



**Most Illustrious Charles F. Williams
Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters
Jurisdiction of Tennessee
Prince Hall Affiliate**
P O Box 280251 Nashville TN 37228

Charles F. Williams Grand Council History

The Grand Council of Illinois under the leadership of Grand Thrice Illustrious Master Charles Jones introduced these Degrees to the Jurisdiction of Tennessee in April 27, 1996. At that time, there were over one hundred and eleven (111) Royal Arch Companions receiving the degrees, it was noted as one of the largest mass degree Greetings in history. With the guidance of Illinois Grand Council for two years, Tennessee was Chartered a Grand Council on April 3, 1998 and recognized as a concordant grand body by Grand Master William E. Blevin Sr. This acknowledgement validated the Grand Charter of “The Most Illustrious Charles F. Williams Grand Council” thereby, recognizing it as the only Prince Hall Grand Council of Royal & Select Masons to operate in the Jurisdiction of Tennessee.

Since that time the Charles F. Williams Grand Council has had the opportunity to assist in the guidance and establishment of three (3) Grand Councils, Washington State in February 1999, Mississippi April 13, 2007 and Texas September 24, 2016.

The council degrees are largely an elaboration and explanation of the Royal Arch Degree and to a lesser extent, the Master Mason degree. The degrees of the council of Royal and Select Masters are necessary to fully complete the education of Ancient Craft Masonry. The degrees of our Masonic system are not chronologically arranged and in the degrees of Royal and Select Master, which many believe, are the most beautiful and impressive of all, offers additional incidents in the building of the first temple. During these degrees the representation of the Master Builder, Hiram Abiff, we learn why the work was lost and the secret of its preservation and recovery. The first council degree, the Royal Master, develops more fully the story of recovery of the "lost" word and the Holy of Holies of the Temple of King Solomon. The Royal Master degree further explains the Master Mason degree by telling of a Fellowcraft, a workman in the quarries, who in true humility asked, “Grand Master Hiram Abiff, when do I receive the Master's Word?” After patiently listening to the explanation of why he may never receive it, he returns to his place in the quarries.

The last degree is that of Super Excellent Master, and tells the story of the Babylonian Captivity, and of Zedekiah and his deceit. Council Masonry is also referred to as “Cryptic Masonry” in allusion to the continuance of the vault, or crypt. Although the Super Excellent Master degree has no connection with Ancient Craft Masonry, rather it is a vivid dramatization of truth and fidelity that becomes impressionable to those participating.

The degrees of Royal and Select Masters were introduced into this country in approximately 1783 in Charleston, S.C and placed under control for conferring degrees by the Council of Princes of Jerusalem. In various states and at various times in their history, the two degrees have been under various authorities and those authorities were responsible for the conferring of the degrees. They have been under the jurisdiction of Grand Councils, Grand Chapters of Holy Royal Arch Masons and Supreme Councils of the Thirty Third Degree A.A.S.R., which in the early days of this degree, participants made a pledge of allegiance to the Supreme Council of A.A.S.R. was taken while conferring the degrees. However, once most states established their own Grand Councils, the pledge was dropped.

Today, the Cryptic degrees are considered to be the eighth, ninth and tenth degree of the York Rite ladder. The gathering is referred to as a Council of Royal and Select Masters, which business and two degree work are performed, and candidates are said to be greeted. On the grand level of the state the gathering is called a grand Greeting.

The Grand Thrice Illustrious Masters of Tennessee and their accomplishments

1998-2004 Willie I Tabors

- First Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
- Established nine (9) subordinate councils in TN
- Established the first Melchezadek Day celebration and banquet
- Granted Grand Charter for three (3) councils in Washington State 1999
- Granted Warrant of U D to five (5) to the state of Mississippi Councils
- Granted the Chartering of the Bernice H. Stevens Lady's of the Circle of Perfection (LOCOP) Royal Grand Perfect Matron Linda Reddick
- Began revisions to Royal and Select ritual 2004

2004-2010 Rev. Adlai Coffee

- Second Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
- Granted Grand Chartering to state of Mississippi five (5) subordinate councils in TN 2006
- Revised ritual completion 2008
- Hosted the General Conference of Grand Councils in Nashville TN May 2010

2011-2013 Raymond H. Washington

- Third Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
- Contributed first Community Toys for Tots financial support
- Constitution revision to new format 2012
- Promoted Health Awareness committee and lectures to Grand Assembly 2012
- Granted Permission for women to receive LOCOP degrees without male counterpart strength 2011

- Granted Warrant U D to Brownsville Council 2013 with 10 members
- Establish lapel pins and cuff links for fund raiser 2012

2013- Present Rev. Kenneth E. Brown

- Fourth Grand Thrice Illustrious Master
- Issue Warrant U D to Brownsville Council #9 May 5, 2013 11 members
- Granted Warrant U D A. M. Webb Council #10 Clarksville TN June 7, 2013 with 11 members
- Re-affiliate Julian Bell #6 council June 8, 2013 with 17 members
- Granted Warrant U D to James E. Poe #11 Sharon TN July 13, 2013 with 13 members
- Re-affiliate Alton W. Patton #3 council in Chattanooga TN July 13, 2013 with 30 members, which grew to 61 members in the following month.
- Granted Warrant U D Benjamin L. Hooks Council #13 Memphis TN December 14, 2013 with 15 members
- Establish the Ish Sodi Award August 2, 2013
- Establish the Past Grand Thrice Illustrious Master Jewel August 2, 2013
- Restructure the business financial infrastructure with voucher and fiscal annual budget report
- Establish the copyright symbol with lecture to the meaning of the Charles F. Williams Grand Council Grand emblem September 2013
- Scratch and Save fund raiser for foundation funding October 2013
- Established a non-profit Foundation with 501 (c) (3) filing February 2014
- Super Excellent ritual revision and edict to perform degree in the district and offer the purchase of SE ritual
- Chartered Brownsville council #9 A. M. Webb council #10 and James E. Poe Council #11 Sharon TN April 2014
- Giblimes Foundation Contribute \$500 to MWPHGL of TN Scholarship August 2014
- Constitution revision to include recognition of the Grand Court of the LOCOP and additional elected and appointed officers. April 2015 Revised Past Thrice Illustrious Master degree November 2015
- Revision to include recognition of the LOCOP April 2015
- Chartered seven (7) councils in the jurisdiction of Texas under Tennessee September 26, 2015
- U D Warrant Liberia October 11, 2015
- U D Warrant Perfection Council in Rosenberg TX
- U D Warrant L O Raynor El Paso TX
- Chartered L O Raynor El Paso TX 6-8-16
- Largest attendance at the 18th Grand Assembly with 123 present from DC, GA TX, KY and FL
- Giblimes Foundation gift \$3,000.00 May 26, 2016

- Acknowledged in the Tennessee Prince Hall Constitution August 2016
- Acknowledged by the Austin W. Williams Constitution July 30, 2016 whereby members who are already Knights of Templar could get the cryptic degree with no charge; and future York Rite journeymen must receive the degrees before becoming Knights of Templar
- Contributed \$500.00 to the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge establishing the Giblimes Scholarship August 2, 2016
- Chartered the jurisdiction of Texas as a Grand Council with 9 councils and U D Warrant four (4) Ladies Circle of Perfection Courts.
- U D Warrant Payne-Scott Council in Hartsville TN December 17, 2016