

Davis, Roy collection of African American masonic programs

Roy Davis collection of African American masonic programs

1960-1981

Title Statement

Davis, Roy collection of African American masonic programsGuide to the Roy Davis collection of African American masonic programs MSS 16493

Author: Initial record created by Rose Oliveira.

Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

P.O. Box 400110

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110

URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

4 May 2021

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:39:37 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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MSS 16493

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1960-1981

1 (box)

English

Prince Hall Conference of Grand Masters, Inc.

Davis, Roy

.5 Cubic Feet 1 legal document box programs

Fair

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Conditions Governing Access

Biographical / Historical

On March 6, 1775, Prince Hall and 14 freed men of color (Cyrus Forbes; Bristol Stenzer; Thomas Sanderson; Prince Taylor; Cato Gardner; Boston Smith; Peter Best; Fortune Howard; Prince Reed; John Carter; Peter Freeman; Benjamin Tyler; Cuff Buffum; and Richard Tilledge) were denied membership into the White Freemasons of Massachusetts (located in Boston) and they petitioned to the Grand Lodge of England for their own charter, which they received on September 29, 1784. It marked the first time that African American men were made freemasons in America. This occurred during a time when African Americans needed a means by which to advance the cause of equality. Boston was a major port for selling enslaved persons in the North. The Colonies enacted Black Codes, curtailing the movements of Black people, both free and enslaved. Prince Hall looked to the Fraternal Order of Free and Accepted Masons because the chief purpose of Freemasonry is benevolence and charity to all mankind. In 1791, Worshipful Master Prince Hall was appointed a Provincial Grand Master of the first Black Provincial Grand Lodge.

In December 1808, one year after the death of Prince Hall, African Lodge #459 (Boston), African Lodge #459 (Philadelphia) and Hiram Lodge #3 (Providence) merged into African Grand Lodge #1. In 1847, out of respect for their founding father and first Grand Master, Prince Hall, they changed their name to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, the name it carries today. In 1848 Union Lodge #2, Rising Sons of St. John #3 and Celestial Lodge #4 became the first lodges organized under the name Prince Hall Grand Lodge.

Prince Hall Freemasons have split into two organizations. The original Prince Hall Freemasons follow a National Grand Lodge order and the majority of Prince Hall Freemasons left in 1863 to become the Prince Hall Affiliates who follow a state jurisdiction. There is also controversy about the segregation of Freemasonry. Some Prince Hall Freemasons believe segregation offers unity and advancement for African American Freemasons while others want one integrated freemasonry. Today, the Prince Hall Masonic Order (Affiliates) spans across all 50 states in the U.S. as well as Lodges in Canada, the West Indies, the Bahamas, Europe, and Asia. There are over 250,000 Prince Hall Masons worldwide, working in more than 5,000 Lodges that can trace their roots to Prince Hall Lodge #459.

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Content Description

This collection contains thirty-two programs of Masonic related events. Twenty-seven are souvenir programs from African American Masonic meetings and events belonging to Roy Davis, a resident of Norwalk, Connecticut who was active in the Prince Hall Grand Chapter of New England. In addition to these are five programs for miscellaneous African American society events in the Northeast. Most of the programs were for events taking place in Connecticut between the late 1960s and early 1980s. There are also programs for the Order of the Eastern Star and the "National Council of Negro Women" that are for women who want to join the masons.

Under the external documents, a spreadsheet is available with an inventory of the masonic programs.

Keywords

African American fraternal organizations
African American freemasons -- Connecticut
African American Freemasons
Davis, Roy