

PRINCE HALL MASONS



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Prince Hall Masons are noted for their concerns for freedom and liberty for all people as well as the needs for those less fortunate. This is shown by their contributions and involvements with organizations such as the N.A.A.C.P., United Negro College Fund and other charitable and educational causes on both national and local levels. A most recent involvement would be the Assault on Illiteracy Program.

Of the 35,000 plus members of the Masonic Lodges in Washington State over 3000 are Prince Hall Masons. Applicants must profess a belief in God, be of good character and request by petition for membership.

Prince Hall is recognized as the Father of Black Masonry in the United States. He made it possible for us to also be recognized and enjoy all privileges of free and accepted masonry. It is generally accepted that Prince Hall was free born in British West Indies. His father, Thomas Prince Hall, was an Englishman and his mother a free colored woman of French extraction.

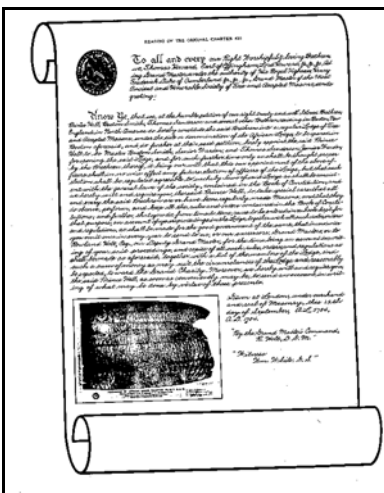
In 1765 he worked his passage on a ship to Boston, where he worked as a leather worker, a trade learned from his father. Eight years later he had acquired real estate and was qualified to vote. Religiously inclined, he later became a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church with a charge in Cambridge.

Black Free Masonry began when Prince Hall and fourteen other free black men were initiated into Lodge No. 441, Irish Constitution attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot, British Army Garrisoned at Castle Williams (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbor on March 1775. The Master of the Lodge being one Sergeant John Batt.

When the British Army left Boston, this Lodge, No. 441, granted Prince Hall and his brethren authority to meet as a Lodge, to go in procession on St. John's Day, and as a Lodge to bury their dead; but they could not confer degrees nor perform any other Masonic "work".

For nine years these brethren, together with others who had received their degrees elsewhere, assembled and enjoyed their limited privileges as 'Masons. Finally in March 1784, Prince Hall petitioned the Grand Lodge of England, through a Worshipful Master of a subordinate Lodge in London for a warrant or charter.

THE WARRANT OF AFRICAN LODGE NO. 459 (September 29. 1784)



"The Warrant to African Lodge No. 459 of Boston is the most interesting, significant and highly prized document known to the Prince Hall Masons Fraternity. Through it our legitimacy is traced, and on it, more than any other factor, our case rests. It was granted on September 29, 1784, delivered in Boston on April 29, 1787 by Captain James Scott, brother-in-law of John Hancock and master of the Neptune, under its authority African Lodge No. 459 was organized one week later, May 6, 1787."

"In 1869 a fire destroyed Massachusetts' Grand Lodge headquarters and a number of its priceless records. The charter in its metal tube was in the Grand Lodge chest. The tube saved the charter from the flames, but the intense heat charred the paper. It was at this time that Grand Master S.T. Kendall crawled into the burning building and in peril of his life, saved the charter from complete destruction.

Thus a Grand Master's devotion and heroism further consecrated this parchment to us, and added a further detail to its already interesting history."

The original Charter No. 459 has long since been made secure between heavy plate glass and is kept in a fire-proof vault in a downtown Boston bank.