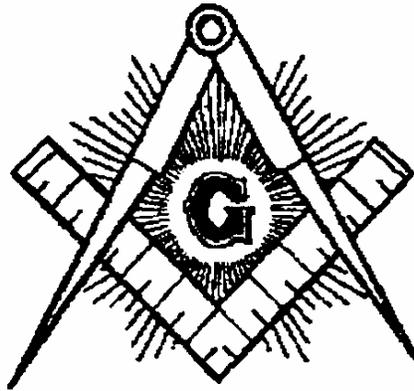


# ***A LIVING SCHISM***



***A History of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge  
Free and Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliates, Inc.  
Florida, Belize Central America Jurisdiction  
1868-1915***

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Trying to bring light on a subject that we all yearn to know more about, I have compiled the available notes, references, books, and archives that could be found and made available to me. I have sent correspondence to available sources that I felt could help me on this great historical adventure. My initial motivation and Inspiration belongs to the late Rev. William E. Hill, my first Worshipful Master at Palestine Lodge #30, Leesburg, Florida. I have talked to Grand lodge officers, who have been the most valuable source in putting this report together. This includes Grand Master, Dr. Robert Terrell, Past Grand Master, Dr. Henry Simmons, Deputy Grand Master, David Wright, Grand Junior Warden, Rev. Dr. Michael R. Moore, Grand Secretary, Phillip Robinson, and Grand Historian, Eugene Johnson. This is only a few of the important brothers who gave me information and insight on this great search for historical light. Please accept this report as history, for due to the lost of so many records and archives, the history could be missing many pieces. It is hoped and expected that a more qualified brother or historian will be motivated within the craft to dig deeper than I have and forward a more specific report. We should all take heed to the words of Reverend R.A. Morrissey when he said, "Every foremost race of people in the world today has its history written by its own members.... To keep this universal rule, black people should be no exception; especially so because the information as well as inspiration will lead their own group toward nobler aspirations and higher ideals in life's activities. The Negro race has a history of which he need not be ashamed, but will wait a long time for a white man to write this history in fairness, for consumption of the, great white public--Colored People and Bible History, 1925.

Freemasonry in Florida was established in January 1868. This gives Florida 130 years of

Masonic experience. Although Freemasonry has prospered in the state, The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge has weathered the storm and is an elite forerunner within the 45 Prince Hall Jurisdictions. Before we can arrive at today's recognition, you have to know where we came from. The last Historian report of the Most Worshipful Union Grand of Florida was done by Grand Historian, Eugene Johnson, in 1984. This history was put together by Brother Johnson from the limited archives and resources that were available. When we reach that area of this report, Bro. Johnson will be acknowledged as the contributor. To begin Florida's Masonic History we must begin In Pennsylvania.

In 1815, the four (4) authorized Prince Hall Lodges in the state of Pennsylvania, came together to organize The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.' These four lodges had received their authorization and charters from the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. (Of course you know this is the origin state for Prince Hall Freemasonry.) Over the next thirteen years, there arose a schism within the Grand Lodge that called for some expulsions and suspensions. In 1828, Harmony Lodge #5 and Union Lodge #4 were expelled from the Grand Lodge for contumacy. Contumacy defined is, being rebellious and non supportive of the administration. During their time of expulsion, Harmony Lodge #5 and Union Lodge #4, created two (2) other lodges. Harmony Lodge #5 and Union Lodge #4 combined, is not a Grand Lodge and had no authority to issue any charters. Therefore, this was done illegally. As we all know, any lodge under expulsion has no Masonic authority to any Masonic activities. Surely chartering other Blue Lodges would be in strict violation of Masonic Law and the Landmarks of Masonry. Now we have two expelled lodges and t illegally chartered lodges. On July 171 1937, these four lodges met in Philadelphia and formed a Grand

lodge under the name and style of Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.' The formation of this second Grand Lodge was a violation of the Landmarks, practices, and Masonic Jurisprudence. None of the participants was a legitimate Masonic Body. In other words, this Grand Lodge is illegal, irregular, unauthorized, and clandestine. It is also possible that many other lodges were chartered by Harmony #5 and Union #4 before the formation of the illegal Grand Lodge, but these were the only four that met in Philadelphia. Though Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was illegal, unauthorized, and irregular, it prospered and became a strong Grand Lodge within the State. Hiram Grand Lodge continued to challenge the leadership of the regular Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. In correspondence with The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania today, they tell us that these records have long been lost or destroyed. The total impact that Hiram Grand Lodge had on the State is unknown. However, evidently they prospered and branched out to other states. The Grand Lodge that established the State of Florida was Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. After ten (10) years of feuding between the now two Pennsylvania Grand Lodges, in an effort to bring peace to the State, John T. Hilton, the then Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge in Massachusetts invited the feudist, representatives of his own Grand Lodge, and representatives of Boyer Grand Lodge the Prince Hall affiliated Grand Lodge of New York, to Meet in Boston on June 23, 1847, and to explore the possibility of composing the differences between the Pennsylvania belligerents. From this meeting, the self proclaimed Grand Lodge of all Grand Lodges was formed, The National Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons for the United States of North America and the Masonic Jurisdictions Therein Belonging. Due to the long name In short it was called "The National Grand

Lodge” or the “National Compact” or “The Compact. This body was supposed to govern all Prince Hall Grand Lodges when any feuds existed in any state. This body was self-constituted and was violating the Landmarks of Freemasonry. The history of the “National Compact Grand Lodge” is research in itself. In this writer’s opinion, I believe it almost destroyed Prince Hall Masonry. Not all the Prince Hall Grand Lodges were receptive to the creation of the National Compact Grand Lodge; several jurisdictions denounced it. However, it is important to show its relationship in the History of Florida Masonry. The National Compact Grand Lodge lasted for thirty (30) years, until 1877. It was then dissolved and all States were its Sovereign head. That is making a long history short. It is in this thirty-year period we find the chartering of lodges in Florida and the establishment of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida; we have seen that Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was created illegally. We see the creation of the National Compact Lodge in 1847 that was also illegal, irregular, and a violation of the landmarks of Masonry. These illegal Grand Lodges were expanding Masonry until 1877. In 1865 Brother Charles F. Daily accepted the Deputy Grand Mastership under Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Brother Charles F. Dailey, 33° was born in St. Thomas, West Indies in 1820. In 1840 he was in the fruit trade between Florida and Europe. He was the leading black Mason in the South. Bro. Dailey received his first three degrees in a lodge in Liverpool, England, and the Scottish Rite in Glasgow, Scotland and was knighted at Greenock, Scotland.” No doubt being of foreign decent Brother Dailey probably did not know of the irregularities of Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania or of the National Compact irregularity. We must also keep in mind this is when the Emancipation Proclamation was in effect. For black people to move about in the south

there was very high risk involved due to the racial tension. Nonetheless, Brother Dailey was a man of unusual ability according to the Grand Lodge Archives. In 1867, the first three lodges in the State of Florida were established by Brother Dailey, Solomon Lodge #50, St. Johns Lodge #51, and Mt. Moriah Lodge #52 were chartered by Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Reflecting back, Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania is irregular and illegal, now combined with the National Compact Grand Lodge that is also irregular and illegal against the Landmarks of Masonry. This leads us to an illegal chartering of the Florida Lodges. To continue, on June 17, 1870 in the city of Jacksonville, to organize a Grand Lodge of Masons for the State of Florida a general assembly of the Craft was called to meet, presided over by the R.W. Brother Charles F. Dailey, Deputy Grand Master for the Southern Jurisdiction, under Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, with R.W. Brother Charles H. Pierce as Grand Secretary The convention lasted for two days. A code of laws for the jurisdiction was adopted, and the Lodges were consolidated, renumbered, and chartered by the Grand Lodge of Florida The following Grand Officers were elected for the ensuing year: Harry H. Thompson, Grand Master; John H. Robinson, Deputy Grand Master; Robert Smith, Grand Senior Warden; James Roberts, Grand Junior Warden; Emanuel Fortune, Grand Treasurer; F.H. Dunkins, Grand Secretary; Rev. Charles H. Pierce, Grand Chaplin. This is the creation of The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida. From 1870 thru 1877, our Florida Grand Lodge was illegal and irregular as we have shown. Let's get legitimate .At a so-called triennial session at Wilmington, Delaware in 1877, the dissolution of the "National Compact Grand Lodge "occurred. A resolution was unanimously adopted:

“Resolved, that each State is its Sovereign head.” With this action being taken, the State of Florida was on its own to decide if it would go its own way or be affiliated with the other Prince Hall Bodies. In which we chose the latter and became Prince Hall Affiliated. Also, to satisfy curiosity, Hiram Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania merged back into the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania

According to archives, between 1870-1898 the State of Florida was governed by five Grand Masters during that period in which each contributed to the blooming of the State. Before the schism, there is no record of discord or unrest in the Grand Lodge under these Grand Masters. To understand the schism that is still haunting our State today, we must deal with key persons and events that took place. (Keep a close eye on the names as one of them will appear again after the split.) In 1896, according to our list of Grand Lodge officers, John H. Dickerson was in the position of Deputy Grand Master We do not see any other Grand Lodge office held by him before this one. This writer could not find any other record showing that he held any office. We can say that Bro. Dickerson was elected or appointed from the craft to the position. From an appeal issued to Prince Hall Masons throughout the world in 1901, we find that Bro. Dickerson was a Reverend Relying on hearsay; Rev. Dickerson was a no-nonsense preacher and had a strict business attitude. He ruled his church with a strong hand as would he rule his Craft. The Rev. John H. Dickerson became Grand Master of Florida in 1892 He remained the Grand Master for 17 years, during which time he became a strong authoritative Grand Master. Under Grand Master Dickerson the saying that “Masonry is Dogmatic and not Diplomatic” shows at its best, Beginning Grand Master Dickerson’s tenure, we see from the archives that S.M. Gibbs is Deputy Grand Master, Professor John Jackson, Grand Senior Warden, John G.

Riley, Grand Junior Warden, A.J. Juniors, Grand Treasure and El. Alexander, Grand Secretary On May 3, 1901, there was a massive fire in the Northwestern part of the City of Jacksonville. The fire began in a mattress company located within the black community Archives tell us that due to high winds and dry houses, the fire destroyed more than two thousand acres and \$25,000,000 worth of property damage Included in this property damage was the Masonic Temple that was home to seven lodges. This is the major event that induces the disagreements, conflict, suspensions, and finally, the schism. With the Grand Lodge being destroyed, Grand Master Dickerson has the responsibility of not only helping to provide relief for the craftsman who had lost all their worldly possessions, but also of holding together the Prince Hall Masons within the city. It is safe to say that the relief came to all those who needed it, but for the Masons of Florida the chaos was just beginning. According to the history passed on, Grand Master Dickerson's Plan was to help everyone that they could then concentrate on the rebuilding of the Masonic Temple. For the next seven years (1901-1908), learn that a building fund was established to which all the craft contributed. An insert taken from the Declaration of Principles of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F & A.M of Florida (clandestine) states, "when for the past seven years all of us have been contributing to that Fund that ought to be large enough now for any ordinary building such as needed. We will discuss these declarations more in depth, for they make up the origin of the clandestine Grand Lodge. From examining these declarations, much of the history lost or not recorded tells us indirectly what possibly could have taken place. Apparently, Grand Master Dickerson's plan was to build a Grand Lodge that was immaculate. The funds already available in the Building Fund, was not enough to build the building that he

planned. The mortgaging of property owned by the fraternity was to be used to build the Grand Lodge that the Grand Master wished. It was during this time (1901-1908) that this writer believes was the major cause to the schism. It was during this time that heated discussions were held on the floor of the Grand Lodge. There are still stories being told of “gun toting preachers” in Grand Lodge Sessions. It is during this time that many craftsmen disagreed with each other and by Grand Master Dickerson being the authoritative and dogmatic type, many crafts members were expelled/suspended and not allowed in the session by order of the Grand Master. In 1909, the charter of The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated, was stolen by a Brother of the craft named C.C. Manigault. This Brother established the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Florida in 1909. He was elected to the position of Grand Master in 1911, and served till 1913. Based on the list of Grand Masters recorded by this Grand Lodge, we see that Rev. S.M. Gibbs served as the second Grand Master from 1914 thru 1915. This is very important because we see this name listed as Deputy Grand Master of The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated serving under Grand Master Dickerson for 1899-1905. Clearly when the schism occurred, the craft had been truly divided even among its Grand Lodge officers before the charter being taken. One would think that the next thing for the rightful Grand Lodge to do would be to pursue the return of the charter by lawful means. This however, did not occur. No doubt due to the times, no funds were available for a long court battle. Remember, the Grand Lodge was in process of being rebuilt due to the fire. We can only assume that Grand Master Dickerson did not waste time with the departing brothers, for they took the charter not the monies or property deeds. The

brothers who departed from the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated, did so illegally by taking the charter and went on to establish an irregular and illegal Grand Lodge, The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of Florida. Of course this causes much confusion on which is the legal Grand Lodge of Florida due to the name taken on by the illegal Grand Lodge. Hopefully, this report will clarify things. In the opening page of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Souvenir Journal you will find the U Declaration of Principles of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Florida “, which states what they stand for. Listed as follows: What we stand for:

- The honest administration of the affairs entrusted to us by our brethren
- The placing of our Endowment Department on a first-class business basis, whereby the amount guaranteed on the death of a brother will be a surety to his beneficiaries.

The regular specified stated time for convening our Grand Lodge in January of each and every year, and the election by ballot of each and every Grand Lodge officer on the afternoon of the second day’s session.

The distribution of the Grand Lodge tax into three parts, vie: General Expense, Charity, and Investment fund.

- The absolute freedom of our Women’s Departments In the management of their affairs.

We recognize their Grand Bodies as sovereign unto themselves and accountable and amendable to no other grand organization within the Masonic realm or out of it.

- The conviction of crimes before the suspension or expulsion, therefore. And strict adherence to the ancient Landmarks of Craft Masonry as practiced by the Fathers in years passed and gone.

- We are opposed to Masonic Lynch Law as practiced by Dickerson and his favored henchmen and his wholesale suspension of the best men of our state.

- We are opposed to the plan of mortgaging all the property owned by the Fraternity for the purpose of building, when for the past seven years all of us have been contributing to that fund which ought to be large enough now for any ordinary building such as needed.

- We are opposed to lifetime service of any Grand Officer. Change is the law of life, therefore let's elect new men every year, lest we drift back into that" Dickersonism "which we have just turned our back on.

- We are opposed to any bosses or bossism to be practiced either toward our brethren or sister In the family of Masonry, and as long as God gives us health and strength, we will oppose all tyranny by refusing to obey the tyrants' These declarations indirectly explain the illegal grand lodge reasons for separating from the rightful Grand lodge. You see several times, which the Principles mention Grand Master Dickerson by name. Through these declarations, many blanks are filled in our history when we discuss the topic of schism and the rightful Grand Lodge. The principles continue with a closing paragraph: In the division of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge, the charter was confiscated by Bro. C.C, Manigault who organized the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Florida in 1909 and began a new grand jurisdiction. In 1936, the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge registered for a charter In the General Masonic Congress of the United States and Canada as was received the 4th day of

November AD. 1936 A.L. 5934 in the city of Washington, D.C., and bears the name EL. Sowell, 33°, G.M., John F. Norglset, 33°, G.S.W., J.A. Miller, G.J.W., T.C. Callahan, Grand Treasure and P. Cunningham, Grand Secretary, Issued by Ed Love, 33°, President of the Grand Masonic Congress and now bears the name of the Most Worshipful Prince Hail Grand Lodge A.F. & AM of Florida and Jurisdiction, Incorporated.

These principles and statement are signed by W.S. Johnson, Grand Historian and MW. Roland A. Baker, Jr., Grand Master. Clearly we can see that the original Brothers of this new Grand Lodge came from the original and rightful Grand Lodge that being the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge. We also see that in 1936, this illegal grand lodge went from Free & Accepted Masons to Ancient Free & Accepted Masons. I will not speculate on whom the Grand Masonic Congress is, but I know of no such order in the' Prince Hall Family. These brothers may have had reasons to be outraged due to the type leadership representing them at the time, but the Landmarks of Masonry do not change. The formation of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Florida violated the Landmarks of Masonry and all accepted principles of forming a Grand Masonic Body. Therefore, this writer is satisfied and thinks it is safe to say: That this Grand Lodge is "BOGUS". As of this date and to this writer's knowledge, the last known Grand Master of this Grand Lodge is Roland A. Baker. Its Grand East is located in Orlando, Florida. To complete the events of the time, after receiving the necessary assistance, Grand Master Dickerson's plan was achieved and carried out to the fullest. At 410 Broad Street, in Jacksonville, Florida, stands a seven-floor building to this date known as The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliated, Florida & Belize, Central America Jurisdiction Incorporated. In 1912,

construction began at 410 Broad Street, and was completed in 1913. The architects who designed the temple were Victor E. Mark and Lee Roy Sheftall, both students of renowned architect Henry J. Klutho. Grand Master John H. Dickerson term in office ended in 1915. In 1985, Secretary of State George Firestone announced that The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge Temple had been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The current Grand Lodge Officers for The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated are as follows: Dr. Robert Terrell 33<sup>o</sup>f Most Worshipful Grand Master, Avid Wright 339, Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Wilson Andrews 33<sup>o</sup>, Right Worshipful Grand Senior Warden, Michael Moore 33<sup>o</sup>, Right Worshipful Grand Junior Warden, Melvin Wright 32<sup>o</sup>, Right Worshipful Grand Treasure, Phillip A. Robinson 330, Right Worshipful Grand Secretary, Willie F. Powell 33<sup>o</sup>, Right Worshipful Committee Chairman of Foreign Correspondence. The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida (PHA) has a membership of approximately 8500 men and 6800 women. They are recognized by all 44 other Prince Hall Jurisdictions.

In conclusion, many questions are still unanswered, but this is just a twinkle of the bright light that can be shown on the subject. The one question which remains with me is "How can a schism remain in place so long?" Many other states also have had this problem, but have long since reconciled. But we here in Florida remain separated and segregated from one another. As black men, I believe this is our famous mistake. Time should heal all wounds, but apparently it does not. Maybe the leadership on each side is unyielding, and maybe a merger would mean someone may lose the so-called position/status that they have waited so many years to get, or maybe, just maybe, a few of us are still lingering in

the northeast corner. Eventually, Florida Masons will do what is good for the order. Sometimes things are better for the many than they are for the few. The Grand Architect of the Universe will guide us to do what is right, and we will wait with patience until then. The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons, Prince Hall Affiliated, Florida & Belize, Central America Jurisdiction, Incorporated, is the recognized Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Florida. GOD SAVE THE CRAFT!

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*A Living Schism” was submitted as a literary document to the Phylaxis Society Writing Contest and won 1<sup>st</sup> Place. The document was footnoted and all research references are listed in the original document.*