

**BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT of the MOST WORSHIPFUL
PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE F. and A. M. of DELAWARE, INC.**

This Grand Lodge was established lawfully by a duly recognized Grand Lodge or by three or more Lodges, which can show that they have consistently professed and practiced the established and unaltered principles of regular Freemasonry.

Black Freemasonry 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 Garrison at Castle William (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbor on March 6, 1775.

When the British Army left Boston in 1776, this Lodge, granted Prince Hall and his Brethren authority to meet as African Lodge No, 1 (Under Dispensation), to go in procession on St. John's Day, and as a Lodge to bury their dead. They could not perform any other Masonic "work". For nine years, these Brothers assembled and enjoyed their limited privileges as Masons. Finally, on March 2, 1784, Prince Hall petitioned the Grand Lodge of England, through a Worshipful Master of a Subordinate Lodge in London (William Moody of Brotherly Love Lodge No. 53) for a Warrant or Charter.

The Warrant to African Lodge No. 459 was granted on September 29, 1784, delivered in Boston on April 29, 1787 by Captain James Scott, brother-in-law of James Hancock and master of the Neptune. African Lodge No, 459 was organized one week later, May 6, 1787. The Warrant to African Lodge No. 459 of Boston is the most significant and highly prized document known to the Prince Hall Masonic Fraternity. Through it, our legitimacy is traced.

The question of extending Masonry arose when Absalom Jones of Philadelphia appeared in Boston. He was an ordained Episcopal priest who was interested in establishing a Masonic Lodge in Philadelphia. Under the authority of the charter of African Lodge No. 459, Prince Hall established African Lodge No. 459B of Philadelphia on March 22, 1797 and Hiram Lodge No. 3 in Providence, Rhode Island on June 25, 1797.

In the year of 1823, Samuel Leary and Jacob Jenkins, residents of Wilmington, Delaware, made applications to Union Lodge No. 4, of Philadelphia, PA, and were made Masons and admitted members thereof. Shortly afterward, the following ones made application to said Lodge (Union No. 4) of Pennsylvania, were received, made and became members: John Cooper, Moses G. Nelson, William S. Thomas, Jonathan Brown, William Pindergrass, Levi Anderson, William A. Stevens, Henry Weeks, Levi Medford, and David Jackson.

In the year 1845, a number of the above named brethren made application to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a charter to open and hold a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Wilmington, Delaware. Recommended by Union Lodge No.4, of Philadelphia, PA, a dispensation was granted and the Star In The East Lodge No.12 (now No. 1), was duly organized on the twentieth day of September 1845, A.L. 5845, with a full corps of officers. This was the first colored Masonic Lodge ever opened or held in the State of Delaware. After the dispensation time, this Star In The East Lodge No.12 (now No.1), received her warrant and returned the

dispensation according to ancient Masonic rules and became a Subordinate Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

In November, 1848, after the above named Lodge had grown to a large number, several of the brethren resigned their membership, and were recommended by their Lodge for an application to form a new Lodge, which was granted by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, and Rising Sun Lodge No.28 (now No.2), was formed.

In the same year, more brethren made application for dispensation and charter to form a new Lodge, the same being granted by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, Meridian Sun Lodge No.28 (now No.3), was formed at Delaware City, DE. These three Lodges worked Masonically in peace and harmony so much so that a communication was sent from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania to send representatives to her next Annual Session and received authority to take charge of the State of Delaware; this request was complied with and on the ninth day of June, A.D. 1849, A.L. 5849, the three above named lodges assembled with their officers and members in their hall on West Fifth Street at 1 o'clock P.M. and were consecrated as the Most Worshipful Hiram Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons, of and for the State of Delaware, by the Most Worshipful Jacob Jenkins, Grand Master of Masons, of the State of Pennsylvania, assisted by the R.W. Peter Anderson, Deputy Grand Master. Officers elected at the formation of the Most Worshipful Hiram Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, of Delaware: M.W. Levi Anderson, Grand Master R.

W. Moses G. Wilson, Deputy Grand Master R.W. William Blunt, Senior Warden R. W. Michael Sterling, Junior Warden R. W. Bennet Hill, Grand Treasurer R. W. Joseph H. Banks, Secretary R. W. John E. Young, Grand Correspondence Secretary R. W. Charles Webber, Grand Prusivant R. W. Levi Meadford, Grand Tyler.

The M.W. Levi Anderson made the following appointments: Bro. Alex Watsun, Grand Senior Deacon; Bro. Hennary Bayard, Grand Junior Deacon; Bro. Benjamin W. Sharpless, Grand Master of Ceremonies; Bro. Henry Weeks, Grand Sword Bearer; Bro. John Viney, Grand Marshall; Bro. Daniel Russell and Bro. Henry Johnson, Grand Chaplains; Bro. Hemsley Jackson, Grand Senior Steward; and Bro. Samuel Green, Grand Junior Steward.

The Craft has elected the following brothers to serve as Grand Master: Levi Anderson, Robert H. Lewis, William Blunt, Frisby J. Cooper, John W. Layton, Benjamin J.L. Tomlinson, Peter S. Williams, William H. Caldwell, Thomas E. Postels, Albert H. Bradley, Amos F. Johnson, John L. Hubert, Dr. Conwell Banton, G. Oscar G. Carrington, P. William Turner, Perry Reese, Clarence Burton, Hershel Draine, C. Portfield Harris, Stewart Simmons, Courtney P. Houston, Jr., Herbert C. Norris, Marvin I. Gray, Solomon L. Henry, James R. Fitzgerald, Jr., Franklin S. Chandler, Sr. and Nathaniel Earl Williams. Some have been reelected, extending their tenure; some have been reelected after a period of years.

The Craft elected the following brothers as Honorary Past Grand Masters: Frank Riley, Courtland R. Burton, William R. Elias, Samuel B. Peterson, William W. Stevenson, Lee R. Keese, Joseph H. Bedford, Sr., George W. Holland, George Pennington, Jr., Fred Way, Jr., Haywood Speight, Jr., Joseph I. Turpin, Franklin N. Butler, Joseph B. Jackson, Jr., Ronald F. Thomas, George C. Wright, Jr., Benjamin H. Beckett, Maurice W. Lafate, Ned W. Brown, James

W. Gibbs, Carl S. Ray, Cecil M. Steele, Charles H. Griffin, Andrew M. Conaway, Lewis F. Williams, John H. Jackson, David C. Roland, Leonard Smith, Holmes R. Allen, John H. Gardner and Leon J. Battle, George W. Beckett, John R. Burton, James E. Bunkley, John W. Clark, III, Samuel R. Harbison, John S. Jackson, Booker T. Reed, Lawrence A. Torrance, James E. Williams, Robert L. Henderson, John T. Luke, Charles H. Grinnage, Jerome Dorsey, Robert L. McGee, William R. Saunders, Charles J. Fountain, John A. Sanders, Thomas Wright, Joseph A. Austin, Dillard Christmas, Ernest Saunders, Edward Swiggett, Sr., John C. Dumas, Leonard R. Turner, William L. Scott, John E. Williams, and Willie G. Brown.

In 1880, a piece of property was acquired on the Twelfth Street between Orange and Market Streets as a Masonic Hall. In it, Shiloh Baptist Church met while its present edifice was being constructed. Howard School used its first floors to house classes until additions were made to the school. Our older citizens have recollections of many a pleasant hour spent in social activities in the old Masonic Hall.

As Wilmington grew and business developed, the growth of the Craft made it apparent that a new home would soon be a necessity. Looking forward to that day, in 1914, Grand Master Hubert organized and incorporated the Hiram Grand Lodge Masonic Temple, Inc., to have funds available when the new quarters must be found. About this time, Grand Master Hubert also organized the Hiram Grand Lodge Endowment Association to aid Masons to have a fund to meet burial expenses.

Under the leadership of Grand Master Banton, negotiations were complete for the sale of the property on Twelfth Street to the Clover Dairy Co., and the purchase of the property of the Delaware Fire Company at 514 French Street. Plans for remodeling the building by Bro. G. O. Carrington were approved. On November 1, 1925, the cornerstone was laid by Grand Master Banton, assisted by the officers and members of the Grand Lodge and visitors from Sister Jurisdictions. Our new home was dedicated according to the customs of Masons on May 16 and 17, 1926.

The challenge of Clandestine Masonry in America necessitated some means of recognition by legitimate bodies. Following the recommendation of the Grand Masters Conference of Prince Hall Masons, Delaware, the lineage with other Grand Lodge tracing their lineage to the Mother Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, at its 95th Annual Communication voted to change its corporate name from that of the M.W. Hiram Grand Lodge, F. & A. M. State of Delaware, P.H.A., to M.W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge, F. & A. M. of Delaware, Inc.

Under the leadership of M.W. Grand Master Stewart Simmons, in 1966, the Grand Lodge acquired one of its present facility at 623 S. Heald Street in Wilmington, Delaware, following the sale of the property at 514 French Street in Wilmington, DE.

For 157 years the Grand Lodge of Delaware AF&AM, and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Delaware stood apart. That division ended on September 16, 2006 as the Grand Masters of both lodges signed a Compact of Recognition. The ceremony, held at the Grand Opera House in Wilmington, celebrated the universality of our brotherhood. The Compact was signed by MW James R. Fitzgerald Jr. Grand Master,

Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Delaware and MW Ronald W. Conaway Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Delaware AF&AM.

Under the leadership of M. W. Nathaniel Earl Williams, Grand Master, the Grand Lodge acquired its current Grand East, located at 1412 W. State College Road, Dover Delaware in April of 2015.

The history of this Grand Lodge has been blessed. During its 167 years, 39 Lodges has been chartered. The active Lodges as of the 167th anniversary include: Star In The East No. 1, Rising Sun No. 2, Rising Sun No. 4, Prudence No. 6, St. John No. 7, Temple No. 8, Morning Star No. 10, Union No. 21, Stone Square No. 22, Dover Air Force Base Military No. 28 and Siam Military No. 30. The Delaware Prince Hall Family includes: St. Matthews Grand Chapter (OES), the Most Excellent Prince Hall Grand Chapter (HRAM), Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and the AEAONMS (Shrines), including the affiliated bodies associated thereof.

Researched by: Judge C.P. Houston, Jr., Past M.W. Grand Master, Dr. Luna I. Mishoe, Past R.W. Grand Historian, HPGM Fred Way, Jr., Grand Secretary Emeritus and M.W. Kermit E. Bruner, Jr., Past M.W. Grand Master of New Jersey. This document is updated March 3, 2016, by R.W. Kelvin L. Harmon – Grand Secretary.