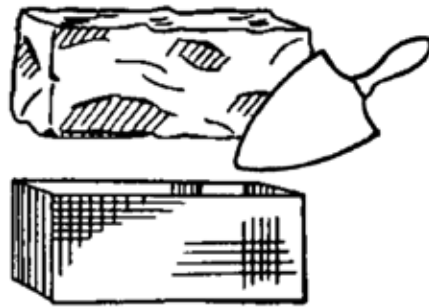


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# The Lyceum

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A Publication of  
The Committee on Masonic Education

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Your Publication Staff & Contributors  
Robert H. Johnson - Editor-In-Chief, Darin A. Lahners -  
Editor, Chad Lacek, 33°, Bernard Davis, Chairman

# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Dear Brethren,

As the chill of winter begins to recede and the promise of spring approaches, our Masonic community experiences a time of renewal and reflection. Each issue of The Lyceum strives to bring you insightful, thought-provoking content, and this edition is no exception. The theme of this issue is “Black History in Freemasonry and Unity.” It celebrates diversity and acknowledges the profound ways in which African American Freemasons have shaped and enriched our craft.

This issue opens with Chad Lacek’s “Every Single Human Being, 33°” which thoughtfully examines our shared humanity.

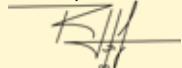
A particular highlight is “Worshipful Brother Robert Smalls: Civil War Hero” by WB.: Darin A. Lahners, FILOR. This article beautifully narrates the courageous story of Robert Smalls, offering an inspiring testament to resilience and dedication.

Steven L. Harrison, 33°, FMLOR, explores the rich tapestry of the “Knights of Wise Men,” a unique tale involving Lionel Richie, the famed singer and musician. Similarly, Todd E. Creason, 33°, FMLOR, captivates us with “Nat King Cole’s ‘Unforgettable’ Escape,” shedding light on an amazing adventure that could have ended badly—but didn’t!

Uncover the story of Hiram Rhodes in “Famous Freemason: Hiram Rhodes,” and explore the scholarly endeavors of “The Phylaxis Society,” showcasing the vibrant contributions of Masons across various spheres. I am confident that each article will deepen your understanding and appreciation of our revered traditions and values. This issue is timely, especially as we advocate for Masonic learning in an era where educational challenges cast long shadows across our nation.

May you find inspiration and unity in these pages, fostering growth in your Masonic journey. I wish you well and hope this issue inspires both reflection and action. Let us continue to be beacons of knowledge and fraternity, uplifting our communities and each other.

Fraternally yours,  
R.H. Johnson,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R.H. Johnson', written over a horizontal line.

Editor-In-Chief  
The Lyceum



# From the Chairman's Desk

by WB: Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee

## ILLUMINATING UNITY THROUGH HISTORY AND EDUCATION



This month, The Lyceum takes us on an enriching journey through Black Freemasonry's history, highlighting how its legacy embodies resilience, unity, and the transformative power of Masonic education.

Education lies at the very heart of Freemasonry. It is through learning that we nurture enlightenment, deepen our understanding of our craft, and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood. The establishment of Prince Hall Freemasonry in 1775 is not only a testament to the resilience of African Americans in seeking admission to the fraternity—it also reflects their unwavering commitment to advancing education as a cornerstone of Masonic principles.

Prince Hall himself exemplified the importance of education in shaping society. As a leader, he championed the acquisition of knowledge, encouraging his brethren to use their understanding of Masonic teachings to uplift communities and guide future generations. Black Freemasonry has long been a beacon, not just for fraternal unity but also for fostering educational initiatives that inspire growth, development, and social change.

As members of the Committee for Masonic Education, we are uniquely positioned to honor this legacy. Let us rededicate ourselves to the noble task of educating all Masons—ensuring they are equipped to carry forward the tenets of Freemasonry with clarity and purpose. Through workshops, resources, and discussions, we can bridge gaps in understanding and bring to light the rich tapestry of Masonic history, including the contributions of Prince Hall Freemasonry.

Unity in Freemasonry flourishes through learning, dialogue, and mutual respect. By exploring the remarkable history of Black Freemasonry, we gain valuable insights into our fraternity's unifying principles.

These lessons remind us of the transformative power of education in fostering connections that transcend barriers and inspire collective progress.

Brethren, let us embrace the task of educating not just the mind but the spirit. May the legacy of Prince Hall and Black Freemasonry guide us as we endeavor to build bridges and illuminate pathways for future generations of Masons.

Fraternally,  
WB Bernard Davis Jr,

*Bernard Davis Jr*

Chairman - Committee on Masonic Education  
Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. M. of the State of  
Illinois



# EVERY SINGLE HUMAN BEING

*by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°*



We are odd creatures, aren't we? Despite our tremendous advances in technology, our massive discoveries of the universe around us, and our mastery of most of the fundamental laws that govern it...we can be rather foolish sometimes.

There are 8.2 billion of us alive today. If you take a moment to consider that fact, how many of those people do you relate to? In other words, how many of them are "people like you"? We tend to divide ourselves into ever-smaller groups of subgroups and so on.

We may all be Americans, but that isn't nearly particular enough for us. It isn't until we have narrowed it down to Liberal, Asian, College-Educated, Northern Californian, Vegan, and Dog (not cat) owner that we begin to feel satisfied that we've got them in their proper place. Only then can we feel safe deciding if they are "like us."

There are three billion genetic building blocks that make us who we are. The variation from one human being to another is less than 0.1% of that staggering amount. We are 99.9% identical. All of us. Not just today. All humans ever. Think about that.

If I showed you two automobiles that were 99.9% the same, could you tell the difference? If a doctor prescribed you a medication, and the pharmacist offered you a less expensive generic pill that was 99.9% identical to the more expensive name brand...you'd take it! Wouldn't you?

Then why do we spend so much time categorizing the insignificant differences between us? I blame geography. The simple fact of where we are born does much to shape our identity. Our language, traditions, religion, music; indeed, most of our culture is decided by our location on the planet.

The ground under our feet is dramatically different from place to place. We swim in different rivers, lakes, and seas. That soil and climate dictate the foods we eat, the type of dwellings we live in, and how we honor our dead.

It's even harder to relate to the people who lived centuries before us. Some of the grains and fruits they ate don't exist anymore. The clothing they wore was made using methods and materials abandoned centuries ago. The instruments that played their music now adorn museums of ancient history, and only a select few musicians attempt to play them.

There is virtually nothing left of the Roman Forum. That cradle of Western society, of which so many writings still survive, yet barely a stone remains. The land where once it stood still bears some outlines of a foundation. The infrequent, single blocks of stone or fragments of pillars seem to have been placed there by some sympathetic archaeologist who could no longer bear the disappointed faces of visitors.

Even our modern cities are unrecognizable in only a few generations. When was the last time you vis-



ited the neighborhood you grew up in? Can you still navigate it without the aid of GPS? A child growing up there now will have very little in common with the child you once were.

But there are two companions we all have in common. Two faithful friends that unite every single human being: Those living now, and the long dead. We have all turned our faces to them, in joy, in wonder, with hope, or with sorrow. We are so accustomed to them that we scarcely think to contemplate that there is not a single person in any place or time that is excepted. One of these two may well be in the room with you right now.

The Sun that shines on you today does so in exactly the same way it shines on every other living person. It's such an obvious statement that you may have never even considered it. I invite you to contemplate it now.

The rays of sunlight that pass through your home are the exact same ones that pass through the slums of India, or the palace of a Sultan. Stars and constellations differ from one hemisphere to another, but the Sun and Moon always greet us the exact same way.

Socrates often walked along the banks of the Ilissus River in Athens, Greece. He was warmed by the exact same sun, in the exact same way, as you have been so many times. Every hero, every villain, every king, every pauper, every person throughout history has the exact same relationship with the Sun and Moon that you and I do.

In fact, the Moon has been tidally locked with Earth for several billion years. This means that we always see the same side of the moon from every place on Earth. Everyone has always seen the same light and shadows, imagined faces and shapes, or simply basked in her eerie glow. They all turned their face to the exact same moon that you do.

This is a truly unifying human condition. Everyone you've ever heard of, everyone that's ever lived, knows exactly how you feel in the presence of these two mutual friends. The next time a ray of moonlight passes through your window or a beam of sunlight warms your face, briefly pause to consider that, in that moment, you are connected to Every Single Human Being.





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# Worshipful Brother Robert Smalls, Civil War Hero

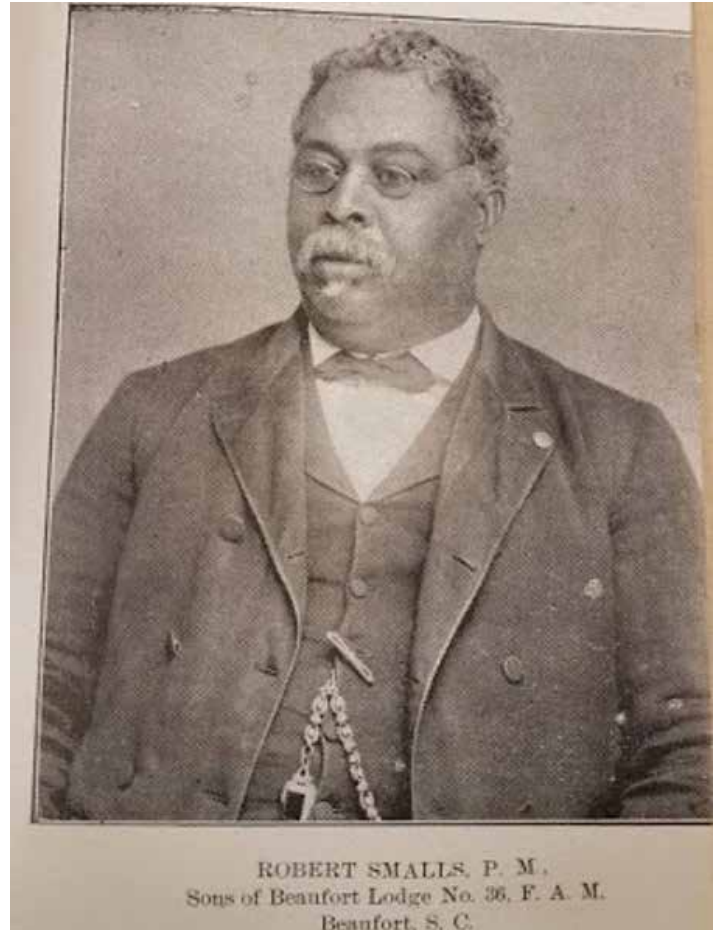
*by WB: Darin A. Lahners, PAEO*

Worshipful Brother Robert Smalls was born on April 5, 1839, in Beaufort, South Carolina to Lydia Polite, a woman who was enslaved to Henry McKee, who was most likely Robert's father. He grew up in Beaufort, in the fields. As Robert was favored over other slaves, his mother began to worry that he might not understand the harsh realities of Slavery, especially those who work in the fields. Robert's mothers asked for him to work in the fields and to witness the whipping of slaves at "the whipping post". When he was 12, his mother requested that Smalls' master send him to Charleston, South Carolina. There he was hired out as a laborer for one dollar per week, with the rest of the wage going to his mother. He worked in a hotel and as a lamplighter on the streets of Charleston, finally finding work on Charleston's docks. He worked as a longshoreman, a rigger, and a sailmaker and finally worked his way into becoming a wheelman or helmsman. As a result, he gained tremendous knowledge about Charleston harbor.

At the age of 17, Bro. Smalls married Hannah Jones, an enslaved Hotel maid. She was 22 and already had two daughters. Their first child together, Elizabeth Lydia Smalls, was born in February 1858. They had a son three years later, Robert Jr, who passed away at the age of two. Robert was determined to pay for their freedom by purchasing them outright, but at the cost of \$800 dollars (roughly \$22,764 in today's currency), it would take him decades to reach that goal. He had only managed to save \$100 dollars.

In April 1861, the American Civil War began with the Battle of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. In the fall of 1861, Bro. Smalls was assigned to work as a wheelman on the CSS Planter, a lightly armed military transport ship. The Planter's duties were to deliver orders, troops, and supplies, to survey waterways, and to lay mines. Smalls was entrusted to pilot the Planter throughout the Harbor, as well as on area rivers and along the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coastlines. Smalls could see the line of Union ships blockading the Harbor seven miles away and began to hatch an escape plan.

On May 12, 1862, the Planter traveled 10 miles



southwest to Coles Island, which was home to a Confederate post that was being dismantled. The ship picked up 4 large cannons and returned to Charleston, where the crew loaded 200lb of ammunition and 20 cords of firewood onto the ship. On the evening of May 12, 1862, the Planter's three Confederate officers disembarked to spend the night in Charleston, leaving Bro. Smalls and the crew on board. Before the officers departed, Smalls requested permission to allow the crew's families to visit them, which was approved, provided that the families left before curfew.

When the families arrived, Smalls and the crew revealed the plan to them. Smalls had discussed the plan with his wife beforehand, to which she said: "It is a risk, dear, but you and I, and our little ones must be free. I will go, for where you die, I will die." The other women were not informed and were frightened at executing the plan. They started to cry out of fear. The men attempted to quiet them with mixed success. At curfew, the family members returned home with the instructions to be at South-



ern Wharf and another wharf to be picked up for the escape attempt. Around 3 am, Smalls put on a captain's uniform and wore a straw hat similar to the captain's, and the Planter departed. After stopping to pick up his and the other crew member's families, Smalls piloted the Planter past five Confederate forts with no issue as he gave the correct signals at checkpoints as Smalls had copied the captain's mannerisms along with wearing his straw hat, it was enough to fool the soldiers manning the various checkpoints. Around 4:30 am, Smalls approached Fort Sumter.

The crew started to be afraid, asking Smalls to give a wide berth to the Fort. Smalls told them that such behavior might raise suspicion of the soldiers manning the guns at the Fort. He piloted the ship along the normal course at a slow cruising speed, pretending as if they were just out for a leisurely cruise. When the Fort gave the challenge signal, Smalls responded with the correct hand signals. There was a long pause, and Smalls started to think he would soon be on the receiving end of a cannon barrage. However, the Fort replied with the all-clear, and the Planter continued on its way. Rather than turn east towards Morris Island, Smalls steered the ship straight towards the Union ships blockading the Harbor. Smalls ordered all the Confederate flags lowered and replaced them with white bed-sheets that his wife had brought with her. This raised the alarm that something was amiss, but the Planter was already outside of the cannon's range.

The Planter was seen by the USS Onward, which began to ready its cannons to fire upon the Planter. Luckily, a crewmember on the USS Onward noticed the white flag of surrender flying on the Planter. The Captain of the USS Onward, John Fredrick Nickels, boarded the Planter, at which point Smalls asked for a United States Flag to fly. Smalls surrendered the Planter to Nickels, exclaiming, "Good morning, sir! I've brought you some of the old United States guns, sir!" Smalls' escape proved especially beneficial to the Union Navy. Along with the artillery pieces that the Planter was hauling, the captain's codebook with the signals for each checkpoint, along with maps of the mines laid in Charleston Harbor, was invaluable, as was Smalls' expertise of the surrounding waters. The United States also learned that Coles Island had been abandoned by Confederate forces, which allowed the United States to capture the island.

Word of Smalls' escape quickly spread throughout the North via newspaper accounts. In the South, the Newspapers demanded disciplinary action for the

officers who left Smalls and his crew alone aboard the ship. The U.S. Congress passed a bill awarding Smalls and his crew prize money for CSS Planter. Smalls was awarded 1500 dollars (roughly \$38415 in today's currency). Smalls was sent to Washington, DC, to help persuade President Lincoln and War Secretary Stanton to allow men of color to fight for the Union. Due to Smalls' effort, Stanton signed an order allowing 5000 African Americans to serve the union at Port Royal, and they were organized into the 1st and 2nd South Carolina Regiments (Colored).

Smalls quickly started serving the Union Navy out of Port Royal, South Carolina, and piloted many navy vessels until he was transferred to the Army in March 1863. Smalls took part in 17 major engagements during the war. Some of his heroic actions include: He was made pilot of the ironclad USS Keokuk and took part in the attack on Fort Sumter on April 7, 1863. The Keokuk took major damage and sank the next morning. Smalls and much of the crew moved to the USS Ironside, and the fleet returned to Hilton Head. On Dec. 1, 1863, Smalls was piloting the Planter on Folly Island Creek when Confederate gun batteries at Secessionville fired upon the vessel. The captain, James Nickerson, fled the pilot house for the coal bunker, but Smalls stayed at his post and piloted the ship to safety.

In May 1864, Smalls was an unofficial delegate to the Republican National Convention in Baltimore. Later that spring, he was in Philadelphia while the Planter was getting overhauled. While in Philadelphia, Smalls was in a streetcar and was ordered to give up his seat to a white passenger. Rather than ride on the open overflow platform, Smalls left the streetcar. The humiliation of Smalls, a heroic veteran, was referenced in a debate that resulted in the State legislature's passing a bill that integrated public transport in Pennsylvania in 1867.

After the Civil War, Smalls returned to Beaufort. There, he became a property owner and purchased several properties, including a two-story building to be used as a school for African American children. He also opened a store with a Philadelphia businessman, which served the needs of freedmen. He was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1868, moving to the Senate in 1870 after being elected to fill a vacancy. In 1874, Smalls was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served from 1875 to 1879 and then from 1882 to 1887, all while being threatened by the South Carolina "Red Shirts," which was a branch of the Klu Klux Klan. His political career was centered on promoting children's welfare, education, and African

American rights. He famously said in 1895: "My race needs no special defense, for the past history of them in this country proves them to be equal of any people anywhere, all they need is an equal chance in the battle of life."

Smalls passed away in 1915 at the age of 75 due to malaria and diabetes. In 2004, the Defense Department named a ship for Smalls. The USAV Maj. Gen. Robert Smalls is a Kuroda-class logistics support vessel operated by the U.S. Army. It is the first Army ship to be named after an African American. Robert Smalls was a member and a Past Master of The Sons of Beaufort Lodge #36 PHA in Beaufort, South Carolina.

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# Knights of Wise Men

*by Steven L. Harrison, 33°, FMLOR*



In 2011, velvet-voiced pop singer Lionel Richie, a member of Lewis Adams Prince Hall Lodge No. 67, Tuskegee, appeared in an episode of The Learning Channel's popular series, *Who Do You Think You Are*. The show follows celebrities as they search out their family roots, usually finding a twist or two along the way. After some digging, the show began to focus on Richie's maternal great-grandfather, John Louis Brown.

In Nashville, where his maternal grandmother had been born, Richie discovered Brown, most likely born into slavery, had married his great-grandmother Volenderver in 1890 when she was only 15, and he was about 50. Before their divorce in 1897, the product of that marriage was Richie's grandmother, Adelaide M. (Brown) Foster.

Knowing his great-grandfather's name, Richie went to the Nashville Metropolitan Archive, where things got interesting as they took on a fraternal air. City directories there listed John Louis Brown as Editor of the Knights of the Wise Men in 1880 and SGA of the Knights of the Wise Men in 1885. The title of Editor was a valuable piece of information indicating Brown was literate – not a guarantee back in those days. Richie's curiosity was piqued wondering who the Knights of the Wise Men were and what the designation SGA meant.

This sent him to Prince Hall Lodge No. 1 PHA F&AM in Nashville, where he met with Professor Corey Walker, Brown University Historian of African Studies.

The program makes no mention if Professor Walker is a Mason. With a prominent Square and Compasses in the background, Walker explains, "Knights of the Wise Men was a fraternal order that also had a benefit for its members. The organization helped build bonds of community between African American men. It was an institution that provided financial benefits to all of its members for sickness as well as in death... It was the precursor of what we think of as modern insurance companies."

According to the show, the Knights of the Wise Men was founded in 1879 to address the needs of the black community. Walker reminds Richie that during that period, white organizations were separate and did not admit African Americans. Pushed away from the white community after the Civil War, blacks created their own institutions to assist African Americans. One of these was the Knights of the Wise Men, which grew to 278 lodges by 1882. "These were the prototypes," says Walker, "of the organizations that helped propel the modern Civil Rights movement."

When Richie questions Walker about the meaning of SGA, he learns it stands for Supreme Grand Archon. "He wasn't just a member of the organization; he was its national leader." In addition, Professor Walker produced a book on the order's rules, laws, and regulations, which Brown authored. The book contains lectures, signs, and passwords; much like today's Masonic rituals, "J.L. Brown was at the forefront in building a significant institution to meet the needs of African



Americans across the nation.”

A newspaper article reveals the fate of the Knights of the Wise Men. It reports on an 1891 smallpox epidemic that caused the organization to pay out substantial death benefits, draining the treasury. The article also reports on the disappearance of its treasurer, S. Carl Walker, who ran off with much of the remaining funds. With that tipping point, the Knights of the Wise Men began their decline.

Brother Richie points out this is the same period during which Brown’s marriage fell apart, and the pressures of the demise of the Knights may have had something to do with it, concluding, “My great-grandfather went from being a scoundrel in my mind all the way to being one of the pioneers of the Civil Rights movement.”

J.L. Brown moved to Chattanooga after the demise of the Knights of the Wise Men. Richie travels there to find out what happened to his great-grandfather. There, he discovers that Brown became a cemetery caretaker and finds a book containing his picture. Brown’s death certificate reveals that his father was Morgan Brown, and his mother is unknown. He is buried in the same cemetery where he worked, in an unmarked pauper’s grave.

A final bit of research shows Brown was a slave, his owner being Morgan W. Brown. In a confusing twist, Richie finds that Dr. Morgan Brown has a son, Morgan W. Brown. Dr. Brown’s diary reveals that J.L. Brown’s mother was a slave named Mariah, whom he stipulates to be freed, along with J.L., upon his death. The show leaves it to speculation as to whether Dr. Morgan Brown, 80, or his son Morgan W. Brown, 39, was J.L.’s father.

Documents shown in the program reveal John Lewis Brown died in 1931 at the age of 92. Writing of his fraternity, he said, “We believe that an acre of noble oaks is worth more than a countryside full of brushwood and that one true and loyal Knight is worth more... than a Chamber room full of trash. We fully recognize the fact that we are poor and need no weights upon us, and to make our way successfully through life requires thorough organization of the masses, without which our future cannot be a bright one. It is only by our good qualities rightly set forth that we are to succeed in the future. First, by educating every boy and girl and teaching from the cradle to the grave honesty, industry, economy of time and means, and the fullest enjoyment of all rights as citizens, and the destruction, death, and burial of the accursed idea that the negro is inferior, simply because he has been in a time deprived of life, liberty, and property. Let us all be wise



**John Lewis Brown**

men and women.”

Other sources indicate that prior to the fallout from the smallpox epidemic and the treasurer depleting its funds, the Knights of the Wise Men had a peak membership of about 350 lodges. It is recognized by some as the first insurance company in the United States. Today, on St. Helena Island in South Carolina, stands a building known as the Knights of Wise Men Lodge. A wood frame building built in 1899, it burned in 1940 and was replaced with the existing concrete structure, which stands as the last remnant of a once-noble fraternity.





# *Famous Freemason: Nat King Cole's "Unforgettable" Escape*

*by Todd E. Creason, 33°, FMLOR*



There had been rumors that there might be trouble, but Nat King Cole refused to cancel the performance. Two shows were planned in Birmingham, Alabama—one for whites and one for blacks. There had been rumors of trouble in the past—it was something he had learned to live with when he

toured. There were rumors that Ku Klux Klan planned to grab him during the show. Nobody knows what they planned to do with him once they had him, but the kinds of atrocities that were being done to blacks in Alabama during the 50s were well known. The police were there, guarding the stage, but nobody actually believed even the Ku Klux Klan would be so bold as to try to kidnap a famous performer off the stage during a show.

The orchestra had just begun playing the introduction of Cole's second song during the first show when a coyote howl rang out in the theater—the signal for the attack. Five men rushed up the aisles of the theater. "Here they come," someone shouted. People began screaming. The police, thinking any attack would come from the wings of the stage, were unprepared for an attack from the audience.

Nat King Cole didn't know what was happening. The lights were in his face as he sang. Suddenly, somebody came out of the darkness and grabbed for him. He stumbled backwards, falling over and breaking the piano bench.

The police rushed out from the wings, cracking one of the assailants in the head with a nightstick, and wrestling another off of Nat King Cole. Very quickly, the police apprehended the five men. Fortunately, not all 150 members of the Klan who were supposed to show up at the performance had—it could have ended very differently. The singer got up, limping badly on his ankle and nursing a swollen lip, and left the stage.

The audience felt bad about what had happened, and they began to applaud and call his name. After more than five minutes, Cole returned to the stage to say a few

words. They wanted him to continue the show, but Cole had been injured during the brawl, and cancelled the show. Cole and his group returned to the hotel, but they knew they were in danger as long as they remained in Birmingham—they needed to get out of Alabama fast. Little did they know they had a friend who had quickly heard about what had happened, and had begun making calls—a friend with certain connections.

Cole's wife, two thousand miles away, had no idea what had happened in Alabama when her phone rang in Los Angeles. The man on the other end told her what had happened, told her that her husband was fine. Of course she knew who the man was—everyone in America did. And how he learned about the incident so quickly isn't hard to imagine considering some of the friends he had—they did call him "the chairman of the board" after all. She had to know as long as her husband remained in Birmingham, he was still in danger, but Frank Sinatra reassured her by saying, "Don't worry, honey, we'll get them out of there." She may have known whom he meant when he said "we." Some of Sinatra's friends were people like Carlo and Joe Gambino, Jimmy Fratianno, Salvatore Spatola, and Albert "the Executioner" Anastasia.

Wherever that first plane out of Birmingham was scheduled to go the following morning is not where it wound up going. The plane was rerouted and took Nat King Cole and his musicians out of danger. The musicians landed safely in Chicago.

And Frank may have had a little help with commandeering that plane out of Birmingham—from then vice-President Richard Nixon.





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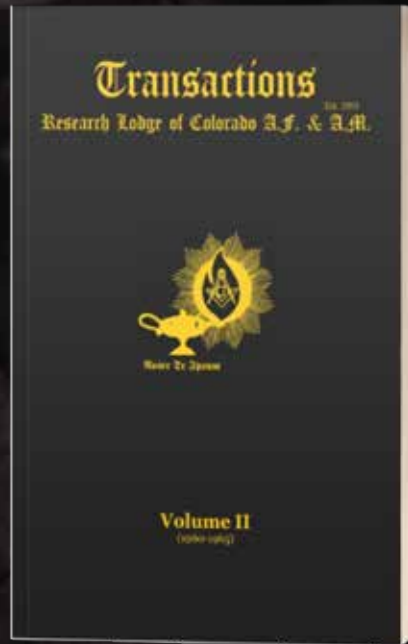
Founded in 2019 to bring together like minded individuals with an interest in the Esoteric, Esotericon is the preeminent conference serving esoteric minded individuals. Topics of our previous conferences have included 'Hidden Symbolism', 'Enochian: Learning to Talk with Angels' and 'Sacred Spaces' among others. We also include special activities such as tarot and natal chart readings.

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#### Mission

Since 1949 we have endeavored to:

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Consider joining us in this work:

All Master Masons from recognized Masonic jurisdictions and Masonic-Affiliated organizations in the United States, Canada, or worldwide are encouraged to contact us and become part of our Conference on Masonic Education.

We also encourage recognized Masonic Jurisdictions to inquire on how to become a member jurisdiction of MCME.

[Join Now...](#)



#### About Us

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Since 1949, the MCME has provided a forum for sharing best practices in Masonic Education with each of its member jurisdictions.

#### Who We Are

The Midwest Conference on Masonic Education was formed in 1949 at a gathering of interested Masons from Illinois (including Alphonse Cerza) and Iowa.

The outcome was to continue getting together by establishing its first Annual Meeting which was held in December 1950 in Cedar Rapids IA. The organization is comprised of a loose and ever-changing collection of Masonic educators from Grand Lodge jurisdictions located in 12 north central States and the Province of Manitoba. Other participants frequently include chairs of Masonic Education as well as Grand Lodge officers.

#### What We Are About

The aim of the Conference is to promote Masonic Education, in part by providing a forum for educators to gather, freely discuss Masonic issues, socialize, and learn from sharing experiences while build-

ing beneficial relationships.

In addition, the Conference initiates special projects such as collecting data on educational practices across all North American jurisdictions, as well as encouraging Masonic research and writing by individual educators.

#### How We Function

The Conference meets once a year, usually in late April or early May, in one of the member jurisdictions. Responsibility for conducting the Annual Meeting rotates each year, eventually being hosted by all member jurisdictions before repeating.

A typical program schedule includes presentations by well-known Masonic speakers, experiential as well as scholarly participant presentations, roundtable discussions, and jurisdiction reports. Sufficient time is also arranged to provide informal chats among attendees. For more than a half century, our participants have expressed the view that our Conference is well worth the time, effort and cost in order to gain the many benefits from attending and participating.

For more information visit:

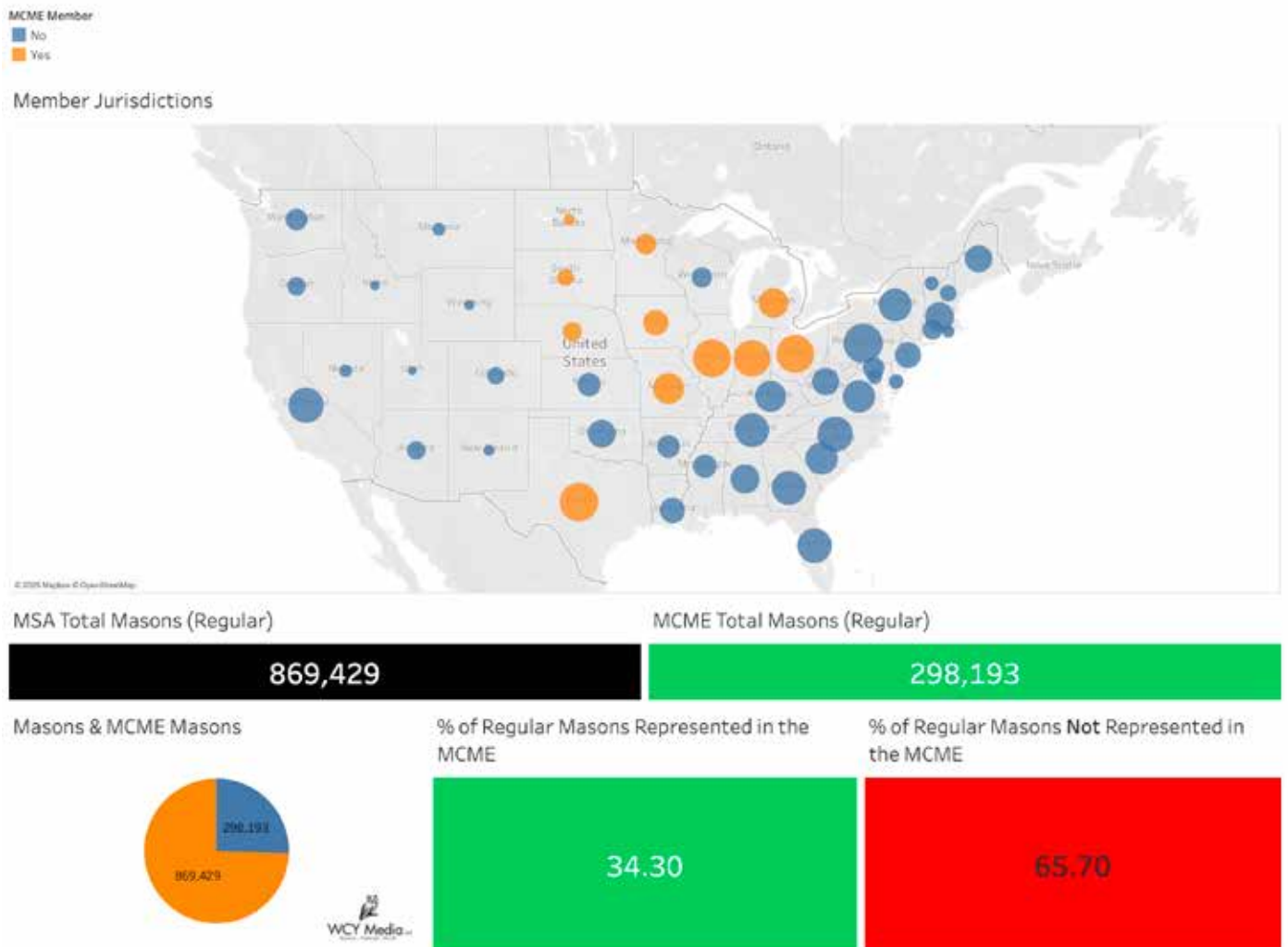
[MCME1949.Org](http://MCME1949.Org)

Remember - Individuals and other orgs can join, that means YOU!



# Are YOU Represented?!

- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- Ohio
- North Dakota
- South Dakota
- Texas



The 2025 Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Hosted by the Grand Lodge of Indiana F. & A. M.

May 2 – 4, 2025

# Famous Freemason: Hiram Rhodes

*Todd E. Creason, 33°, FMLOR*

Hiram Rhodes Revels was born free in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on September 27, 1827. Educated in Indiana and Ohio, he graduated from Knox University in Illinois. Ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Revels accepted a pastorate in Baltimore in 1860. He served as an army chaplain for a black regiment during the Civil War and helped establish schools for freed slaves. In 1869 the Mississippi legislature elected him to the United States Senate, in which he was the first African American member.

When Hiram Rhodes Revels, was escorted to the front of the Senate Chamber to take his oath on February 25, 1870, the Atlanta Constitution reported that “the crowded galleries rose almost en masse, and each particular neck was stretched to its uttermost to get a view. A curious crowd (colored and white) rushed into the Senate chamber and gazed at the colored senator, some of them congratulating him. A very respectable looking, well dressed company of colored men and women then came up and took Revels captive, and bore him off in glee and triumph.”

Hiram Rhodes Revels was a Prince Hall Freemason, and served as Grand Chaplain of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio. He was elected to the Senate from Mississippi to fill the unexpired term of Albert G. Brown, who withdrew from the office in 1861 when Mississippi joined the Confederacy. After an ugly battle over whether Revels even qualified as a citizen, the argument was finally resolved in a 48-8 vote in favor of Hiram Rhodes Revels being seated. He served a little over a year and later became the President of what is today Alcorn State University.

Brother Nat King Cole was a member of Thomas Waller Lodge No. 49, PHA, Los Angeles, California. He joined in 1938. The lodge was founded by a group of African-American musicians who were members of Musicians Local 767, and Cole joined with his friend and drummer Lee Young. Nat King Cole remained faithful to Masonic principles his whole life—he saw himself as a builder of musical architecture, but he built more than music. His music helped to bring people and races together.



Neither Frank Sinatra nor Richard Nixon were Freemasons.

I told this story in Famous American Freemasons: Volume II, and I like it for several reasons. It reminds us that not-so-many years ago, America was a very different place, and while we still have work to do, we have come a very long way. It's also a reminder of those brave African-American men and women who challenged the barriers, and put themselves at tremendous risk in the process in their struggles for equality. And finally, that even back in those days of overt racism and discrimination, there were those with skin just as white as mine, that saw the injustices being done, and helped to do something about it.



# The Phylaxis Society

*by the Committee on Masonic Education*



The Phylaxis Society holds a significant place in Freemasonry, particularly within Prince Hall Freemasonry. I believe that the society is, in essence, continuing the work of Prince Hall, who, as one of Boston's most prominent citizens during the revolutionary period, was the founder of the African Lodge of the Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons of Boston. This lodge was the world's first lodge of what was termed Black Freemasonry and the first society in American history devoted to social, political, and economic improvement.

Not much is known of Hall's life before the Revolution. He was born in 1735 and was the slave of William Hall of Boston. His son, Primus, was born in 1756 to Delia, a servant in another household. In 1762, at the age of 27, Hall joined the Congregational Church and, soon after, married an enslaved woman named Sarah Ritchie. Eight years later, after Sarah's death, he married Flora Gibbs of Gloucester.

A month after the Boston Massacre, William Hall freed Prince. His certificate of manumission read that he was "no longer reckoned a slave, but [had] always accounted as a free man." Hall made his living as a huckster (peddler), caterer, and leather dresser. He was also listed as a voter and a taxpayer. He owned a small house and a leather workshop in Boston.

It is believed that he was one of the six black men of Massachusetts named Prince Hall listed in military records of the Revolution. He may well have fought at Bunker Hill. A bill he sent to Colonel Crafts indicates that he crafted five leather drumheads for the Boston Regiment of Artillery in April 1777.

In 1775, Hall and fourteen other free blacks joined a

British army lodge of Masons who were stationed in Boston. After the British departed, they formed their own lodge, African Lodge No. 1, though it would be twelve years before they received a permanent charter. Hall became the lodge's first Grand Master.

Hall was active in Boston's black community. He used his position as the "Worshipful Master" of the Black Freemasons to speak out against slavery and the denial of black rights. For years, he protested the lack of schools for black children and finally established one in his own home.

In his last published speech, his charge to the African Lodge in June 1797, Hall spoke of mob violence against blacks: *"Patience, I say; for were we not possessed of a great measure of it, we could not bear up under the daily insults we meet with in the streets of Boston, much more on public days of recreation. How, at such times, are we shamefully abused, and that to such a degree, that we may truly be said to carry our lives in our hands, and the arrows of death are flying about our heads....tis not for want of courage in you, for they know that they dare not face you man for man, but in a mob, which we despise..."*

Prince Hall died in 1807 at the age of 72. A year later, his lodge honored him by changing its name to Prince Hall Grand Lodge.

**Here are a few key reasons why The Phylaxis Society is important:**

1. Preservation and Dissemination of Knowledge: The Phylaxis Society is dedicated to the study and dissemination of Masonic knowledge, often referred to as "Masonic light." It focuses on the



history and contributions of Prince Hall Freemasonry, which has a rich heritage dating back to 1775.

2. Promotion of Prince Hall Freemasonry: The Society plays a crucial role in promoting and educating others about Prince Hall Freemasonry. It aims to correct misconceptions and highlight the historical significance and contributions of African-American Freemasons.

3. Research and Publication: The Society publishes “The Phylaxis” magazine, which is considered one of the finest Masonic publications. This magazine provides a platform for Masonic writers to share their research and insights, fostering a deeper understanding of Masonic history and principles.

4. Guardianship of Masonic Heritage: Symbolically, the name “Phylaxis” means to guard and preserve. The Society is committed to protecting the legacy of Prince Hall Freemasonry against misinformation and ensuring that its true history is preserved and shared.

**We will discuss each of these points below.**

The Phylaxis Society is a membership society that consists of Free and Accepted Masons who have a desire to receive and disperse Masonic knowledge-” Masonic Light.” The organization was created by Prince Hall Masons and is partial toward dispersing light about Prince Hall and the network of Masons that derive from The African Lodge of Boston, Massachusetts, going back to 1775. These Masons are predominantly African-American. Active membership in the Phylaxis Society is open, however, to any freemason who is a member of a grand lodge recognized by the Prince Hall Conference of Grand Masters or recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England – the Premier Grand Lodge.

The Phylaxis Society has evolved into a diverse, international organization dedicated to studying the life of Prince Hall and to researching the history of Prince Hall Freemasonry. The Society also seeks to create a bond of union for Masonic writers and to educate Universal Freemasonry about Prince Hall Freemasonry. The Society has become the leader in its field, encouraging Prince Hall Masonic Study and stimulating the writing of accurate and interesting articles for publication. In this manner, it fosters the close human relationship that is the ideal of Freemasonry.

The principal organ of the Society is The Phylaxis Mag-

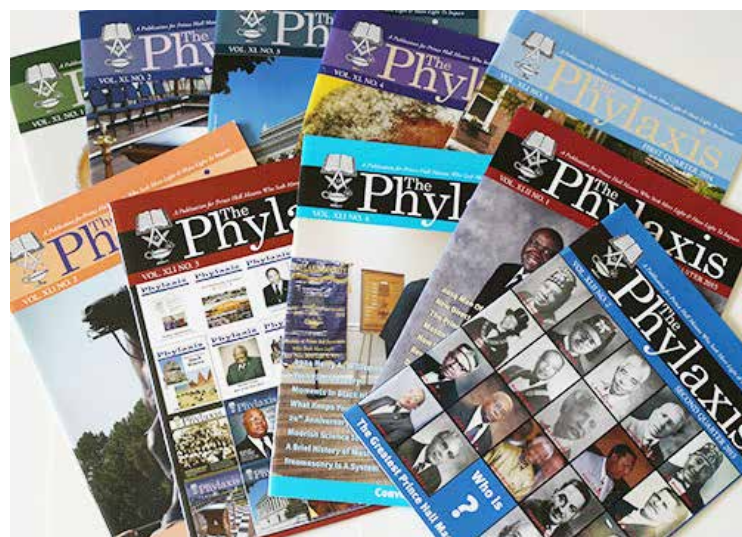
azine, which is said by some to be the finest Masonic publication in Prince Hall Masonry. You can subscribe to this magazine without applying for membership, but to become an active member, you must first become a subscriber. Anyone who wishes to pursue active membership should begin by signing up for a Magazine Subscription and follow up by requesting Membership. Subscribers will find it an interesting and informative Masonic reading. Members are also provided an opportunity to make literary contributions to the magazine.

Notes, queries, and information of Masonic interest: space will be devoted in various issues of The Phylaxis Magazine to special Masonic studies, Masonic curios, items of special interest concerning Masonic history, biography, etc., and other unusual Masonic data as listed, with the request that members of the society who have additional information on any of these topics communicate with the members who present the original item. This leads to many valuable and interesting personal contacts and often to lasting friendships.

The Phylaxis Magazine is the most respected and enduring international publication for Prince Hall Masons now extant and is one of the most valued benefits of membership in the Phylaxis Society. The magazine is published as frequently as four times a year and, since 1974, has featured the writings of the most respected researchers in Prince Hall Masonry.

Periodically, you can find Sample Articles from the magazine on the website: <https://thephylaxis.org/>. Back issues of the magazine are also available.

Subscriptions to the magazine are available for persons who are served by the United States Postal Service as well as for non-domestic subscribers. A lifetime subscription is also available for domestic subscribers.





The Society operates under the administration of its Officers and a board of directors elected biannually by its active members. It is not affiliated with any particular Masonic grand lodge or other Masonic body. Although it consists only of Freemasons, it is not a Masonic lodge; it does not bring non-masons into the Masonic order, and it in no way interferes with the legislative and ritualistic affairs of any Masonic body.

The word PHYLAXIS is pronounced fil-lak-sis. Phyl is Greek for tribe, clan, or race and is akin to the Greek word 'physic,' which means to bring forth – more to be. PHYLAXIS means to guard and preserve. Symbolically, we interpret it as bringing forth more light in Masonry and guarding the Prince Hall Fraternity against its enemies using truth to preserve our Masonic heritage.

## HONORS GIVEN BY THE PHYLAXIS SOCIETY

*Certificate of Literature.* Each year, the member who writes the article is judged to be a masterpiece, published in The Phylaxis Magazine during the year, and is awarded the "Certificate of Literature." This award not only encourages better writing but also adds incentive for more research into Prince Hall Masonry.

*Ira S. Holder, Sr F.P.S. Certificate of Literature* is awarded to those who write masterpieces on Prince Hall Freemasonry and are not members of the Prince Hall Fraternity.

*Jno. G. Lewis, Jr F.P.S. Medal of Excellence* is awarded annually to the most outstanding Master Mason in Prince Hall Freemasonry.

*Dr. Charles H. Wesley, F.P.S. Medal of History*, is awarded annually for the best-written article on Prince Hall Masonic History.

Lux e Tenebris Research Chapter is a unique chapter that researches all aspects of Freemasonry and publishes its transaction of papers written and critiqued by its members.

Phylaxis Masonic Hall of Fame honors regular Freemasons of the past who have contributed outstanding service to Prince Hall Freemasonry.

The Phylaxis Society is an important and crucial organization for Freemasonry. For more information on The Phylaxis Society, including its wonderful history, please visit their website:

<https://thephylaxis.org/about-us/our-history>



# ***Masonic Educational Conferences***

**Midwest Conference on Masonic Education** – May 2nd-4th 2025, Indiana  
[www.MCME1949.org](http://www.MCME1949.org)

**San Antonio Esoteric Summit** - Saturday, June 7th, 2025  
San Antonio, TX, Alzafar Shrine - Director's Staff Building  
Tickets are for sale! - <https://tinyurl.com/4wvkjpaf>

**Esotericon** – June 13th, 2025 – Manassas, Virginia  
Tickets are for sale! - [www.esotericon.net](http://www.esotericon.net)

**Northern Illinois All-State Spring AMD In-Gathering** - June 21st, Medinah Shrine  
Open to all members of the Allied Masonic Degrees

**South Pasadena Masonic Con (SPML)** – July 25th, 2025 – California  
[www.MasonicCon.com](http://www.MasonicCon.com)

**Central Illinois All-State Fall AMD In-Gathering** - Date is forthcoming, Normal Lodge,  
Bloomington-Normal Masonic Lodge  
Open to all members of the Allied Masonic Degrees

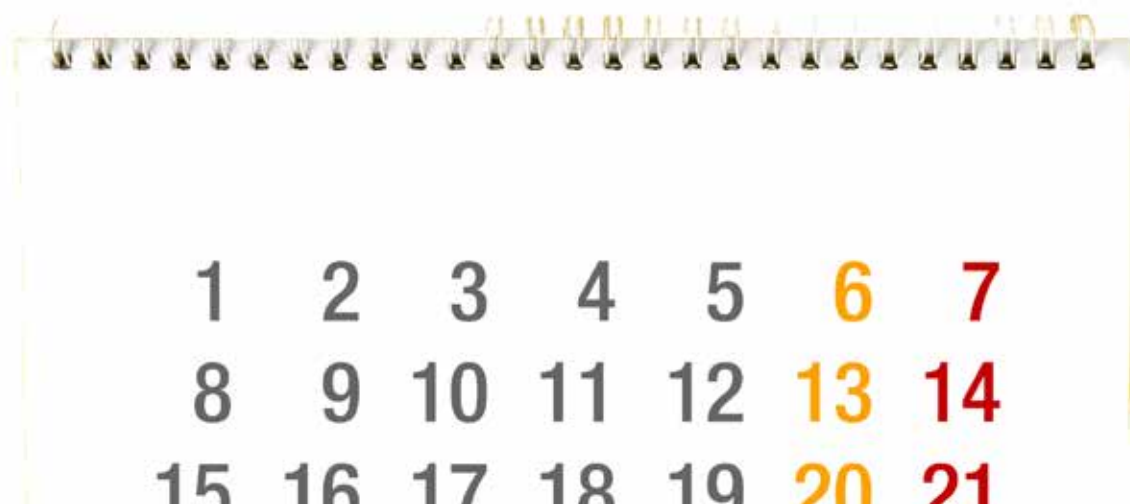
**Masonic Con South** – October 18 & 19th, 2025 – North Carolina  
[www.MasonicConSouth.com](http://www.MasonicConSouth.com)

**Yes! Masonic Con Chicago will be back in September of 2026.**

For more visit, [MasonicConferences.com](http://MasonicConferences.com)

If your lodge or organization is having an Educational Event (not related to instruction or charities), please let us know. Email the details to: [Admin@wcypodcast.com](mailto:Admin@wcypodcast.com)

Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.







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אדסזאנע סרזשזאכעס