



## **An Historical Account of Prince Hall Grand Council, Royal & Select Masters, Commonwealth of PA and Jurisdiction PHA**

The following is a brief history of Prince Hall Grand Council, Royal & Select Masters, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Jurisdiction PHA, which was instituted on June 21, 1980.

At the 49th Annual Grand Convocation of the Grand Chapter HRAM of Ohio on August 16, 1916 a resolution was adopted empowering Past Grand High Priest Charles E. Gordon to establish Councils of Royal & Select Masters in Ohio. Pursuant to this action the following Councils were created: Adoniram Council No. 1, Cleveland, OH; Zabud Council No. 2, Toledo, OH; and Herald Council No. 3, Columbus, OH. On August 13, 1917 at the Knights of Honor Hall, corner of Central Avenue & George Street in Cincinnati, OH, the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters for the State of Ohio and Jurisdiction was organized as Charles E. Gordon was elected the first Thrice Illustrious Grand Master. The following Illustrious Companions were also elected: Joseph J. Lee, Right Illustrious Deputy Grand Master; Alben A. Payne, Right Illustrious Grand Principal Conductor of the Works; John H. Bowles, Right Illustrious Grand Treasurer; Leroy H. Johnson, Right Illustrious Grand Recorder; Charles L. Poner, Right Illustrious Grand Captain of the Guard; C.C. Campbell, Right Illustrious Conductor of Council; Everett Gatiff, Right Illustrious Grand Steward; James E. Jackson, Right Illustrious Grand Sentinel and Right Illustrious Grand Lecturer John P. Bowles. A committee on Constitution was appointed as follows: John H. Bowles, Joseph J. Lee and John P. Bowles. On August 16, 1920 at the regular Grand Assembly held in Columbus, OH, the Constitution was approved and the officers were authorized to take out articles of incorporation. On December 21, 1920, the Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters for the State of Ohio was duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio and is the Mother Jurisdiction of Prince Hall Cryptic Masonry.

Vashon Council No. 13, Pittsburgh, PA was chartered by Prince Hall Grand Council of Ohio on August 22, 1923 but was short lived. Philadelphia Council U.D., Philadelphia, PA. first appeared on the Annual Returns of Prince Hall Grand Council, R&SM of Ohio at their 36th Annual Grand Assembly on May 27, 1956 along with Alpha Council No. 16, New York, NY, which was established in 1951 and Jordan Council U.D., New London, CT. At the 37th Annual Grand Assembly of Ohio on May 26, 1957, the warrants for Jordan Council No. 17 and Philadelphia Council No. 18 were recommended and approved and had been issued under the date, June 24, 1958 after the institution of the Grand Council of New York. Philadelphia Council was part of the formation of Prince Hall Grand Council, R&SM of New York on April 19, 1958 with Alpha Council No. 1, New York, NY; Jordan Council No. 2, New London, CT, Philadelphia Council No. 3, Philadelphia, PA and Adoniram Council U.D., Newark, NJ as Emmett J. Avery of Alpha Council No. 1 was elected the first Thrice Illustrious Grand Master of New York. The following Illustrious Companions were also elected: Robert F. Jordan #2, Right Illustrious Deputy Master; John R. Gilmore #3, Illustrious Grand Principal Conductor of the Works; W. DeVoe Joiner #1, Illustrious Grand Conductor of Council; Fred Johns #1, Illustrious Grand Treasurer; Illustrious Grand Recorder James W. Kelley

#3; and Grand Illustrious Captain of the Guard David F.L. Jones, Adoniram Council U.D.

John R. Gilmore, originally a member of Alpha Council No. 16, was the first Thrice Illustrious Master of the Philadelphia Council U.D., when it was under Ohio and Philadelphia Council No. 3, when it was under New York. He was elected the first Illustrious Grand PCW of New York. James W. Kelly of Philadelphia Council No. 3 was elected the first Illustrious Grand Recorder. On February 14, 1959 at the invitation of Thrice Illustrious Master John R. Gilmore of Philadelphia Council No. 3, Thrice Illustrious Grand Master Emmett J. Avery of New York journeyed to Philadelphia to assist in conferring the degrees on 29 candidates of Philadelphia Council, 23 from Washington, D.C., which subsequently formed King Solomon Council No. 5, Washington, D.C. In addition to John R. Gilmore, Phelmon E. Johnson of Philadelphia Council No. 3 and Jerry Bigger of Philadelphia No. 3 were elected Thrice Illustrious Grand Master of New York 1970-71 and 1976-77 respectively. Prince Hall Grand Council of New York issued warrants to Adoniram Council No. 4, Newark, NJ; King Solomon Council No. 5, Washington, D.C.; Omega Council No. 6, Washington, D.C.; Zabud Council No. 7, New York, NY; Mystic Tie Council No. 8, Brooklyn, NY; Jacksonville Council UD, Jacksonville, FL (1964); Progress Council No. 9 (UD in 1969), Philadelphia, PA; Ish Sodi Council No. 10, Boston, MA; Delco Council No. 11, PA (1974); John L. Hubert Council No. 12, Wilmington, DE; Phelmon E. Johnson Council No. 14 which subsequently changed its name to Edward D. Ford Council No. 14, Pittsburgh, PA; Owen H. Thompson Council No. 15, Baltimore, MD (May 15, 1975); Hiram Council No. 16, PA and other Councils in New York and other States.

Thrice Illustrious Masters Charles Washington of Philadelphia Council No. 3; Howard Lennon of Progress Council No. 9; Herbert C. Scott of Delco Council No. 11; Moses Brown of Edward D. Ford Council No. 14 and James Jenkins of Hiram Council No. 16 had a Planning Meeting in November 1979 to form a Grand Council of Pennsylvania. On June 21, 1980, Prince Hall Grand Council was instituted at the Masonic Temple, 4301 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA as Robert H. Cody was elected the first Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Grand Master of Pennsylvania. The following Illustrious Companions were also elected: Howard Lennon, Grand Illustrious Deputy Master; Henry C. Small, Grand Illustrious Principal Conductor of the Works; Glenn Lankford, Grand Illustrious Treasurer; Shelley T. Strickland, Grand Illustrious Recorder; Bobbie R. Stone, Grand Illustrious Assistant Recorder and Phelmon E. Johnson, Grand Illustrious Advisor. Past Thrice Illustrious Grand Master Samuel Jackson (D.C.) of New York installed the elected officers.

At the 166th Annual Grand Lodge Session of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of PA on October 12, 1981, Prince Hall Grand Council received an Official Certificate of Recognition and Acceptance from Most Worshipful Grand Master Thomas Scipio. On October 24, 1981, at the 161st Annual Grand Convocation of the Most Excellent Chapter, Holy Royal Arch Masons of PA, Prince Hall Council received a letter of Recognition and Permission to recruit from the ranks of Holy Royal Arch Masons of Pennsylvania from Most Excellent Grand High Priest Wesley S. Archer.

Subsequently on June 12, 1982, new warrants were issued by Prince Hall Grand Council, R&SM of Pennsylvania to Philadelphia Council No. 1; Progress Council No. 2; Delco Council No. 3; Edward W. Ford Council No. 4, Hiram Council No. 5 and Floyd Shivers Council No. 6 (which was set up as a UD Council on December 12, 1981).

Prince Hall Grand Council subsequently issued warrants to Eureka Council No. 7, Philadelphia, PA (which was set up as a U.D. Council on February 20, 1988) on June 10, 1989; Leon H. Johnson Council No. 8, Chester, PA on June 8, 1991 and John G. Grantham Council No. 9, Norristown, PA on June 12, 1993. Also Prince Hall Grand Council of PA issued charters to Councils in North Carolina (1994) and Virginia (1997) which lead to the formation of Prince Hall Grand Council R&SM, Jurisdiction of North Carolina, Inc. in 1995 and Prince Hall Grand Council R&SM, Commonwealth of Virginia, PHA, Inc. on April 26, 1998 respectively. David R. Odom of North Carolina and William F. Milton of Virginia were elected the first Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Masters of their respective Jurisdictions.

Past Thrice Illustrious Grand Masters of New York John R. Gilmore, Phelmon E. Johnson and Jerry Biggers are Past Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Masters of Pennsylvania (Honorary).

John R. Gilmore Priory No. 2., KYCH, Pennsylvania, organized on October 1, 1994 and established on August 31, 1995 is named in memory of a distinguished York Rite Mason of Pennsylvania John R. Gilmore, Past Thrice Illustrious Grand Master of NY, R&SM; Past Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Master of PA (Honorary), R&SM; Past Right Excellent Grand Secretary of PA, HRAM; Past Most Eminent Grand Commander of PA, MKT and Most Eminent Honorary Past Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, U.S.A. and Its Jurisdiction, PHA, Inc.

Prince Hall Grand Council is a supporting member of the General Conference of Grand Councils of Royal & Select Masters PHA, U.S.A. & the Bahamas, Inc and the following Illustrious Companions are currently serving the General Conference: PRGTIM Hubert A. Braxton, General Conference Thrice Illustrious Grand Master elected in 2025; PRGTIM Kevin M. Small, General Conference Jurisdictional Deputy; Grand Illustrious Historian & Auditor Walter J. Sims, Jr., General Conference Grand Auditor and Member of the Historical Committee; PRGTIM Larry O. Grant, General Conference Assistant Grand Treasurer; PRGTIM Calvin E. Ligons, Member of the Audit Committee; and PRGTIM Kevin M. Small, General Conference Grand Marshal. PRGTIM Howard Lennon served as General Conference Thrice Illustrious Grand Master 1995-1997. Also, previous elected officers of the Conference were PRGTIM Charles Johnson, General Conference Grand Treasurer; PGCTIGM Howard Lennon, General Conference Grand Treasurer; and PRGTIM Booker T. Nichols, General Conference Grand Trustee. Previous appointed officers of the Conference were General Conference Jurisdictional Deputies PRGTIM's Robert A. Wilson; Hubert L. Braxton; Otis J. Guinyard and Michael Stewart.

As we are in the 21st Century, we can easily picture strides of rapid progress. We, the Royal & Select Masters of this day, must contribute to

that progress. We look to the future while commemorating the past, drawing lessons from the past for the future.

**Yours in the Cryptic Rite,**

**P.T.I.M. Walter J. Sims, Jr., KGC, KYGCH, MSA, KCT**

**Charter Member, Eureka Council No. 7 (1988)**

**Grand Illustrious Historian & Auditor**

**Prince Hall Grand Council R&SM of PA**

**General Conference Grand Auditor and Member of the Historical Committee**

**Prince Hall Grand Council, R&SM, Commonwealth of PA**

**Past Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Grand Masters**

1. Robert Cody - 1980-1981
2. Howard Lennon - 1981-1983
3. Herbert Scott - 1983-1985
4. Henry C. Small - 1985-1987
5. Charles Johnson - 1987-1989
6. Edwin Mobley - 1989-1991
7. Kermit C. Downes- 1991-1993
8. Willie Burris - 1993-1995
9. William Don Jones - 1995-1996
10. Charles E. Jones - 1996-1997
11. Stark R. Gilliam - 1997-1998
12. William L. Lockwood - 1998-2000
13. Robert A. Wilson - 2000-2001
14. Antoine Small - 2001-2003
15. Ernest Rutherford - 2003-2005
16. George M. Howard - 2005-2007
17. Calvin E. Ligons - 2007-2009
18. Roland L. Williams - 2009-2011
19. Hubert Braxton - 2011-2013
20. Otis J. Guinyard - 2013-2015
21. Loyd Rowell - 2015 - 2016
22. Larry O. Grant - 2016- 2018
23. Michael C. Stewart - 2018- 2020
24. Howard J. Fleming, Jr. -2020-2022
25. Joseph L. Sanders, Jr. - 2022-2023
26. Kevin M. Small - 2023-2025

**Past Right Grand Thrice Illustrious Masters (Honorary)**

Phelmon Johnson                      James Cameron  
Booker T. Nichols                      Carlee London  
Glenny Lankford  
John R. Gilmore  
Shelley Strickland  
Alexander Murphy  
Lenwood James  
Jerry Bigger  
Ozell Glenn  
Joseph L. Jackson  
Thomas Outland  
John White