography of his books includes the bestseller, co-authored with Paul M. Bessel, *Out of the Shadows, The Emergence of Prince Hall Freemasonry in America: Over 225 years of Endurance* (2006). Brother Roundtree's other works include: *The National Grand Lodge and Prince Hall Freemasonry: The Untold Truth* (2010); *Conference of Grand Masters Prince Hall Masons, Conference History: 1887 -2013* (2014); *The Greatest Prince Hall Mason of the 20th Century* (2016); *History of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia: 1822-2016* (2016); *A Fractured Legacy: United Supreme Council Southern Jurisdiction* (2018); *Fact-Checking William H. Grimshaw's Official History of Freemasonry Among The Colored People of North America* (2019); *The Gavel Strikes Thrice: An Addendum to a Fractured Legacy* (2020); *A Non-Masons Guide to Prince Hall Freemasonry* (2020); *Joseph A. Walkes, Jr.: A Trailblazing Prince Hall Mason* (2021); *Give us free: African Lodge Masons and the Abolitionist Movement* (2022); *Prince Hall Order of the Eastern Star: A Synopsis of the Grand Chapters* (2023), and *Redemption Lodge No. 24: The History of an Out-Front Lodge, Leading the Way* (2025), and *Minutes of African Lodge No.459/African Grand Lodge: An Overview* (2025). Alton is working on writing two books, *Great Women of the Prince Hall Order of the Eastern Star*, and *Great Prince Hall Masons of the Nineteenth Century*.

Alton is the President of KLR Publishing, where he publishes his books. He once had an international Masonic magazine (2001-2005), *The Masonic Globe*, with bureau chiefs throughout the United States and overseas. He was the president and editor of *The Masonic Globe*. The *Masonic Globe* was a success, but Alton could not maintain the magazine and write books simultaneously. He chose to write books.

Alton G. Roundtree has been an active worker in the Phylaxis Society since 2000. He was a founding member of Chi Rho. He has written over 70 articles for *The Phylaxis* magazine and *Lux e Tenebris* transactions. Alton spearheaded the production of the Phylaxis Society's book, *The Greatest Prince Hall Masons of the Twentieth Century*.

Alton was Editor of *The Phylaxis* magazine from 2013 to 2022. Alton has not slowed down in his writings for *The Phylaxis* magazine and *Lux e Tenebris*. He will continue to support the endeavors of the Phylaxis Society.

POPE JOHN XXIII & FREEMASONRY

By: Dr. Robert L. Uzzel, FPS

Winner of the Joseph A. Walkes Jr. Medal of Literature

1973 was a very important year in my life. On March 20, I was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in Waco Lodge #92 in my hometown of Waco, Texas.

On April 20, I passed my proficiency examination in the work of the Master Mason Degree. On May 18, I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion and Sociology at Baylor University. After a great summer as a Bible salesman in Pulaski, Virginia, I returned to Waco in September and began work on my Master of Arts Degree in Church-State Studies at Baylor. On September 29, I received my 32nd Degree in the Waco Scottish Rite Bodies and became a Noble of the Mystic Shrine in Karem Temple in Waco.

During the fall semester of 1973, I took a seminar entitled Ecumenics under Dr. James Leo Garrett, Jr.¹ In this course, I learned much about the history of the ecumenical movement, a multi-faceted event in church history. This course introduced me to Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, better known as Pope John XXIII, a man who had died ten years earlier and who made a tremendous contribution to Christian unity in his launching of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). This great man never publicly stated that he was a Freemason. However, many of the ideals for which he stood—including the call for religious liberty and interfaith dialogue at Vatican II—are quite compatible with Masonic principles. Traditionalist Catholics often claim that Catholics who are open to ecumenism are “closet Freemasons.” Among the highest-ranking Catholics against which this charge has been brought is Pope John XXIII.²

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has adopted the following ecumenical teaching: Ecumenism, from the Greek word “oikoumene,” meaning “the whole inhabited world,” is the promotion of cooperation and unity among Christians. Jesus Christ founded one Church and, in the midst of his Passion, prayed, “That they may all be one.” (John 17:21) In fidelity to that, the Catholic Church takes part in an ecumenical movement seeking visible unity among the diversity of Christian Churches and ecclesial communities.³

Much has been said and written about the historic conflict between Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry. Such conflict began in 1738, when Pope Gregory VII issued *In Eminenti: Papal Bull Dealing with the Condemnation of Freemasonry*.⁴

Many efforts have been made to bring about reconciliation, but such have been denounced by Traditionalist Catholics whose condemnation of Masonry is often combined with condemnation of other “evils” such as democracy and ecumenism.⁵

There can be no doubt that one of the major events of the twentieth century was Vatican II, the event that brought the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. This decisive advance in Catholic-Protestant relations was the brainchild of Pope John XXIII. When he announced plans for this event, he said it was time to “open the windows and let in the fresh air.”⁶ While preparing for the council, he set up the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, with Jesuit theologian Augustin Cardinal Bea as president. One of the Secretariat’s first actions was to send observers to the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi, India in 1961. The Protestant and Orthodox communions were then invited to send delegate observers to Vatican II. Cardinal Bea—who has also been accused of being a “closet Freemason”—affirmed in greeting them that “the immeasurable grace of baptism” established bonds between all Christians that were stronger than their divisions.⁷

Angelo Roncalli was a man destined to have a great impact on both the church and the world. In his later years, he stated that he could never remember a time when he did not want to be a priest.⁸ Here are some of the important events of his life. On November 25, 1881, he was born in the Italian village of Sotto il Monte, on the road from Bergamo to Lecco.⁹ On May 21, 1899, he delivered his first sermon.¹⁰ On April 11, 1903, he was ordained as a sub-deacon.¹¹ On December 18, 1903, he was ordained as a deacon.¹² On July 13, 1904, he received his Doctorate in Theology from Bergamo Seminary. On August 10, 1904, he was ordained as a priest.¹³ On March 19, 1925, he was consecrated as an archbishop.¹⁴ During his long pastoral career, his areas of assignment included Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, and France as well as his native Italy. This stimulated his interest in interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

According to his Vatican biography:

The Catholic Church was present in many ways throughout the young Turkish Republic which was

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in the process of renewing and organizing itself. His ministry to Catholics was demanding and he became known for his respectful manner and dialogue with the Orthodox and Muslims. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was in Greece, which was devastated by fighting. He sought to gain information about prisoners of war and he helped to save many Jews by giving them transit visas issued by the Apostolic Delegation.¹⁵

On January 12, 1953, Pope Pius XII elevated Archbishop Roncalli “to the sacred purple” at the Consistory. Thus, Cardinal Roncalli was in a position to succeed the man who appointed him.¹⁶ On October 9, 1958, Pope Pius XII died.¹⁷ On October 28, 1958, Cardinal Roncalli was elected pope.¹⁸ On November 4, 1958, the papal coronation took place.¹⁹ On January 25, 1959, he announced that he was convening the first ecumenical council since 1870.²⁰ On October 11, 1962, he gave his opening address at Vatican II.²¹ On December 8, 1962, he gave his final address to the first session of the council, having recognized that additional sessions would be required.²² On Maundy Thursday April 11, 1963, he issued his *Pacem in Terris: Encyclical of Pope John XXII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty*. This document has been described as his “last will and testament.”²³ On June 3, 1963, he died, after serving 58 years as a priest, 38 years as a bishop, and less than five years as pope.²⁴ On September 3, 2000, he was beatified by Pope John Paul II and given the title of “Blessed.” On April 27, 2014, he was canonized by Pope Francis and given the title of “Saint.”²⁵

Roncalli chose the name of John XXIII. He had studied the life of Pope John XXII, who reigned from 1317 to 1334.²⁶ He was also inspired by the Holy Saints John of Jerusalem, to whose memory Masonic lodges are dedicated. According to his biographer:

Pope John explained very simply that he loved the name John because had been borne by the two men in the Gospels who were closest to Jesus: John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. John the Baptist ‘prepared the way of the Lord,’ and shed his blood as a witness to the Light. John the Evangelist, favoured by Jesus and his mother, leaned on his breast at the last supper and derived from this ‘a charity which burned with lively flame until extreme old age. . . . But it was his conclusion that moved even the hard-bitten college of cardinals. He had called himself John in order to renew the exhortation of the Apostle John: “My children, love one another, love one another because this is the greatest commandment of the Lord. Venerable brethren, may God in his mercy grant that we, bearing the same name John, may with the help of divine grace have his holiness of life and strength of soul, even unto the shedding of blood, if God so wills. . . . The message was love, the means sacrifice.”²⁷

A Catholic editor—who does not appear to be a Traditionalist—wrote:

Here’s an interesting tidbit: Pope John XXIII called Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist “our special patrons” in his speech announcing the Second Vatican Council . . . And when he actually opened the Council, Pope John XXIII again called upon Sts. John the Baptist and John the Evangelist to “intercede for us to God” Go figure, eh? There were always a lot of wild theories back in the day that John XXIII was a Freemason. It’s likely we’ll never know for sure, just as we’ll never know the full impact Freemasonry (a secret society condemned by more popes than any other single organization, most recently by the Holy Office under Pope John Paul) had on the sacking of the human and liturgical elements of the Catholic Church. Theories abound, of course, and I’m not suggesting the Council’s patron saints as designated by John XXIII prove anything at all. I just find it to be an interesting coincidence.²⁸

On November 25, 1958, the new pope was so busy that he hardly had time to notice his 77th birthday. His age caused some to predict that his pontificate would be uneventful. However, nothing could have been further from the truth! The following statement “hit the nail right on the head”:

If anyone expected Roncalli to be a mere caretaker pope, providing a transition to the next reign, he destroyed the notion within minutes of his election . . . stomped in boldly like the owner of the place, throwing open windows and moving furniture around.²⁹

As previously stated, Pope John XXIII never publicly acknowledged being a Freemason and many Traditionalist Catholics have tried to link him to Freemasonry. It should also be noted that many of us Freemasons have great admiration for him and see his life and teachings as compatible with our craft. Peter Hebblethwaite, in his book *Pope John XXIII, Shepherd of the Modern World: The Definitive Biography of Angelo Roncalli*, made numerous references to Freemasonry—all negative. The only one of these attributed to Roncalli comes from a letter written by the future pope to his sisters following the Lateran Pacts between the Vatican and the government of Benito Mussolini on February 11, 1929. Roncalli wrote: “Let us bless the Lord! Everything that free-masonry, that is, the devil, had done against the Church and the Pope in the last sixty years—all that has been over-turned.”³⁰

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Even if Roncalli held anti-Masonic views in 1929, this does not mean that he held such until the end of his life. I will now examine both Catholic and Masonic sources which allude to his possible involvement in Freemasonry.

According to one Traditionalist Catholic site:

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was liberal and modernist from the very beginning. . . .

When he became a professor of patristy at the Lateran University, he was removed after a few months due to "suspicion of modernism" and "proclaiming the theory of heretic Rudolf Steiner". He was sent to exile to Bulgaria and Turkey.

Italian writer Pier Carpi claims that he has clear evidence that Roncalli during his stay in the Middle East, was admitted to Freemasonry.

Maurice Bardet, a well-known freemason in the Masonic publication "Les Echos du surnaturel", informs us that he was his adviser. Several members of the French police assigned to his protection at the time, certified that he visited the Grand Lodge of the city in Paris, every Thursday evening in civilian clothing.³¹

Traditionalist Catholics made an issue of Pope John's meeting with clergy of other denominations, including Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher, a prominent Freemason.³²

According to the aforementioned site:

Through the establishment of the "Secretariat for Christian Unity" and by the admission of Geoffrey Fisher, the freemason of the Old Reptonian Lodge no. 3725 belonging to the Grand Lodge of England, and later the Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of the Mother in the world, responsible for the Philo-Protestant Anglicanism, he tried to derive Catholics in a turbulent stream of false ecumenism and prepare them for the heretical and blasphemous Vatican II Council.

During an official meeting of Bea and Fisher, held in Rome at the residence of Bea anticardinal, at the Brazilian Pontifical College, just after the audience given to Fisher by antipope John XXIII, Fisher himself said that his visit to John XXIII should be considered an event of historical significance, but even more important was the creation of the "Secretariat for the unity of Christians". His visit is something temporary, but this "Secretariat" is a permanent institution that will continue the work begun.

On June 25, 1959 in the encyclical "Ad Cathedram Petri" he called non-Catholics separated brothers and sons.

The Catholic Church always calls them heretics, schismatics or pagans, unbelievers.

On January 18, 1960, the delegation of the Jewish-Masonic lodge B'nai B'rith went to the Vatican to talk to the antipope about the sudden increase in antisemitism.

Antipope John XXIII could not be a pope because he was a freemason, and therefore, by virtue of the ordinances of Catholic Popes, he was excommunicated and was not a member of the Catholic Church.

He founded a new Antichurch of Antichrist in the bosom of the Catholic Church.

Logically, then, the next antipopes of this antichurch, his successors, were not and are not popes, therefore they supported socialism, freemasonry and false religions.³³

Traditionalist Catholic polemicist Steven Speray wrote:

-Cardinal Angelo Roncalli was a documented Freemason seated next to Edouard Herriot, Secretary of the Radical Socialists whom Roncalli hosted, along with other officials of the Masonic "Fourth Republic" of France, in 1953.

-Was Papal Nuncio in Paris and would visit the Grand Lodge of that city in civilian clothes every Thursday evening as testified by several members of the French police appointed to guard him. (This information can be substantiated by Commandant Rouchette, the retired French police at B.P. 151, 18105 Cognac Cedex. France. Also noted in Mary Ball Martinez, The Undermining of the Catholic Church, Hillmac, Mexico, 1999, p. 117)

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-Yves Marsaudon, 33rd degree Scottish Rite Freemason: "The sense of universalism that is rampant in Rome these days is very close to our purpose for existence... with all our hearts we support the revolution of John XXIII." (Yves Marsaudon in his book *Ecumenism Viewed by a Traditional Freemason*, Paris: Ed. Vitiano; quoted by Dr. Rama Coomaraswamy, *The Destruction of the Christian Tradition*, p. 144.)

-Yves Marsaudon, the aforementioned French Freemason and author, also claims that Roncalli [John XXIII] became a thirty-third degree Mason while a nuncio at France.

-The Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy of Italian Freemasonry told 30 Days Magazine: "As for that, it seems that John XXIII was initiated (into a Masonic Lodge) in Paris and participated in the work of the Istanbul Workshops." (Giovanni Cubeddu, 30 Days, Issue No. 2-1994 p. 25) ...

-When Angelo Roncalli was the nuncio to France, he appointed a thirty-third degree Freemason and close friend, the Baron Yves Marsaudon, as head of the French branch of the Knights of Malta, a Catholic lay order, causing a major scandal for the Pius XII papacy. (Paul I. Murphy and R. Rene Arlington, *La Popessa*, 1983, pp. 332-333) ...

-John XXIII wrote a Masonic type of encyclical *Pacem et Terris* and was praised by General Secretary of the British Communist Party, John Gollan, before television cameras on April 21, 1963, said the "encyclical (*Pacem in Terris*) [of John XXIII] had surprised and gladdened" him and, therefore, he had externalized his "most sincere satisfaction at the recent 28th Party Congress." (Fr. Joaquin Saenz Y Arriaga, *The New Montinian Church*, Brea, CA., p. 170)³⁴

The website *Grande Oriente Democratico* is a place for Freemasons of Italy, principally those members of the *Grande Oriente d'Italia di Palazzo Giustiniani* to express their ideas and opinions. According to this site:

These words echo the very important Speech to the Moon of October 11, 1962, with which Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Second Vatican Council. A Speech adequately interpreted in its esoteric and exoteric, religious and initiatory, Catholic and Masonic spiritual meanings, in chapter IV of the book *Freemasons. Society of Unlimited Responsibility. The Discovery of the Ur-Lodges*, Chiarelettere, on pages 160-162.

All seem to be a good omen for the Roman Catholic Church to take the road – also under the guidance of Princes of the Catholicism such as Matteo Zuppi – toward a Vatican Council III that may give adequate responses to the spiritual expectations of Christians in the Third Millennium.³⁵

When Pope John died, Mexican Freemasons published the following expression of sympathy:

THE MEXICAN WESTERN GRAND LODGE of free and accepted Masons, at the death of POPE JOHN XXIII publicly expresses its sorrow for the loss of this great man, who made a revolution in the ideas, thoughts and forms of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

THE ENCYCLICALS "MOTHER AND TEACHER" and "PEACE ON EARTH" Made a revolution in concepts favoring THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND HIS LIBERTY

Mankind has lost a great man, and we the Freemasons recognize his elevated principles, his humanitarianism and his condition as a GRAND LIBERAL the Pope of the Council."³⁶

According to Catholic Forum:

One of the main charges made is that John XXIII was a Mason. It is claimed that John XXIII, then Angelo Roncalli, joined the Freemasons in 1935 as a papal nuncio in Turkey. However, no proof exists of this ever happening. It appears as though someone hostile to the post-conciliar church came up with a list of Masons in the Roman Curia, and included the Pope in the list, but without proof that he was a Mason. Two proofs that are offered for the claim that John XXIII was a Mason include a number of Freemasons who hail Pope John as a fellow member, and the book *The Broken Cross* by Piers Compton. As to the Masons who claim John XXIII to be a fellow member, it cannot be taken at face value. Masons have proven themselves to

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be great enemies of the Church, and when they caught wind that John XXIII may have been a Freemason, they no doubt did everything they could to support the claim, for the sole purpose of causing trouble within the Church.³⁷

I firmly believe that, while there are exceptions to everything, most Freemasons do not consider themselves enemies of the Catholic Church but, rather, desire to “bury the hatchet” after centuries of misunderstanding. Pope John XXIII—whether or not he was ever initiated into a lodge—laid the foundation for such reconciliation with his many ecumenical gestures, including the calling of Vatican II. We can only pray that his gentle spirit might have greater influence on both Catholics and Masons in the future. God bless Bro. Angelo Roncalli, a great and good man!

Sources

1 Dr. Garrett was an outstanding scholar. During the spring semester of 1974, I took his “Seminar on Church and State.” He served as director for my M.A. thesis on “The Nation of Islam: Belief and Practice in Light of the American Constitutional Principle of Religious Liberty,” which I completed in 1976. We remained friends throughout the years. On February 5, 2020, Dr. Garrett died at age 94. On February 13, I was honored to serve as a pallbearer at his funeral.

2 There were no official pronouncements related to Freemasonry at Vatican II. However, on December 11, 1962, Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca, Mexico delivered a speech calling for better relations between Catholics and Masons; see Robert L. Uzzel, “Don Sergio Mendez Arceo: Mexican Bishop and Friend of Freemasons,” *Lux e Tenebris*, 2019, 69-77. Like Pope John XXIII, Bishop Mendez was denounced by Traditional Catholics as a “closet Freemason.”

3 “Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs: Ecumenical,” <https://www.usccb.org/committees/ecumenical-interreligious-affairs/ecumenical>.

During the fall semester of 1986, while working on my Ph.D. in Religion at Baylor, I took “History of Roman Catholicism” under Dr. Glenn O. Hilburn. In this class, he talked about the ideal of unity accompanied by division, pointing out that, on the same night that Jesus prayed “That they may all be one” His disciples were bickering over who would sit on the right hand and who would sit on the left; see Mark 10:35-40.

4 <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Clem12/c12inemengl.htm>.

5 Traditionalist Catholicism (TradCat) is a movement in the Catholic Church that emphasizes beliefs, practices, customs, traditions, liturgical forms, devotions and presentations of teaching associated with the Church before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), in particular the Tridentine (Latin) Mass. Traditionalist Catholics were disturbed by the liturgical changes that followed the Vatican II, which they feel stripped the liturgy of its outward sacredness, eroding faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Many also see ecumenism as blurring the distinction between Catholics and other Christians. Traditionalist Catholicism is socially conservative in its philosophy and worldview and teaches a complementarian view of gender roles; see William J. Collinge, “Traditionalism,” *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*, a part of *Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements Series* 2nd ed., Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 433–434

6 Maureen Fielder, “Vatican II: It’s About That Fresh Air,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 8, 2012, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/vatican-ii-its-about-fresh-air>. The author writes: “I thought of Vatican II not as a finished product, but as a ‘seed’ that would grow and flower and flourish, bringing new life with each decade thereafter. Soon, I thought, we would have a married clergy and not long after that, women would be ordained. The laity would truly run parishes in democratic forms and would be consulted widely by bishops. Theologians would be free to publish and speak and dialogue in a church that valued and welcomed new ideas and new insights.” Sadly, today—sixty years after Vatican II—this has not happened. Another hope that has not been realized in the rescinding of the Catholic ban on Masonic membership.

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7 Samuel McCrea Cavert. *Church Cooperation and Unity in America, A Historical Review: 1900-1970* (New York: Association Press, 1970), 288. Dr. Garrett, a Southern Baptist theologian, was one of the Protestant observers. His doctoral dissertation at Harvard University dealt with Protestant Writings on Roman Catholicism Between Vatican I and Vatican II. His voluminous writings include books on Baptists and Roman Catholicism (1965) and Reinhold Niebuhr on Roman Catholicism (1972). For his 1973 seminar, I presented reports on two Vatican II documents: "Religious Liberty" and "The Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." The latter contains positive statements about Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims and declares that the Jews cannot be held responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.

8 Ibid., 13.

9 Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII, Shepherd of the Modern World: The Definitive Biography of Angelo Roncalli* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1987), 1.

10 Ibid., 26.

11 Ibid., 40.

12 Ibid., 43.

13 Ibid., 45.

14 Ibid., 115.

15 "Biographical Profile, 1881-1963,

"https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/biography/documents/hf_j-xxiii_bio_20190722_biografia.html.

16 Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 232. It is unlikely that Pius expected Roncalli to be his successor. The styles of the two men were very different. Cardinal Antonio Samoré compared an audience with Pius XII to "a particularly stiff oral examination" and a meeting with John XXIII to "chatting with one's favourite grandfather"; see *ibid.*, 300.

17 Ibid., 269.

18 Ibid., 284.

19 Ibid., 293.

20 Cavert. *Church Cooperation and Unity in America*, 288.

21 Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 428.

22 Ibid., 464.

23 Ibid., 484. It is quite unusual for an encyclical to be issued at the time of a council. However, since Pope John knew he was dying, it was absolutely necessary to complete this all-important project.

24 Ibid., 504. Under the leadership of Roncalli's friend and chosen successor, Giovanni Montini (Pope Paul VI), Vatican II held three additional sessions, concluding on December 8, 1965.

25 Boudreaux, Richard (4 June 2001). "Display of Love for John XXIII." *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved 31 August 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27172118>. Most saints are honored on the day of their death, although Saint John the Baptist is honored on June 24, the legendary day of his birth. The Feast of Saint John XXIII is celebrated on October 11, in memory of his opening of Vatican II on October 11, 1962.

26 Ibid., 286. The pontificate of John XXII was part of the Avignon papacy, sometimes called the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church," which lasted from 1309 to 1377. This period reflected a growing loss of power for the papacy and resulted in direct challenges to papal authority, ending the claims asserted by Pope Innocent III at the height of the medieval period. By the end of the 14th Century, church and state emerged as clearly defined entities that operated within their own spheres; see "The Avignon Papacy: The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1309-1377," <https://worldhistory.us/medieval-history/the-avignon-papacy-babylonian-captivity-of-the-church-1309-1377.php>. During this time, the papacy was based not in Rome but in Avignon, a town in southern France. The Avignon popes included Clement V, whose unholy alliance with King Philip IV led the suppression of the Order of Knights Templar and the execution of the Templars' last Grand Master Jacques de Molay.

27 Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 286-87.

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28 Michael J. Matt, Patron Saints of Vatican II...and Freemasonry?

<https://www.remnantnewspaper.com/web/index.php/fetzen-fliegen/item/1944-patron-saints-of-freemasonry-and-vatican-ii>.

29 Time, November 17, 1958; as quoted in *ibid.*, 285.

30 Angelo Roncalli, *Familiari I*, 185. Letter dated February 24, 1929; as quoted in Peter Hebblethwaite, Pope John XXIII, 133. The appearance of this quote on page 133 should remind any Mason who reads this of Psalm 133.

31 Antipope Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli aka John XXIII,

<https://www.sanctamissa.pl/en/vaticanum-ii-antichurch/antipope-angelo-giuseppe-roncalli-aka-john-xxiii>; for information on Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy, see Robert L. Uzzel, *Éliphas Lévi and the Kabbalah: The Masonic and French Connection of the American Mystery Tradition* (New Orleans, La.: Cornerstone Books, 2006), 107-10.

Geoffrey Fisher was the last of 10 children, born near Nuneaton in Warwickshire on May 5, 1887. The Fishers have a long-standing pedigree tracing their priestly origins as far back as the last decade of the 10th century and a monk named John Fisher, in the

Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Abbey of Burton. His father Henry, a gentle and scholarly hyperactive priest and his good-natured loving mother, encouraged Geoffrey to pursue his inclination toward an academic life. He enjoyed the antiquity and ambiance of Exeter

College, founded in 1314. Qualified now in Theology, he was ordained a priest in 1913 at Wells Theological College in Salisbury and a year later, he was appointed Headmaster of Repton, the prestigious and respected public school in Derbyshire, founded in the 16th century. It is during his headmastership that he was initiated as an Entered Apprentice in the Old Reptonian Lodge No. 3725 at Freemasons' Hall, London. On January 11, 1916, he was passed to the Degree of Fellowcraft in October and made a Master Mason on January 9, 1917. This was the start to a long and successful Masonic career. In January 1926, Bro. Fisher became a joining member of Tyrian Lodge No. 253 in Derby. In September 1932, he was appointed as the Bishop of Chester. He was about to embark on a new career and once more he was prepared to take on the new challenges with enthusiasm and determination. On January 22, 1935, he joined Saint Anselm Lodge No. 5166 meeting at Freemasons' Hall in Chester. It only took him a year to be elected Master of the Lodge and to gain the Province's recognition by being appointed Provincial Grand Chaplain. In 1937, he was given the high rank of Grand Chaplain of the United Grand Lodge of England. This was a time when it was fashionable to be a Freemason. King George VI was an overt supporter and active member of the Craft. Fisher's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury occurred at the end of World War II in 1945 and lasted until 1961. He spent his retirement years in the village of Trent in Dorset, where he died on September 15, 1972; see "Freemason & Archbishop of Canterbury – Dr Geoffrey Francis Fisher (1887-1972)," *Freemasonry Matters*, July 24, 2015.

33 <https://www.sanctamissa.pl/en/vaticanum-ii-antichurch/antipope-angelo-giuseppe-roncalli-aka-john-xxiii>.

34 Steven Speray, "Pope St. John XXIII or Antipope John XXIII?" <https://stevensperay.wordpress.com/2017/10/08/pope-st-john-xxiii-or-antipope-john-xxiii>.

35 https://www.traditioninaction.org/ProgressivistDoc/A_195_J23.html

36 Guadalajara, Jal., Mexico, June 3, 1963 Dr. Jose Guadalupe Zuno Hernandez"

(Fr. Joaquin Saenz Y Arriaga, *The New Montinian Church*, p. 147) in <http://romancatholicfaith.weebly.com/blog/-mexican-freemasons-mourned-for-john-xxiiis-death>.

37 "Vatican II Popes," <https://www.catholic-forum.com/members/catholictracts/tract11.html#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20main%20charges%20made%20is%20that,However%2C%20no%20proof%20exists%20of%20this%20ever%20happening>.

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Joseph E. Lee: A Trailblazing African American Leader in Florida

By: Jerry Urso FPS (Life)



Florida Memory

Early Life and Education

Joseph E. Lee was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 15, 1849, and came of age during the complex aftermath of the Civil War. Determined to rise through education, he studied law and became one of the earliest African American attorneys in the state of Florida, eventually gaining admission to the Florida Bar.

Education at Howard University

Lee pursued his higher education at Howard University, one of the most prestigious historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States. He graduated in 1873, earning his law degree. Founded in 1867 in Washington, D.C., Howard was a critical center for the education of African American professionals during Reconstruction and beyond. It provided Lee with rigorous legal training and placed him in a network of emerging Black leaders committed to justice and civil rights.

Joseph E. Lee came of age during the complex aftermath of the Civil War. Determined to rise through education, he studied law and became one of the earliest African American attorneys in the state of Florida, eventually gaining admission to the Florida Bar.

Legal Career

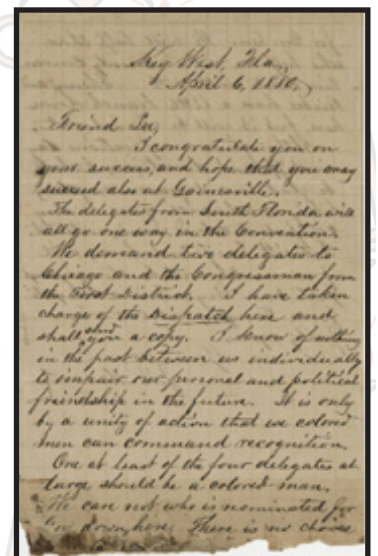
Lee established a legal practice in Jacksonville, where he became known for defending the rights of Black citizens in an era marked by discriminatory laws. His work as an attorney positioned him as both a legal advocate and a community protector.

Political Career in Florida

Lee served in both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida State Senate during the post-Reconstruction period, representing Duval County. As a Republican, he was a staunch advocate for education, civil rights, and economic development for African Americans. Historian Canter Brown Jr. identifies Lee as one of the most prominent Black public officials in Florida during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Republican Party Leadership

Lee was also a powerful figure within the Republican Party. He served as a delegate to national and state Republican conventions and was instrumental in shaping policy and representation for African Americans in the party. He supported civil rights legislation and remained active in organizing Florida's Black Republican base well into the early 1900s.



Jacksonville Public Library

Joseph E. Lee: A Trailblazing African American Leader in Florida

Judicial Service

In the 1890s, Joseph E. Lee became a Municipal Judge in Jacksonville, making him one of the earliest African American judges in Florida. His appointment was historic in Florida's legal system, as it symbolized a rare and powerful assertion of Black legal authority during the post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras. Lee was known for his fairness, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to justice, particularly in a system that was often stacked against African Americans. He held this judicial role through the early 1900s, balancing courtroom authority with civic responsibility, and helped lay the groundwork for future generations of Black jurists in Florida.

Masonic Affiliation

Joseph E. Lee was a dedicated member of Harmony Lodge No. 1, under the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated. The Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida document his active participation in the fraternity. Like many Black leaders of his era, Lee used Freemasonry as a platform for leadership development, education, and community uplift. He notably served as Grand Legal Advisor and also held the position of Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge, providing guidance on constitutional and legislative matters and maintaining critical records. Lee also delivered a powerful and widely praised speech on the history of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge, highlighting its role in empowering African American communities across Florida.

Relationship with James Weldon Johnson

Joseph E. Lee shared a significant geographical and professional connection with James Weldon Johnson, who was also from Jacksonville, Florida. Johnson, a noted educator, diplomat, author, and civil rights leader, likely benefited from the legal and civic groundwork laid by Lee in the region. Their careers overlapped during a time of intense political and racial tension in Florida, and both men played roles in shaping Black civic identity in the state. Johnson later recalled that his father took him to the courtroom specifically to witness Joseph E. Lee—a prominent African American—serving as a judge. This early exposure to Black excellence and authority left a profound impression on the young Johnson and influenced his own path toward leadership.

Connection to President Benjamin Harrison

President Benjamin Harrison recognized Joseph E. Lee's leadership and appointed him to several federal positions during his administration. This recognition helped elevate Lee's stature not just in Florida but on the national stage, as he became an example of Black Republican leadership during a time when such representation was diminishing elsewhere in the South.

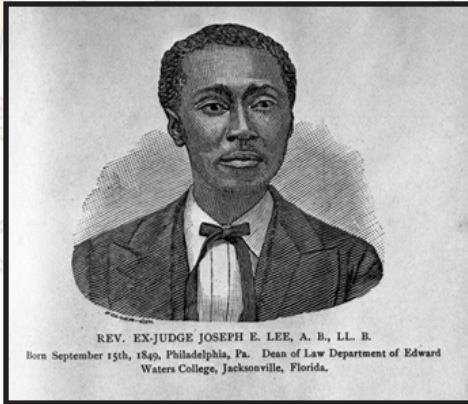
Connection to President William McKinley

Under President William McKinley's administration, Lee continued to serve in federal roles and remained a key political ally in Florida. McKinley's support of Black officeholders was limited by national politics, but Lee's appointment and visibility served as a beacon of representation for African Americans seeking governmental reform and participation.

Connection to President Theodore Roosevelt

President Theodore Roosevelt, known for his controversial but symbolic meeting with Booker T. Washington, also acknowledged Joseph E. Lee's significance in Florida Republican politics. Lee's involvement with Roosevelt's administration reinforced the Republican Party's traditional, albeit inconsistent, support for African American political inclusion at the turn of the 20th century. Notably, Roosevelt dined at Lee's home in Florida—an extraordinary gesture in the racially segregated South, further affirming Lee's stature and respectability among national Republican leaders.

Joseph E. Lee: A Trailblazing African American Leader in Florida



Florida Memory

Ties to the African Methodist Episcopal Church

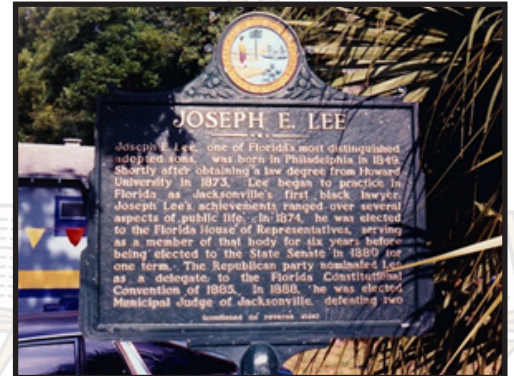
Lee was also deeply involved in religious life as a member of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The AME Church was not only a religious institution but also a political and educational force for Black communities. Lee's participation in the AME Church further cemented his status as a leader devoted to spiritual and social uplift.

Civic Engagement and Community Leadership

Outside of elected office, Lee was deeply committed to public service. He supported Black educational initiatives, worked with civic and religious organizations, and mentored younger leaders. His efforts were essential to sustaining Black civic life in Florida during segregation.

Legacy

Joseph E. Lee died in 1934, leaving behind a legacy of leadership, perseverance, and dignity. His career bridged the Reconstruction era and the rise of Jim Crow, and his achievements remain a symbol of what African Americans accomplished despite structural racism. Today, his life continues to be studied by scholars and celebrated in Florida's Black history.



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The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings. –Eric Hoffer

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Masonic Musings Under the Guise of Masonry

By: Damien Jack, FPS

Are you the same person in private as you are in public? If a person was to see you in two separate situations, would they recognize you as being the same person? Would a Brother be able to recognize you in the dark as well as in the light? These questions are significant because they speak to your character, which is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as, "one of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual."¹ In the charge of a Master Mason, we are taught our manhood depends on our character, not our positions, and not our reputations. Most importantly, the charge teaches us not to have two characters, one for your fellows and one for privacy. That being said, we seem to find those hiding under the guise, or the external appearance of Masonry.

You may be pondering what brings about this line of questioning. The thought entered my mind as I was watching the movie *Conclave*. While the external purpose of the movie centered around the election of a new Pope, a few internal aspects caught my attention. The first took place when the cardinals were having lunch, and the main character Lawrence was called by Tedesco, one of the leading candidates for the papacy, to sit with him. When asked about a new cardinal that appeared before them, Lawrence stated, "A marvelous testament to the Universal Church, don't you think? So many men of different cultures, races bound together by their faith in God."² Tedesco responds not only by laughing, but pointing out how everyone is sitting with their fellow countrymen and how it's divided by language. Tedesco even went as far as saying, "Can you seriously imagine the alternative?" When he said this he pointed to the table being occupied by the African Cardinals.

Watching this scene immediately caused me to think of Matthew 15:7-9, 18-20, "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.'"³ I pondered over these passages of scripture because it reminds me, and hopefully you as well, of the purpose of the common gavel and how we should be using that working rid our hearts and minds of the vices and superfluities of life.

How does this scene speak to Freemasonry you ask? In the same manner Lawrence spoke of the variety of men being bound together by their faith in God, Freemasonry speaks the same in the manner by the tenet of Brotherly Love. Brotherly Love is defined as, "By the exercise of Brotherly Love we are taught to regard the whole human race as one family – the high, the low, the rich, the poor, who are created by one Almighty parent and inhabiting the same planet, we should aid, support, and protect each other. On this principal Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion and promotes true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained perpetually at a distance."⁴

Masonic Musings Under the Guise of Masonry

While my mind was fixed on the hypocrisy being displayed by Tedesco in the movie, another scene made me ponder further. Their plans for placing a certain cardinal in the position of Pope, Lawrence meets secretly with Aldo and Sabbadin in a stairwell. Seeing the reluctance of Lawrence in the person they've chosen to support, Sabbadin says, the following, "The point is we will never find a candidate who doesn't have a black mark against them. We're mortal men. We serve an ideal. We cannot always be ideal." Ideal, "a standard of perfection; a principle to be aimed at." ⁵ Understanding that we are "weak frail mortals," no one is perfect but we do strive to be that perfect ashlar, which means we need to be improving daily. That said, are you working daily to be ideal, to aim for the principles of Masonry, or are you just serving the ideal?

How many of you are familiar with some "Tedescos" in the Order? Those who appear to be in Masons in public, but act un-Masonic in private? Those who do not follow the charge of the Master Mason where it states, "Be a true man in your home as well as out in life. Do not measure your importance by your titles or your money, but by the texture of your character and the cleanliness of your speech." Epictetus once proclaimed, "Circumstances do not make the man, they only reveal him to himself." ⁶ As you make this journey on the level of time, as you find yourself in seasons of prosperity and adversity, what will certain circumstances say about you? Remember that you know yourself to be by tried, and in the midst of those trials or circumstances, will they reveal that gentlemen stands before others, or will it reveal that you've been hiding under the guise of Masonry?

So Mote It Be

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Understanding Masonic Symbols

By: Saliym Hakiym, MPS

There should be nothing more important to a Freemason than to learn and understand the meaning of Masonic symbols. The Freemason who knows nothing or very little about Masonic symbolism knows nothing about which he belongs. Those Masonic symbols are of the occult variety and this occult only means that the Masonic doctrine is hidden from everyone who cannot or will not learn the underlying meanings of those symbols.

So, what is the definition of symbols?

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, it is, *"something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance."*

Especially: *"a visible sign of something invisible."*

Example: *"the lion is a symbol of courage."*

So, when you see a Masonic symbol, understand that there is an occult (hidden) meaning behind what is being shown since a symbol is "a visible sign of something invisible." This is what is called the esoteric doctrine in Masonry.

The next time you attend a Masonic School of Instruction, ask the instructor to explain those symbols to you esoterically because you want to know the hidden meanings.

It is great to know the ritual and recite it verbatim and it is great to know the procedures in your jurisdiction but what about learning what has been hidden?

I'll give you an example. You were given an apron and told that it is "a distinguishing badge of a Mason," and it is. But what about the cord or string with tassels to tie on the apron and the blue border that's on a Master Mason apron or what is the significance of that gavel used by the Master of Masons?

You probably were told that the color blue represents royalty and the sky, and it does represent that but where did they get that from? They got it from Numbers 15: 37-41, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: *Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God.*'"

The esoteric meaning of the color blue along with the cord with tassels on the end on the apron are a reminder of the commandments (613 of them) from God.

Understanding Masonic Symbols

When you dig deeper in your research, you will find that the Ancient Egyptians used the color blue to represent the Goddess Isis. And the tassels which are placed in two groups of 7 each on the front of a Past Master's apron represent Osiris. The Osiris legend is that his brother Set wanted to usurp the throne from him, so he assaulted and killed Osiris and cut his body into 15 pieces of which Isis the wife of Osiris was only able to find 14 pieces. Of course, there is more to the legend, but I'll let you research it. Past Masters, did you know that?

This question is also mainly for Past Masters. *"If the letter G within the Square and Compass, symbolizes the Grand Architect of the Universe, tell me, why was it removed from your emblem and replaced with the Sun?"* The next question you may ask your instructor about that gavel is, *"If it is used by the Master of Masons to symbolize his authority and control of the lodge, why is it given to the candidate in the 1st degree?"* See if he can answer that for you.

In the 1st degree, you were asked, *"What come you here to do?"* and, you said, *"You came here to subdue your passion and improve yourself in Masonry."* So, I'll ask you a question, *"How can you improve yourself in Masonry if you do not learn the underlying meanings of the symbols and allegories in Masonry?"* All instructions to do so are hidden within them.

This esoteric occult (hidden) doctrine can be called the Secret Doctrine of the Masonic Lodge. That Secret Doctrine by the very lectures, concealed, rather than revealed. Sure, we can get a story from them but that is all we can get until we study esoterically. If we were to accept what appears to be rational explanations from the ritual and initiation ceremonies and seek nothing further, Freemasonry would be meaningless to us. We could never say truthfully that, Freemasonry makes a good man better without learning the Secret Doctrine of the Masonic Lodge and applying those lessons to our life.

If you can receive it, I'll answer that gavel question here.

The Gavel is a symbol of the Norse God Thor's hammer and his power. It also represents the T cross Tau, which is the creative side of Deity, meaning the Master of Masons opens and closes his lodge at will and that nothing comes before the lodge without his permission. The Tau is also the emblem of generative power, of eternal transmigrating life, which is called reincarnation.

This is why the Master of Mason's gavel is given to the candidate because he (the candidate) is being reborn into a new metaphysical/ spiritual life. If he and you can receive it.

[Quran 66:8] in part, *"O Sustainer, complete for us our light and forgive us, for surely, You have the power over all things."*

Medicine, law, business, engineering. These are noble pursuits. And necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love. These are what we stay alive for.
—Tom Schulman, Dead Poets' Society (1989)

LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

By: Joshua Feliciano, FPSH

Washington, D.C. -September 7, 2022

A pivotal point in American Freemasonry occurred when the Sovereign Grand Commanders of the ONLY four regular and recognized the Scottish Rite Supreme Councils in the United States assembled at the House of the Temple in Washington, DC, to sign an original Statement of Unity. This historic document solidifies an internal agreement of unity, legitimacy, and mutual support among the Southern and Northern Jurisdictions of both Mainstream and Prince Hall Affiliated Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

Participating Supreme Councils:

The Supreme Council, 33°, Southern Jurisdiction (SJ)

-III. James D. Cole, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander

The United Supreme Council, 33°, Prince Hall Affiliation, Southern Jurisdiction (PHA-SJ)

-III. Corey D. Hawkins Sr., 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander

The Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (NMJ)

-III. Peter J. Samiec, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander

The United Supreme Council, 33°, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction (PHA-NJ)

-III. Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander



LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

Origins and Intent of the Statement

The paper discusses the creation of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in 1801 in Charleston, South Carolina, and re-expresses the basic Masonic values that the Rite was established upon. All Councils recognized their position as a direct descendant of the original Supreme Council, as well as a legitimate sovereign conservator of the Rite in the jurisdiction. This agreement also states that all Scottish Rite Masons must be and stay in good standing of a Lodge created by a recognized Grand Lodge. This paper also clarifies via the Statement that, without being recognized by one of the four signers, no other Supreme Council will be recognized or considered legitimate in the United States. This provision will ensure the effectiveness of the Rite while delegitimizing irregular or unrecognized Scottish Rite organizations, as they are not conferred for action without being tied to an established Masonic body.

Principles of Unity and Governance

The Councils expressed their agreement to uphold the following common principles:

Sole legitimacy: Only the four signatories are the legitimate Scottish Rite authorities in the irrespective jurisdictions.

Mandatory adherence: The four signatories must adhere to the Masonic rules as defined by the irrespective recognized Grand Lodges such as visitation and the AASR being an appendant body of symbolic masonic lodges.

Exclusive governance: Only the four signatories govern Scottish Rite membership, chartering, and recognition processes.

Denial of legitimacy: Any Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite outside of these four signatories that is not mutually recognized, will be denied legitimacy.

Commitment to support: They will support each other in promoting the cause of Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

These principles strengthen a unified Masonic presence in the United States, rooted in shared heritage, discipline, and respect for established Masonic law.

Ceremonial Significance

The signing ceremony was solemn and symbolic. Ill. Leonard Proden, 33°, Grand Prior of the Supreme Council (SJ), opened with an invocation quoting Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "In order to unite with one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must go and meet one another." The quote resonated deeply with the day's message: Unity is not just administrative. It is fraternal.

Ill. James D. Cole, 33°, reminded the audience, "Recognition is external. Unity is internal." His words emphasized the spirit of mutual dedication beyond signatures and seals—a brotherhood reaffirming its highest values.

A Path Forward

The meaning of this Unity Agreement extends beyond a purely symbolic one. It provides the opportunity for cooperative projects, educational endeavors, and joint action to face the issues that modern Freemasonry is experiencing. It recognizes the 2 regular Prince Hall Affiliated Supreme Councils as equals within the context of Scottish Rite bodies nationally, and in doing so, advances a step forward toward racial reconciliation, fraternal bonds, and coherence of operations. In a new era of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, this agreement can be a template of principled cooperation, rooted in history, and aimed at the future. In unison, these Councils have said: We are stronger not only because we recognize each other, but because we move forward together as one.

LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

Historical Legal Foundation: Grand Constitutions of 1786

The authority and legitimacy reaffirmed in the Statement of Unity in 2022 are congruent with the Grand Constitutions of 1786, the underlying document that governs the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Of particular importance, there are two articles:

Article IX:

"In a country under the jurisdiction of a Supreme Council of Sovereign Inspectors General, duly constituted, and recognized by all others, no Sovereign Grand Inspector General, or Delegate Inspector General, or Deputy, or Sub-Inspector, or Agent, shall have authority to act in such country, unless he shall have been recognized and confirmed by the same Supreme Council. And if any person shall act in opposition to this regulation, he shall be suspended and excluded from all the rights and privileges of the Order, until he shall be reinstated by the Supreme Council in whose jurisdiction the offense was committed."

This article enunciates that a Supreme Council in a country that possesses lawful jurisdiction, and acceptance is the only Inspector General that possesses authority, barring a formality acknowledged by the Supreme Council. The article reinforces the Statement of Unity's statement regarding mutual acceptance, furthermore, indicates the need for jurisdictional boundaries.

Article XVII:

"It requires a majority of votes to invest with lawful authority the acts of Sovereign Grand Inspectors General done in a country where there exists a Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree legitimately instituted and recognized; and no Inspectors General, or Deputy, or Agent, shall have the right to act in such country without the permission or Exequatur of the Supreme Council of the same, under the penalty of suspension and nullification of their acts. No Supreme Council shall extend its powers beyond its own jurisdiction without the express consent of the Council concerned."

According to Article XVII, acts done in a country in which a recognized Supreme Council exists require the majority consent. Inspector's, Exequatur (fancy word alert--a formal authorization), cannot act independently or into other jurisdictions without the Exequatur to do so. The Article's clear insistence upon a properly recognized body of the fraternity serves as a support mechanism for the Unity Statement which neither recognized nor adhered to the authority of bodies of the fraternity acting outside of topical legality. These Grand Constitutional principles remain applicable today, projecting historical legitimacy upon the 2022 Unity Agreement and firmly anchoring it into the law and fraternity of the Scottish Rite tradition.

The Grand Constitutions of 1786 are the foundational governing document of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. Traditionally attributed to Prince Frederick of Prussia, these Grand Constitutions provide the legal, administrative, and philosophical framework for how the 33° structure of the Scottish Rite operates throughout the world.

United Supreme Councils' Articles

Further affirmation appears in an article in the Constitutions of the United Supreme Councils:

Article reads:

"The Grand Secret Constitutions of 1761, the Regulations of 1762, and the Grand Constitutions of 1786, and those subsequent thereto, as herein modified... shall be the basic laws governing the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in this Jurisdiction."

LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

This clearly codifies that the Grand Constitutions of 1786 and their predecessor documents are not just historical references but serve as the binding legal standard. Any organization not governed by these sources or that contradicts their authority operates outside the recognized constitutional framework of the Scottish Rite.

Both United Supreme Councils (PHA-SJ and PHA-NJ) include an article in their constitutions that affirms exclusive jurisdiction over the Scottish Rite among African American Masons in the United States and its territories.

Article reads:

"The jurisdiction and the control of the degree of the A.A.S. Rite among colored men in the United States of America and their Territories and Dependencies is claimed exclusively by the two Supreme Councils... and all bodies or individuals not authorized by either of said Supreme Councils to disseminate or work the said degree among colored masons are hereby declared to be irregular, spurious and clandestine."

This article reinforces the central theme of the 2022 Statement of Unity: that authority within the Scottish Rite is both territorial and jurisdictional and must be exercised by recognized and duly authorized bodies only. It also demonstrates that the legitimacy of the United Supreme Councils is not a modern invention but rooted in decades of mutual recognition, operational boundaries, and shared constitutional law.

World Conference of Supreme Councils (WCOSC)

In May 2025, both United Supreme Councils listed in the Statement of Unity gained international recognition when they were formally admitted as members of the World Conference of Supreme Councils (WCOSC). Founded in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1961, the World Conference of Supreme Councils (WCOSC) is the global assembly of regularly established Supreme Councils of Scottish Rite Freemasonry that trace their authority from the Grand Constitutions of 1786. Membership in the WCOSC is only by invitation after a thorough investigation of lineage, requirement of regularity, and mutual recognition of existing Supreme Councils. Membership is not ceremonial; it is the only legitimate, international standard of authority of any Supreme Council of Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

The admission of the two PHA Supreme Councils from Southern and Northern Jurisdiction is a landmark event in Masonic history that legitimized and recognized their regularity and standing in the International fraternity, not only within the United States. The WCOSC will not recognize irregular, or self-constituted, Supreme Councils; it only recognizes those with unbroken and recognized lineage and lawful jurisdiction. Therefore, any claims of legitimacy made by any other groups, particularly in the United States, are directly and unequivocally countered by the international recognition granted to the PHA Southern and Northern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in 2025. The WCOSC does provide rights of mutual recognition, international mutual aid, and provides the guidelines for regular Scottish Rite Freemasonry from the Grand Constitutions of 1786. The membership list is published and updated on a regular basis and is the international reference point for valid Scottish Rite authority.

No one ever became extremely wicked suddenly.

—Juvenal

LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

As of 2025, the WCOSC comprises the following member Supreme Councils:

Supreme Council, 33°, Southern Jurisdiction, USA

Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, USA

United Supreme Council, 33°, Prince Hall Affiliation, Southern Jurisdiction, USA

United Supreme Council, 33°, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction, USA

Suprême Conseil de France (Supreme Council of France)

Supreme Council of Italy

Supreme Masonic Council of Spain

Supreme Council of Portugal

Supreme Council for Turkey

Supreme Council for the Swiss Confederation

Supreme Council of the Grand Orient of Poland

Supreme Council of the Grand Orient of Romania

Supreme Grand Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Luxembourg

Supreme Council of the Grand Lodge of Cedars of Lebanon

Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Scotland

The inclusion of the United Supreme Councils, PHA-SJ and PHA-NJ, represents the culmination of decades of advocacy and recognition, cementing their position as the only regular and recognized Prince Hall Scottish Rite Supreme Councils in the world.

Conclusion

Numerous organizations have emerged claiming Masonic authority without regularity by any of the established and mutually acknowledged Supreme Councils. According to the Grand Constitutions of 1786, World Conference of Supreme Councils and the 2022 Statement of Unity, such claims have no standing within the formal Scottish Rite framework.

The Statement of Unity from 2022 and acceptance into the World Conference of Supreme Councils is an affirmation of the sacred trust that enrolls recognized Supreme Councils based on legal authority, mutual recognition, and an abiding profession of Masonic principles. It is built on the Grand Constitutions of 1786 and the enduring articles of the United Supreme Councils to close the door on irregularity and throw open widely the gates of unity.

In a time of disinformation, disunity, and dubious claims against the integrity of the Craft, this agreement reminds us of continuity and clarity. It employs legal precedent and moral authority, rooted in centuries of law and light, to construct a refashioned fraternity, one that holds the past accountable, the present affirmed, and the future secured. It is more than a promise; it is a covenant, a binding assertion that connects the Scottish Rite, not just by geography, but by principle, practice, and purpose.



LEGITIMACY & LAW IN THE SCOTTISH RITE

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The wicked are wicked, no doubt, and they go astray and they fall, and they come by their deserts; but who can tell the mischief which the very virtuous do?

—William Makepeace Thackeray

An Unforgettable Masonic Experience

By: Donald Corinthian Jones, PMWGM/SGIG

Greetings Brethren, I decided to write this article after numerous brothers kept asking me for details about my visit to Boston for the Prince Hall Symbolic Re-opening ceremony. Although this is not one of those deep thinking consistorial, ritualistic, biographical or esoteric articles, it is nevertheless historical. I wrote it because I think it's informative and offers an insight into our origins and our past in relation to our present.

My journey begins the weekend of April 26-27, 2024, in Boston, MA. That is where I was able to indulge in two of my favs or passions at the same time. Those are Prince Hall Freemasonry and being a history buff. I had the opportunity of being a reenactor. I wore colonial garb and had a script as I portrayed Boston Smith, one of the 'Immortal 15' free black men who were initiated into Freemasonry on March 6, 1775, and started 'organized' Black Freemasonry in America. I want to thank my MWGM Paul A. Hibner for bestowing on me the honor of representing the Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania for the Historic 11th Biennial Reopening of African Lodge 459. The weekend was full of events relating to our Founder.

On Friday April 26, 2024, the Sights and Sounds Speaker Series Tour kicked off. We first visited the Prince Hall Memorial at Cambridge Commons, in Cambridge MA. This is the location where General George Washington assumed command of the Continental forces on July 3, 1775. We were treated to a dissertation by Past Grand Lecturer 'Red' Mitchell who informed us that the five engraved black granite tablets of the Prince Hall Memorial were representative of the 5000 plus men of color who served in the Revolutionary War.

We then visited the African Meeting House which was built in 1806 and served as the African Baptist Church of Boston. It is a Boston African American National Historic Site. African Lodge 459 held some of their lodge meetings in this location. The meeting house has some of the original 19th century floorboards and pews. It was awe inspiring to stand in the pulpit and sit in the pews where notables like Frederick Douglass spoke and Rev. Prince Hall presided as Worshipful Master.

After leaving the historic Beacon Hill neighborhood we visited Copp's Hill Burial Ground, the resting place and gravesite of our founder Prince Hall and some members of his family. It was challenging traversing the steep streets leading to the Burial site, but it was well worth the visit. My brothers, you can read about Prince Hall, you can buy and wear the gear, go to your lodge meetings and festive days, but standing at the Prince Hall broken column gravestone is a reality check. Here at this site is the man who started it all. Blue house Freemasonry, Holy Royal Arch, Consistory, Shrinedom, Order of Eastern Star, etc., for people of color all got its start from this man.

We ended our tour with a visit to Castle William Island. This is where the British Fort was located and the 'Immortal 15' free black men were initiated into Freemasonry. Standing on the banks of the Fort you can visualize the difficulties and challenges that those 15 determined men experienced. Just imagine the attention that 15 black men boarding a boat and rowing to a British occupied garrison would have drawn then and even now. But they were determined, they persevered and were successful.

An Unforgettable Masonic Experience



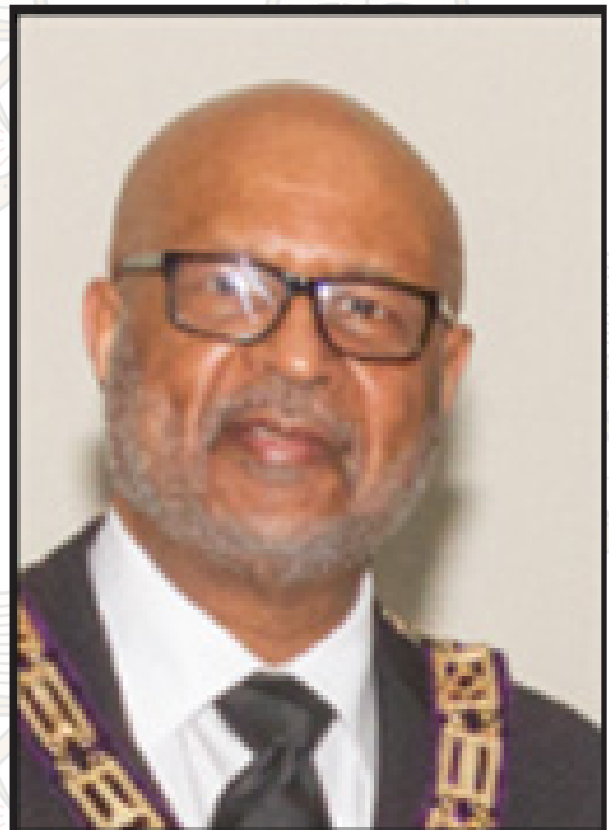
That Friday evening, at the William E. Reed Auditorium we were treated to an outstanding performance by the theatrical group called 'The PACK'. The play was entitled 'The Blacks of Europe'. The theatrical presentation was about the birth of African Lodge 459, and it centered around how Prince Hall contacted members of the 'mainstream' Grand Lodge about joining Freemasonry. It gave those in attendance an insight into how Prince Hall and friends had to navigate through the streets and volatile atmosphere of pre-revolutionary war Boston. After the play those in attendance were then treated to a very special event. The original charter of African Lodge 459 was brought out to the stage and put on display along with several other historic documents.



On Saturday April 27, 2024, African Lodge 459 had its' Symbolic Reopening followed by a Table Lodge ceremony. A large contingent of visiting dignitaries from various 'non' Prince Hall jurisdictions around the world were received first. Then Fifteen sitting Grand Masters or their representatives dressed in colonial garb were announced and escorted to their stations by a fife and drum corps in an impressive opening ceremony. We then had the ritualistic Re-Opening ceremony. During the meeting there were memorable speeches and salutations relating to the achievements and greatness of our founder.

Each MWGM or their representative was afforded the opportunity to give remarks. I think the MWGM of California, RW Bro. David San Juan summed it up for everyone when he said, and I quote: 'This was an experience that he will never forget'. Kudos to MWGM Justin A. Petty of the MWPGHL of Ma. and his entire team for bringing the African Lodge 459 Reopening ceremonies and weekend events back again.

After the reopening we attended a Table Lodge ceremony. Many jurisdictions do not practice this ceremony. The Table lodge is one of the oldest traditions of our craft, and its purpose is to unite and celebrate as brothers in a ritualistic ceremony that includes rousing toasts and food. With the appointment of MWPGM Yves R. Maignan as the new African Lodge 459 director we look forward to this beautiful tradition continuing to bring our legacy and history back to life.



Bogus Masonry & Eureka Chapter No. 3 HRAM I PHA

By: David Pugh, FPSH



During my tenure as Excellent High Priest while pursuing my goal to research the history of my Royal Arch Chapter I discovered a connection to another position I held at that time. I had the honor of serving as the Director of the Commission on Bogus Masonic Practices during my term as Excellent High Priest in 2022. This brief essay will examine the history of Eureka Chapter and explore the question; what connection does a Prince Hall Affiliated Chapter have with Bogus Masonry?

Eureka Chapter No. 3, Chicago IL is a subordinate chapter of the Most Excellent Prince Hall Grand Chapter Holy Royal Arch Masons State of Illinois and Jurisdiction. It was one of the four founding chapters that constituted our Grand Chapter in 1879, the others being St. Mark, St. John, and Mount Moriah.¹ It was then chartered as Eureka Chapter No. 3 on February 9th, 1880, by the newly formed Most Excellent Prince Hall Grand Chapter Holy Royal Arch Masons State of Illinois and Jurisdiction.² We will begin our examination of the history of Eureka Chapter#3 by looking at each of the founding principal officers starting with the founding Scribe.

The founding Scribe listed on our charter is Companion Adam Horn. We don't know much about Companion Horn other than that he was a member of Hiram Lodge No. 14 subordinate to The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of The State of Illinois. He also served as the Worshipful Master of his lodge in 1881, the following year after Eureka was founded.³ Companion Adam Horn was a dedicated Mason who served his Lodge and his Chapter with distinction, and he did his part to promote Masonry in the state of Illinois.

Our first King was Companion John J. Gross. He was a member of John Jones Lodge#7 subordinate to the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of Illinois. He served as their Worshipful Master in 1879 and then had the distinction of serving as the Grand Junior Warden in 1884.⁴ The most significant achievement related to Royal Arch Masonry is that he served as the Most Excellent Grand High Priest from 1883-1885.⁵ Our founding King Companion John J. Gross was truly a leader in both Craft and Capitular Masonry on the subordinate and Grand level. He set a great example of service for those who would come after him!

We have taken a closer look at two of the founding principal officers of Eureka Chapter No. 3 and we still have not uncovered any connection to bogus masonry! Let us now turn our attention to our founding Excellent High Priest for the answer to the question. What connection could a regularly chartered Prince Hall chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons have with Bogus Masonry?

Bogus Masonry & Eureka Chapter No. 3 HRAM I PHA

The founding Excellent High Priest of Eureka Chapter No. 3 was none other than the infamous John G. Jones!⁶ John G. Jones was a rising star in Prince Hall Masonry at the founding of Eureka Chapter No. 3. He was the nephew of Past Grand Master John Jones who served as Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio from 1865-1867.⁷ John G. Jones served as Worshipful Master of the Lodge named after his uncle John Jones Lodge No. 7 in 1875. He was subsequently elected Deputy Grand Master and served from 1875 to 1876. He also was the first black Shriner, and he founded the Shrine in 1893. In addition, he rose to the rank of Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, Southern and Western Jurisdiction in 1895.⁸ Unfortunately, just as his star was on the rise in Prince Hall Masonry, he would subsequently fall from grace. He was expelled from Freemasonry in 1903 for contumacy by the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Illinois. "After being expelled in 1903, he became the "Father of Clandestine Masonry." He established an irregular grand lodge or two in Illinois and nationally promoted clandestine activity"⁹

We see from the above sources that the first High Priest of Eureka Chapter No. 3 later became known as the "Father of Clandestine or Bogus Masonry". There is an irony in this discovery. Two subsequent Excellent High Priests of Eureka would become Directors of the Commission On Bogus Masonic Practices of the Phylaxis Society. The first was Darryl Andrews FPS, and after his tenure I was appointed next to succeed him as director of the Commission.

Just as the Mosaic Pavement is composed of white and black squares, emblematic of good and evil, so is Man composed of positive and negative attributes. There is much we can learn from the life of John G. Jones. From the white squares of his life, we can be inspired to set high goals and work hard to achieve them, both inside and outside of Freemasonry. However, his Black squares reinforce that if we don't subdue our passions like pride, arrogance, and entitlement, we too can fall from grace if we are not diligent!

In conclusion Eureka Chapter No. 3 was founded by three dedicated hard-working Masons, the most distinguished being the EHP John G. Jones. John G. Jones' later expulsion in no way erases his accomplishments in Prince Hall Masonry.

Our chapter was founded by one of the most prominent and influential Masons of that era. This, in my opinion, is a history to be proud of and celebrate!

I will continue to follow John G. Jones' example of service and leadership in Prince Hall Masonry. However, I will also continue to fight against the scourge that is the black square of his legacy, Bogus Masonry!

Yours Under a Living Arch and Over a Triangle

Sources

¹ <http://yorkriteilpha.com/>

² Current charter of Eureka Chapter No. 3, Holy Royal Arch Masons

³ <http://www.mwphglil.com/>

⁴ <http://www.mwphglil.com/>

⁵ <http://yorkriteilpha.com/>

⁶ Current charter of Eureka Chapter No. 3, Holy Royal Arch Masons

^{7, 8, 9} Determination And Indignation Questions and Answers On Two John Jones: Analysis On How the Initial "G" Separates A



Harmony in Heritage:

Attracting a Younger Generation to Masonry in Small Towns like Madison, Florida

By: Marlon S. Honeywell, FPS

Introduction

In the heart of my hometown, Madison, Florida, once existed a timeless tradition of camaraderie and fellowship, deeply rooted in the practices and principles of Masonry. As a Mason with a personal connection to this small yet vibrant community, I have the privilege of sharing an inside perspective on the profound sense of brotherhood that I witnessed as a young man growing up in Madison.

Background Information

Madison County, located in the Florida Panhandle, is a community that stands as a testament to both the resilience and evolving nature of small-town America. Its historical and demographic characteristics provide a rich context for understanding the unique fellowship experienced within its only Prince Hall Masonic lodge and chapter, Widow's Son Lodge no. 9 and AREME Chapter no. 128, respectively.

Historical Context

Established in 1827, Madison County is named after James Madison, the fourth President of the United States.¹ The county's chronicle is intertwined with the plantation economy of the South, where cotton cultivation played a significant role, largely relying on the labor of enslaved African Americans. This period shaped much of the county's early socioeconomic landscape. Following the Reconstruction period, Madison County, like many parts of Florida, witnessed an increase in racial violence, which peaked towards the end of the 19th century and continued into the early decades of the 20th century. Additionally, the county experienced significant racial tensions, including 16 lynchings recorded between 1877 and 1950, ranking it sixth highest in the state for such incidents during this period.^{2,3}

Population

The population of Madison County has seen fluctuations over the years. In 2010, the population was recorded at 19,251, which decreased to 18,198 by 2022, denoting a 5.5% decline.⁴ The racial makeup shows a diverse population with a majority of 56.0% white residents, followed by 33.5% African American residents. Hispanic individuals comprise approximately 7.0% of the population, while Asian, Native American, and other racial groups form smaller percentages.⁵ An image of the courthouse in Madison, Florida, may be found in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Madison County Court House

Harmony in Heritage

Beacon of Inclusion

From the 1960s to the 1990s, African Americans faced significant social and institutional barriers, which limited opportunities for fraternal inclusion and communal contributions.⁶ In this climate, Freemasonry emerged as a vital outlet for many, including my father, Napoleon Honeywell, and mother, Catherine James-Honeywell. During this timeframe, Masonic lodges and chapters in Madison also afforded a safe space where African Americans could find a sense of belonging, mutual support, and empowerment.

Attracting a Younger Generation

Currently, in contrast to my parents' generation, attracting younger individuals to Masonry presents new and different challenges. Firstly, there's a growing disconnection between fraternal values and the rapidly evolving interests of a younger era.⁷ Secondly, the digital age shifted socialization patterns and most younger people prefer online communication over in-person meetings. Thirdly, there is an increasing skepticism regarding relevance and impact; and younger individuals now have numerous choices of organizations to join. Nonetheless, given the aforesaid issues, choosing to embrace modern technology, community engagement, and inclusivity may be the key to solving this dilemma, which plagues our fraternity.

Modern Technology

Accepting the role of modern technology is pivotal and digital outreach may play a crucial part in facilitating a positive outcome.⁸ By actively maintaining a dynamic online presence through social media platforms, Masonic lodges can showcase annual activities, values, and community impact, thereby appealing to the tech-savvy youth. Websites and online forums may also offer resources regarding history and principles, making the fraternity more accessible and comprehensible to those unfamiliar with it.

Periodic Virtual Meetings

Integrating periodic virtual meetings into Masonic practice can offer greater flexibility. This approach acknowledges the busy, often digital-centric lifestyles of younger individuals. Virtual meetings not only make it easier for members to stay engaged, regardless of their physical location or time constraints, but it also caters to a generation that is increasingly comfortable with online interactions. These innovations, while respecting the traditions of Masonry, provide a bridge and ensure that this fraternity remains relevant and appealing in an ever-evolving world.

Community Engagement

Enhancing community engagement and service is another strategy to attract younger members. Focusing on local impactful projects offers opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the community.⁹ This approach aligns with the fervor of youngsters to be involved in social and civic causes. Collaborative projects, such as neighborhood clean-ups, charity fundraisers, or educational initiatives, benefit the community and provide a platform to develop leadership skills and forge new connections. Additionally, partnering with local schools, churches, colleges, and youth organizations for joint service projects or mentorship programs may attract a younger audience. To this end, community-focused efforts showcase the germaneness of Masonry and drastically improve its appeal.

Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will show you a failure.

Thomas A. Edison, 1847 - 1931

Harmony in Heritage

Inclusivity

Stimulating social and cultural inclusivity is vital for the future of Masonry. Masonic lodges must be seen as welcoming spaces that celebrate the diversity of a wider community. Such actions also involve embracing people with varying perspectives and life experiences.¹⁰ By hosting discussions and events on contemporary issues (i.e., environmental concerns, technological advancements, retirement, accumulating wealth, etc.), lodges and chapters engage a population that desires to participate in progressive dialogue. Said initiatives also demonstrate Masonry's commitment to evolution, while still upholding its core mission: making good men better. Moreover, designing an inclusive environment where members feel valued and heard guarantees that Masonry remains an attractive choice for community-minded individuals across generations.

The Future in Madison County

The Church

The future of Masonry in Madison County hinges on its ability to adapt and remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. For example, strengthening ties with local churches can be a key strategy, as religious institutions often share similar values. By collaborating on joint initiatives or community events, lodges and chapters can demonstrate their commitment to these shared values and entice individuals who are active in faith-based areas.

Civic Involvement

To the extent allowable, civic involvement is another crucial area to highlight the beauty of Masonic membership. When applicable, participation in local governance, community planning, and public forums can position Masonry as an active and contributing force in the county's development.¹¹ This visibility in public affairs not only showcases the fraternity's commitment to civic responsibility but also provides opportunities for members to develop and demonstrate leadership skills.

Volunteerism

Volunteering remains a cornerstone of Masonic activity. Collective involvement in local charities, schools, and non-profit organizations, can underscore Masonry's role in fostering community welfare. Moreover, organizing or participating in volunteering events, such as food drives, literacy programs, or environmental clean-ups benefits the community and elevates the public perception of Masonry as a positive and proactive force.

Personal Reflection

Growing up in Madison County, my journey is deeply intertwined with the community's fabric. Born in 1972, I navigated my formative years within the nurturing bounds of this close-knit community. My parents, family, and the Madison County school system, where I graduated in 1990, played a pivotal role in shaping my early experiences and perspectives. My father, a barber, farmer, and school bus driver, and my mother, an educator and administrator for Title III, were pillars of strength and inspiration in my life. Their respective roles in Masonry, education, and community service profoundly influenced my values and outlook. This personal history in Madison County, woven with familial ties and community engagement, deeply informed my understanding and appreciation of Masonry's role in small towns. It underscores the fraternity's relevance in nurturing personal growth, community responsibility, and the enduring bonds of fellowship. Given these facts, my hope is that the younger generation will garner the same appreciation and outlook over time. For growth, we must be open to enforcing age-old traditions in new and innovative ways.

Conclusion

Looking toward the future of Masonry in small towns, I hope to see soon a vibrant tapestry of history, fellowship, and community service. To do so, lodges and chapters must stand as beacons of unity, drawing from a rich past to illuminate the path forward. Their presence should endeavor to remind us that in our rapidly evolving world, the timeless values of brotherhood, integrity, and mutual support retain their profound significance.

To those seeking a sense of belonging, purpose, and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact, Masonry in small towns offers a unique and rewarding journey. It's a journey rooted in tradition yet adaptable to contemporary needs, where personal growth and community welfare go hand in hand.

Additionally, in small town lodges, one will find more than just a fraternity; you'll discover a family, a source of inspiration, and a platform to make a real difference. We just have to convince the younger generation to give us a chance.....

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**The principal mark of genius is not perfection but
originality, the opening of new frontiers.**

—Arthur Koestler

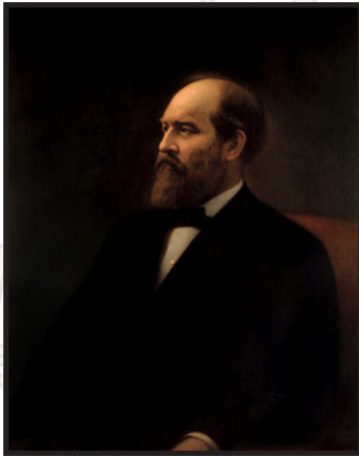
“What If”

Bro. James Abram Garfield

20th President of the United States

By: Jerry Urso FPS-Life

“A brave man is a man who dares to look the Devil in the face and tell him he is a Devil”-James Garfield



White House Historical Association

Abstract

In the great halls of democracy where statues are erected, and names are immortalized one is entitled “What If”. James Abram Garfield was the last of the log cabin presidents. An ordained minister who invoked the name of the creator and followed the beatitudes of Jesus the Christ as equal to the Ten Commandments. He served in the Union Army as a General but led not with the sword but with righteousness and humility. Born impoverished and one of the most unlikely of men to occupy the white house James A. Garfield was the embodiment of the widowed son. His approach to Civil Rights was broad in scope as any we have seen even to this present day. He was ready to bring the troops back into the south to preserve reconstruction and break the backs of the Klan once and for all. James Garfield Was the Only U.S. President to prove a Math Theorem.

Early Life

James Garfield was born on November 19, 1831, to Abram and Eliza Ballou Garfield. When his father died in 1833, Eliza was left in an impoverished state. To assist his mother, James took on various jobs. At the age of sixteen, he ran away to work on the canal boats that shuttled commerce between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. During his six weeks on the boats, he fell overboard fourteen times and eventually caught a severe fever that forced him to return home. While recovering, Garfield made a vow to make his way in the world using his brains rather than his brawn. ¹

At age eighteen, Garfield experienced a religious conversion and was baptized into the denomination of his parents, the Disciples of Christ. In 1850, he enrolled at Williams College, where he thrived intellectually. He relished the opportunity to hear the renowned thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson and was both challenged and inspired by the strong personality of the college’s president, Mark Hopkins. Garfield saw himself as a reformer, strongly identifying with the antislavery ideals of the emerging Republican Party. These convictions would only deepen with time, shaping both his rise as a Union general during the Civil War and his later career in politics. After graduating from Williams College with honors in 1856, Garfield returned to the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (now Hiram College) as a faculty member. Although officially appointed as an instructor in classical languages, he taught a broad range of subjects, including English, history, geology, and mathematics. ²

The Civil War

In August 1861, James A. Garfield organized the 42nd Ohio Infantry and quickly rose from lieutenant colonel to full colonel within a matter of weeks. On January 10, 1862, he led Federal forces against Confederate troops commanded by Humphrey Marshall at the Battle of Middle Creek. Despite being greatly outnumbered, Garfield’s tactical skill led to a decisive Union victory and the collapse of Confederate control in Eastern Kentucky. His military acumen earned him steady advancement in the Union Army. By September 1863, during the Battle of Chickamauga, Garfield—now a major general and the youngest officer to hold that rank—made a daring ride under enemy fire to relay critical orders. He also served as chief of staff to Major General William S. Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Cumberland. Before leaving military service to return to politics. ³

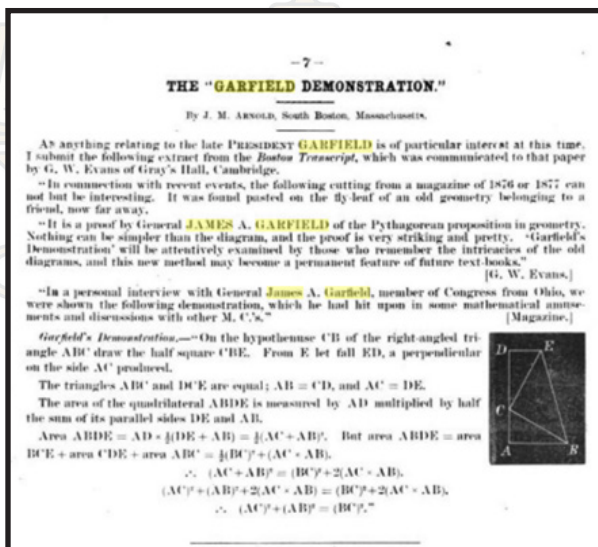
"What If" Brother James Abram Garfield 20th President of the US

Politics

Garfield was elected to the Ohio State Senate in 1859, serving until 1861. In 1862, while still in military service, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent Ohio's 19th district, where he would serve for nearly two decades. During his time in Congress, Garfield became known as a skilled orator and a staunch supporter of the gold standard. On civil rights, he took a more moderate stance than some of his Republican contemporaries, advocating gradual progress rather than radical change. Before the Civil War, Garfield opposed John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, viewing it as misguided, yet he recognized that Brown's trial and execution would become a pivotal moment—a spark that would help ignite the national conflict. ⁴

Presidential Election

While attending the 1880 Republican National Convention, James A. Garfield had no intention of seeking the presidential nomination; he was there to support his friend, Secretary of the Treasury John Sherman. However, after multiple deadlocked ballots and growing frustration among delegates, Garfield unexpectedly emerged as the compromise candidate. On the 36th ballot, he was nominated as the Republican Party's "dark horse" candidate. In the general election, Garfield narrowly defeated Democratic nominee General Winfield Scott Hancock, winning the presidency by a margin of just 10,000 popular votes, though his victory in the Electoral College was more decisive.



Mathematics

James A. Garfield was the first person to use the properties of trapezoids to prove the 47th Proposition of Euclid — more commonly known as the Pythagorean Theorem. His elegant and original proof stands alone in its ingenuity; any subsequent attempt to use trapezoids in proving the theorem has inevitably mirrored his method. Garfield's paper remains the only known proof of the Pythagorean Theorem that employs trapezoids, a testament to his sharp intellect and creative reasoning. Yet, his brilliance in mathematics was matched by a profound spiritual insight. ⁵

Freemasonry

Brother James A. Garfield became a Freemason in Ohio shortly after his election to Congress, joining Columbus Lodge No. 30 in Columbus. He remained affiliated with that lodge until May 4, 1869, when he demitted to help establish Pentalfa Lodge No. 23 in Washington, D.C. Garfield is listed as a charter member of Pentalfa Lodge and remained an active member until his death. In 1866, he became a Knight Templar through Columbia Commandery No. 2 in Washington, D.C. He was also a Master Mason and a member of the Scottish Rite, receiving the 4th through 14th degrees from the renowned Freemason Albert Pike in 1872. ⁶

Prince Hall Freemasonry

James A. Garfield became well-known for his "front porch" speeches during the 1880 presidential campaign, delivered from his home in Mentor, Ohio. Among the many visitors were influential African Americans, including numerous veterans of the United States Colored Troops, who came to show their support. Garfield's inauguration on March 4, 1881, held particular significance for African Americans. It marked the first time African Americans participated in a presidential inaugural parade. The procession included African American troops, members of the Odd Fellows, and African American Freemasons—all of whom helped escort the President-elect to the Capitol for the swearing-in ceremony. ⁷



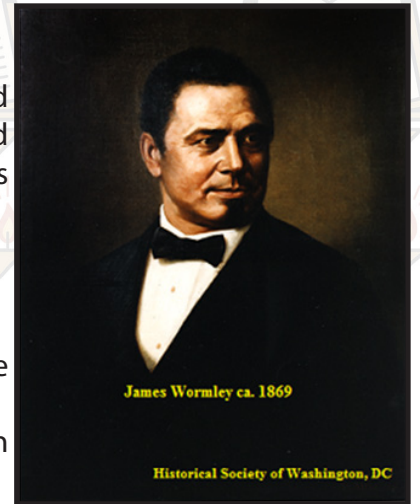
National Park Service

“What If” Brother James Abram Garfield 20th President of the US

Garfield, a committed Freemason, was deeply involved in the Masonic community in Washington, D.C. He invited his own Knights Templar Commandery, Columbia Commandery No. 2, to serve as his personal guard during the inauguration. Columbia Commandery remained closely associated with Garfield throughout his brief presidency and solemnly accompanied his remains to their final resting place following his assassination. ⁷

James A. Garfield became acquainted with James Wormley, a prominent African American nurse, caterer, and hotelier whose reputation had grown nationally and internationally in the decade prior to the Civil War. Wormley, the son of free Black parents who arrived in Washington, D.C., in 1814, began operating a series of boarding houses and a restaurant on I Street NW between 15th and 16th Streets—just a block north of Lafayette Square and Wormley

also served as Junior Deacon in the Most Worshipful Acacia Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the District of Columbia, which was later renamed the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia in 1944. ⁸



This historic event symbolized a major step forward in the inclusion of African Americans in public life and national celebrations, reflecting Garfield's advocacy for civil rights and the growing civic presence of African American communities in the post-Civil War era.

Inauguration

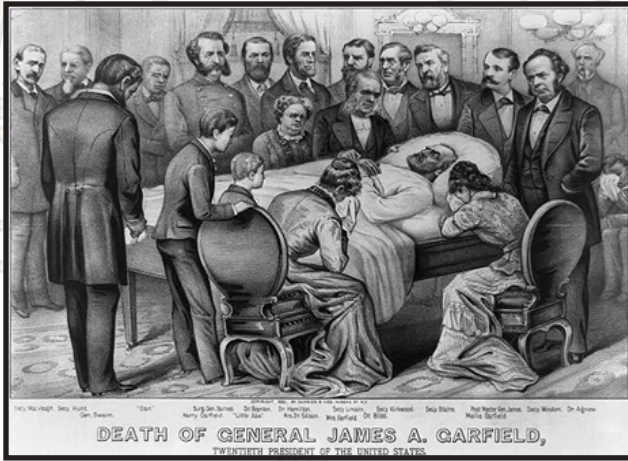
Following the Compromise of 1877, which effectively ended Reconstruction and led to the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, James A. Garfield confronted the deep racial divisions in the United States head-on. In his inaugural address, he underscored the significance of African American citizenship with the following words:

“The elevation of the negro race from slavery to the full rights of citizenship is the most important political change we have known since the adoption of the Constitution of 1787. No thoughtful man can fail to appreciate its beneficent effect upon our institutions and people. It has freed us from the perpetual danger of war and dissolution. It has added immensely to the moral and industrial forces of our people. It has liberated the master as well as the slave from a relation which wronged and enfeebled both. It has surrendered to their own guardianship the manhood of more than 5,000,000 people, and has opened to each one of them a career of freedom and usefulness. It has given new inspiration to the power of self-help in both races by making labor more honorable to the one and more necessary to the other. The influence of this force will grow greater and bear richer fruit with the coming years.”

Garfield believed strongly in the protection of African American civil rights. He advocated for the return of federal troops to the South to ensure free and fair elections and to defend African Americans from escalating violence and intimidation, particularly from the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups. Though his presidency was tragically cut short, Garfield's stance reflected a continued commitment to the promises of Reconstruction and the expansion of justice and equality in post-Civil War America. ⁹

**Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what
we know we could be.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson**

"What If" Brother James Abram Garfield 20th President of the US



National Archives

Death

On July 2, 1881, President James A. Garfield, the 20th president of the United States, was shot by Charles J. Guiteau at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C. The attack occurred less than four months into Garfield's presidency. Though he initially survived the shooting, Garfield endured months of suffering before dying on September 19, 1881, in Elberon, New Jersey. He became the second American president to be assassinated, following Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Guiteau, who claimed he acted out of political vengeance, was tried for murder, found guilty, and executed by hanging one year later.

On July 2, 1881, President James A. Garfield, the 20th president of the United States, was shot by Charles J. Guiteau at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C. The attack occurred less than four months into Garfield's presidency. Though he initially survived the shooting, Garfield endured months of suffering before dying on September 19, 1881, in Elberon, New Jersey. He became the second American president to be assassinated, following Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Guiteau, who claimed he acted out of political vengeance, was tried for murder, found guilty, and executed by hanging one year later.

Historian David Oshinsky discusses Garfield's medical care in his fascinating new book *Bellevue: Three Centuries of Medicine and Mayhem at America's Most Storied Hospital*: "Had the responding physicians ... done nothing more than make Garfield comfortable," Oshinsky writes, "he almost certainly would have survived. Instead they searched clumsily for the bullet, inserting unwashed fingers and filthy probes into the open wound."¹⁰

At the time President Garfield was shot, Alexander Graham Bell was working in a laboratory in Washington, D.C. Like many Americans, he followed the unfolding tragedy through newspaper reports and grew increasingly alarmed by the president's deteriorating condition. Garfield's physician, Dr. Willard Bliss, was fixated on locating and removing the bullet lodged in the president's body, repeatedly probing the wound by hand—often causing more harm than good.

Determined to help, Bell believed he could invent a device to locate the bullet using principles he had encountered during his earlier experiments with the telephone. While trying to eliminate static interference in telephone lines, Bell had discovered that the presence of metal objects affected the induction balance circuit he was developing. He realized this phenomenon could be adapted into a metal-detecting device. Bell quickly went to work, hoping that his invention would allow Bliss to safely extract the bullet and save the president's life.¹¹

According to an article in the *New York Herald* dated July 26, 1881, Wormley was immediately sought out to prepare the meals of the President by the attending physician, Dr. Willard Bliss. One of the foods most requested by the President was something called "beef tea." This concoction was prepared from the finest tenderloin available. The meat was placed upon a broiling iron, not to cook but to sear the surface. It was then placed into a mechanical press provided by Wormley's which compressed the meat with a pressure of 300-400 pounds until all the juices had been squeezed out of the steak.¹²

Legacy

During his brief time in office, Garfield made historic strides toward racial equality and civil rights. He appointed several prominent African Americans to significant federal positions, including Frederick Douglass, John M. Langston, Blanche K. Bruce, and Robert Elliott. These appointments were bold and unprecedented at the time, signaling a clear commitment to inclusion and progress—distinct from the cautious approaches of prior administrations.

“What If” Brother James Abram Garfield 20th President of the US

Garfield’s legacy remains one of the great “what ifs” in American history. What if federal troops had returned to the South to protect African Americans from voter suppression and violence? What if Garfield had lived to fulfill the promises of his inaugural address—promises of unity, equality, and national healing?

While we can never fully know what might have been, what we can say with certainty is this: James A. Garfield lived as a man of God, a Brother in Freemasonry who upheld his oaths, and a leader who believed in equal rights for all. His life, though tragically brief, stands as a testament to the enduring power of integrity, faith, and the pursuit of justice.

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George Jean Nathan, from his 1952 book, “The World of George Jean Nathan:”

My code of life and conduct is simply this: work hard, play to the allowable limit, disregard equally the good and bad opinion of others, never do a friend a dirty trick, eat and drink what you feel like when you feel like, never grow indignant over anything, trust to tobacco for calm and serenity, bathe twice a day . . . learn to play at least one musical instrument and then play it only in private, never allow one’s self even a passing thought of death, never contradict anyone or seek to prove anything to anyone unless one gets paid for it in cold, hard coin, live the moment to the utmost of its possibilities, treat one’s enemies with polite inconsideration, avoid persons who are chronically in need, and be satisfied with life always but never with one’s self.



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