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PRINCE HALL, KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

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Prince Hall Freemasonry

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Prince Hall Freemasonry derives from historical events which led to a tradition of separate, predominantly African-American, Freemasonic fraternal organization in North America. Prince Hall Masonry has always been *regular* in all respects except constitutional separation.

On March 6, 1775, an African American named Prince Hall was made a Master Mason in Irish Constitution Military Lodge No. 441, along with fourteen other African Americans: Cyrus Johnston, Bueston Slinger, Prince Rees, John Canton, Peter Freeman, Benjamin Tiler, Duff Ruform, Thomas Santerson, Prince Rayden, Cato Speain, Boston Smith, Peter Best, Forten Horward, and Richard Titley, all of whom apparently were free by birth. When the Military Lodge left the area, the African Americans were given the authority to meet as a Lodge, form Processions on the days of the Saints John, and conduct Masonic funerals, but not to confer degrees nor to do other Masonic work. These individuals applied for and obtained a Warrant for Charter from the Grand Lodge of England in 1784 and formed African Lodge #459.

By 1787 there were at least 73 African-American Masons in Massachusetts, who petitioned the legislature with their *"desire to return to Africa, our native country . . . for which the God of nature has formed us."*^[1] The Huntingdonian minister John Marrant preached to the Prince Hall Lodge on June 24, 1789. His Nova Scotia congregation was significant in the successful agitation for repatriation by Black Loyalists as well as the subsequent revolt which occurred in Sierra Leone in 1800.

Despite being stricken from the rolls (like all

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American Grand Lodges were after the 1813 merger of the Antients and the Moderns), the Lodge restyled itself as African Lodge #1 (not to be confused with the various Grand Lodges on the Continent of Africa), and separated itself from United Grand Lodge of England-recognised Masonry. This led to a tradition of separate, predominantly African American jurisdictions in North America, which are known collectively as Prince Hall Freemasonry. Widespread racism and segregation in North America made it impossible for African Americans to join many mainstream lodges, and many mainstream Grand Lodges in North America refused to recognize as legitimate the Prince Hall Lodges and Prince Hall Masons in their territory.

Masonic Miscellany

Great Architect of the Universe · Square and Compasses · Pigpen cipher · Eye of Providence · Hiram Abiff · Sprig of Acacia · Masonic Landmarks · Pike's *Morals and Dogma* · Propaganda Due · Freemasonry and the Latter Day Saint movement · Dermott's *Ahiman Rezon*

At present, Prince Hall Masonry is recognized by some UGLE-recognized Grand Lodges and not by others, but appears to be working its way toward full recognition.^[2] It is no longer unusual for traditional lodges to have significant African-American membership.

According to data compiled in 2005, 38 out of the 51 mainstream US Grand Lodges recognize Prince Hall Grand Lodges.^[3]

In 1809, the Prince Hall Grand Master of African Lodge #459 was George Middleton of Boston. He had been commander of the **Bucks of America**, a unit of black soldiers during the American Revolution. The unit received a flag from Governor John Hancock for its faithful service. Middleton was also a founder of the African Benevolent Society. His home is preserved in Boston, Massachusetts.

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References

1. ^ "Blacks in Massachusetts and the Shays Rebellion", *American Studies in Black and White: Selected Essays, 1949-1989*, Sidney Kaplan, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst MA, 1991 ISBN 0-87023-469-2; *Black Square and Compass: 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry*, Walkes, Joseph A., Jr., Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply, Richmond VA, 1981 ISBN 0-88053-061-8
2. ^ "Who is Prince Hall?", accessed on 9 February 2006.
3. ^ Prince Hall Recognition Chart, accessed 9 February, 2006.

- Roundtree, Alton G., and Paul M. Bessel (2006). *Out of the Shadows: Prince Hall Freemasonry in America, 200 Years of Endurance*. Forestville MD: KLR Publishing

External links

- Grand Master George Middleton's home

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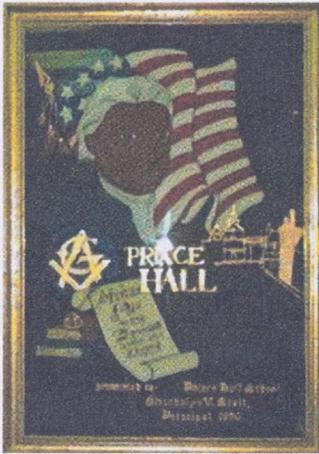
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- Prince Hall Freemasonry
- Prince Hall Freemasonry, Phylaxis Society
- Prince Hall Revisited by Tony Pope, editor of the Australian & New Zealand Masonic Research Council's publications.
- The Black Heritage Trail The George Middleton House Boston African-American National Historic Site
- Museum of Afro-American History website George Middleton house and has photo of Bucks of America flag-for reference only}

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WHO IS PRINCE HALL ?

Prince Hall is recognized as the Father of Black Masonry in the United States. Historically, he made it possible for Negroes to be recognized and enjoy all privileges of free and accepted masonry.

Many rumors of the birth of Prince Hall have arisen. A few records and papers have been found of him in Barbados where it was rumored that he was born in 1748, but no record of birth by church or by state, has been found there, and none in Boston. All 11 countries were searched and churches with baptismal records were examined without finding the name of Prince Hall.

One widely circulated rumor states that "Prince Hall was free born in British West Indies. His father, Thomas Prince Hall, was an Englishman and his mother a free colored woman of French extraction. In 1765 he worked his passage on a ship to Boston, where he worked as a leather worker, a trade learned from his father. During this time he married Sarah Ritchery. Shortly after their marriage, she died at the age of 24. Eight years later he had acquired real estate and was qualified to vote. Prince Hall also pressed John Hancock to be allowed to join the Continental Army and was one of a few blacks who fought at the battle of Bunker Hill. Religiously inclined, he later became a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church with a charge in Cambridge and fought for the abolition of slavery." Some accounts are paraphrased from the generally discredited Grimshaw book of 1903.

Free Masonry among Black men began during the War of Independence, when Prince Hall and fourteen other free black men were initiated into Lodge # 441, Irish Constitution, attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot, British Army Garrisoned at Castle Williams (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbor on March 6, 1775. The Master of the Lodge was Sergeant John Batt. Along with Prince Hall, the other newly made masons were Cyrus Johnson, Bueston Slinger, Prince Rees, John Canton, Peter Freeman, Benjamin Tiler, Duff Ruform, Thomas Santerson, Prince Rayden, Cato Spain, Boston Smith, Peter Best, Forten Howard and Richard Titley.

When the British Army left Boston, this Lodge, # 441, granted Prince Hall and his brethren authority to meet as a lodge, to go in procession on Saints John Day, and as a Lodge to bury their dead; but they could not confer degrees nor perform any other Masonic "work". For nine years these brethren, together with others who had received their degrees elsewhere, assembled and enjoyed their limited privileges as Masons. Finally in March 2, 1784, Prince Hall petitioned the Grand Lodge of England, through a Worshipful Master of a subordinate Lodge in London (William Moody of Brotherly Love Lodge # 55) for a warrant or charter.

The warrant was granted on September 29, 1784 under the name of African Lodge, # 459 on the register of the Grand Lodge of England by authority of then Grand Master, the Duke of Cumberland, delivered in Boston on April 29, 1787 by Captain James Scott, brother-in-law of John Hancock and Master of the Neptune. Prince Hall was the first Master of the lodge which was organized one week later, May 6, 1787.

The warrant to African Lodge # 459 of Boston is the most significant and highly prized document known to the Prince Hall Masonic Fraternity. Through it, Masonic legitimacy among free black men is traced, and on it more than any other factor, rests their case. That charter, which is authenticated and in safekeeping, is believed to be the only original charter issued from the Grand Lodge of England still in the possession of any Lodge in the United States. African Lodge allowed itself to slip into arrears in the late 1790's and was stricken from the rolls after the Union of 1813 although it had attempted correspondence in 1802 and 1806. In 1827, after further unreplied communication, it declared its independence and began to call itself African Grand Lodge # 1. It is interesting to note that when the Massachusetts lodges which were acting as a Provincial Grand Lodge also declared themselves an independent Grand Lodge, and even when the present Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed by the amalgamation of the two separate lodges, African Lodge was not invited to take part, even though it held a warrant every bit as valid as the others.

The question of extending Masonry arose when Absalom Jones of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania appeared in 1791 in Boston. He was an ordained Episcopal priest and a mason who was interested in establishing a Masonic lodge in Philadelphia. Delegations also traveled from Providence, Rhode Island and New York to establish the African Grand Lodge that year. Prince Hall was appointed Grand Master, serving in this capacity until his death in 1807.

Upon his death, Nero Prince became Grand Master. When Nero Prince sailed to Russia in 1808, George Middleton succeeded him. After Middleton, Petrert Lew, Samuel H. Moody and then, John T. Hilton became Grand Master. In 1827, it was Hilton who recommended a Declaration of Independence from the English Grand Lodge.

In 1869 a fire destroyed Massachusetts' Grand Lodge headquarters and a number of its priceless records. The charter in its metal tube was in the Grand Lodge chest. The tube saved the charter from the flames, but the intense heat charred the paper. It was at this time that Grand Master S.T. Kendall crawled into the burning building and in peril of his life, saved the charter from complete destruction. Thus a Grand Master's devotion and heroism further consecrated this parchment to us, and added a further detail to its already interesting history. The original Charter # 459 has long since been made secure between heavy plate glass and is kept in a fire-proof vault in a downtown Boston bank.

In 1946, the Grand Lodge of England again extended recognition to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge but withdrew it the same year. In 1994, the Grand Lodge of England finally

accepted a petition for recognition by Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. "England cited several reasons recognition was withheld," Nicholas B. Locker, Grand Master of Prince Hall from 1992-1994, said in an interview in June 1996. "One was 'territorial boundries,' because the Grand Lodge of England had already recognized the white Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, which shared the same jurisdiction with us. "Another factor was that Prince Hall owed back payment of dues to the Grand Lodge. Back 200 years ago, there were no checks, and often dues for England were put in the hands of sailing ship captains. It was several months before the ships arrived in England, and money was lost. So it wasn't possible to say for sure that Prince Hall paid all his dues."

The ties were arranged to be formalized in June 1996. In its 212 years, the Prince Hall Grand Lodge has spawned over 44 other Grand Lodges. The subordinate lodges receive recognition once their grand lodges are recognized.

Today, the Prince Hall fraternity has over 4,500 lodges worldwide, forming 44 independent jurisdictions with a membership of over 300,000 masons whereby any good hearted man who is worthy and well qualified, can seek more light in masonry.

Prince Hall is buried in a cemetery overlooking the Charlestown naval yard in Boston's north end. His grave is situated near a large tree, his wife's grave is directly behind his. The site is marked by a broken column; a monument erected 88 years after his death by Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Massachusetts. Still today, believers in the Diety and travelers from all walks of life can be seen winding their way to that sacred spot to pay homage at the final resting place of the first Grand Master of the "colored" Grand Lodge of Masons. This great Mason, Statesman, and Soldier, having traveled to that undiscovered country from whos bourne no traveler returns; remains as the pillar of wisdom, strength, and beauty among all masons today.

Other well known Prince Hall Masons
(* means these brothers have links)

1. * Thurgood Marshall, Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court
2. * Alex Haley, author
3. * Booker T. Washington, educator/founder Tuskegee Institute
4. * Charles B. Rangel, U.S. Congressman New York
5. * Louis Stokes, U.S. Congressman Ohio
6. * William "Count" Basie, orchestra leader/composer
7. * Nathaniel "Nat King" Cole, American pianist and singer
8. * W.E.B. DuBois, educator/author/historian
9. * Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, orchestra leader/composer
10. Medger Wiley Evers, civil rights leader
11. * James Herbert "Eubie" Blake, composer/pianist
12. Andrew Young, former mayor of Atlanta
13. Thomas Bradley, mayor of Los Angeles, California
14. Sugar Ray Robinson, mid/light heavy boxing champion
15. John H. Johnson, publisher EBONY and Jet magazines

16. Carl B. Stokes, first Black elected mayor, Cleveland, OH
 17. Robert Sengstacke Abbott, founder/publisher CHICAGO DEFENDER
 18. Richard Allen, founder/first bishop AME Church
 19. Matthew Henson, explorer
 20. Daniel "Chappie" James, general U.S. Air Force
 21. James Forten, abolitionist/manufacturer
 22. Timothy Thomas Fortune, journalist
 23. Richard D. Gidron, president, Dick Gidron Cadillac
 24. William C. Handy, composer
 25. Augustus F. Hawkins, U.S. Congressman California
 26. Lionel Hampton, orchestra leader/composer
 27. Benjamin L. Hooks, Former Executive Director NAACP
 28. Benjamin Mays, educator/former president Atlanta University
 29. Ralph H. Metcalfe, Olympic champion
 30. A. Phillip Randolph, founder/ first president, International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
 31. Egbert Austin "Bert" Williams, actor/ comedian
 32. Harry A. Williamson, author/Masonic historian
 33. * Scottie Pippen, #33, Chicago Bulls / Forward
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Prince Hall

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from Prince hall)

Prince Hall (c.1735 - December 4, 1807) is considered the founder of "Black Freemasonry" in the United States, known today as Prince Hall Freemasonry.

Prince Hall is claimed to have been born in the British West Indies, Bridgetown, Barbados on September 12, 1748, moving to Boston at a later date, sometime before 1775. He was the son of an English leather merchant and his mother was a free colored woman of French extraction. He secured a working passage on board a ship bound for America. He was a hard worker and realized that education was a key to success. He was an active worker in his community. He loved his new home in America and when the outbreak of the war for Independence he presented a petition on behalf of Blacks stating they were willing to serve in the Continental Army.

Documents in Massachusetts showing that slaveowner William Hall freed a man named Prince Hall on April 9, 1765 cannot be conclusively linked to any one individual as there exists record of no less than 21 males named Prince Hall, as several other men named Prince Hall were living in Boston at that time. It is also unknown whether he was free-born or a freedman. Narrative stories of Prince Hall's birth and youth are unsubstantiated and appear to have been invented by their authors (particularly William H. Grimshaw in 1903).

Prince Hall was a property owner and a registered voter in Boston. He worked as an abolitionist and civil rights activist, fought for laws to protect free blacks in Massachusetts from kidnapping by slave traders, campaigned for schools for black children, and operated a school in his own home.

On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and fourteen other black men were initiated, passed and raised in Military Lodge No. 441, an integrated Lodge attached to the British Army and then stationed in Boston. Prince Hall apparently

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Notable People and Places

James Anderson · Albert Mackey · Albert Pike · **Prince Hall** · John the Evangelist · John the Baptist

served in the Continental militia during the American Revolutionary War, and may have fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill. (Once again, his service record is unclear because several men of the name appear in the Massachusetts militia records.)

When the British Army left Boston in 1776, the black Masons were granted a dispensation for limited operations as *African Lodge No. 1*. They were entitled to meet as a Lodge, to take part in the Masonic procession on St. John's Day, and to bury their dead with Masonic rites, but not to confer degrees or perform other Masonic functions. Excluded by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, they were granted a charter by the Premier Grand Lodge of England in 1784 as African Lodge No. 459 (but, due to communications problems, did not receive the actual charter until 1787).

Shortly after that, black Masons elsewhere in the United States began contacting Prince Hall with requests to establish affiliated Lodges in their own cities. Consistent with European Masonic practice at that time, African Lodge granted their requests and served as Mother Lodge to new black Lodges in Philadelphia, Providence and New York.

A problem quickly arose for black men wishing to become Masons in the newly formed United States: the members of a Lodge must agree unanimously in an anonymous vote to accept a petitioner to receive the degrees. As a consequence of the unanimity requirement, if just one member of a lodge did not want black men in his Lodge, his vote was enough to cause the petitioner's rejection. Thus, although exceptions did exist, Masonic Lodges and Grand Lodges in the United States generally excluded African Americans. And since the vote is conducted anonymously, this created a second problem: since no one knew who had voted against the applicant, it was impossible to identify a member as pursuing a policy of racism. This allowed even a tiny number of prejudiced members to effectively deny membership to black petitioners, and in some cases even exclude black men who had legitimately been made Masons in integrated jurisdictions. Thus there arose an apparently unintentional system of racial segregation in American Masonry, which remained in place until the 1960s and which persists in some jurisdictions even to this day.

In 1791, black Freemasons met in Boston and formed the *African Grand Lodge of North America*. Prince Hall was unanimously elected its Grand Master and served until his death in 1807. (The claim that he was appointed Provincial Grand Master for North America in 1791 appears to have been fabricated.) The African Grand Lodge was later renamed the *Prince Hall Grand Lodge* in his honor. In 1827 the African Grand Lodge declared its independence from the United Grand Lodge of England, as the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts had done 45 years earlier. It also stated its independence from all of the white Grand Lodges in the United States.

Today, predominantly black Prince Hall Grand Lodges exist in the United States, Canada,

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the Caribbean and Liberia, governing Prince Hall Lodges throughout the world. After nearly two centuries of controversy, the Grand Lodge of England was asked to decide the matter of Prince Hall Masonic legitimacy. Carefully studying the records, the Grand Lodge of England concluded that the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was indeed entitled to Masonic recognition, and this against the tradition that, per state, only one recognised Masonic body should exist. As a result, most (though not all) "mainstream" (i.e. predominantly white) Grand Lodges in the United States and elsewhere have extended full fraternal recognition to their Prince Hall counterparts.

See also

- Prince Hall Freemasonry

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External links

- Biography of Prince Hall, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon
- Prince Hall History, Widow's Son Lodge No. 4 PHA, North Carolina
- Prince Hall Freemasonry, Phylaxis Society
- Find-A-Grave: Prince Hall
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PRINCE HALL HISTORY

Prince Hall is recognized as the Father of Black Masonry in the United States. He made it possible for us to also be recognized and enjoy all privileges of Free and Accepted Masonry.

Many rumors of the birth of Prince Hall have arisen. Few records and papers have been found of him either in Barbados where it was rumored that he was born, but no record of birth, by church or state, has been found there, and none in Boston. All 11 countries of the day were searched and churches with baptismal records were examined without a find of the name of Prince Hall. ¹

One widely circulated rumor states that "Prince Hall was free born in British West Indies. His father, Thomas Prince Hall, was an Englishman and his mother a free colored woman of French extraction. In 1765 he worked his passage on a ship to Boston, where he worked as a leather worker, a trade learned from his father. Eight years later he had acquired real estate and was qualified to vote. Religiously inclined, he later became a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church with a charge in Cambridge." This account, paraphrased from the generally discredited Grimshaw book of 1903, is suspect in many areas. ²

Black Freemasonry began when Prince Hall and fourteen other free black men were initiated into Lodge No. 441, Irish Constitution, attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot, British Army Garrisoned at Castle William (now Fort Independence) Boston Harbor on March 6, 1775. The Master of the Lodge was Sergeant John Batt. Along with Prince Hall, the other newly made masons were Cyrus Johnson, Bueston Slinger, Prince Rees, John Canton, Peter Freeman, Benjamin Tiler, Duff Ruform, Thomas Santerson, Prince Rayden, Cato Spain, Boston Smith, Peter Best, Forten Howard and Richard Titley.

When the British Army left Boston in 1776, this Lodge, No 441, granted Prince Hall and his brethren authority to meet as African Lodge #1 (Under Dispensation), to go in procession on St. John's Day, and as a Lodge to bury their dead; but they could not confer degrees nor perform any other Masonic "work". For nine years these brethren, together with others who had received their degrees elsewhere, assembled and enjoyed their limited privileges as Masons. Thirty-three masons were listed on the rolls of African Lodge #1 on January 14th, 1779. Finally on March 2, 1784, Prince Hall petitioned the Grand Lodge of England, through a Worshipful Master of a subordinate Lodge in London (William Moody of Brotherly Love Lodge No. 55) for a warrant or charter.

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

Prince Hall was appointed a Provincial Grand Master in 1791 by H.R.H., the Prince of Wales. The question of extending Masonry arose when Absalom Jones of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania appeared in Boston. He was an ordained Episcopal priest and a mason who was interested in establishing a masonic lodge in Philadelphia. Under the authority of the charter of African Lodge #459, Prince Hall established African Lodge #459 of Philadelphia on March 22, 1797 and Hiram Lodge #3 in Providence, Rhode Island on June 25, 1797. African Lodge of Boston became the "Mother Lodge" of the Prince Hall Family. It was typical for new lodges to be established in this manner in those days. The African Grand Lodge was not organized until 1808 when representatives of African Lodge #459 of Boston, African Lodge #459 of Philadelphia and

Hiram Lodge #3 of Providence met in New York City.

Upon Prince Hall's death on December 4, 1807, Nero Prince became Master. When Nero Prince sailed to Russia in 1808, George Middleton succeeded him. After Middleton, Petrert Lew, Samuel H. Moody and then, John T. Hilton became Grand Master. In 1827, Hilton recommended a Declaration of Independence from the English Grand Lodge.

In 1869 a fire destroyed Massachusetts' Grand Lodge headquarters and a number of its priceless records. The charter in its metal tube was in the Grand Lodge chest. The tube saved the charter from the flames, but the intense heat charred the paper. It was at this time that Grand Master S.T. Kendall crawled into the burning building and in peril of his life, saved the charter from complete destruction. Thus a Grand Master's devotion and heroism further consecrated this parchment to us, and added a further detail to its already interesting history. The original Charter No. 459 has long since been made secure between heavy plate glass and is kept in a fire-proof vault in a downtown Boston bank.

Today, the Prince Hall fraternity has over 4,500 lodges worldwide, forming 45 independent jurisdictions with a membership of over 300,000 masons. [Want more light?](#)

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 2. Black Square and Compass - 200 years of Prince Hall Freemasonry. Page 8. Joseph A. Walkes, Jr. 1979. Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co. Richmond, Virginia
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Welcome

The Order of Knights of Pythias is an international, non-sectarian fraternal order, established in 1864 in Washington, DC, by Justus H. Rathbone and was the first fraternal order to be chartered by an Act of Congress.

Domains of the Order exist in most states and provinces, and subordinate lodges are located in many cities and towns across the United States and Canada.

Please take a look around our website. If you are interested in joining, please use the "Ask About Membership" link and someone will be in contact with you shortly.

Although there is no central registry of deceased members, if you are interested in genealogical information, please use the "Ask Us a Question" link, and we will do our best to direct you to someone who may be able to help.



"If Fraternal Love held All
Men Bound, How Beautiful
This World Would Be"

-Justus H. Rathbone

To contact us:

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Contact Supreme Lodge by clicking [here](#)
Contact our webmaster about the [website](#)

258,222 Visitors

Since December 1, 1995



[View the Pythian International](#)

Let's Say **Thanks**
In support of our troops

<http://www.letsaythanks.com/>

**We are aware of several
email scams using our name.
Please delete them without
action.**



The Pythian Story

History of the Order

The Order of Knights of Pythias is a great international fraternity which was founded in Washington, DC, February 19, 1864, by [Justus H. Rathbone](#), and embraces more than two thousand subordinate lodges in the United States and Canada, with occasional lodges having been formed elsewhere. The primary object of fraternal organizations is to promote friendship among men and to relieve suffering. Each organization adopts some outstanding principle as its objective. The individuality of an order is determined by its ideal sentiment. The distinguishing principles of the Order of Knights of Pythias are "FRIENDSHIP, CHARITY and BENEVOLENCE".

It bases its lessons and builds its ritual largely on the familiar story of the friendship of Damon and Pythias, who were historical characters living about four hundred or more years before the beginning of the Christian era. They were members of a school, founded by Pythagoras, who was known as the father of Greek philosophy.

To become a member of the Pythagorean Brotherhood, certain very rigorous tests were demanded and applied, some of which are very similar to the ritualistic work of our order today. The object of the organization was the moral uplifting and purification of society. Strict morality, absolute truthfulness, honor and integrity were thoroughly inculcated in the minds of its membership. It was a maxim of Pythagoras that the two most excellent things for man were "to speak the truth and to render benefits to each other". The outstanding feature of the society, however, was the marvelous friendship and loyalty which bound the brotherhood together with hoops of steel, which was so remarkably demonstrated in the incident which forms the historic basis of our order.

Damon had opposed the pretensions of the king of Syracuse, who had gained the throne by fraud, and as a result he was condemned to death. Pythias became a hostage for Damon, while the latter was permitted his liberty to bid his wife and child goodbye. Each was willing to die to save the other's life. Their loyalty to each other, the adventures that beset them, and the outcome of this noble friendship, form the basis for one of the most beautiful stories of history as exemplified in our ritual.

The Drama - *Damon and Pythias*

John Banim, Irish poet and dramatist, wrote a play based on this friendship, which was first produced in London in 1821, and has since been staged many hundreds of



Damon and Pythias

times.

Familiarity with the Banim play encouraged Justus H. Rathbone to organize a fraternal order on the basis of such friendship. Its first small group of members took the vows of the new order with their hands placed upon a pocket Bible that had been given Mr. Rathbone by his mother. This Bible is still cherished as a treasured relic of the Order, and many thousands of others have been privileged to become members in what is known as "Rathbone Bible Classes" the original Bible being used to obligate them.

Abraham Lincoln and Our Ritual

The Order began, of course, during the Civil War, and its founder believed that it might do much to heal the wounds and allay the hatred of civil conflict. President Abraham Lincoln, being advised of the contents of the ritual and its teaching, said: "The purposes of your organization are most wonderful. If we could but bring its spirit to all our citizenry, what a wonderful thing it would be. It breathes the spirit of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence. It is one of the best agencies conceived for the upholding of government, honoring the flag, for the reuniting of our brethren of the North and of the South, for teaching the people to love one another, and portraying the sanctity of the home and loved ones. I would suggest that these great principles be perpetuated and that you go to the Congress of the United States and ask for a charter, and so organize on a great scale throughout this nation, and disseminate this wonderful work that you have so nobly started. I will do all in my power to assist you in this application and with your work."

The suggestion made by the President was adopted. An application was made to Congress for a charter, and the Order of Knights of Pythias was the first American Order ever chartered by an Act of the Congress of the United States.

In the Order's ritualistic work, every sentence has a meaning and every paragraph a beautiful and inspiring lesson. The flag of the country has an honored place at every meeting and the Holy Bible is the supreme Book of Law. The Order does not seek to shape any man's creed, but Pythianism is the practical application of religious and charitable principles to every day life. We have a heritage of which we are proud and our precepts and teachings lead men to higher ideals of life. We invite like minded men of good character to join us in making these ideals the dominant factor in modern living.

Peace Through Understanding

The Knights of Pythias is dedicated to the cause of universal peace and is pledged to the promotion of understanding among men of good will as the surest means of attaining it.

We believe that any two men, believers in a Supreme Being, meeting in a spirit of good will in an honest effort to understand each other, can live together in peace and harmony.

We seek those who agree with this belief to apply for membership in the Knights of Pythias and join us in an effort to reach "[Peace Through Understanding](#)."



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