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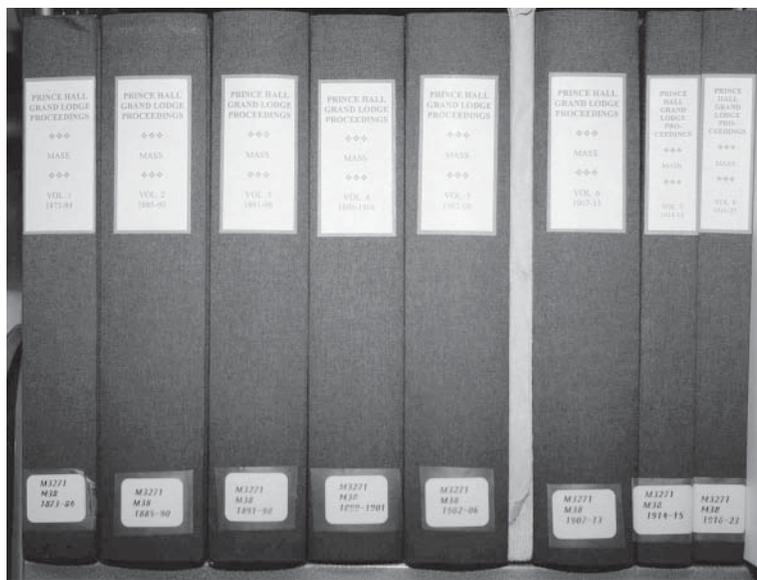
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# Iowa Masonic Library: A Research Mecca

By Alton G. Roundtree

The Iowa Masonic Library played a major role in writing *“Out of the Shadows: The Emergence of Prince Hall Freemasonry in America (Over 225 Years of Endurance)”*. Seemingly, all needed materials (proceedings, books, periodicals, and collections) are in the Iowa Masonic Library. The Library collection of proceedings pertaining to Negro or Colored Grand Lodges (today’s PH Grand Lodges) and information concerning allied and appendant bodies were imperative in the research effort. I could not have written Chapter Four (National Grand Lodge) without visiting the Iowa Masonic Library. A trip has been made to the Library since the book was written and more information has been accumulated.

Five trips were made to the Iowa Masonic Library over a period of three years. Two of the trips were for one week. There is so much information in one location that it is difficult to stay focused. This writer learned early that it was best to develop a specific agenda for a visit to the Library and stick to the agenda. There was not enough time in the work day. It is easy to lose track of time. Bill Krueger or Tim Anderson would tap on the desk or flick the lights to let me know that it was time to call it a day.



*Bound proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts go back to 1873. The proceedings of Prince Hall grand lodges are well preserved in the library’s stacks.*

**There is so much information in one location that it is difficult to stay focused.**

Many hours and days were devoted to reading Negro or Colored Grand Lodge Proceedings from 1847 to 1920. Much information was found that refutes what has been written concerning the National Grand Lodge or National Compact. Since the argument against the National Grand Lodge is based on Prince Hall writers and undocumented information, this writer adamantly doubts that anyone can produce information that can refute what is said in *“Out of the Shadows.”* The information has always been in the proceedings. Seemingly, the Prince Hall writers never read the proceedings. The National Grand Lodge cannot tell the true story because they do not have the proceedings. The Prince Hall Grand Lodges kept the proceedings when they declared their independence from the National Grand Lodge or merged with an independent Grand Lodge since their history extends back to when they were under the National Grand Lodge. The Proceedings are in the Iowa Masonic Library.

If one wanted to do a reference check on *“Out of the Shadows”* they could easily contact the Iowa Masonic Library and ask for the referenced information. Much of the reference material is in the Iowa Masonic Library.

Truly, “service” is the by word with the staff at the Iowa Masonic Library. One can easily write the Library or call and have information reproduced and sent to them for the cost of printing and postage. Books can also be ordered for loan. No effort is spared in accommodating the seeker of information.

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This writer found the Harry A. Williamson and Joseph A. Walkes, Jr. collections to be helpful in writing the book. I found much information in those two collections. Williamson's level of organization of information is astonishing. In terms of organization of information, one could easily surmise that Walkes was a student of Williamson.\*

One cannot talk about visiting the Iowa Masonic Library primarily to review Prince Hall Grand Lodge proceedings without telling the truth about the lack of a central repository of proceedings and other documents pertaining to Prince Hall Freemasonry. This writer has been asked why he did not contact the Grand Historian, Grand Librarian or Grand Secretary of the Prince Hall Grand Lodges instead of visiting the Iowa Masonic Library. First, in the Prince Hall world, a brother contacting a Grand Lodge directly is a breach of Masonic protocol. Even if one did contact a Grand Lodge, imagine the delays involved in receiving needed approvals. Many Prince Hall grand lodges do not have complete sets of proceedings. What Prince Hall grand lodge would permit a writer unlimited access to their proceedings without being able to censor what is written? What grand lodge could provide a brother to sit with a researcher for a week? The point is that it was not feasible to contact each Prince Hall

grand lodge.

This writer is planning another trip to the Iowa Masonic Library for one week to complete work on another book, *The National Grand Lodge and Prince Hall Freemasonry: A Quiz Book*. It is good to know that required information can be found in one place.

*Alton Roundtree is the editor of the Prince Hall Masonic Digest (DC) and is an Actual Fellow of the Phylaxis Society.*



\* *Note the Walkes comment on page 13. Ed.*

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# Historical Masonic Site

## Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Arkansas



**GPS location: N 34° 13.576' W 92° 00.151'**

The Director for Historical Sites, Brother Herby Price, Jr., and the Deputy Director for Historical Sites, Brother Richard V. Johnson, are creating a database that will contain all Masonic sites, or as many as you will submit to us, whether or not they have been placed in the national register of historic sites. The logic is that any Masonic site may take on a historical significance depending on how history plays out at the site. We identify Masonic sites and place them in the database while they still stand and can be located by latitude and longitude.

The building pictured belongs to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Arkansas and was their primary headquarters until their new building was occupied this year. See page 18.