

BECAUSE YOU NEED TO KNOW... SAN ANTONIO LODGE #1

Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Free & Accepted Masons of Texas (Prince Hall Affiliated) from 1871 - 1969

Written by Burrell Parmer

Freemasonry is the leading fraternal organization in the world. Its origins are lost in the unrecorded history of medieval times, but it formally organized in London, England, in 1717.

As a fraternal organization, Freemasonry unites men of good character who, though of different religious, ethnic or social backgrounds, share a belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of mankind. It exists to take good men and help them to become better men.

The fraternity embodies an attractive system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. Founded upon Christian principles established in the Holy Bible, Freemasonry strives to teach a man the duty he owes to God, his neighbor and to himself, but interferes neither with religion or politics as it prescribes the practice of virtues in the conduct of its business. The foundation is character. Its purpose is service. Its measure is giving. It cultivates the exercise of charity in its best and broadest sense, to assist the Widows and Orphans of its deceased members, to stimulate friendship, harmony and brotherly love, and generally, to promote in its own way, the happiness of mankind.



**Prince
Hall**
1735 – 1807

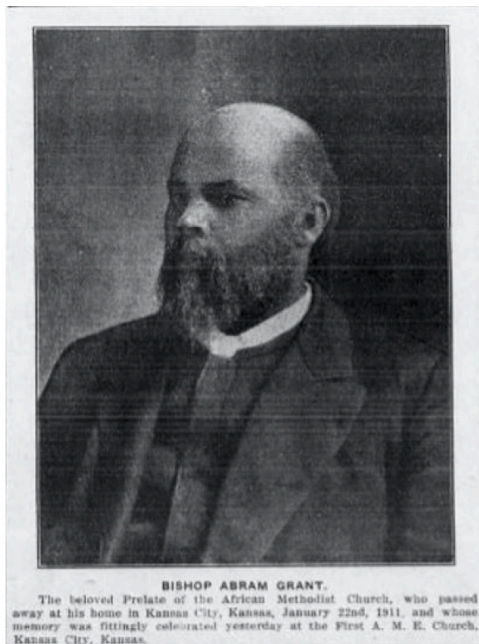
Freemasonry among Blacks began in 1775 when Prince Hall, a community leader in Boston, Mass., and 14 other men of color became Freemasons in Lodge No. 441 of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. After receiving a Charter to operate as African Lodge No. 459 from the Grand Lodge of England in 1784, Prince Hall Lodges were established in Providence, R.I., and Philadelphia, Penn., and eventually spread throughout the country.

In 1871, the first Masonic Lodge of Black men, San Antonio Lodge No. 22, was established in San Antonio under the jurisdiction of the King Solomon Grand Lodge of Kansas (National Grand Lodge). In 1875, the five Prince Hall Lodges in Texas met in Brenham, Texas and formed The Most Worship Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas in which San Antonio Lodge No. 22 was re-chartered as San Antonio Lodge No 1 on May 10, 1876. The lodge's first principle officers were Brothers George Jackson (Master of the Lodge), Richard Wallace (Senior Warden), and Nelson Williams (Junior Warden).

SAN ANTONIO LODGE #1...

CONTINUED

One of the lodge's most prominent members was Bro. Rev. Abraham L. Grant who served as the 4th Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons of Texas from 1881 - 1885. Bro. Grant, an African Methodist Episcopal minister, was the pastor of St. James AME Church in 1878. In less than two years, the church became the largest, most spiritual, most active and most harmonious church in the state. Rev. Grant became a mighty force in San Antonio, relied upon by the mayor to provide advice relating to interests of the Black race. His popularity among blacks and whites rose steadily and continued the unbroken line of leaders that sprang out of the A.M.E. Church. Rev. Grant's elevation to bishop came May 24, 1888 at the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church in Indianapolis. He died Jan. 22, 1911 in Kansas City, Kan., and was buried in the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery in San Antonio on Jan. 29, 1911.



Charles Andrews Sr.

San Antonio Lodge No. 1 quickly gained a reputation as a very prestigious lodge with many of its members being doctors, lawyers, ministers, and other professionals.

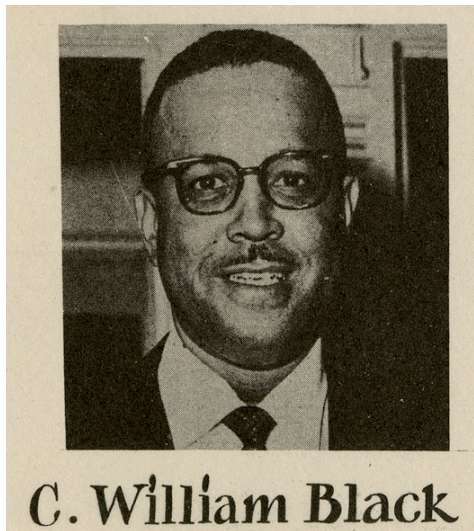
Charles Andrews, Sr., a famed physician and 1931 Howard Medical School graduate, worked tirelessly to provide medical care to those who entrusted their medical needs to his expertise. In those days, the doctor became a part of the family. Bro. Andrews provided medical care for all who came to his office or whose home he visited without regards to their race or ability to pay. He maintained the Well Baby Clinic at the old YWCA (now the Delta House) until Santa Rosa Hospital began allowing Black children into their facility.

SAN ANTONIO LODGE #1...

CONTINUED

He served as president of the Lone Star Medical Association, the state affiliate of the National Medical Association. He wrote a weekly article for the San Antonio Register entitled, "Your Baby and Mine." Additionally, the San Antonio Housing Authority dedicated the Dr. Charles C. Andrews Apartments in his honor. Bro. Andrews died at the age of 100 on Sept. 19, 2004 and is buried at Sunset Memorial Park.

Mt. Zion First Baptist Church Pastor and Civil Rights Activist Bro. Rev. Claude W. Black, Jr., was a member of the Lodge. He served on the City Council in the 1970s and was the city's first black mayor pro-tem. He was amongst religious leaders who fought against segregation and helped integrate San Antonio's parks, swimming pools, movie theaters, and department store lunch counters. Bro. Black also became an associate of Martin Luther King, A. Phillip Randolph, Thurgood Marshall and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. He was appointed a delegate to the 1995 White House Conference on Aging by President William Clinton. During the Johnson administration, he was a delegate to the White House Conference on Civil Rights. In 1993, the Eastside Multi-purpose Center located at 2805 East Commerce Street was renamed the Claude W. Black Community Center. Bro. Black died on March 13, 2009 and is buried at Meadowlawn Memorial Park.



In the 1960s, Bro. Norris L. McVea, Sr., had aspirations of becoming a Freemason; following in the steps of his father. A prominent cement contractor over 50 years, he was employed by H. B. Zachry Construction before forming his own successful business. A beloved and devoted member of New Light Baptist Church, Bro. McVea served as a commissioner for housing and vice-president and president of the San Antonio Development Agency. Bro. McVea served as the longest tenured Master of the Lodge totaling 13 years. A 33rd Degree Mason, he served as a Special District Deputy Grand Master for the 19th Masonic District and was an Honorary Past Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge. As a member of Moussa Temple No. 106 (Prince Hall Shriners), Bro. McVea served as the Illustrious Potentate and was an Honorary Past Imperial Potentate. Bro. McVea died on Oct. 26, 2018 and is buried at Sunset Memorial Park.

SAN ANTONIO LODGE #1...

CONTINUED

In 1965, Bro. William Woods, a retired Air Force food superintendent, became a member of San Antonio Lodge No. 1 during the administration of Grand Master Dr. Isadore H. Clayborn. Bro. Woods would later reach the second highest office in The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas, as the Deputy Grand Master. Additionally, a Past Potentate of Moussa Temple No. 106, Bro. Woods later became the Imperial Deputy of the Desert of Texas, a direct appointee of the Imperial Potentate, Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine of North & South America, Inc. He is currently an Honorary Past Grand Master in The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas.



In 1969, the Lodge purchased one acre of land located at 1307 Wheatley Avenue and erected a building which included a meeting hall, laundromat, grocery store, and a snack bar. Previously, the Lodge met at 605 W. Travis Street.

Additionally, the Lodge, along with other Masonic Lodges in the area, hosted Christmas parties at Sutton Homes and Wheatley Courts. And performed Cornerstone Laying Ceremonies for numerous churches in the city to include St. James AME and St. Paul United Methodist Church.

SAN ANTONIO LODGE #1...

CONTINUED

One of the most solemn ceremonies within Freemasonry, the Masonic funeral or Last Rites Ceremony have been performed by members for deceased Brothers. The ceremony is performed by a deceased Master Mason's lodge, so that he can be honored by those who have known him and his works. It is one of the few ceremonies performed in public by Freemasons. The Masonic funeral is carried out at the request of the deceased Master Mason's family.