



Martin O. Weddington Papers.

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

THE ANNUAL ADDRESS

of

AMOS T. HALL
President

CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS
OF PRINCE HALL MASONS OF
AMERICA

in session at

St. Paul, Minnesota

May 20-22, 1957

WORSHIPFUL BRETHREN OF THE CONFERENCE:

Our hearts swell with gratitude to God as we assemble today in the twin cities in another annual Conference, for we know that it is only through His manifold mercies and blessings that we are permitted to meet again.

We have come from the various Jurisdictions of Prince Hall Masonry to again pay homage to our Founding Fathers; to re-affirm our faith and loyalty to the cause and principles for which they lived and died.

We have come to review the progress made by Prince Hall Masonry during the past year and to re-dedicate ourselves to continued interest in and support of those principles for which Masonry stands.

You are here at a great sacrifice, to share in this rich and stimulating fellowship. I do not know how you feel about the matter; but, as for me, the exchange of ideas and experiences with leaders of Masonry each year gives me a wealth of information and inspiration which is of invaluable assistance to me in overcoming many of the difficulties which I face in my Jurisdiction.

Therefore, I feel very strongly, that I am more than compensated for the sacrifice that I have made in order to attend this annual Conference.

It is ever true that wherever Prince Hall Masonry exists, it occupies a place of leadership and unexcelled influence. I wish that I had the time to give you a complete and detailed panoramic view of each good deed Prince Hall Masonry has accomplished during the year; --a picture of every tear it has dried; each heart it has made lighter; each civic enterprise it has supported; every movement for the progress of the race in which it has participated. Lack of time and information will not permit me to give you this picture.

However, I should like to review, in this brief message, some of the movements and projects in which our Conference, as such, has been tremendously interested.

LEGAL RESEARCH BUREAU OF THE N. A. A. C. P.

First and foremost of these projects, is the Legal Research Bureau of the NAACP. Prince Hall Masonry has made its most valuable and outstanding contribution to racial progress in its support of the Legal Research Bureau. We wish that it were not necessary for our Grand Lodges and our brethren to contribute funds to this project.

We long for the time when men everywhere will be measured by character and ability and not by race and color; when the partition walls that separate various segments of our society are destroyed. But, until that time comes, the fight must be kept up; and, though the way ahead may be hard and call for increased support of Prince Hall Masons, let us here and now resolve to keep up the fight until every man everywhere in our country, is free. And, when that day comes, we will be able to look back on the sacrifices we have made with compensating satisfaction.

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS

A Conference held in Los Angeles last September, called together many large national organizations. Of particular interest to us here is the fact that the Conference of Grand Masters of Prince Hall Masons was the only Masonic organization of color represented there.

Most of the meetings were held in the facility operated for the care and treatment of persons afflicted with polio. Here, the representatives of the various national organizations were given the opportunity to see, at first hand, the terrible havoc this dread disease plays on the human body.

Also, we were shown just how science, guided and directed by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, is attacking the problem. Already the Salk vaccine is a success. But, the Foundation has not stopped there. It is still spending considerable money in an effort to give to those who have been stricken a new lease on life.

As I went through the facility, I saw little children, --some mere babies -- with twisted bodies and distorted forms; young women in the prime of life, stricken down and made helpless; strong men in iron lungs dying for breath. Then, when I saw what the Foundation is doing for these stricken people, I came away convinced that, although I had made contributions in the past in support of the National Foundation, --that all that I had done was not enough and that certainly every dollar spent, every mile traveled, every speech made, --was definitely justified and merited.

Your Conference presented to Mr. Basil O'Connor, the president of the National Foundation, a very beautiful plaque, evidencing the appreciation Masonry has for the achievements of this organization in the care, treatment, prevent and cure of polio.

Omitting the captions, here follows the letter received from Mr. O'Connor in which he acknowledges receipt of the plaque:

September 24, 1956

Dear Mr. Hall:

It was a pleasure to meet you at our Conference of National Organizations last week. I hope you agree with me that we had a most successful meeting. To be assured that we may count on the foremost organizations across the nation to help us finish the fight against polio is comforting indeed.

The handsome citation which you presented to me, on behalf of the Conference of Grand Masters of Prince Hall Masons, is being placed on the wall of my office. From day to day it will not only give me personal pleasure but for others it will be another proof of the generosity of Prince Hall Masons in their continued support of the battle against polio.

I count on you to extend my deep personal appreciation to the members of your organization for the honor they have bestowed upon me.

Sincerely yours

S/ Basil O'Connor
President

As the heart and soul of Masonry is charity, it is no wonder that Prince Hall Masonry, from the most humble lodge on local level to the Grand Lodge on state level and our National Masonic organizations, is supporting, in ever-increasing amounts, this worthy cause.

May these charities and ministrations never cease until the great crippler has been completely eradicated.

SPURIOUS MASONRY

I am happy to report that Prince Hall Masonry is becoming increasingly alert to spurious masonry. On local level, we find many of our lodges joining in a coordinated program of the Grand Lodge in an effort to wipe out spurious masonry.

On the state level, many of the Grand Lodges are alert, --carrying on a program aimed at eliminating illegal masonry. Since our last meeting, the case we had in the Supreme Court of the State of New Mexico has been affirmed. You will recall that this was a lawsuit filed by our Grand Lodge of that state in which we recovered a judgment enjoining the bogus group from operating in the State of New Mexico. An appeal was taken to the Supreme Court of the state and, not long ago, that Court affirmed the judgment of the lower court in a very sweeping decision. As the petition for re-hearing has been denied, the illegal group is making an effort to consolidate with our Grand Lodge.

You have also been advised of a lawsuit we had in the State of Oklahoma where several bogus groups were enjoined from holding themselves out as Masons. These groups have sought membership in our Grand Lodge.

In Kentucky, a suit for an injunction against a bogus group is pending in the circuit court of Louisville, Kentucky. The trial will be had soon and we confidently expect to win.

In New York, our Grand Lodge, through the office of the Attorney General, is challenging the right of a bogus group to operate in that state. In Pennsylvania, our Grand Lodge is opposing the admission of a spurious group into that state.

The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Kansas should be congratulated for a very fine job it did in this field. Under a statute which it had passed by the Legislature of Kansas, the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of that state prosecuted several bogus masons in the Criminal Courts and, in a jury trial, the defendants were found guilty and punishment meted out to them. This case is on appeal. We believe it will be affirmed. It is a dose of medicine which the bogus groups do not like to take.

The Honorable George W. Crawford, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council Scottish Rites Masonry for the Northern Jurisdiction, requested a representative of the Conference to meet with him in the Cathedral at Philadelphia last Saturday. He felt that the Conference should be represented and your president attended. Plans are being formulated for waging an intensive battle all over the country in an effort to wipe out illegal masonry.

Most of you know that the Imperial Council of the Shrine has set up a Commission to study and eliminate the evil. This Commission, in cooperation with the Grand Masters of the various states, is doing more in an organized way to stamp out illegal masonry than has ever been done before.

While it is true that Prince Hall Grand Lodges are becoming increasingly alert in the attack on spurious masonry, through the medium of litigation, it is to be regretted that for the most part we are woefully lacking in maintaining and using one of the most effective weapons we have in this fight against illegal masonry. I refer, of course, to education.

It is to be regretted that there are still those of us who take the attitude that we should "let them exist and they will die of their own poisonous effect."

Because this erroneous attitude exists, the program of education must be stressed within our own groups. Every Grand Lodge, perhaps through the sponsorship of this Conference, should be interested in keeping every Prince Hall Mason informed as to the legitimacy of our Institution and its great accomplishments and achievements. On the other hand, the illegitimacy of those who oppose us should be pointed out.

Here is an example:

One of the most perplexing questions asked by bogus masons of our members is, "Why don't you use the four letters? We are four letter men; -- you're just three letter men."

Have you every thought of how many of our members do not know the difference between the two?

There appeared recently in The Oregon, a masonic magazine published by the Grand Lodge of Oregon, on the subject, "A. F. & A. M. vs F. & A. M.," in which the reason some Grand Lodges use "A. F. & A. M." and others use "F. & A. M." was explained. Every Prince Hall mason should be informed of such matters.

As this is one of the trick questions most generally asked by illegal masons of our members, it stands to reason that we should be informed.

Why shouldn't this Conference, through its Information Bureau, send out to all of the Grand Lodges and they, in turn (if they think well of the idea) send the material into every Lodge, to be read so that every Prince Hall Mason may know the answer to the question of why we use the term "Free and Accepted Masons."

There are many other subjects on which members should be better informed. Such information will not only arm them against vicious attacks by bogus masons but is calculated to fill them with pride and courage to go out and wage a stronger fight in defense of legal masonry.

UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND

Some of our Grand Lodges have made liberal contributions to the United Negro College fund. Many of our brethren lead in the effort to help the Negro colleges of the South which have furnished much of the leadership of the race. That these colleges cannot exist without assistance is a fact that requires no proof. Many of our brethren received their formal training in these schools. It is but natural that Prince Hall Masonry should feel that it has a real stake in the continued operation of these institutions.

INFORMATION BUREAU

The need for the Information Bureau is conceded. We have already pointed out the role this bureau can play in educating our brethren as to the legitimacy of our group and the illegitimacy of those who oppose us.

The Information Bureau cannot be developed to carry on a worthwhile program unless it receives the wholehearted support of this Conference. It should be so developed and operated that every good deed we do, every achievement we make, every contribution we give for good, will be known, appraised and appreciated.

Let's build and sustain the kind of agency we need to best serve our needs.

OUR YOUTH

It is to be regretted that we have not given to our boys the same serious consideration, guidance and direction as have Masons of other races. We should realize that if our institution of tomorrow is to be the great organization we wish it to be, the ideals and principles of masonry must be sold to the boys of today.

In several of the jurisdictions, serious effort is made to organize the boys as our white brethren have done. In other jurisdictions, nothing is being done. Certainly we are not offering to our boys an organization with the uniformity and stature given the white boy.

As a representative of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma, I would be happy to meet with a group from the various states to plan and to build an organization that will be uniform for the boys of Prince Hall Masonry and will open to them an avenue through which they may be inducted into Freemasonry.

UNITED STATES SAVINGS BONDS

The Treasury Department of the United States has asked permission for its representative to appear before our Conference. Of course, we are

happy to have the representative address us. Prince Hall Masonry, as in the past, advocates a concerted, systematic plan for the purchase of savings bonds by lodges and members. And, as in the past, we pledge again our support of our Government in the sale of savings bonds.

CONCLUSION

Here we have given you a superficial view of a few of the achievements of Prince Hall Masonry. As previously pointed out, more time than the Conference could afford would be needed to give a detailed picture of all its achievements and activities.

It is with pardonable pride, however, that we call your attention to the fact that wherever a fight is being waged for the progress of the race, for national security, for peace and for justice to all peoples of our land, Prince Hall Masonry is there making its contributions. It is our sincere hope that the time is not too far distant when a central agency, established by this Conference, will be able to inform the public of the many contributions made by Prince Hall Masonry to humanity.

I thank you sincerely for the honor and privilege you have given me in allowing me to serve you during the past year.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
AMOS T. HALL

Born - Bastróp, Louisiana, admitted to practice law in all of the Courts of Oklahoma, and the Supreme Court of the United States; Attorney in cases resulting in admission of Negroes to State Colleges and Universities in Oklahoma.

He has appeared in many cases where the Civil Rights of Negroes were protected, and among these were: an action to protect the right to vote; to equalize teacher's salaries; to prevent the enforcement of restrictive covenants; to protect the rights of Negroes charged with crimes where racial prejudice was evident.

He is a member of the National Legal Committee of the N. A. A. C. P.; He is a member of the Committee of Management of the Hutcherson Branch of Y.M. C.A.; Member Board of Trustees of Wiley College.

In 1950 he was designated by the Supreme Council of Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Masons for the Northern Jurisdiction as the "Mason of the Year," and was presented a medal for distinguished service and achievement.

Grand Master of Prince Hall Lodge of Oklahoma.

Please return to me
JRL

948 Iglehart Ave.,
St. Paul 4, Minn.,
January 28, 1957.

SUBJECT: Report of Committee on Meals.

TO : S. L. Ransom, General Chairman, Committee on Arrangements
For Grand Masters' Conference, 790 St. Anthony Ave., St.
Paul, Minn.

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Meals for the Grand Masters' Conference inquired at catering establishments in close proximity to Pilgrim Baptist Church, Meeting place of the Conference, with results as indicated:

Criterion Cafe: The manager stated that he could accomodate no more than seventy (70) diners at one time because of the small size of his private dining room.

Road Buddy's: Mr. Chester Oden Sr. stated that his establishment could accomodate the entire delegation in his main dining room with the following menu if there were a guarantee of seventy-five (75) persons per meal:

Tuesday May 21

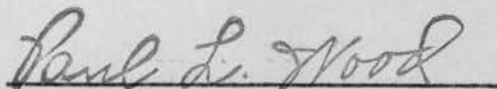
Pot Roast of Choice U. S. Beef
Brown Gravy
Snowflake Potatoes Early June Peas
Assorted Cold Bread or Hot Rolls
Pie or Ice Cream
Coffee Tea or Milk*

Wednesday May 22

Roast Loin of Pork with Dressing
Applesauce
Candied Sweet Potatoes Fresh String Beans
Assorted Cold Bread or Hot Rolls
Coffee Tea or Milk*
Pie or Ice Cream

*Milk Extra

The above priced at \$1.25 per person.


Paul L. Wood
Sub-Committee Chairman