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-Black Masonry

Hall also took the lead in antislavery agitation. When three Negroes were kidnapped and sold into slavery in the West Indies, Hall sprang into action. Under his leadership, the Negroes of Boston filed a mass petition with the Massachusetts Legislature. The petition condemned slavery and the slave trade. Spurred on by the petition, Governor John Hancock filed an official protest. The three men were located and returned to Boston where a huge celebration was held. This incident and the protest of Negroes and whites led to the passage of a state law against the slave trade.

Despite isolated gains, this was a difficult period for the American Negro. In the first flush of victory, there was a rash of manumissions. Other Negroes received freedom as a result of war service, court suits or legislative action. By 1790 slavery was a dying institution in the North.

Not all men rejoiced.

To poor whites, the recently-emancipated slaves were an economic threat. To aristocrats and businessmen, free Negroes were social dynamite, an anomalous group in a social system designed for two: Negro slaves and free white men. With one eye on the Haitian Revolution, which began in 1791, and another on the sharp upswing in the free Negro population in towns and cities, men of power began enacting discriminatory legislation. The freedom of Negroes was severely restricted. They could not walk on the streets of Boston after 9 p.m. without a pass; they could not go outside the bounds of their community without a pass. They could not even own certain types of property. Worse, they were barred from the best jobs.

In Boston, in the turbulent years after the Revolution, free Negroes were insulted, threatened and beaten by mobs of poor whites. On public occasions, they were barred from Boston Commons.

Prince Hall watched the darkening clouds with deepening despair. The old patriot was horrified by the desecration of the symbols of the Revolution. On July 4, public-spirited crowds celebrated the birth of the Republic by whipping Negroes and driving them from the streets of Boston.

Particularly shocking was an incident involving one Colonel Middleton, a hard-swearing, hard-fighting Negro who had commanded a Negro company in the Revolutionary War. Prince Hall was doubtlessly aware of the Boston riot described by Lydia Maria Childs, who witnessed it as a child. "About three o'clock in the afternoon," she wrote, "a shout of a beginning fray reached us. Soon, terrified children and women ran down Belknap Street, pursued by white boys, who enjoyed their fright. The sounds of battle approached; clubs and brickbats were flying in all directions. At this crisis, Col. Middleton opened his door, armed with a loaded musket, and, in a loud voice, shrieked death to the first white men who should approach. Hundreds of human beings, white and black, were pouring down the streets, the blacks making but a feeble resistance, the odds in numbers and spirit

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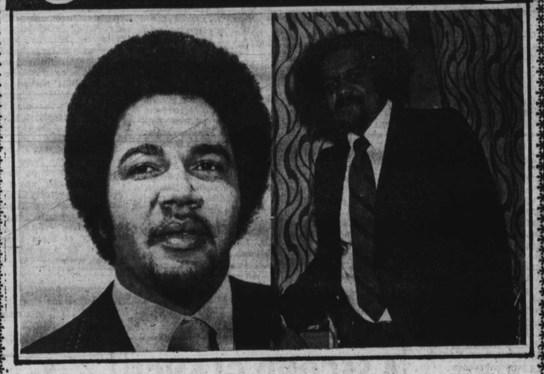
Always for... FREEDOM



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St. James was organized in 1824

St. James Church was organized as an independent parish in the year 1824. The first service was held June 22nd of that year. The Reverend Mr. Levington founded St. James and was the first Negro priest to serve as a missionary of the church in the South.

From its inception, St. James became a guiding force in the life of both the free and bonded Negro in Baltimore. Long before the Civil War, a day school was inaugurated here for people of color.

The St. James Benevolent Society, designed to beneift the whole community, was established in the early 1840's. This group proved to be the point of union for colored men of every denomination in the city who had at heart the well being of the race and the preservation of the highest and best ideals.

Through the years many sons of St. James Church have gone into the priesthood to help further God's work throughout our country.

From its humble beginnings the church has moved to various parts of our city. The first church to be built in the early 1830's cost $2300.00.

In 1901, a new church was built at Park Avenue and Preston Street. At 6 o'clock Easter morning in 1932 the first service was held at our present edifice at Lafayette Square. In 1944, St. James Parish purchased the land on which the present church property is located for $25,500.00.

The Reverend George F. Bragg Jr. guided the destiny of St. James from 1891 to his death, March 12, 1940.

The Rev. Cedric E. Mills, now retired Bishop of the Virgin Islands, assumed his duties October 1, 1940. Under his direction, St. James Parish became one of the outstanding churches in the diocese of Maryland. The vision of an apartment building for the elderly had its beginnings with Bishop Mills.

Our present rector, the Rev. Donald O. Wilson, was called to St. James in 1963.

Under his able leadership, the St. James Terrace Apartments were erected and the present church site now includes the entire east side of the 800 block of Arlington Avenue facing the picturesque Lafayette Square.

Under our present rector the church plant had been remodeled and visions of a new educational building are on the horizon. Preliminary planning had already begun on this new facility. St. James continues to move forward ever broadening its program and continuing its service to God, His People, and His Community.

DEDICATED TO SERVICE

1824-1969

During the 145 years of its existence the priests and congregation of St. James Parish have dedicated themselves to the service of the community. In keeping with God's command that we establish his kingdom here on earth by giving services to those in need, a number of groups and organizations have been sponsored or assisted by our parish.

CHURCH ORIENTED GROUPS

1826 — ST. JAMES DAY SCHOOL — Established by William Levington, the first priest, for the education of colored citizens in the community.

1840 — ST. JAMES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY — Designed to benefit the whole community, a plan of union for the colored men of all denominations, had at heart the well-being of the race and the preservation of the highest and best ideals.

1891 — THE MARYLAND HOME FOR FRIENDLESS COLORED CHILDREN — Also known as the George F. Bragg Home, was founded by the Rev. George Freeman Bragg Jr., D.D., and a group of Negroes who were interested in the welfare of underprivileged Negro Youth.

It was incorporated under the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1920. The institute, which had been located in the city of Baltimore was moved to its present location, a thirty-two acre tract in Baltimore County. The home is now a part of the Baltimore City Department of Education.

1955 — LAFAYETTE SQUARE COMMUNITY Center — Established under the leadership of the community and now a part of the United Appeal Agency.

1968 — THE ST. JAMES TERRACE APARTMENTS — Erected under the guidance of Father Wilson. Apartments for the elderly overlooking historic Lafayette Square.

CHURCH-COMMUNITY ASSOCIATED GROUPS

Over the years, St. James has afforded housing to many community grups:

The USO during the World War II

The Negro Little Theatre, now the ARENA PLAYERS

The Sheldon B. Hoskins Dance Groups

Physical Education facilities for Car H.S. and School No. 111 Facilities for interfaith Basketball Leagues

Headquarters of Operation Champ

Harlem Park Urban Renewal

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LANVALE AND BENTALOU STREETS
Revs. Spencer G. Dobson, Pastor
Harold L. Dobson, Co-Pastor

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Rev. William L. Jeffries, Assistant Pastors
Rev. Andrew Wynn
Mr. Joseph Anderson, Chairman of the Deacon Board
Mr. Alonzo Cain, Assistant Chairmen, Deacon Board
Mr. Ernest Halkes
Mr. Thomas Allmond, Chairman, Trustee Board
Mrs. Thelma Whitmore, Church Clerk

At this joyous Holiday Season, we congratulate you for your noteworthy effort. As we wish you success, we also say
"May love and good fortune be yours every hour,
And a spirit of faith that will sing,
To lift up your soul redeemed and made whole,
Like the music of bubbling springs."
—Hoover
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