

# A.E.A.O.N.M.S.

High Priest and Prophet; John W. Sniethers of West Chester, Pennsylvania, Imperial Treasurer; Magnus Robinson of Alexandria, Imperial Recorder; E.A. Turpin of Camden, New Jersey, Imperial Assistant Recorder; J.H. Jones of Alexandria, Imperial Oriental Guide; W.H. Breckett of West Chester, Pennsylvania, Imperial Chief of Patrols; W.H. Jones of Pittsburgh, Imperial First Ceremonial Master; J.E. Loveland of Camden, Imperial Second Ceremonial Master; James Spriggs of Philadelphia, Imperial Outer Guard; W.A. White, Imperial First Steward; John Stokes of Camden, Imperial Second Steward; and A.F. Carroll of Pittsburgh, Imperial Captain of the Guard.

The Imperial Grand Council directed the officers to incorporate the organization under the laws and regulations governing corporations of Washington, D.C. The necessary papers were prepared and signed by the new officers on May 22, 1901. The papers were duly recorded at 2:30 p.m. on November 13, 1901.

The first annual session of the newly organized Imperial Council was held in Newark, New Jersey on September 25, 1901. All subsequent annual sessions are counted from that point. It was here that a constitution was formally adopted designating the Imperial Council as a charitable, benevolent, fraternal and social organization, dedicated to the welfare and extension of Prince Hall Freemasonry. The constitution also decreed that membership in the fraternal order be confined to regular freemasons who were members of lodges descended from African Lodge #459, known as Prince Hall Masons.

## A Legal Battle Won

**P**rior to 1914, both Black and White Masons and Shriners had established local Masonic Lodges and Shrine Temples in several cities and towns, especially in Texas. In some instances in the same cities, namely Dallas, El Paso and Houston.

In 1914, White Masons in Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas attempted to outlaw the practice of Prince Hall Masonry and Prince Hall Shriners from operating as a legitimate fraternal body in the United States. The White group entered a law suit against the Black orders, charging that they had no legitimate right to display Masonic and Shrine emblems in private or public or call themselves Prince Hall Masons, Shriners, or otherwise.

The White Masons petitioned a state court in Houston, Texas to enjoin all

Black Masons and Shriners from using any imitation of the name, constitution, title, emblem and regalia of White Lodges and Temples. They sought to stop Prince Hall Masons and Shriners from operating as a legitimate fraternal body not only in the five states that brought the suit, but also from operating in any states within the United States of America.

When a district court in Texas ruled overwhelmingly in favor of the White Masons, the Black Masons and Shriners carried the case all the way to the United States Supreme Court. The highest court ruled that due to the silence and apparent willingness of White Masons all over the country in years gone by, Blacks had prospered and flourished as a Masonic group and had through hard work and a will to succeed, sometimes with outstanding assistance and cooperation from White Masonic groups, amassed some 76 local Lodges and Temples, placed more than 9,000 members on Masonic rolls, and acquired real and personal property totaling more than one half million dollars, as of Prince Hall Masonic year 1928.

During the hearing of the case, a lifetime member of the White Masons revealed that much of the paraphernalia, regalia, emblems and insignias used by Black Masons were purchased from or through White Masons and that, in at least one instance, a White Lodge or Temple had sold all of their old regalia and insignias to a group of Blacks for their personal use when the White group moved to bigger and more spacious quarters.

With these facts in evidence, the Supreme Court contended that the objections of Whites to Blacks operating as Masons and Shriners came too late after too long a delay, and that they [the Whites] had no legal right to claim that Blacks were not legitimate Masons.

On June 3, 1929, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the decision of the lower court and reversed the decree against Prince Hall Masons and Shriners. The decision guaranteed them all the rights as a body to appear in public and in private and to practice the time-honored traditions of Masonic work.

By winning this lawsuit, the Prince Hall Family of Freemasons proved beyond doubt that they were a legitimate body of Freemasons, that they had obtained proper authority to work and act, and that they had authority in every branch of Prince Hall Freemasonry and in all affiliated, appendant, adoptive and concordant bodies.

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Ahmes Temple # 132 Strollers at Drill Competition-Exhibition.



Imperial Potentate Gray and other illustrious Shriners and Daughters of Isis as they donate \$25,000 to UNCF.



Shriners and Daughters on a visit to the Crippled Children's Hospital.



Shriners and "the little ones"—the "seeds for tomorrow".



Mecca Temple # 10—Championship Drill Team, 1987



Platta Shriners Temple, as they give donation to Children's Hospital.