—Father of Black Masonry, champion of freedom

Continued from Page 2

He also became a Methodist minister and a talented organizer and advocate of Negro Freedom. Within ten years of his arrival in Boston, the young man from Barbados was one of the leading lights of the Negro's First Freedom Movement.

As one of America's first abolitionists, Hall made a big contribution to the movement that led to the erosion of slavery in the North. As organizer and leader of the first Negro organization outside the Negro church, Hall made an important contribution to the development of Negro morale and solidarity.

The years from 1787 to 1830 were crucial in the development of Negro personality. During this span, Prince Hall, Richard Allen, James Varick, George Liele, James Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish made the first important step in the invention of the American Negro as a group.

Hall excelled in the areas of organization and technique. During the first wave of Negro agitation, he learned the value of an organizational base. And he was soon preaching the virtues of solidarity and collective action to the scattered and largely demoralized Negro population of Boston. Though free, Hall made a point of signing slave petitions, an act that dramatized the unity of fate of free Negroes and slaves.

His major contribution, however, was the organization of the first Negro Masonic Lodge. He attempted first to enter a lodge of the white American Masons. Rebuffed, he applied to a lodge attached to a British regiment stationed near Boston. On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and fourteen other Negroes were initiated into Masonry in the British Army Lodge.

When the British regiment withdrew, the Negro Masons formed, under a limited permit, African Lodge No. 1, one of the first Negro organizations in America. After the War, Hall was granted a charter from the Grand Lodge of England.

On May 6, 1787, African Lodge No. 459 was formally organized in Boston with Hall as Master. This event, coming less than a month after the founding of the Free African Society of Philadelphia, was an epochal leap forward in Negro consciousness.

In 1797, Hall helped organize African Lodges in Philadelphia and Providence, Rhode Island, thereby becoming a pioneer in the development of a Negro interstate organization.

Throughout this period, Hall protested bigotry and discrimination. Like most American Negroes, he fought on two fronts in the Revolutionary War. As an American patriot and a soldier in George Washington's Army, Hall opposed British tyranny.

As a Negro, he opposed American bigots with their own weapons: the lofty words of the Declaration of Independence. With many other Negroes, Hall saw service on Bunker Hill.

When George Washington arrived to take command of the Army of Cambridge, he found scores of Negroes in the ranks. Although these veterans had fought with distinction at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill, Washington immediately barred them from the Continental Army.

The free Negroes of New England refused to accept this blow without protest. Hall, according to tradition, led a delegation of free Negroes who took their complaints to Washington's headquarters. Washington was impressed by the delegation's plea.

Hall and his group were too diplomatic and clever to show all their cards, but they managed somehow to convey a subtle threat.

The colonists, at that moment, were pressed on all sides. They lacked manpower and weapons. To make matters worse, an uncomfortably large number of Americans were siding with Great Britain. In this volatile situation, America could ill afford additional enemies. Lord Dunmore made this abundantly clear when he issued a proclamation welcoming slaves and free Negroes to the British Army. Thousands of slaves, including some who belonged to Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, abandoned the plantations to fight for their own freedom.

Apprised of these developments, George Washington overruled himself and countenanced the enlistment of free Negroes who had served in the Army at Cambridge. In a letter to the President of Congress, Washington explained his decision.

Said he: "It has been presented to me, that the free Negroes, who have served in this army, are very much dissatisfied at being discarded. As it is to be apprehended, that they may seek employ in the ministerial (British) army, I have presumed to depart from the resolution respecting them, and have given license for their being enlisted . . . ."

After the disastrous winter of Valley Forge, Washington scrapped all resolutions and accepted free Negroes and slaves.

Prince Hall and other Negro leaders continued to trouble the soul of America during the war years. In pamphlets and in briefs, they stressed the close connection between American Freedom and Negro Freedom.

Hall was the moving force behind a "slave petition" that openly questioned the sincerity and the good sense of American patriots. The petition, which was filed on January 13, 1777, with the General Court of Massachusetts is reproduced in part below:

The petition of a great number of Negroes, who are detained in a state of slavery in the very bowels of a free and Christian country, humbly showing, —

That your petitioners apprehend that, they have, in common with all other men, a natural and inalienable right to that freedom, which the great Parent of the universe hath bestowed equally on all mankind, and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever.

But they were unjustly dragged by the cruel hand of power from their dearest friends, and some of them even born from the embraces of their tender parents — from a populous, pleasant and plentiful country, and in violation of the laws of nature and of nations, and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity, brought hither to be sold like beasts of burthen;

And like them, condemned to slavery for life — among a people possessing the mild religion of Jesus — a people not insensible of the sweets of national freedom, nor without a spirit to resent the unjust endeavors of others to reduce them to a state of bondage and subjection . . . .

(The Petitioners) cannot but express astonishment that it has never been considered, that every principle from which America has acted, in the course of her unhappy difficulties with Great Britain, bears stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of your humble petitioners. They, therefore, humbly beseech Your Honors to give their petition its due weight and consideration, and cause an act of the legislature to be passed, whereby they may be restored to the enjoyment of that freedom, which is the natural right of all men, and their children (who were born in this land of liberty) may not be held as slaves after they arrive at the age of twenty-one years. So may the inhabitants of this State (no longer chargeable with the inconsistency of acting themselves the part which they condemn and oppose in others) be prospered in their glorious struggles for liberty, and have those blessings secured to them by Heaven, of which benevolent minds cannot wish to deprive their fellowmen.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, shall ever pray;

LANCASTER HILL,
PETER BESS,
BRISTEN SLENFEN,
PRINCE HALL,
JACK PIERPONT,
(his X mark.)
NERO FUNELO,
(his X mark).
NEWPORT SUMNER,
(his X mark).

Also active during this period were Hall's contemporaries, Phillis Wheatley and Paul Cuffe. Wheatley, the second American woman to publish a book, did not voice open protests; but she struck hard blows for the cause with her poems.

Cuffe, a wealthy captain who sailed his own ships to Europe and Africa, was outspoken and inventive. Barred from the ballot box in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, he refused to pay his taxes and filed a defiant petition of protest.

O.E.S. Chapters CALL FOR FREEDOM NOW!

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First Maryland lodge warranted in 1825

The first lodge of black Masons constituted in Maryland was warranted Feb. 2, 1825 by the First Independent African Grand Lodge of North America No. 1, of the state of Pennsylvania, Peter Richmond, grand master; Richard Parker, deputy grand master; Thomas Dupee, grand senior warden; Prim Clover, grand junior warden (chartered by the Grand Lodge of England, 1815 his Serene Highness Henry Frederick Duke of Cumberland, Grand Master) under the title of Friendship Lodge No. 6 of Baltimore, Maryland.

St. James Lodge and Enterprise Lodge were later warranted by the same authority.

In 1845 these three subordinate lodges created the first black Grand Lodge of the State of Maryland.

In 1847 another Grand Lodge was organized by and under authority of the Maryland Grand Lodge.

These two Grand Lodges remained in the field until 1876, when being convinced that the object which each Grand body sought to accomplish would be better served by a union of the two.

Accordingly, efforts to consolidate were made by the leading members of the two organizations with well merited success.

Articles of agreement, forming a basis of union, were duly signed by commissioners. A general assembly of Masons under the two Grand Lodges took place at Douglas Institute on September 12, 1876.

The Rev. James A. Handy, grand master of the first Colored Grand Lodge and Nathaniel Burgess, grand master of the Union Grand Lodge, were present.

The report of the commissioners was ratified and the First Union Colored Grand Lodge of the State of Maryland was then organized as a result of the union.

In 1878 this name was changed to THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND.

The Grand Lodge moved from the corner of Saratoga and Davis Sts. to 253 and 255 Courtland St. Then in 1917 the Grand Lodge moved to McCulloh and Mosher Sts.

When the Articles of Incorporation were amended in 1947 the Grand Lodge became, The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Maryland and its Jurisdiction, Inc.

The records of the two Grand Lodges from 1866 to 1876 have been lost or destroyed and only the records dating from Grand Master Handy to Grand Master Samuel T. Daniels are available.

From left, the late Grand Master Emeritus Dr. Willard W. Allen, Councilwoman Victorine Q. Adams and Deputy Grand Master James T. Dorsey.

—IN MEMORY OF DR. ALLEN—

Willard W. Allen, dean of all Masons

Dr. Willard W. Allen, who for 37 years served as Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the State of Maryland, was the unquestioned "dean" of grand masters in the United States.

A native of Buckingham County, Va., he was married to the late Mrs. Thekla Henson Allen. Two daughters were born to this union; Miss M. Rosalind Allen and Mrs. Elizabeth Allen Nalle. Miss Allen is now a vice principal in the Baltimore public school system while Mrs. Nalle teaches in this city.

Dr. Allen was married to Mrs. Gladys Rawlings Allen.

He received his early education in Virginia. Later he took correspondence courses at LaSalle Institute in Chicago.

He was the holder of honorary Doctor of Law degrees from Allen University, Columbia, S.C., and Wilberforce University, Xenia, Ohio. His Wilberforce degree was presented in the same class with the late John W. Bricker, former governor and United States Senator from Ohio.

His success as a business man began in 1913 when he began work in the insurance field with the Mutual Benefit society.

In 1925, he accepted the position as president of the Southern Life Insurance Company, a position he held until May, 1969 when he retired. Never a person to stand idle, upon retirement he conducted his real estate business from his new office at 1810 Pennsylvania Ave., where he was a neighbor of the Baltimore National Bank's northwest branch.

A nationally known fraternal figure, Dr. Allen from 1928 until 1965, headed the United Supreme Council of Scottist Rite Freemasonry, of the Southern Jurisdiction, consisting of 22 states south of the Mason-Dixon line, as Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander.

He was also a member of the Pythian order.

His civic interests were widespread. From 1927 to 1930 he served as a member of the Zoning Commission making a study for the permanent Zoning Board by appointment of the late Mayor William F. Broening.

He was a member of the Baltimore Grand Jury which conceived the idea of creating a home for feeble-minded children, and aided in getting legislation to this effect in 1924.

He served by appointment of Mayor Broening on the Cheltenham Board (now known as Boy's Village) and in 1939 was named by the late Gov. Herbert R. O'Conor as a member of the commission to revise the Magistrate Fee System of Maryland.

Dr. Allen in 1943 served as a member of the commission named to study housing problems of blacks in Baltimore.

The year before he had been appointed associate state administrator of the Maryland War Savings Staff. He served as promotion specialist of the War Finance Division of the Interracial Section, U.S. Treasury Department as a dollar-a-year man in Washington.

A member of the Morgan State College trustee board for 20 years, and also a trustee of Virginia Union University, he assisted Dr. J. M. Ellison, then Union's president in the organization of the United Negro College Fund Campaign in Maryland.

— Willard W. Allen —

He was awarded a Certificate of Merit in 1952 by Kappa Chapter of Iota Phi Lambda Sorority and in 1955 was placed on the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN Honor Roll.

For more than 40 years he was a faithful member of Enon Baptist Church where he served on the board of trustees.

Widely traveled, he was awarded the Knight Commander citation in Monrovia by then President William V S. Tubman of Liberia.

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