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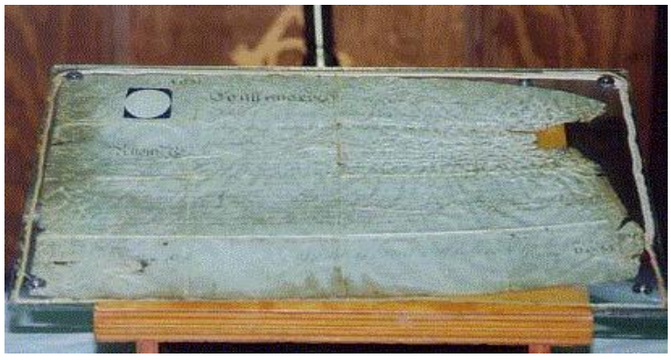
Freemason risks his life to save charter
Part 3: Finale?



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

On March 6, 1775 fifteen brothers stood tall as monuments of our great fraternity, indistinguishable from those grand Pillars Jachin and Boaz, and yet that was just the beginning of what would be the light of the Grand Architect shining through Freemasonry realized.

With Brother Prince Hall's June 1784 letter to the Grand Lodge of England, the work of the fifteen brothers continued. Brothers who were only allowed to open and close lodge and give masonic rites to their fallen brothers who laid down their working tools, a day of glory was soon to rise. Days turned to months and months to years without a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England. After several delays over various reasons, a ship ports into Boston Harbor. The captain of this ship, James Scott from London who worked directly under founding father John Hancock, had precious cargo onboard which would bring to America a long-awaited dream made into a reality.

On April 29, 1787, Captain Scott delivered a "Warrant of Constitution" along with a gift from Grand Secretary William White, a bound copy of the Book of Constitutions that was issued for African Lodge No 459 by the Grand Lodge of England. The warrant was signed and sealed on September 29, 1784 by His Royal Highness Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, Grand Master, R Holt, Deputy Grand Master, and attested by William White, Grand Secretary. Only three months after Brother Prince Hall's application letter for a warrant was received the "Warrant of Constitution" was signed, but it took three years of patience and praying for it to come to full light.

The Brothers of African Lodge No 1, moved quickly to organize under their new warrant and new lodge number. On May 6, 1778 African Lodge No 459 was set to work and Prince Hall was installed as Worshipful Master, Boston Smith as Senior Warden, and Thomas Sanderson as Junior Warden.

The Brothers of African Lodge No 459 did not rest; they set themselves to work as all good masons do that know their duty. The Grand Lodge of England records show that African Lodge No 459 made contributions to its charity fund in 1789, 1792, 1793, and 1797.

In 1792, the Grand Lodge of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was formed, but the only two lodges in Massachusetts that had a charter from the Grand Lodge of England (St Andrews Lodge and African Lodge) took no part in its organization. For years St Andrews Lodge was under great pressure to join the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and finally

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Masonic Apologia

By Pat Cook 33° IGH

Freemasonry is not a "secret" society so much as an "invisible" society. Masons don't talk much about Freemasonry. We mistakenly think we're not supposed to, and also we're uncomfortable doing it. The Greek term "Apologia" means "to speak in defense" of an idea or action. As Masons we need an apologia so we can communicate with the world what we are about.

What do you say when someone asks you about Masonry? First find out as much as you can about the questioner. Consider beginning with questions such as: What do you know about Masonry? What do you think Masonry is? What do you want to know about Masonry? A good answer is targeted so that it effectively addresses the interest of the person asking.

Questioners usually come in three categories. The first just wants a simple answer. The second kind wants a fuller answer, and the third really wants a deep explanation into the fraternity. With some upfront information you can match your reply appropriately. If the apologia doesn't match the interest of the person asking, then it will not satisfy them.

You need to build a list of characteristics of the fraternity. Here are a few of mine:

We are a fraternity.
We believe in democracy.
We collect useful life lessons to preserve and teach.
We believe in God.
We practice charity.
We believe in balance and discipline.
We believe in freedom of religion.
We believe life is a journey of self-improvement.
We teach life lessons through symbols.

While this list can go on and on, an effective Masonic apologia means picking out the characteristics that you are most interested in and being able to talk about them clearly and effectively. Why do we believe in God? Why do we believe in freedom of religion? Why do we value balance and discipline?

Answers take work and careful thought. A stuttering or halting answer is ineffectual. Think and work on your apologia; practice it and polish it. Make a list of the qualities of Masonry that you value most. Pick one at a time and build out an effective way to communicate it to someone who asks you about Masonry. This is also a great way to improve yourself in Masonry.

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relented in 1809. African Lodge No 459 was never invited to join the Grand Lodge.

On June 24, 1791 the African Grand Lodge of North America was formed. An assembly of black masons was convened just off of Water Street in Boston Massachusetts in Mason's Hall in the Golden Fleece. Prince Hall was elected Grand Master and under his leadership in the first year he issued two warrants to new lodges.

Brother Prince Hall would lay down his working tools on December 4, 1807 and received a full Masonic burial ceremony in Boston Massachusetts. He and the original fifteen brothers who stood strong through war and personal trials paved the way for black Americans who were not allowed to join the Craft based on their skin color instead of the content of their heart and character.

The unfinished pyramid on the American dollar bill is not a masonic symbol but a symbol nonetheless to show that the work on our great temple is always incomplete – the first temple meaning ourselves and the other our country. The work should never stop, always striving to better ourselves and to reach ever higher in the pursuit to reach the Great Architect of the Universe till he calls us home.

"Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." – Bro. Oscar Wilde

"Journey Passport" Program
The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: acompass@yahoo.com

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This is how I explain why Masons believe in God. First, Masonry is not a religion. We don't tell any Mason how to express his belief in God and that choice up to him. But we believe that there is something greater than ourselves, something that sends us on a journey of improvement, exploration, and growth. An individual is not God, and not complete. Life is a journey. We call that journey "From Darkness to Light." A belief in God is our spark to go on that journey.

Masons believe in freedom of religion because history has shown that many conflicts are born in religious beliefs that divide men into aggressive camps. Masons thus believe tolerance of other religions is a peaceful way for men to live and work together.

Masonry teaches balance and discipline as a primary virtue, and that being an asset to society is a noble endeavor. An unbalanced lifestyle, exemplified for example by a workaholic, a freeloader, or a hedonist, does not make one a good contributor to the needs of society.

Masonry communicates lessons through symbols. The great virtues of life must be discovered and appreciated, so lessons are best learned by exploration. Masons delight in the discovery of these lessons. Symbols such as a ruler, hammer, compasses, or square all have important life lessons that the individual Mason learns to appreciate through thought and contemplation. Masonry doesn't hand out answers, it offers paths for exploration.

What is your apologia? Our duty is not just to live by Masonic values but to share them effectively. We must be visible, and ready to express what we've learned.

Good journeys my Brothers.

Farewell to the Brethren of St James Lodge, Tarbolton by Robert Burns (1786)

Adieu! a heart-warm fond adieu; dear brothers of the mystic tie!
Ye favoured, enlighten'd few, companions of my social joy;
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie, pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba';
With melting heart, and brimful eye, I'll mind you still, tho' far awa.

Oft have I met your social band, and spent the cheerful, festive night;
Oft, honour'd with supreme command, presided o'er the sons of light:
And by that hieroglyphic bright, which none but Craftsmen ever saw
Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write those happy scenes, when far awa.

May Freedom, Harmony, and Love, unite you in the grand Design,
Beneath th' Omniscient Eye above, uhe glorious Architect Divine,
That you may keep th' unerring line, still rising by the plummet's law,
Till Order bright completely shine, shall be my pray'r when far awa.

And you, farewell! whose merits claim justly that highest badge to wear:
Heav'n bless your honour'd noble name, to Masonry and Scotia dear!
A last request permit me here, - when yearly ye assemble a',
One round, I ask it with a tear, to him, the Bard that's far awa.

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