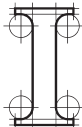


Early Newspaper Accounts of Prince Hall Freemasonry

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OPEN TERRITORY

N 1871, AN EXASPERATED LEWIS HAYDEN¹ WROTE TO J. G. FINDEL² about the uncertain and complicated origins of grand lodges in the United States and the inconsistent attitudes displayed towards the chartering in Boston of African Lodge No. 459 by the Grand Lodge of England: “The territory was open territory. The idea of exclusive State jurisdiction by Grand Lodges had not then been as much as dreamed of.”³ The general

1. Hayden was a former slave who was elected to the Massachusetts legislature and raised money to finance John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry. His early life is described by Harriet Beecher Stowe in her book, *The Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Jewett, Proctor & Worthington, 1853).

2. Findel was a member of *Lodge Eleusis zur Verschwiegenheit* at Baireuth in 1856 and editor of the *Bauhütte* as well as a founder of the *Verein Deutscher Freimaurer* (Union of German Freemasons) and author in 1874 of *Geist unit Form der Freimaurerei* (Genius and Form of Freemasonry).

3. Lewis Hayden, *Masonry Among Colored Men in Massachusetts* (Boston: Lewis Hayden, 1871), 41.

theme of Hayden's correspondence with Findel was that African-American lodges certainly had at least as much—and possibly more—claim to legitimate Masonic origins as the white lodges did, and they had been denied recognition because of racism.⁴

The origins of African-American Freemasonry in the United States have generated a large literature and much dispute. Freemasonry was part of a new social landscape that took shape during and after the American Revolution⁵ and included African-Americans from the earliest days of the nation, and it has had a continuing and considerable impact on African-Americans, where a robust fraternal life over two centuries has been most influenced by the Prince Hall tradition.⁶ Freemasonry was a “tool kit” of ideas for black community formation just as it was for the white majority and provided a moral vision to replace the sense of limitation born of slavery,⁷ constituting “resources for development and a defense against white racism.”⁸ The issue of the legitimacy of the origins of African-American Freemasonry is of more than passing importance to the history of race in America. A contentious subject, focus of much of the debate has been over the alleged regularity of African-American lodges and whether they had authentic charters from older recognized grand lodges. The suspicion has been that racially discriminatory attitudes “relied on abstruse procedural arguments and the historical record, all ingeniously manipulated.”⁹

Inevitably discussion of African-American Freemasonry recalls an extraordinary individual, Prince Hall, who was not only an important Mason of African origins but also one of the most important Freemasons to come out of the formative days of the Republic. His early life is sometimes unclear but, as the ensuing pages illustrate, his Masonic membership paralleled a later career as an adroit and articulate proponent of natural rights.¹⁰ The common claim is that

4. Hayden, *passim*.

5. Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 173.

6. Ron Kelley, “Brotherly influence: Prince Hall Freemasonry’s Lasting Impression on African-American Fraternal Orders,” *Phylaxis*, 39:1 (1st quarter 2012), 20. See Theda Skocpol, Ariane Liazos, Marshall Ganz, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6.

7. David Hackett, “The Prince Hall Masons and the African American Church,” in Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantrowitz, eds., *All Men Free and Brethren: Essays on the History of African-American Freemasonry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 138–39.

8. Hackett, 141.

9. Martin Summers, “Arguing for Our Race,” in Hinks and Kantrowitz, 158.

10. Samuel K. Roberts, *In the Path of Virtue: The African American Moral Tradition*, (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1999), 23.

he was initiated on March 6, 1775, with fourteen other African-Americans, by Sergeant John Batt of Irish Lodge No. 441 of the 38th Regiment of Foot, then stationed in Boston.¹¹ Initially granted a “permet” to march on St. John’s Day and to bury their dead, Bro. Hall applied on behalf of the lodge to the premier Grand Lodge, the “Moderns,” in London for a charter that was granted in 1784 and finally after much delay was physically delivered to Boston in 1787. Out of these events was born African Lodge No. 459 that eventually transformed itself into “African Grand Lodge No. 1,” from which Prince Hall Masons descend.

There are alternative accounts of the first initiations. Peter Hinks and Stephen Kanowitz point out that it could have occurred in 1778 or that Prince Hall could have been initiated in 1775 and the other men in 1778.¹² Like Prince Hall’s early life, there have been a number of alternative scenarios advanced that call for more examination of regimental histories and personal memoirs. Considerable scholarly work remains to be done, and the study of this fascinating if controversial period of Freemasonry is helped by bringing together, facilitated by their appearance online, the transcripts of early newspaper references to “African Lodge” and “Prince Hall.” We are surprised, given their significance, that this has not been done more exhaustively. To accomplish this we have relied primarily on electronic databases, and particularly on “America’s Historical Newspapers” published by Readex, a division of NewsBank, and Genealogy Bank. The optical character recognition of these digitized scans varies in quality, and the databases we have used don’t include every newspaper of the period nor every issue of those papers they have reproduced. The appendix to this article is “A Checklist of Newspaper References to Prince Hall or African Lodge, 1782–1830,” but it is more than likely that there are other articles our searches didn’t find. Indeed, we welcome an expansion of our list.

One of our important discoveries is neglected evidence of white Masons helping Prince Hall and African Lodge and expressing an affinity. For example,

11. The 38th left Athlone, Ireland, in 1774 for Boston where during 1775 it fought in the Battle of Breda Hill (Bunker Hill). In 1776 it was posted to New York, and stayed in the area until 1783. Formed in 1705 and originally Lillington’s Foot, in 1751 it was numbered the 38th Regiment of Foot, and in 1782 as the 38th (1st Staffordshire) Regiment of Foot. Later, the regiment became part of the South Staffordshire Regiment and then, in 1959, the [Staffordshire Regiment](#). In 2007, The Staffordshire Regiment became 3rd Battalion The Mercian Regiment. See “A brief history of the Staffordshire Regiment”, acc. 5 July 2013, <http://staffordshireregiment-museum.com/history.html>

12. Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantowitz, “Introduction: The Revolution in Freemasonry,” in Hinks and Kantowitz, 3.

Bro. Nathan Willis's *Independent Chronicle*¹³ published Prince Hall's dignified response to a sarcastic story about African Lodge's 1782 celebration of St. John's Day, and Bro. Benjamin Russell's *Massachusetts Centinel*¹⁴ published a series of positive stories about African Lodge, including a touchingly hopeful poem for racial harmony in the Craft (reprinted here in its entirety for the first time) celebrating the receipt of African Lodge's charter. This brotherhood contrasts with other, later white Masons publically ignoring or denouncing or defaming Black Masons and then privately providing support.

Albert Pike displayed a notable example of this ambivalent behavior towards Black Masonry. In 1875 he wrote to the white Grand Lodge of Ohio, "Prince Hall Lodge was as regular a lodge as any lodge created by competent authority, and had a perfect right (as other lodge in Europe did) to establish other lodges, making itself a mother Lodge." And yet in the same letter he said, "I took my obligations to white men, not to negroes. When I have to accept negroes as brothers or leave Masonry, I shall leave it."¹⁵ Palliatively, Pike later gave a copy of his Scottish Rite rituals to Thornton A. Jackson, Prince Hall Grand Commander, S.J., sometime after 1887, when Jackson assumed office, and before 1891, when Pike died.¹⁶

The apparently earliest newspaper reference is for December 30, 1782, only seven years after Prince Hall was initiated, and our account arbitrarily stops in 1827, the year of the "Declaration of Independence of African Lodge." During this

13. Willis was a journeyman on the paper's staff who went on to be editor of the *Portland Eastern Argus*. Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 223.

14. Russell was an apprentice of Isaiah Thomas, publisher of the famous *Massachusetts Spy* and Grand Master of Massachusetts, 1802–1805 and 1809–10. Russell founded the *Centinel* in 1784 and was one of the printers, "more forthright in their opinions than their colonial predecessors had been, but they settled into the role of reliable auxiliaries to the victorious Whig establishment, which was growing steadily more disenchanted with the democratic, localistic political fervour the Revolution had unleashed." Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 40. "Unlike most Federalist printers, Russell pursued a political career in his own right, becoming a prominent local officeholder beginning in 1805. Besides positions on the Boston School Committee, Board of Health, and as a city alderman, he represented Boston in the state legislature from 1805 to 1805 continuously, capping his career with a term on the Executive Council." Pasley, 233.

15. *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free & Accepted Masons of the State of Ohio at its Sixty-eighth Annual Grand Communication begun and held at Columbus, October A.L. 5875* (Cincinnati: Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1875), 49–50.

16. Arturo de Hoyos, "On the Origins of the Prince Hall Scottish Rite Rituals," *Heredom*, 5 (1996): 52.

forty-five year period, we found thirty unique articles (some of which are now reprinted here), each giving an insight to the earliest days of Prince Hall Masonry.

The first example is in December 30, 1782, *The Independent Ledger*, and the *American Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 5, no. 243, published by Edward Draper and John West Folsom:

B O S T O N , D e c . 3 0 .

...
 On Friday laft (27th inst) the feast of St. John the Evangelift was celebrated by SAINT BLACK'S Lodge of Free and Acc-pt-d M-f-ns, who went in procession, preceded by a band of mufick, dressed in their aprons and jewels, from Brother Gl-pions, up State-Street, and thro' Corn hill to the house of the *Right Worshipful* GRAND MASTER, in Water street, where an elegant and splendid entertainment was given upon the occasion.

This brief notice seems to be mocking African Lodge with a sarcastic reference to “Saint Black’s Lodge,” though the rest of the article is neutral and presumably accurate. “Brother Gl-pions” refers to Louis Glapion (d. 1813), a hairdresser and member of African Lodge, who with George Middleton (1735–1815) built a home 1786–87 at what is now 5–7 Pinckney Street on Beacon Hill in Boston, which still stands today.¹⁷ Col. Middleton was commander of the famous Black regiment, the Bucks of America, and third Master of African Lodge.¹⁸ “Water Street” refers to the residence and leather workshop of Prince Hall that was also used by African Lodge as a meeting place.¹⁹

17. “Louis Glapion, George Middleton, owners and occupiers. Wooden dwelling; East on Clapboard Street; South on Jona Mason & Garrison G. Otis, Land 1,925 square feet; house, 345 square feet, 1 story, 4 windows; value \$600.” *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston*. 1798. Boston, 1890, p. 482, in Charles H. Wesley, *Prince Hall Life and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United Supreme Council, SJ, 1983), 83. The house is designated by the National Park Service as a Boston African-American National Historic Site.

18. Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 50; Gregory S. Kearse, “The Bucks of America & Prince Hall Freemasonry,” *Prince Hall Masonic Digest* (Washington, DC, 2012), 8.

19. Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 84. A letter from Hall to William White, Secretary of the Grand Lodge, London, May 17, 1787, is signed “Living in Wourter Street at the sine of the Golden Fleece in Boston where our Lodge is now held.” William Upton, “Prince Hall’s Letter Book,” (13) [Wesley gives the citation as letter 13 from Upton’s AQC paper, but the full quote is not

There then appeared in reply to this jibe a gentle and sensible rebuttal by Prince Hall himself. On January 9, 1783, in *The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 15, no. 530, published by Bro. Nathan Willis:

Mr. WILLIS,

OBSERVING a sketch in Monday's paper, printed by Meff's Draper and Folsom,²⁰ relative to the celebration of the feast of St. John, the Evangelist, by the African Lodge — the Master of the said Lodge being Possessed of a charitable disposition towards mankind, we therefore hope the publisher of the said sketch meant nothing else but a candid description of our procession, &c. — therefore, with due submission to the public our title is not *St. Black's Lodge*, neither do we aspire after high titles, but our only desire is, that the Grand Architect of the Universe would Diffuse in the hearts the true spirit of Masonry which is love to God, and universal love to all mankind: These I humbly conceive to be the two grand pillars of Masonry. Instead of a splendid entertainment, we had an agreeable one, in brotherly love. With humble submission to the above publisher and the public, I beg leave to subscribe myself your humble servant,

PRINCE HALL,

Master of the African Lodge No. 1.

there.]; Prince Hall to William Moody, August 12, 1785, signed "Master of the African Lodge, at the Golden Fleece in Water Street, Boston." Upton, p. 58

20. The paper referred to must be Draper and Folsom's *The Independent Ledger, and the American Advertiser*. "Monday's paper" seems to refer to Monday, January 6, 1783, but there is no article in it describing activities of any Masonic lodge.

dedicated to the St. John.

N. B. Neither do we dedicate our Lodge to St. John, but by being Chrif-tians, and made under that denomina-tion, chufe to do fo; but were we to dedicate for anciency, or for honour, we could trace it from the creation.

This is Prince Hall's dignified response to the anonymous carp at "St. Black's Lodge" published eleven days earlier, albeit in a competing paper, and is characteristic of his reserve in responding to critics. It is worth nothing that Nathaniel Willis was a member of St. Andrews Lodge No. 235, and perhaps provided a sympathetic venue for Bro. Hall's rejoinder.²¹ This is not, as we shall see, the only instance of a brother white Mason publishing positive material about African Lodge and its members.

Then, more than a year later, on October 20, 1784, the *Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 2, no. 9, published by Bro. Benjamin Russell, carried the following surprising notice:

SIX SHILLINGS Reward.
L O S T, the C H A R T E R of
L a certain GRAND LODGE: Any
person that has found the same, and will leave
it with the Printers hereof shall be intitled to
the above reward.
P. H—LL, Grand Secretary.

The advertisement was another sarcastic dig apparently written by someone familiar with the status of African Lodge's charter. On March 2, 1784, Prince Hall had written to William Moody in London and asked that he present African Lodge's request for a warrant before the Grand Master of England. The charter for African Lodge No. 459 was issued on September 20, 1784, but not sent to Boston because the fee had not been paid. The fee paid was over £6 os. 8d., so the reward of six shillings was a trifling, less than one-twentieth of the charter fee.²²

21. *Lodge of St. Andrew, and the Massachusetts Grand Lodge* (Boston: Lodge of St. Andrew, 1870), 235.

22. Upton, 56–57.

Benjamin Russell (1761–1845) was a member of Rising States and St. John’s Lodges of Boston, Jr. Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 1811–12, Sr. Grand Warden, 1813, and Grand Master, 1814–16.²³ After this one mocking notice, Russell’s *Centinel* thereafter turned to publishing sympathetic notices of African Lodge and Prince Hall. Evidence of this are a lengthy article about the death of Luke Belcher. The first notice appears on August 18, 1786, *The American Recorder and Charlestown Advertiser*, Charlestown, vol. 1, no. 708, published by John W. Allen and Thomas C. Cushing:

Died, his excellency Luke Belcher, late governour of the Africans in this town. He was universally respected by every rank of citizens.

Luke Belcher was apparently enslaved by Jonathan Belcher (1681/2–1757), Governor of New Hampshire (1729–1741), Massachusetts (1730–1741), and New Jersey (1747–1757), founder of Princeton University, and the first American-born Freemason. One could think that calling Luke Belcher “his excellency” and “governour of the Africans” was sarcasm, but that seems grossly out of place in an obituary notice, especially since the publishers could have simply ignored Belcher’s death. It seems significant that the death of an African American received any notice at all. The informal titles probably reflected both Luke’s status among African Americans and his relationship with the Belcher family. This death notice is expanded August 19, 1786, *Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 5, no. 44, published by Bro. Benjamin Russell:

On Monday last was summoned by the all-subduing Monarch, from this sublunary abode, Luke Belcher, aged 42, by birth an African, formerly of the family of his late Excellency Governour Belcher; and on Thursday last his remains were respectfully deposited in the Dreary mansion of the silent, attended by a lengthy procession of friends and respectable characters, preceded by a band of brothers, in union, denominated the Afri-

23. William R. Denslow, *10,000 Famous Freemasons* (Richmond, VA: Macoy Pub., 1957), vol. 4 (Q–Z), s.v. Benjamin Russell.

can Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, in the garb and ornaments of the craft, led by the Tyler and Stewards of the order, bearing the insignias of their respective offices, preserving that due decorum and becoming respect requisite on so serious an occasion, and characteristick of the honourable fraternity.—The corps being carried into church, where the funeral service was performed, the body of their friend and brother they left with its parent earth, the tenement appointed for all living—contemplating that it was in reserve for them to do as he had done—that they must all follow his example, for

“The scepter’d King—the burden’d flave;

“The humble and the haughty die;

“The rich—the poor—the base—the brave;

“In dust without distinction lie.”

Though our departed friend could not boast of any very elevated distinctions in life, he has left behind the “pearl of great price”—a character many of his apparent superiors need not be ashamed to imitate, but without which even the sons of affluence are poor indeed. His salutary instructions to those of his own kindred, to “lead lives void of offence,”—to live within compass, and act upon the square, cannot be injurious to the lives of others, if carried into practice, not even to those superficially distinguished by nature, unfortunately having, perhaps, little else to boast of than a different complexion. But will the most circumspect—the most harmless walks of life—the mind being the dwelling place of every good and generous principle—of every masonick virtue, secure from the arrest of the ghastly Conqueror? Ah, no! Cæsar and Scipio, Pompey and Cato have submitted, tacitly confessing their inability to last to secure a retreat.

Compared to many obituaries of the time, this is an unusually long notice. Bro. Benjamin Russell published this fulsome obituary, and it is in marked contrast to the sham reward notice for the missing African Lodge charter he published two years earlier on October 20, 1784. Luke Belcher's notice was more than a half column, when most death notices were only a few lines. It not only praised his character, but also gave a dignified description of African Lodge's participation in the funeral. Further, the notice squarely chastises those who may feel superior but who have "little else to boast of than a different complexion." It seems significant that this lengthy obituary of an African American was repeated by at least four newspapers from Middletown, Massachusetts, to Philadelphia.²⁴ (The four lines of poetry, "The scepter'd king . . .," is from the drinking song "Plato's Advice.")²⁵ Prince Hall and his brethren had overcome the fact that, "The black subculture was considered by white New Englanders to be at or near the bottom of the social scale."²⁶

Given the to-ing and fro-ing of public view of African-American Freemasonry, it would have been an appreciative Prince Hall when he opened the pages of his paper on May 2, 1787, *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 13, published by no less than Bro. Benjamin Russell:

A F R I C A N L O D G E .
BY Captain SCOTT, from London, came
the CHARTER, &c. which his Royal High-
ness the Duke of CUMBERLAND, and the Grand
Lodge of Great Britain, have been graciously pleaf-
ed to grant to the African Lodge, in Boston. Af-
the Brethren have a desire to acknowledge all fa-
vours shewn them, then in this publick manner re-
turn particular thanks to a certain Member of the
fraternity, who offered the so generous reward in
this paper some time since, for the Charter supposed
to be lost; and to assure him, though they doubt of

24. See the Appendix to this article for a full details of the reprints.

25. It was published at least as early as 1771 in George Alexander Stevens, comp., *The Choice Spirit's Chaplet: or, A Poesy from Parnassus* (Whitehaven, England: John Dunn, 1771), 267–68.

26. William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees: The Development of the Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 60.

his real friendship, that he has made them many
 good friends. P R I N C E H A L L
Boston, April 30. 1787.

This announcement from Prince Hall is his great triumph: the premier Grand Lodge of England recognized the legitimacy of African Lodge and granted it a charter. Russell make an about face, generously putting aside his earlier sarcasm. Prince Hal's response is restrained like that he made to the earlier notice about "St. Black's Lodge," and yet he deftly buries his detractor with kindness when he refers to his "so generous reward." He goes on to say that the detractor, presumably a white Mason, has made African Lodge "many good friends." It's possible that one of those new friends was Bro. Benjamin Russell, the publisher of the *Centinel*. After the hoax notice of the "so generous reward" for the missing charter, the coverage of African Lodge in the *Centinel* over the years was uniformly positive. We would like to think that Bro. Russell had second thoughts about mocking fellow Freemasons, perhaps after meeting with Prince Hall and becoming his friend.

The news appeared elsewhere as well. May 5, 1787, *The Salem Mercury: Political, Commercial, and Moral*, Salem, no. 30, published by Bro. John Dabney and Thomas C. Cushing:

In Capt. Scott, lately arrived from London, the African Lodge, in Boston, received a Charter, which his Royal Highness, the Duke of Cumberland, and the Grand Lodge of Great-Britain, have been pleased to grant.

The notice summarizes Prince Hall's announcement and is similar to shipping announcements of the day. John Dabney (1752–1819) was a member of Essex Lodge, Salem, Massachusetts.

Hardly routine was what appeared on May 5, 1787, *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 14, published by Bro. Russell. The paper carried this remarkable poem:²⁷

27. The poem "Masonry," May 5, 1787, seems to have been only cited three times, and then only recently: Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr eds., *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas* (New York: St. Martin's Press,

S. BRENT MORRIS & PAUL RICH

M A S O N R Y.

T H R O ' O U T the globe's extensive round,
The fire of love extends,
Which glows in true mafonick hearts—
That family of friends!

Ev'n AFRIC'S SONS—ill-fated race!
Now feel its genial heat;
With charter'd rights, from England's Duke
THE SABLE LODGES MEET.

No more shall COLOURS difagree;
but hearts with hands unite;
For in the wond'rous myftery,
There's neither BLACK nor WHITE.

And lest a BLEACHED BROTHER shou'd,
in fcorn turn up his nose—
Know that a PRINCE* may favours take,
From Dukes, nor honour lofe.

* A PRINCE – *Master of the African Lodge – H-ll*
is only an American addition to his name.

This poem wonderfully expresses the ideals of Freemasonry and is remarkable for transcending the racism of the period with idealistic optimism, especially in the third stanza. It gave highly positive publicity to African Lodge and included the clever wordplay of a duke giving favors to a prince. The poem is unsigned, and with only three days between the notice of receipt of the charter and the poem, the anonymous poet must have been quickly commissioned by Russell or was Russell himself.

Russell published on December 5, 1807, the obituary notice of Prince Hall in the *Columbian Centinel* (successor of the *Massachusetts Centinel*) announcing his death “yesterday morning.” This notice was repeated in at least six other newspapers. It is significant that Russell who was the first to publish the

1995) 16; Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010) 31; Peter P. Hinks and Stephen Kantrowitz, “Introduction: The Revolution in Freemasonry,” in Hinks and Kantrowitz eds., *All Men Free and Brethren*, 6.

notice about the arrival of the charter followed by the positive and supportive poem was also the first to publish Hall's obituary. Was Russell in the end a Masonic friend of Prince Hall and African Lodge, or even a general supporter of African-Americans?

A MAN BETOKEN TO NONE

That Prince Hall was made a Freemason by British soldiers during a period of confrontation between the British and the colonists. That says something about his independence of character and the contradictions of his time, and more attention needs to be paid to his position in colonial Boston in addition to his role as founder of a lodge. His life is an argument that individuals make history rather than are its creation: newspapers of the eighteenth century give us an idea of the leadership accounting for the success of African-American Freemasonry and place the movement in context. Prince Hall was an extraordinary man of many parts.²⁸

On this point, Professor Alan Gilbert of the University of Denver has asserted that the American Revolution should be regarded as two revolutions in process. In a recent book, *Black Patriots and Loyalists*, he writes that, "Those who fought for independence sometimes did so to oppose emancipation. Conversely, in which may at first seem like a paradox, some of those who fought to crush the incipient rebellion for American 'freedom' did so to further their own freedom from slavery, embracing British offers of emancipation in return for their service in the imperial cause."²⁹

So the British soldiers who initiated Prince Hall may have been sympathetic to the indignities suffered by blacks in the colonies. It does seem there was a paradoxical element to the revolutionary era in which Prince Hall lived, as the

28. The numerous newspaper accounts we quote in this series sustain our feeling and the view that Davis took in his early (1946) account: "easily the most distinguished American Negro of his day." Harry E. Davis, *A History of Freemasonry Among Negroes in America* (Philadelphia: United Supreme Council, Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Northern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. (Prince Hall Affiliation), 1946), 14. Compare in a contentious account of the Prince Hall movement, Henry Wilson Coil Sr., John MacDuffie Sherman, with assistance of Harold Van Buren Voorhis, *A Documentary Account of Prince Hall and Other Black Fraternal Orders* (N.p.: Missouri Lodge of Research, 1982), 18.

29. Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), viii.

monarchical British were in respects ahead of the revolutionary new Americans in their negative view of slavery. Indeed, Harry Davis suggests that because of long service in the West Indies, British regiments may have had black members who were Masons.³⁰ (Many members of the first Masonic lodge in Boston, St. John's, were Loyalists and more than twenty of them fled when the British evacuated Boston.³¹)

No incident in his life better illustrates the complexity of a situation in which Hall found himself than what transpired just shortly after he had handled the drawn out business of acquiring a proper charter from the English grand lodge.³² At the center of the episode is the recognition of a Masonic secret sign. Masonic recognition stories are a genre of their own, usually turning on an incident when someone in distress gives a Masonic sign and is rescued. And it is true that a word or sign has brought relief not only to the destitute but to soldiers on the battlefield and frontier scouts about to be scalped. However, there is no more dramatic rescue than that recorded in early 1788 (February 18, 1788, *The American Herald*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 332, published by Edward Eveleth Powars):

Af infamous an action has been perpetrated within a few days past as ever blotted the annals of human nature. The Captain of a vessel, in the employ of a foreigner, engaged a number of negroes, to go down to one of the islands in the vicinity of this town, to work: having got them on board his boat, he directly proceeded to the vessel and confined them : this being done he immediately fet sail, and having arrived off Salem, he sent on shore and inveigled a number more of unfortunate black on board. Having thus far succeeded in his

30. Davis, 31–32, “by 1790, fifty Antients regimental warrants had been granted within the British army, the majority of which were granted to regiments posted to North America.” Ric Berman, *Schism: The Battle that Forged Freemasonry* (Brighton, Chicago, Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), 64. Nor have historians responded to the challenge of Harold Van Buren Voorhis to investigate white members of Prince Hall lodges. “White Brethren in Prince Hall Lodges,” chapter 12, Harold Van Buren Voorhis, *Negro Masonry in the United States* [New York: Henry Emmerson, 1940], 49–51.

31. Henry May, *History of St. John's Lodge of Boston* (Boston: Saint John's Lodge, 1917), 57.

32. For a brief but useful outline of the event, Davis, 181–82.

detestable purpose, he pursued his voyage, either to some of the southern states, or to the West-Indies, where, in all probability, he will dispose of them to linger out a wretched existence in the worst of Slavery. Blush humanity ! And recoil civilizations, at the conduct of men who profess to be guided by thy principles.

This is the first report we have found so far of the infamous kidnapping which inspired Prince Hall to petition the Massachusetts legislature to abolish the slave trade. It really improves in its dramatics on any Dan Brown story or Walt Disney movie about the Craft. It also is important in documenting intercession for a black brother by a white merchant who took brotherhood seriously, which was, to put it mildly, not always to be the case in the future history of Prince Hall lodges in contact with white Freemasonry.³³

In reviewing the circumstances of the kidnapping, it is useful to remember that by the 1770s there were over a half million slaves in North America, so free blacks like Hall were in a minority and constantly in danger of being snatched by slave merchants.³⁴ Slavery had been abolished in Massachusetts in 1783 but fugitive slaves from jurisdictions where it was legal were subject to repatriation. (February 26, 1788, *The New York Packet*, New York City, no. 779, published by Samuel and John Loudon):

Messieurs Printers,
TEARING the unhappy African from his native country, and from all that is dear to man, into a land of strangers and perpetual servitude, is an evil upon which the ablest pens have been exercised in the most pathetic addresses to the feelings of the

33. "Freemasonry was therefore compromised by antiblack, antifemale, anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, antiradical, and anti-immigrant sentiments, such that the Ku Klux Klan was 'quite successful in recruiting Masons to its ranks.'" Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*, quoting Dumeil [sic. Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964], 122] (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11-12.

34. Carole Boston Weatherford, *The African-American Struggle for Legal Equality in American History* (Aldershot, England: Enselow Publishers, 2000), 23. Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts in 1783, but not the slave trade until the Prince Hall intervention.

benevolent : But the more execrable practice of man-stealing, where the devoted victim has obtained his manumission, in reward for many years faithful service, is so truly diabolical, that we may rely upon the concurrent censure of all, who are not destitute of generous sentiments, and their united efforts to relieve distress, and bring the perpetrators of such nefarious crimes to condign punishment. To this purpose the Printers are generally requested to insert the following extract of a letter dated
-Charleston, Massachusetts, Feb. 13, 1788.

‘Solomon Babson, master of the sloop Ruby, under pretence of employing them to labor, decoyed three free Negro men, belonging to Boston, and has carried them off. The sloop cleared out for Martinico, but I suspect she is either gone to Charleston, S.C. or to Georgia. The Negroes were quiet, industrious men, and have left wives and children in distress, as well as a burden to the community. Every lover of Justice must feel resentment against such an outrage upon human nature. One of the unfortunate men was a faithful servant of mine, made free in reward of his fidelity; and if you can discover the author, or gain any intelligence of these unfortunate fellows, you will oblige a number of respectable citizens, and subserve the cause of humanity. The names of these injured men were Wendham, Cato, and Luck.’

The newspaper account is based on an anonymous letter that is quoting still another anonymous letter, one from Charleston. In sum it refers to the scandal of the kidnapping of the three free Blacks in Boston Harbor for sale as slaves in Martinique. The “letter from Charleston” sounds as if it had been published earlier in another newspaper, probably from Massachusetts. The villain was Solomon Babson, who was the owner, bonder, and commander of the Massachusetts brig *Ruby* and received a letter of marque to act as a privateer against

the British.³⁵ His kidnapping of Americans was not only immoral but illegal, and it went far beyond his marque charter. One of his three victims, “Luck,” was a member of Prince Hall’s African Lodge.³⁶

This incident inspired Prince Hall and other free Blacks in Boston to petition the Massachusetts legislature to abolish the slave trade, which is described in the next newspaper story appearing in the April 8, 1788 issue of *The New York Morning Post and Advertiser* (New York City, no. 1268, published by William Morton):

The following is a copy of a petition presented to the General Court of Massachusetts; which is taken from the original in the hand writing of the signer, who is a free Negro in the town of Boston:

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bay, in General Court assembled, on the 27th of February 1788.

The Petition of the great number of BLACKS,
Freemen of this Commonwealth.

Humbly sheweth,

THAT your petitioners are justly alarmed at the inhuman and cruel treatment that three of our brethren, free citizens of the town of Boston lately received. The Captain under pretence that his vessel was in distress on an island below in this harbour, having got them on board, but them in irons, and carried them

35. “Bonds of the Letters of Marque ... September 16, 1782: Ruby. Massachusetts brig. Guns: 6. Crew: 21. Bond: \$20,000. Master: Solomon Babson. Bonders: Solomon Babson, Newburyport. John Babson, Newburyport. Joseph Tyler, Newburyport. Owner: John Babson, Newburyport.” Charles Henry Lincoln, *Naval Records of the American Revolution: 1775–1788* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 449.

36. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877), vol. 3, 5th series, 54–55. Hazard wrote to Belknap on April 5 and discussed Hall’s petition and the kidnapping case, 28–29. Belknap also wrote to Hazard on April 18, 1788, and reviewed the kidnapping and Governor John Hancock’s intervention with the Governor of Martinique, 32.

off from their wives and children, to be sold for slaves; this being the unhappy state of these poor men, what can your petitioners expect but to be treated in the same manner by the same sort of men?—What then are our lives and liberties worth, if they may be taken away in such a cruel and unjust manner as this? May it please your Honor's, we are not insensible, that the good laws of this state, forbid all such bad actions; notwithstanding we can assure your Honors, that many of our Free Blacks, that have entered on board of vessels, as seamen, have been sold for slaves; and some of them we have heard from, but know not who carried them away. Hence it is that many of us, who are good seamen, are obliged to stay at home through fear, and the one half our time loiter through the streets, for want of employ; whereas if they were protected in that lawful calling, they might get a livelihood for themselves and theirs, which in the situation they are not in, they cannot. One thing more we would beg leave to hint, that is, that your petitioners have for some time past beheld with grief, ships cleared out from this harbour for Africa, and there they either steal, or cause others to steal, our brothers and sisters, fill their ships holds full of unhappy men and women, crowded together, then set out to find the best market, to sell them there like sheep for the slaughter, and then return here like honest men, after having sported with the lives and liberty of their fellow men, and at the same time call themselves Christians. Blush, O Heavens! At this, these our weighty grievances! We cheerfully submit to your Honors, without dictating in the least, knowing by experience

that your Honors have, and we trust ever will
in your wisdom do us that justice that our pre-
sent condition requires, as God and the good
laws of this commonwealth shall dictate you.

And as in duty bound, your petiti-
oners shall ever pray.

PRINCE HALL.

This letter substantiates that Prince Hall was not only a Masonic founding father but a well known leader of the African-American community in Boston and indeed in America. His petition was reinforcing one brought by the Quakers, and he inspired the Boston clergy to submit one of their own. All this agitation bore fruit. The results of the changes that he demanded was an act passed on March 26, 1788, one month after his petition, "to prevent the Slave Trade, and for granting Relief to the Families of such unhappy Persons as may be Kidnapped or decoyed away from this Commonwealth."³⁷ News of this was widely reprinted.

Then, on August 23, 1788, readers of *The Pennsylvania Mercury, and Universal Advertiser* (Philadelphia, no. 278, published by Daniel Humphreys) were further updated:

Extract of a letter from Boston.

...

*An Extract of another letter from the same place.*³⁸

I have one piece of good news to tell you. The negroes who were kidnapped from hence last winter are returned. They were carried to St. Barthomew's and offered for sale. One of them was a sensible fellow, and a Free mason. The merchant to whom they were offered was of this fraternity; they were soon acquainted; the negro told his story; they were carried before the governor, with the

37. See and compare as published by Thomas and Samuel Green. April 24, 1788, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy: Or, the Worcester Gazette*, Worcester, vol. 17, no. 786, published by Bro. Isaiah Thomas and April 24, 1788, *The Cumberland Gazette*, Portland, Maine, published by Thomas B. Wait. Also Kaplan, *The Black Presence*, 210.

38. The immediately preceding article is an "Extract of a letter from Boston." Thus we can assume this story of Prince Hall is from the same letter.

ship master and supercargo. The story of the negroes was, that they were decoyed on board, under pretence of working; the story of the others was, that they were purchased out of gaol; wherein they had been confined for robbery. The Governor detained them; the vessel put off immediately from the island. They were kept within certain limits, and a gentleman of the island, was bondsman for them for six months; in which time they sent here for proofs, which arriving, they were liberated.

‘The morning after their arrival here, they made me a visit, being introduced by Prince Hall, who is one of the head men among the blacks in this town. The interview was Affecting—There, said Prince, this is the gentleman who was so much your friend, and petitioned the Court for us—alluding to the share which I had in the petition against the slave trade. They joined in thanking me; and really, my dear sir, I felt, and do still feel, from this circumstance, a pleasure which is a rich compensation for all the curses of the whole tribe of African traders, aided by the distillers, which have been liberally bestowed upon the clergy of this town for their agency in the above petition.’

This “letter from Boston” was an excerpt of a letter of August 2, 1788, from Rev. Jeremy Belknap, Boston, to Ebenezer Hazard, New York, apparently published elsewhere (where we have not yet discovered).³⁹ (Belknap is the gentleman whom Hall said “petitioned the court for us.”)

Surely this is one of the most dramatic results of a Masonic sign by a distressed Mason ever recorded, and suggests by what it precipitated that Prince Hall was very much his own man, capable of charting a course that was betoken neither to British hierarchy or American “squirearchy.” The repatriation of the

39. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1877), vol. 3, 5th series, 54–55, 28–29, 32.

three kidnapped men preceded by two hundred years the celebrated legal battles that would enforce on a larger scale the rights that Prince Hall demanded.

The event underlines that he was a Mason true to the Craft, but moreover a man true to his humanity. And his story gets—to borrow a Lewis Carroll phrase and to contradict the use of the word in respect to Prince Hall by Henry Wilson Coil⁴⁰—curiuser and curiuser.

THE DOG THAT DIDN'T BARK

In 1892, Bro. Arthur Conan Doyle published “Silver Blaze,” a Sherlock Holmes short story. Inspector Gregory of Scotland Yard says to Holmes, “Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention.” Holmes replies, “To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” The detective is puzzled: “The dog did nothing in the night-time.” And Holmes replies, “That was the curious incident.”

A negative fact is still a fact, and in this series about the origins of Prince Hall Freemasonry, there are a number of newspaper articles that were published about African-American Masons without any remark that they were untoward, extraordinary, or exceptional. They were ordinary reports of ordinary lodge business in all respects, but it was their ordinariness that was extraordinary.

The Boston Gazette and the Country Journal for June 22, 1789, (Boston, no. 1811, published by Benjamin Edes and Son) reads:

It is curious, says a Correspondent, to observe the peculiar Strains of our late Advertisements—DONEGANI tumbles in the Papers without any permission from the Selectmen, or any other Body whatever.—While the poor African Lodge informs the Public, that a SERMON will be delivered, by permission—When Tumblers, Strollers, &c. can impose on the Town, without Leave or License, and a worthy Man is oblig'd to ask “permission” to preach a Sermon, we may justly exclaim, O’ Boston ! How art thou fallen!—

40. Coil *et al.*, ix.

There is no response or rebuttal by subscribers to this. The indignation that a sermon needs permission but a carnival act does not is accepted without any question by the readers. Nor is there any attention to the fact that the lodge is an African-American one. The articles in the post-revolutionary press seem to illustrate that for the papers and public, Masons are Masons. Indeed, more regularity attached to the activities of Prince Hall and African Lodge than of many other Masons and lodges of the period.

An example is the sermon referred to in the newspaper, probably the St. John's Day sermon of June 14, 1789, preached by Rev. John Marrant, chaplain of African Lodge.⁴¹ Marrant was called America's first black preacher and became chaplain of African Lodge in that same year that he delivered the address. Joseph A. Walkes considered that "It may very well have been the first published speech by a Black American."⁴² (There are several advertisements that year for Donegani's circus acts, and for Marrant's published sermon.)

A few weeks later, there appeared a summary of Masons' celebrating St. John's Day. Prince Hall activities are recorded in the same article (June 27, 1789, *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 11, no. 30, published by Bro. Benjamin Russell) as those of other Masons:

The FESTIVAL of ST. JOHN,

In true mafonick ftyle, was celebrated on Wednesday, by the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of MASONS, at the Bunch-of-Grapes—on which occasion the following Great Officers were installed—The Right Worshipful M. M. HAYS, Grand Mafter;—AARON DEXTER, Esq. Grand Steward.—SAMUEL BRADFORD, Esq. Grand Sword-Bearer.—SIMON ELIOT, Esq. Grand Marfhall—and Mr. NORTON BRAILSFORD, Grand Deacon.

The African Lodge, No. 459, alfo celebrated

41. [John] Marrant, *A Sermon Preached on 24th Day of June 1789, Being the Festival of St. John the Baptist, at the Request of the Right Worshipful the Grand Master Prince Hall, and the Rest of the Brethren of the African Lodge of the Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons in Boston* (Boston: Bible and Heart, [1789]).

42. Joseph A. Walkes Jr., *Black Square & Compass: 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry*, rev. ed. (Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., 1981), 24.

this festival. At 11 o'clock, they proceeded in their professional insignia to the South-School, where their Chaplain delivered to them a sermon. They afterwards dined together at their Hall.

Then in the late summer of the same year, the newspapers minuted the death of Bro. Robert Livingston, Past Grand Master of New York, and of Bro. Thomas Saunderson, Secretary of African Lodge and one of the fifteen original initiates of the African Lodge. September 7, 1789, *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1822, published by Benjamin Edes:

DIED]—At New-York, Robert G. Livingfton, Esq.
—— At Kittery, Samuel Hirft Sparhawk, Esq
—— At Braintree, Deacon Jonathon Webb.
—— In this town, Mrs. Abigail Homer, aged 74.
Mrs. Mary Dixon, aged 101, school-mistrefs. Mrs.
Agnes Bradlee, aged 53. Mr. Thomas Saunderfon,
Secretary of the African Lodge, No. 1.

The sermon preached by Reverend Marrant in June had soon made its way into print. September 14, 1789, *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1,823, published by Benjamin Edes and Son:

Just PUBLISHED,
And to be sold at the *Bible and Heart*, in BOSTON.
ASERMON Preached by the Rev Brother
MARRANT, at the request of the AFRICAN
Lodge of free and accepted MASONS, in Boston, at
the Festival of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1789.
SEPT. 13, 1789.

An example of the continued good standing and reputation of Prince Hall is the August 20, 1792, letter to him from the Grand Secretary of the English Premier Grand Lodge, "Moderns," W. M. White, addressing him as "Right Worshipful" and asking for his help in getting information about a number of American lodges as "we have never heard from them, since the commencement of the last war in America." The Grand Secretary adds that he wishes

African Lodge success for the coming year and is “happy to have it in my power to contribute thereto.”⁴³

There is lots of room for research about this decade. For example, there is a small mystery about a funeral notice of November 29, 1796. The departed brother’s name is unknown, although a search can possibly produce it. We do know that the January 14, 1779, regulations of African Lodge list James Hawkins as an Entered Apprentice.⁴⁴ From the November 29, 1796, *Polar-Star and Boston Daily Advertiser*, Boston, no. 47, published by Alexander Martin:

African Lodge,
☞ The brethren of the African
Lodge are requested to meet at brother JAMES
HAWKINS’s, Devonshire-ftreet, this afternoon at
3 o’clock; there to form a proceffion, and attend
the funeral of a deceafed brother Nov 29

Prince Hall was well informed about the Craft and an articulate spokesperson, as shown in an advertisement from the August 28, 1797, *The Boston Gazette, and Weekly Republican Journal*, Boston, no. 2337, published by Bro. Benjamin Edes:

Just published, and to be fold at Prince Hall’s Shop,
opposite the Quaker Meeting Houfe, Quaker Lane
A CHARGE delivered to the African
Lodge, June 24, 1797.
By the Right Worhipful PRINCE HALL.

This is an advertisement for the second of two published charges by Prince Hall delivered to African Lodge. The first was in 1792, and this one is a small 18-page pamphlet “published by desire of the members of said Lodge” and delivered at Menotomy (now the town of Arlington, Massachusetts).⁴⁵

A portion of the Charge reads:

43. William H. Grimshaw, *Official History of Freemasonry Among the Colored People in North America* (Montreal: Broadway Publishing, 1903), 88–89. Would that all of Grimshaw was based on archives!

44. Manuscript, A. J. Worsham, November 17, 1949, quoted in Wesley, *Prince Hall*, 155.

45. For a detailed analysis of Hall’s 1792 charge, see Gregory S. Kearse, “Prince Hall’s 1792 Charge: An Assertion of African Heritage,” *Heredom* 20 (2012): 273–309.

Live and act as Mafons, that you may die as Mafons ; let those despisers see, altho' many of us cannot read, yet by our searches and researches into men and things, we have supplied that defect, and if they will let us we shall call ourselves a charter'd lodge, of just and lawful Mafons ; be always ready to give an answer to those that ask you a question; give the right hand of affection and fellowship to whom it justly belongs let their colour and complexion be what it will : let their nation be what it may, for they are our brethren, and it is your indispensable duty so to do ; let them as Mafons deny this, and we & the world know what to think of them be they ever so grand; for we know this was Solomon's creed. Solomon's creed did I say, it is the decree of the Almighty, and all Mafons have learnt it : tis plain market language and plain and true facts need no apologies.⁴⁶

Now, admittedly not every press mention of African Lodge was laudatory nor apparently were some members of the lodge itself free of the hubris which sometimes marks even Masons. An example of this sort of thing is in the February 24, 1800, *Farmers' Museum Literary Gazette*, Walpole, N.H., vol. 7, no. 360, published by Bro. Isaiah and Alexander Thomas:

N U T S.

[ORIGINAL]

I N the metropolis of a sister state, there is a respectable lodge of Free Masons, composed of free people of colour. We learn that on the same day that General Washington died, the master of this African Lodge, "died also."

46. Prince Hall, *A Charge Delivered to the Africa Lodge June 24, 1797, at Menotomy* (Boston: Benjamin Edes, 1797), p. 18. Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 32218 (filmed).

His name was Hawkins, and he died very much regretted. His place was immediately filled by Mr. Prince Hall, who succeeded in the honours of his late friend and fellow craftsman, Hawkins. On this occasion a member of the society was appointed to write and deliver an eulogy. We have not seen this work, but we learn that the orator "acquitted himself like a man." As his exordium is an example of the sublimely ludicrous, we give it, as handed to use by a gentleman lately from B—, "Friends and fellow citizens, we have this day lost a Hawkins and a Washington! but thanks be to God, we have still left a Pickering, a Wolcott, and a Hall!"

This is an example of sardonic if perhaps deserved humor from *Farmers' Museum Literary Gazette*. The last page of this paper has the headline "The Desert," and has sections marked "The Muses," with poetry, "Miscellany," with an article on errors of the press, and a section marked "Nuts," with two humorous stories. The story is obviously fictitious as there was no Master of African Lodge named Hawkins, and Prince Hall remained Master until his death in 1807. It likely refers to the James Hawkins mentioned in the November 29, 1796, funeral announcement. The joke seems to be that the speaker was so foolish that he equates lesser worthies like Pickering, Wolcott, Hall, and Hawkins with George Washington. Pickering and Wolcott were probably Timothy Pickering (1745–1829) of Massachusetts, Secretary of State, and Oliver Wolcott, Jr. (1760–1830) of Connecticut, Secretary of the Treasury.

The publisher, Bro. Isaiah Thomas (1749–1831), Grand Master of Massachusetts in 1809, perhaps was not as sympathetic to Prince Hall or African Lodge as Masonic publishers Nathan Willis and Benjamin Russell had been. Or perhaps we should accept the piece as a deserved poke at all fraternal pomposity, no matter what the lodge.

In contrast, while Prince Hall was not George Washington, Adelaide M. Cromwell in her study of Black leadership in early Boston considers that four African-Americans stand out: the poetess Phillis Wheatley; the victim of the Boston Massacre, Crispus Attucks; the fifer of Revolutionary War folklore,

Brazillai Lew; and Prince Hall. If they and other Black Americans of historical significance are less known, one might ponder why.⁴⁷

Prince Hall is especially important because of the role that his Boston played in creating the American mythology: “The Pilgrims and the Puritans, the Boston Tea Party and Paul Revere, that very specific City on a Hill, had by the Civil War become part of the personal heritage of every individual who could claim a history of freedom. . . . New England had become the nation and, in the process, the nation had become New England.”⁴⁸ His increased prominence in the story of America is overdue.

We conclude that this is a situation where Brother Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s remarks about the dog that did not bark is an apt way to describe how the press in the late 1790s treated Prince Hall and African Lodge in about the same fashion as it did other Masonic lodges. One cannot say the same for all Masonic commentators during the ensuing two centuries. Harold Van Buren Voorhis writes, “Over a period of many years I have read hundreds of discussions and opinions in Grand Lodge proceedings on this subject—among which are some of the most vitriolic attacks on Negroes and Negro Freemasonry. Yet, during the times when these attacks were in especially full bloom, as well as during periods of quiescence, there is only the evidence of our Negro brethren facing the issue very calmly as gentleman.”⁴⁹ Prince Hall Masonry had as solid and honest a beginning as any of America’s other Masonic lodges.

THE MODERN CLAM-EATERS — PRINCE HALL FREEMASONRY AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

One can be fairly sure when examining the newspaper references to Prince Hall in this series of articles that he too read them, and that many of the events recounted were common knowledge.⁵⁰ After all, the population of Boston in

47. Adelaide M. Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins: Boston’s Black Upper Class, 1750–1950* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 27–32.

48. Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 236.

49. Voorhis, *Negro Masonry in the United States*, 5.

50. Kearsse, “Prince Hall’s 1792 Charge,” 275.

1790 was only 18,320.⁵¹ Furthermore, Hall was proud of his lodge and was not inclined to accept anything resembling unjust criticism in the press.⁵² Characteristically, as early as 1782 when an article appeared in *The Independent Ledger*, and the *American Advertiser* of Boston about a St. Black's Lodge having a procession on St. John's day to the house of its "Right Worshipful Grand Master," Hall. He immediately wrote to the paper that, "our title is not St Black's Lodge; neither do we aspire after high titles."⁵³

The newspaper accounts testify to a well-ordered and active lodge that from fifteen members in 1776, grew to thirty-four in 1787.⁵⁴ The letter in August 1792 to Hall from William White, the grand secretary of the Premier Grand Lodge in London, asking for information about other lodges in Boston, is an indication that Hall and the lodge were considered in good standing.⁵⁵

As the newspapers confirm the regularity of African-American Masonic activity, albeit subsequently blurred by so much misinformation propounded over the years, it is curious that more study has not been made of the actual reporting. Perhaps that is symptomatic of an unfortunate larger problem. Clemson University professors LaGarret J. King and Patrick Womac have written strongly about the way American history "ignores Black Americans who were also instrumental in developing and fighting for the philosophies of U.S. democracy." They deplore the omission of blacks "as persons involved in the national-building efforts of the United States."⁵⁶

Given Masonry's emphasis on equality, the lack of scholarly attention to the upstanding role of African-American Freemasonry in early Boston is singular.⁵⁷ In their study of black fraternalism, Harvard professors Theda Skocpol,

51. Population History of Boston, acc. <http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/boston.html>

52. But in our survey we have come across only a few instances that were less than favorable.

53. David L. Gray, *Inside Prince Hall* (Lancaster, VA: Anchor Communications, 1904, 43.

54. Gray, 19.

55. Gray, 22.

56. La Garrett J. King and Patrick Womac, "A Bundle of Silences: Examining the Racial Representation of Black Founding Fathers of the United States Through Glenn Beck's Founders' Fridays," *Theory and Research in Social Education*, vol. 142, no. 1, January–March 2014, 37.

57. "Over a period of many years I have read hundreds of discussions and opinions in Grand Lodge proceedings on this subject – among which are some of the most vitriolic attacks on Negroes and Negro Freemasonry. Yet, during the times when these attacks were in especially full bloom, as well as during periods of quiescence, there is only the evidence of our Negro brethren facing the issue very calmly as gentlemen.... The mountains builded out of mole-hills have not withstood the elements of careful scrutiny and are being leveled by the plumb of reason and the square of honest judgment." Voorhis, *Negro Masonry in the United States*, 5.

Ariane Liazos, and Marshall Ganz remark that the refusal of white Masons to acknowledge Prince Hall Masons was a hypocrisy that repudiated their claim to “apparently universal principles of brotherhood.”⁵⁸ The fraternalism demonstrated by Prince Hall and his friends was in the face of obstacles that would have overwhelmed less hardy souls: “The only way we can understand this remarkably persistent commitment on inclusion and equality by the leaders of black fraternal institutions forged during decades of forced racial domination and segregation is to recognize that African American lodge members were, in an important sense, even more committed to core fraternal values than were whiter fraternalists.”⁵⁹

European customs would not serve the new United States, and so along with their fellow new citizens the members of the Prince Hall lodge sought to define themselves as Americans, embraced the development of traditions that gave the new country legitimatizing myths. An 1803 article in Boston’s *Independent Chronicle* about the lodge observing the feast of shells demonstrates this.⁶⁰ The “Feast of Shells” is another name for Forefather’s Day, established formally in 1769 at Plymouth, Massachusetts, to commemorate the landing of the Pilgrims. The name derives from clams and other seafood served at the celebration. The use of shells as dishes for food complimented the incorporation of scallop shells into architectural designs and made a reference to the scallop shell badges of pilgrims in medieval Europe, affirming the designation of the Plymouth settlers as Pilgrims. (Not to mention its use in Templar art and that the New England clambake became a firmly rooted gastronomic ritual.)⁶¹

In Boston’s *Independent Chronicle* for January 9, 1804:

58. Theda Skocpol, Ariane Liazos, Marshall Ganz, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African-American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 11.

59. Skocpol, 226.

60. *The Independent* was strongly Republican and anti-Masonic; the eighteen-year old son of Benjamin Austin Jr., the owner of the paper and a Republican with anti-Masonic views, was killed in a scuffle with Thomas O. Selfridge, a Federalist attorney. Controversially, Selfridge was freed by a jury of which Bro. Paul Revere was a member. Jayne E. Triber, *A Free Republican: The Life of Paul Revere* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 189 ff.

61. Kathy Neustad, *Clambake: A History and Celebration of an American Tradition* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 32–34.

The modern Clam-Eaters.

THE *Pilgrim's Sons* who dwell on earth,
God knows from whom they claim their birth,
On some pretence, as rumour tells,
Each year renew their *feast of shells*,

From the January 17, 1803, *The Independent Chronicle*, Boston, vol. 35, no. 2276,
published by Abijah Adams and Ebenezer Rhoades:

A TOAST at the *Feast of Shells*, parodized at a late meeting of the *African Lodge*:—

May that *Congrefs* which stood the friend of *poor Negro*, when *poor Negro* had no other friend in the world, be refitted and confirmed as the JACHIN, when *Africa*, (poor Negro's country) shall stand the BOAZ of true political and social Liberty, until sun, moon and stars shall never shine again.

More research about the individual members of the early black lodges will be of outstanding value to Masonic historiography. Even small scraps of additional knowledge would help towards understanding what was the beginning of black associational life in America,⁶² or in the convincing phrase of Gregory Kears, “black cultural nationalism.”⁶³

But within African-American Freemasonry there were a number of strands. The membership of the early Prince Hall lodges was diverse, as an obituary of an early member reminds us from the *New England Palladium*,—a reminder that Freemasonry was well established in the West Indies prior to the African Lodge Masonic activities in Boston. (For example, in Guadeloupe there were lodges established in 1766, 1768, and 1770.)⁶⁴

62. The sermons, minutes, and correspondence should be pursued for suggestions of how the early Prince Hall Masons felt about their past, and see if there is anything to be said for Keith Moore's claim that Prince Hall “could be deemed the father of Afrocentrism. He was the first to acknowledge in America a history for African people.” Keith Moore, *Freemasonry, Greek Philosophy, The Prince Hall Fraternity and the Egyptian (African) World Connection* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2008), 14.

63. Kears, “Prince Hall's 1792 Charge,” 278–79.

64. See Lionel Augustine Seemungal, “The Beginnings of Freemasonry in Trinidad,” Grand Lodge of Scotland site, <http://www.grandlodgescotland.com/masonic-subjects/>

EARLY NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF PRINCE HALL FREEMASONRY

From the August 2, 1803, *New-England Palladium*, Boston, vol. 22, no. 16, published by Alexander Young and Thomas Minns:

DIED;

In this town, on the 23d inst. Mr. Joseph Dumass, a native of Guadaloupe, a coloured man. He has resided in this town for many years past; during which, he conducted himself with great propriety and decorum. He was a member of the African Lodge.

His brethren like Dumass were passing, and Prince Hall himself died in 1807. Gregory Kearsse makes much of the significance of his life span as set against the eventful days of the American Revolution and nation-making, and that he was in his forties when called upon to assert his Masonic role—a case of the right age at the right time: “This maturity of age advances the idea that Hall had access to and a grasp of the colonial political, social, and cultural pulse of his day.”⁶⁵

The passing of Prince Hall himself occasioned substantial press notice. If indeed Benjamin Russell became a supporter of African Lodge, as evidenced by the sympathetic articles he published in the *Columbian Centinel*, it is a sad coincidence that it fell to him to publish the first obituary of Prince Hall. This obituary, published on Saturday, December 5, indicated Hall died on Friday, December 4, not December 7 as marked on his tombstone.

From the December 5, 1807, *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, no. 2471, published by Bro. Benjamin Russell:

Yesterday morning, Mr. *Prince Hall*, Æt. 72, Master of African Lodge. Funeral on Monday afternoon at 3 o'clock, from his late dwelling house in Lendell's-

masonic-articles/371-the-beginnings-of-freemasonry-in-trinidad, acc. 17 June 2014. “The impressive global and temporal range of European Freemasonry and its connections to Africans and their descendants throughout the Diaspora comes into clearer focus in the Caribbean. The uniqueness of the Caribbean—its continuities of ‘ruptures and discontinuities’ constitute the markings of diasporas—position this area as a quintessential arena where we can begin to situate the diaspora consciousness at the heart of African American Freemasonry.” Corey D. B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008,) 57.

65. Kearsse, “Prince Hall’s 1792 Charge,” 284.

Lane; which his friends and relations are requested to attend without a more formal invitation.

From the December 8, 1807, *Newburyport Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, vol. 11, no. 70, published by Ephraim Williams Allen:

OBITUARY.

...
In Boston, Mr. *Wm. Carlton*, Æt. 47—Mrs. *Abigail Averill*, Æt. 44—Mrs. *Elizabeth Pulsifer*, Æt. 61—Miss *Harriot Cushing*, Æt. 28—Mrs. *Elizabeth Pratt*, Æt. 31—Mr. *Prince Hall*, Æt. 72, Master of the African Lodge.

(The publisher, Bro. Ephraim Williams Allen (1779–1846) joined St. John's Lodge, Boston, in 1815, eight years after this notice, but renounced Freemasonry during the Morgan Affair and remained an anti-Mason until his death.)

From the December 9, 1807, *The Democrat*, Boston, vol. 4, no. 99, published by Benjamin Parks:

Died,

...
Mr. Prince Hall, aged 72—His remains were interred on Monday, in complete Masonic order, by the African Lodge, of which he was Master—A very large procession of blacks followed him to the grave.

Certainly his life was viewed as successful and significant:

Prince Hall used the structure and idealism of Freemasonry to gain a serious political public voice, to overcome slavery and racism, and to cross class barriers. He authored petitions to the Massachusetts Assembly urging full citizenship for blacks and an allowance for their participation in the young American Republic. He petitioned for schools and equal treatment under the laws governing the country. In 1797, he delivered the earliest publicly recorded

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antislavery address by a black person. What is significant about Hall's actions is the extent to which they reflect his early use of the 'master's tools.'⁶⁶

However, now that he was gone, and as we shall see in our concluding section, the work of Prince Hall would have the square and compass applied to see if it was enduringly worthy, for without the leader, how would the enterprise fair? Writes Brent Morris about post-revolutionary Boston, "Given the loose situation in Massachusetts [which the authors plan to illustrate by reissuing an old history of St. John's, the first Massachusetts lodge] with an Ancient Grand Lodge, a weak Provincial Grand Lodge, and the Scottish St. Andrew's Lodge, African Lodge may have preferred to remain loyal to the Modern Grand Lodge in London."⁶⁷ But that was no longer possible. The English grand lodges were about to merge as the United Grand Lodge of England and the American state grand lodges were leaving their British past and growing on their own terms. African Lodge faced the future without its founder and in an increasingly hostile environment.

THE MANIPULATION OF HISTORY

Power creates and manipulates history, which was the case with the narrative of African-American Freemasonry after the death of Prince Hall. The Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1949–2012) emphasized the ways in which the past is silenced, as was in the case of African-American Freemasonry. He felt that one must be ever wary of the ways in which dominant cultures manipulate the master narrative. Control over the narrative is achieved by a process that Trouillot described as fact creation, fact assembly, fact retrieval, and retrospective significance. That is a fair description of what happened to the recounting of the role of Prince Hall and the story of the early days of African-American Freemasonry during the ensuing nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁸

66. Tamara L. Brown, Gregory S. Parks, Clarendia M. Phillips, eds., Anne S. Butler, "Black Fraternal and Benevolent Societies in Nineteenth Century America," *African American Fraternities and Sororities: The Legacy and the Vision* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 77.

67. S. Brent Morris, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry* (New York: Alpha Books (Penguin), 2006), 59.

68. See Sarah Brooks, "Connecting the Past to the Present," *Theory & Research in Social Education*, vol. 42, no. 1, January-March 2014

This suppression cannot be entirely blamed on the bowdlerizing efforts of white Freemasons bent on expurgating the evidence of early African-American lodges. For example, we do not know enough about the attitudes of African-American religious leaders towards the Craft.⁶⁹ One would expect that early African-American Roman Catholic leaders like Augustus Tolton and Daniel Rudd would have supported the Catholic view of Masonry, while of course there is ample countervailing evidence that Protestant African-American leaders were often involved in lodges. A thorough examination of who in the African-American religious community supported Freemasonry and who opposed it is overdue. Still, the denials of the legitimacy of Prince Hall Masonry came in great volume from white Freemasons and are an example of “*argumentum ad populum*, in which a thesis is asserted, even acclaimed, because it resonates with the moral schemata and expectations of its audience, but at the cost of a dangerous suspension of analytic and political judgment.”⁷⁰

Despite this, what Prince Hall created before his death in 1807 lived after him. There is a certain appropriateness in the first publication of his death notice being in the *Columbian Centinel* as apparently the Boston publisher Bro. Benjamin Russell had become a supporter of African Lodge. Hall’s demise did not mean an end to African-American Masonry. Fledgling lodges in other cities took root. This is seen by the notice in the December 24, 1811, *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, vol. 40, no. 10,945, published by Zachariah Poulson:

NOTICE.

THE Brethren of the AFRICAN LODGE No 459, are hereby notified, that they are to meet at their Lodge room in Spruce street, on Friday, the 27th Instant, at nine o’clock in the morning, being the ANNIVERSARY OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, in order to join the Procession which will move precisely at 11 o’clock, and proceed from thence to the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, where a Charity Sermon will be

69. Cf. Roger Sansi, “Sorcery and Fetishism in the Modern Atlantic,” in Luis Nicolau Pares and Roger Sansi eds., *Sorcery in the Black Atlantic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 33–34.

70. Corey D. B. Walker, *A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 16.

delivered on the occasion and a collection made for
the benefit of the said Lodge

N. B. The Brethren are desired to be punctual
in their attendance at the time specified.

By order of the W. M

James Johnson, *Sec.*

dec 20

20 24 17

This Philadelphia lodge was, of course, chartered on the basis of the charter of the Boston lodge. The evidence indicates that the now several African-American lodges sought to interact with the white lodges. Take for example the October 3, 1818, *New York Daily Advertiser*, New York, vol. 11, no. 462, published by Theodore Dwight, William B. Townsend, and John W. Walker:

MASONIC NOTICE.

✎ The members belonging to the African Lodge of free and accepted Masons, are requested to attend an extra meeting of said lodge, on the 6th inst. Precisely at 6 o'clock P. M. for the express purpose of receiving additional instructions in the sublime and exalted science and mysteries of masonry, and at the same time a general lecture thereon, and an inquiry into the proficiency which each member of P. Lodge has made since favours has been conferred upon them; as, also, an exhibition and full explanation of the working or operating tools of each speculative mason, with the various badges emblematical of their respective orders, on the degrees which have been by merit conferred upon them, after which a jubilee will be performed by the members of said lodge. Punctual attendance is solicited. Masonic brethren belonging to other Lodges are respectfully invited to attend, and will be most graciously received.

By order of
oct 2-31

SANDY LATTION,
R. W. Master.

This is an explicit invitation in which the African Lodges invite white Masons (who would have been the only in the vicinity “belonging to other lodges”) to a meeting. Perhaps there had been informal oral invitations; perhaps the New York African Lodge had decided to begin an outreach program; perhaps the New York African Lodge was trying to shame the White lodges into welcoming African Lodge members.

The obituary notices continue as the original brothers of 1775 and others pass on, and they suggest that more research is needed into the genealogical background of individual lodge members. In the March 8, 1819, *Boston Commercial Gazette*, Boston, vol. 51, no. 24, no. 2335, published by John Russell and Simon Gardner:

DEATHS.

...

Yesterday, Mr. Robert Warr, A respectable man of colour, aged 39—funeral tomorrow afternoon, at 3 o'clock from his late home, in Nassau-street. Friends and relations are requested to attend.— The members of the African Lodge, are requested to attend the funeral of their late brother Warr.

Another appears on February 15, 1822, *The Salem Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, vol. 36, no. 14, published by Caleb Cushing and Ferdinand Andrew:⁷¹

DEATHS.

...

At Cambridgeport, Scipio Dalton, 72, deacon of the African Baptist Church in Boston, V. P. of the African Humane Society, and a respectable member of the African Lodge, of which he was senior warden.

71. “In 1822, Thomas Cushing left the paper due to poor health to Caleb Cushing and Ferdinand Andrews...” “*Salem Gazette*,” www.wikipedia.org, accessed April 12, 2013.

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The January 14, 1779, regulations of African Lodge list Scipio Dalton as a Fellowcraft.⁷² He was a founder of Boston's African Society in 1796 and First African Baptist Church in 1805.

Still another passing is in the April 24, 1824, *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, no. 4,178, published by Bro. Benjamin Russell:

DIED,

...

Yesterday morning, Mr. John Jonah, aged 53. Funeral to-morrow afternoon, immediately after divine service, from his late dwelling house, in Warren-street—friends and relations are requested to attend. ↪ The members of the African Lodge are invited to attend.

Then in terms of the future, what is perhaps the most important newspaper notice about Prince Hall Masonry was published June 28, 1827, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 18, no. 40, published by Nathan Hale

AFRICAN LODGE—No. 459.

GREETING :

BE it known to all whom it may concern,— That we, the Master, Wardens, and Members of the African Lodge, No. 459, city of Boston, (Mass.) U. S. of America, hold in our possession a certain unlimited Charter, granted Sept. 29, A. L. 5784, A.D. 1784, by Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, Acting Grand Master, under the authority of his Royal Highness Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, &c. &c. &c. Grand Master of the most ancient and honourable Society of free and accepted Masons. Be it further known, that the Charter alluded to bears the seal of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge at London, England, and was presented to our much esteemed

72. Manuscript, A. J. Worsham, November 17, 1949, quoted in Charles H. Wesley, *Prince Hall: Life and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (Washington: United Supreme Council, S.J., P.H.A., 1983), 155.

and worthy brethren and predecessors, Prince Hall, Boston Smith, Thomas Sanderson, and several others, agreeably to a humble petition of their, sent in form to the above Grand Lodge.— Be it remembered, that according to correct information as regards this instrument, and the manner in which it was given, it appears to have been confined exclusively to the Africans, and to certain conditions. Whether these conditions have been complied with by our ancestors, we are unable to say; but we can add, that, in consequence of the decease of the above named brothers, the institution was, for years, unable to proceed, for the want of one to conduct its affairs, agreeably to what is required in every regular and well conducted Lodge of Masons. It is now, however, with great pleasure, we state, that the present age has arrived to that degree of proficiency in the art, that we can, at any time, select from among as many, whose capacity to govern, enables them to preside, with as much good order, dignity and propriety, as any other Lodge within our knowledge. This fact can be proved by gentlemen of respectability, whose knowledge of masonry would not be questioned by any one well acquainted with the art. Since the rise of the Lodge to this degree of proficiency, we concluded it was best and proper to make it known to the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge from whence we derive our Charter, by sending written documents and monies, to fulfill the agreements of our ancestors, giving information of the low state to which it had fallen, its cause, &c. with its rise and progress; and also, soliciting further favours, whereby we might be placed on a different and better standing than we had heretofore. And notwithstanding this has been long since done, and more

than sufficient time has elapsed for returns, yet we have never received a single line or reply from that Hon. Society. In consequence of this neglect we have been at a stand what course to pursue. Our remote situation prevents us from making any verbal communication whatever.— Taking all these things into consideration, we have come to the conclusion that, with what knowledge we possess of masonry, and as people of colour by ourselves, we are and ought by rights to be, free and independent of other Lodges.— We do, therefore, with this belief, publicly declare ourselves free and independent of any Lodge from this day—and that we will not be tributary, or governed by any Lodge than that of our own.— We agree solemnly to abide by all proper rules and regulations which govern the like fraternities—discountenancing all imposition to injure the Order—and to use all fair and honourable means to promote its prosperity; resting in full hope, that this will enable us to transmit it in its purity to our posterity, for their enjoyment.

Done at the Lodge, this, the 19th June, A. L. 5827, A.D. 1827. In full testimony of what has been written, we here affix our names.

JOHN T. HILTON, R. W. M.

THOMAS DALTON, Sen. Warden.

LEWIS YORK, Jun. Warden.

J. H. PURROW, Secretary

June 26

This is the celebrated “Declaration of Independence by African Lodge.” It marks the end of the first phase of Prince Hall Masonry when African Lodge worked as an English lodge. It also marks the beginning of a long struggle for its history to be recognized by the white brethren. In 1874, when the Grand Lodge of Ohio was considering the recognition of the Ohio Prince Hall Grand Lodge, the Prince Hall Grand Master William Parham was not in a very conciliatory

mood when quoted in the *Masonic Monthly*: “I do not propose to occupy the negro pew in the lodge-room, nor wait until my white companions are served before my turn comes round. We have had enough of that in the American Church to last through all time. . . . The world listens with scorn and contempt to the loud-mouthed professions of white American Masons, to which their lives and practices are so constantly giving the lie.”⁷³

In sum, as the newspapers show, the documentary evidence as to Prince Hall and his achievements far exceeds that of many individuals of his time, black or white, and completely justifies the conclusion of Prof. Adelaide Cromwell of Boston University and others that he deserves his place as one of Boston’s most prominent citizens, “with few peers there or elsewhere.”⁷⁴ There was a robust African American middle class in Boston in the last decades of the eighteenth century and Hall was one of its prominent leaders.⁷⁵

EPILOGUE

Not much is known about the fourteen brothers initiated with Prince Hall in 1775, and for that reason a final obituary will serve for the time being as an epilogue. While there is no indication in the obituary that this Peter Freeman was the Freeman who was a Freemason, he is a “colored man” and would have been 34-years old in 1775 and thus 89 in 1830. This makes him a good candidate to be one of the fourteen initiated with Hall and perhaps the last of that immortal group of brethren to die.

March 3, 1830, *Norwich Courier*, Norwich, Conn., vol. 32, no. 1,650, new series, vol. 8, no. 49, published by John Dunham:

Died,

In this city, on the 21st ult. PETER FREEMAN, a colored man and a Revolutionary pensioner, aged 89.

73. “Colored Masonry,” *Masonic Monthly*, vol.1, no.1, April 1878, 7–8.

74. Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins*, 32,

75. Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and ‘Race’ in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 170.

APPENDIX

A CHECKLIST OF NEWSPAPER REFERENCES TO PRINCE HALL OR AFRICAN LODGE, 1782–1830

- December 30, 1782, “BOSTON, Dec. 30” [notice of Saint Black’s Lodge procession], *The Independent Ledger, and the American Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 5, no. 243, published by Edward Draper and John West Folsom
- January 9, 1783, “Mr. Willis” [response to Saint Black’s notice], *The Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 15, no. 530, published by Nathan Willis
- October 20, 1784, “SIX SHILLINGS Reward” [reward for African Lodge charter], *Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 2, no. 9, published by Benjamin Russell
- August 18, 1786, “Died, his excellency Luke Belcher” [Luke Belcher death notice], *The American Recorder and Charlestown Advertiser*, Charlestown, vol. 1, no. 708, published by John W. Allen and Thomas C. Cushing
Reprinted—
- August 24, 1786, *The New York Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, New York City, no. 760, published by William Morton
- August 19, 1786, “On Monday last was summoned” [Luke Belcher obituary], *Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 5, no. 44, published by Benjamin Russell
Reprinted—
- August 26, 1786, *The Daily Advertiser*, New York, vol. 2, no. 4, published by Francis Childs
 - August 26, 1786, *The New York Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser*, New York, no. 762, published by William Morton
 - August 29, 1786, *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, no. 2,351, published by John Dunlap and David C. Claypoole
 - September 11, 1786, *The Middlesex Gazette*, Middletown, Massachusetts, vol. 1, no. 45, published by Moses H. Woodward and Thomas Green

- May 2, 1787, "AFRICAN LODGE" [African Lodge charter delivered], *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 13, published by Benjamin Russell
Reprinted—
- May 18, 1787, *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, no. 2584, published by John Dunlap and David C. Claypoole
- May 5, 1787, "In Capt. Scott, lately arrived from London" [African Lodge charter delivered], *The Salem Mercury: Political, Commercial, and Moral*, Salem, no. 30, published by John Dabney and Thomas Cushing
- May 5, 1787, "Masonry" [poem celebrating the uniting force of Masonry], *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 14, published by Benjamin Russell
- February 18, 1788, "As infamous an action as has been perpetrated" [kidnapping of black Bostonians], *The American Herald*, Boston, vol. 7, no. 332, published by Edward Eveleth Powars
- February 26, 1788, "Messieurs Printers" [kidnapping of black Bostonians], *The New York Packet*, New York City, no. 779, published by Samuel and John Loudon
Reprinted—
- March 19, 1788, *The Independent Gazetteer; or, the Chronicle of Freedom*, Philadelphia, vol. 7, no. 707, published by Eleazer Oswald
- April 8, 1788, "The following is a copy of a petition" [petition signed by Prince Hall about kidnapped Blacks], *The New York Morning Post and Advertiser*, New York City, no. 1268, published by William Morton
Reprinted—
- April 8, 1788, *The New York Packet*, New York City, no. 791, published by Samuel and John Loudon
 - April 11, 1788, *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, no. 2,867, published by John Dunlap
 - April 12, 1788, *The Independent Gazetteer; or, the Chronicle of Freedom*, Philadelphia, vol. 7, no. 728, published by Eleazer Oswald
 - April 16, 1788, *Connecticut Journal*, New Haven, no. 1,068, published by Thomas and Samuel Green
 - April 24, 1788, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy: Or, the Worcester Gazette*, Worcester, vol. 17, no. 786, published by Isaiah Thomas

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- April 24, 1788, *The Cumberland Gazette*, Portland, Maine, published by Thomas B. Wait

August 23, 1788, “Extract of a letter from Boston” [kidnapped blacks returned], *The Pennsylvania Mercury, and Universal Advertiser*, Philadelphia, no. 278, published by Daniel Humphreys

Reprinted—

- August 29, 1788, *The New York Packet*, New York, no. 832, published by Samuel and John Loudon

June 22, 1789, “It is curious, says a Correspondent” [tumblers do not require permission but a sermon at African Lodge does], *The Boston Gazette and the Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1811, published by Benjamin Edes and Son.

Reprinted—

- June 30, 1789, *The New-York Daily Gazette*, New York, no. 153, published by John and Archibald M’Lean

June 27, 1789, “The FESTIVAL of ST. JOHN” [celebration of St. John’s day by Boston Masons, including African Lodge], *The Massachusetts Centinel*, Boston, vol. 11, no. 30, published by Benjamin Russell

Reprinted—

- July 4, 1789, *The New-York Daily Gazette*, New York City, no. 162, published by John and Archibald M’Lean

September 7, 1789, “DIED”—At New-York, Robert G. Livingston, Esq.” [death notice of Thomas Saunderson, secretary of African Lodge], *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1822, Benjamin Edes

Reprinted—

- September 8, 1789, *The Salem Mercury*, Salem, vol. 3, no. 152, published by John Dabney and Thomas Cushing
- September 10, 1789, *The American Herald; and the Worcester Recorder*, Worcester, vol. 8, no. 420, published by Edward Eveleth Powars

September 14, 1789, “Just PUBLISHED” [sermon by John Marrant], *The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1,823, published by Benjamin Edes and Son

Reprinted—

- September 26, 1789, *The Massachusetts Centinel*, vol. 12, no. 4, published by Benjamin Russell

- September 28, 1789, *The Boston Gazette, and Country Journal*, Boston, no. 1,825, published by Benjamin Edes and son
- October 7, 1789, *The Massachusetts Centinel*, vol. 12, no. 7, published by Benjamin Russell

November 29, 1796, “African Lodge” [request to assemble for a funeral], *Polar-Star and Boston Daily Advertiser*, Boston, no. 47, published by Alexander Martin.

February 24, 1800, “NUTS” [satire of pretensions of African Lodge member], *Farmers’ Museum Literary Gazette*, Walpole, N.H., Vol. 7, no. 360, Isaiah and Alexander Thomas

Reprinted—

- March 8, 1800, *Newhampshire Sentinel*, vol. 1, no. 51, published by John Prentiss
- March 12, 1800, *Massachusetts Spy, or Worcester Gazette*, vol. 29, no. 1,405, published by Isaiah Thomas and son
- March 26, 1800, *The Farmer’s Monitor*, vol. 16, no. 763, published by Thomas Collier

January 17, 1803, “A TOAST at the Feast of Shells” [a toast parodized at African Lodge], *The Independent Chronicle*, Boston, vol. 35, no. 2276, published by Abijah Adams and Ebenezer Rhoades

August 2, 1803, “DIED” [death notice of Joseph Dumass, member of African Lodge], *New-England Palladium*, Boston, vol. 22, no. 16, published by Alexander Young and Thomas Minns

December 5, 1807, “Yesterday morning, Mr. Prince Hall” [death notice of Prince Hall], *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, no. 2471, published by Benjamin Russell

Reprinted—

- December 7, 1807, *Boston Gazette*, Boston, vol. 23, no. 28, whole no. 1156, published by John Russell and James Cutler
- December 7, 1807, *Independent Chronicle*, Boston, vol. 39, no. 2,777, published by Abijah Adams and Ebenezer Rhoades

December 8, 1807, “Obituary” [death notice of Prince Hall], *Newburyport Herald*, Newburyport, Massachusetts, vol. 11, no. 70, published by Ephraim Williams Allen

Reprinted—

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- December 8, 1807, *New-England Palladium*, Boston, vol. 30, no. 46, published by Alexander Young and Thomas Minns
- December 12, 1807, *The Providence Gazette*, Providence, Rhode Island, vol. 43, no. 2293, published by John Carter
- December 14, 1807, *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, vol. 10, no. 35, whole no. 503, published by Isaac Adams and Williams Jenks, Jr.

December 9, 1807, “Died” [obituary of Prince Hall], *The Democrat*, Boston, vol. 4, no. 99, published by Benjamin Parks

Reprinted—

- December 10, 1807, *Boston Courier*, Boston, published by B. Parks

December 24, 1811, “NOTICE” [African Lodge procession on St. John’s Day], *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, vol. 40, no. 10,945, published by Zachariah Poulson

Reprinted—

- December 26, 1811, *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, vol. 40, no. 10,947

October 3, 1818, “MASONIC NOTICE” [extra meeting of African Lodge], *New York Daily Advertiser*, New York, vol. 11, no. 462, published by Theodore Dwight, William B. Townsend, and John W. Walker

Reprinted—

- October 5, 1818, *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, no. 3559, by John Crookes.

March 8, 1819, “DEATHS” [death notice of Robert Warr, member of African Lodge], *Boston Commercial Gazette*, Boston, vol. 51, no. 24, no. 2335, published by John Russell and Simon Gardner

February 15, 1822, “DEATHS” [death notice of Scipio Dalton, member of African Lodge], *The Salem Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, vol. 36, no. 14, published by Caleb Cushing and Ferdinand Andrews

April 24, 1824, “DIED” [death notice of John Jonah, African Lodge invited to attend], *Columbian Centinel*, Boston, no. 4,178, published by Benjamin Russell

June 18, 1827, “AFRICAN LODGE—No. 459” [declaration of independence], *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Boston, vol. 18, no. 40, published by Nathan Hale

March 3, 1830, "Died" [death notice of Peter Freeman, possibly one of the fourteen initiated with Prince Hall], *Norwich Courier*, Norwich, Conn., vol. 32, no. 1,650, new series, vol. 8, no. 49, published by J. Dunham

Reprinted—

- March 9, 1830, *Rhode Island American, Statesman and Providence Gazette*, Providence, R.I., new series, vol. 1, no. 68, published by D. Mowry, B. F. Hallett, Editor, J. C. Parmenter, printer

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