The Multifaceted Freemasons of Jamaica: 'Each One Members of the Other.'

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When the English captured Jamaica from the Spanish in May 1655, it paved the way for over 300 years of colonial rule. The West Indies at this time was known as the cockpit of Europe where the gamecocks, mostly Spanish, English, and French sought a fight to the death for Caribbean territory as one Freemason, John 2nd Duke of Montagu, experienced at first hand. Following his appointment as Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge in 1721, Montagu obtained a grant to colonize the West Indian islands of St Lucia and St Vincent, whose sovereignty had been hotly contested by the English and French for the best part of the previous century. Montagu personally equipped a flotilla to bring settlers to the islands, the largest ship perhaps not coincidentally named *The Charles and Freemason*. The undertaking was a total failure. Unable to muster enough support from British warships the new colonists were quickly run off by the French.

Montagu made a far more successful investment in Jamaica by funding the education of a free-born black named Francis Williams. According to a local chronicler at the time, Montagu wished to test his theory that black individuals could match the intellectual achievements of whites if given the same educational opportunities. Williams was sent to London where he excelled in mathematics, Latin, and poetry, and returned home to become one of the earliest black poets of note in the British Empire.

Montagu also sought to have Williams enter politics. He was willing to obtain a privy seal for him, or an appointment as one of the governor's advisers in Jamaica, but the incumbent governor, Edward Trelawny, found Williams unacceptable on account of his complexion.[1] Capability played second fiddle to colour in Jamaican slave society. How it came to be restructured is reflected in the annals of Jamaican Freemasonry.

It all began in May 1738 when Captain William Douglas sailed into the British naval station at Port Royal with a roving warrant to promote the Craft wherever he went. A member of the Old King's Arms Lodge No. 28 in London, Douglas had recently been appointed Provincial Grand Master for 'the coast of Africa and the Islands of America' that included Jamaica. Douglas was no stranger to the island, having plied the Jamaica run for the past ten years as commander of HMS *Phoenix* carrying naval dispatches, chasing Spanish patrol ships, and transporting invalids from the naval hospital back home.[2] By 14 April 1739 the Premier Grand Lodge of England had warranted the Mother Lodge of Jamaica, and there is little or no doubt that Douglas had a hand in its formation. Brothers met at Allen's Tavern in Kingston, a bustling town of merchants and traders across the harbour from Port Royal.

Another Freemason in Jamaica around this time was a Scotsman, Charles Leslie, who satisfied his curiosity about life on the other side of the Atlantic by spending little less than a year in the island before returning to Edinburgh, where he published *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica* in 1739.[3] Leslie dedicated this volume to the Earl of Eglinton (a later Grand Master Mason of Scotland) with the declaration: 'You will see in the following sheets that slavery is the ruin of society.' A second edition published the following year[4] includes additional text highlighting the Maroons who had escaped enslavement, set up their own communities, and fought the authorities for many years to retain their freedom. Unconquered, Jamaica's Maroons eventually forced the British

[1] E. Long, *The History of Jamaica,* Vol. II. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 475.

[2] The National Archives, Kew, UK. ADM 106/856/40 and 6/15/86.

[3] According to William Wallace, a surveyor, Leslie had come over to Jamaica as his 'fellow servant.' See T. Burnard, *Master, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 110.

[4] Retitled *A New History of Jamaica* (Edinburgh: J. Hodges, 1740). Also published in Dublin (1741) with a French translation (1751).

to negotiate the first of several peace treaties in 1739. Charles Leslie lauded these self-liberated Africans: 'Can the history of old Rome produce any greater examples?'

Leslie also produced several volumes of verse including Masonic poems and prose, the most memorable being a passage from his *Vindication of Masonry* delivered at the consecration of the Vernon Kilwinning Lodge in Edinburgh, of which Leslie was an original member:

> Numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same divine artist, which roll through the vast expanse, and are conducted by the same unerring laws of nature.

As *Philalethes* editor, Shawn Eyer reminds us, 'Freemasons today will recognize these words in the English Emulation Ritual.'[5]

A second lodge was chartered at Port Royal in 1742, and with it came the Province of Jamaica, but Captain Douglas no longer played an active role. He had died the previous year after being invalided out of Cartagena during the ill-fated British invasion of this Spanish stronghold, and is buried at Port Royal.[6] There is no obvious explanation as to why Grand Lodge appointed three Provincial Grand Masters for Jamaica between 1742 and 1744 in such rapid succession. First was Ballard Beckford, a wealthy planter politician whose family were Jamaica's biggest landowners during the island's heyday as the world's largest sugar producer. Beckford held a seat in the Jamaica House of Assembly, but his peers promptly expelled him for adultery with the wife of another member, and the subsequent divorce case ended up before the Privy Council in London. Perhaps Beckford's reputation caught up with him, and George Hinde, the son of an English shipwright, took over the province. Hinde had made his fortune in Jamaica as the local agent for Augustus & John Boyd of London, who provided finance to planters, and bagged the contract for supplying His Majesty's Navy in Jamaica. Hinde was also a prominent prize agent, selling off enemy vessels and their cargoes that were continually brought into Kingston or Port Royal. Alas, he forgot to pay the king his due from the sale of four French ships, and by the time the authorities caught up with him Hinde was in his grave.[7]

[5] S. Eyer, 'Numberless Worlds, Infinite Beings' *The Journal of Masonic Research and Letters*, Summer 2012, 117. Online at www.academia.edu/Philalethes This deals with the fascinating cosmological ideas found in the writing and rituals of some early Freemasons.

[6] *Derby Mercury*, 30 July 1741, 3. There is no record so far of Douglas warranting any other lodges despite a note that he would be going to Montserrat for that purpose. See F. W. Levander, 'The Collectanea of the Rev. Daniel Lysons,' *ACQ* 29 (1916), 80.

[7] F. Hanson, et al., *The Laws of Jamaica: Comprehending All the Acts in Force, Passed Between the Thirty-Second year of the Reign of King Charles the Second, and the [Eleventh] Year of the Reign of King George the Fourth, Inclusive [1681-1830]*. Vol. 6. (Spanish Town: Aikman & Son, 1817), 369, 373.

The third Provincial Grand Master, Alexander Crawford, hailed from Fifeshire, Scotland, and settled in Kingston as a merchant trader petitioning for portions of cargoes condemned as lawful prize in the vice-admiralty court. Most of Jamaica's early Masonic records have not survived, but from a later report Crawford appears to have been an indifferent officer, using his authority only when it suited him, and more often than not when 'publickly called upon by the lodges he has demitted.'[8]

The third lodge to be warranted in Jamaica was the Sociable in the capital, Spanish Town. In June 1754 we find them marching through the town in full regalia to celebrate the Feast Day of their patron saint, St John the Baptist, at the parish church.[9] Here they listened to a 'learned Discourse suitable to the Occasion' by the vicar before returning to their lodge 'to undertake the Ceremonies of the Day.' The vicar was The Revd Brother John Venn, the first-known clerical Freemason in Jamaica, who arrived in 1740. When the Bishop of London asked Venn to comment on the state of the island, he replied: 'Jamaica is more civilized and less unhealthy than most English people suppose though some physiques cannot stand the climate.' Based on this observation Venn concluded that 'since white people cannot work in the climate, slavery is necessary.' On well-run plantations he asserted 'discipline is administered evenly and moderately, but some masters are guilty of shocking cruelties which the law cannot touch.'[10]

A fellow Freemason appointed as Venn's curate in 1758 turned out to be The Revd Bro. Anthony Davis, who has been credited with having introduced Freemasonry to Harvard in 1736.[11] Davis participated in the Annual Feast celebrated by the Sociable in June 1758, after which they retired to the residence of Bro. John Bankes, where the comedy *The Constant Couple* was performed for the benefit of that brother. Evidently his career as clerk to a Spanish Town merchant found Bankes wanting; all the more significant is the fact that he rented his house from a Free Negro.[12]

Throughout these years Alexander Crawford continued to hold the chair of Provincial Grand Master, even after his move to Westmoreland in the far west of the island, where he tried his hand as a sugar planter. By virtue of their plantation holdings both Ballard Beckford and Alexander Crawford featured in Tacky's slave rebellion of 1760. Tacky was an Akan chief on the Gold Coast before his capture and enslavement on

[8] Jasper Hall, Provincial Grand Master, Jamaica, reporting to James Heseltine, Grand Secretary (Moderns) on the State of Masonry in Jamaica, 22 August 1772. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 22/B/4a-b.

[9] *Jamaica Courant*, June 1754.

[10] Venn to Bishop Sherlock, 15 June 1751. Fulham Papers, Vol. XVIII, 45–32. Lambeth Palace Library.

[11] R.A. Minter, *Episcopacy without Episcopate: The Church of England in Jamaica before 1824*. (UK: Self Publishing Association, 1990), 183.

[12] 'Census of St Jago de la Vega [Spanish Town] undertaken by Charles White in July and August 1754.' Jamaica Archives. Gifts and Deposits, 7/18/5/27.

Beckford's Frontier estate near Port Maria on Jamaica's north coast. From the outset Tacky had displayed outstanding qualities and was promoted to the rank of driver, with the dubious role of maintaining discipline in the fields, by the use of the whip if necessary. Behind the scenes, and with incredible secrecy, Tacky hatched a plan with those same slaves and others in different districts to supplant colonial rule with a new regime of small African principalities. In the early hours of Easter Monday morning Tacky and his troops raided the munitions store in Port Maria, and moved inland burning plantations, slaying, and looting with more and more supporters swelling their ranks at every stop along the way. Tacky was nonetheless betrayed by two slaves on another Beckford estate who alerted the authorities, and within a month Tacky and many of his men were either killed or captured. Yet still there followed an even bigger revolt in Westmoreland where Alexander Crawford had his estate. And so great was his fear that he sharpened his quill and wrote his will, but it would not be proved for many years to come. Crawford and his family escaped with their lives thanks to Cato, a loyal slave who subsequently received his freedom.[13]

The Atlantic world at this time was tied together by a thick web of merchants and mariners, so much so that in 1760 the London lodge now registered as Antiquity No. 2[14] was known as the West India and American Lodge, because so many of its members were commercially connected to this region. Thomas Marriott Perkins, a past Master of the West India and American Lodge, succeeded Alexander Crawford as Jamaica's fourth Provincial Grand Master in 1762. This was an appropriate appointment since Perkins already held the post of Provincial Grand Master of the Mosquito Shore, a British protectorate stretching along the Caribbean coast of present day Nicaragua and Honduras. The English had ousted the Spanish to found settlements of traders along this 550-mile strip, mainly mahogany and logwood cutters who provided the merchant mariner Bro. Perkins with a lucrative living from the timber trade. The son of a Sheffield clergyman, Perkins first appears in Masonic records as a Grand Steward in the Feast of 1756. The following year he received a magnificent Masonic jewel from the Sea Captains Lodge, now one of the largest and oldest jewels in the United Grand Lodge of England's collection. Three lodges were warranted in Jamaica during Perkins' tenure, and the brethren deemed him 'an expert Mason', but since he was always at sea they concluded that 'such a transient Provincial Grand Master' was 'unfavourable both to the appointment and honour of Masonry.'[15] There is no doubt where Perkins' loyalty lay. On one of his numerous trips to the Mosquito Shore in 1766 he signed a petition along with other 'Shoremen' requesting 'civil government entirely independent of Jamaica.' In 1770 Per-

[13] Journals of the Jamaica House of Assembly, 19 November 1761, ff. 287–88.
[14] One of the old four lodges responsible for the formation of the Grand Lodge in 1717.
[15] Jasper Hall, 1772 report.

kins resigned his Masonic responsibilities in Jamaica but retained them at the Mosquito Shore where he constituted the Lodge of Regularity and the Amity Lodge in the Bay of Honduras.[16]

The new Provincial Grand Master of Jamaica, William Wynter, was anything but transient and he took the chair in 1770 with unquestionable proof of permanence. A member of the Sociable Lodge, Spanish Town where he resided, Wynter was a third generation Jamaican and chief magistrate of St Catherine, the parish of his birth in 1704. As a physician and sugar planter Wynter represented three parishes in the House of Assembly at one time or another over a period of sixteen years. His appointment as Provincial Grand Master however was rejected outright by the brethren of his own lodge, and he promptly erased them from the list of lodges.

> This drove them into open rebellion, and they formed what they called a Grand Lodge and set up (as they say) a Grand Master of their own, in opposition to Brother Wynter, his Deputation and the Grand Master of England.[17]

Wynter stood his ground and found favour in the orders beyond the Craft, in this instance the Ancient and Accepted Rite. Although the rite originated in France, Jamaica has the distinction of having been the springboard for the propagation of what later became The Ancient and Accepted, or Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in North America, more usually known as the Rose Croix in England, Wales, and its Districts and Chapters Overseas.

> In 1761 the Rite commissioned a French merchant, Etienne (Stephen) Morin, Inspector General throughout the New World. Morin brought his warrant to Jamaica where he set up a Grand Chapter of Princes of the Royal Secret or *Ne Plus Ultra* and appointed Henry Andrew Francken, a Dutch Mason attached to Jamaica's vice-admiralty court, Deputy Inspector General of all the Superior Degrees of Free and Accepted Masons in the West Indies. Francken in turn appointed William Wynter as President and Grand Commander of the Grand Chapter of Sublime Princes of the Royal Secrets in Jamaica. In 1767 Francken set sail for America where he warranted on Morin's behalf the establishment of a Lodge of Perfection in Albany. During his lifetime Morin had been involved in the revision of the rituals, and on his death in 1771 Francken not only assumed Morin's leading role but continued his revision of the rituals.
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> The seed which had been planted in America by Francken eventually bore fruit, and the first Supreme Council in the world was formed in Charleston around 1800. On 31 May the following year the new Council was opened as the American Council of the Scottish Rite, later becoming the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction USA. In 1813, The Supreme Council of the Northern Jurisdiction of the United

[16] Perkins reporting to Michael Devon, Grand Lodge, 26 July 1773. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 23/E/9.

[17] Jasper Hall, 1772 report.

> States was formed, and this is the body from which The Supreme Council of England and Wales and its Districts Overseas obtained a patent in 1845.[18]

The Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction USA has since erected a plaque at the Kingston Parish Church commemorating the contributions of Morin and Francken who are buried in the church grounds.

Three more lodges were warranted during Wynter's incumbency, the Kingston Lodge and two in Montego Bay on the north shore, the St James's and the Union, the latter starting out with an engaging little story from London found in the Minutes of the Old Dundee Lodge No. 18:

> Leave granted for an Impression to be taken from the die cut for the Past Master's Jewel of this Lodge for the use of the Union Lodge of Montego Bay, Jamaica.[19]

Wynter died in May 1772 and is chiefly remembered in civic life for opposing the legislation that denied white people the right to dispose of their estates 'according to their wills and intentions.' In 1761 the Assembly had passed 'An Act to Prevent the Inconveniences Arising from Exorbitant Grants … made by White Persons to Negroes.' The primary 'inconvenience' was a growing free population of affluent blacks and people of colour challenging the prevailing social system. From that time 'no lands, negro, mulatto, or other slaves, cattle, stock, money, or other real or personal estate' exceeding the value of £2000, (£204,924.60)[20] could be given or declared in trust 'by any white person to any negro or to any person being the issue of a negro.'

Wynter was one of three dissenters who found the Act not only denied free-born Britons the right of disposing their estates as they thought fit, but since many of the beneficiaries were their own children, 'it lays a restraint on parental affection,' and therefore 'unnatural.'[21] The objection was dismissed and any white person wishing to leave such an inheritance had to apply to the Assembly for a private bill until the Act was repealed in 1813. Wynter was the father of several mixed race children, and following his wife's death he lived openly with Eleanor Abrahams, a woman of colour whose future independence he secured by leaving her land, funds, and freedom. Wynter similarly endowed Candis, a Negress, adding that it was also his 'desire' that she reside at his plantation near Spanish Town 'if she thinks proper so to do.' That too was the language of slavery.[22]

[18] A. Lazarus, 'A Brief Note on the Jamaican Roots of the Ancient and Accepted Rite.' Afeef Lazarus, 33°, is the Inspector General for Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and Past District Grand Master of Jamaica.

[19] A. Heiron, *Ancient Freemasonry and the Old Dundee Lodge No. 18* (London: Kenning & Son, 1921), 31.

[20] Purchasing power in 2017 as calculated by The National Archives, Kew, UK, Currency Converter 1270–2017.

[21] Transcribed by A. Powers in *A Parcel of Ribbons. The Letters of an 18th Century Family in London & Jamaica*. (lulu.com Self-Publishing, 2012), 106.

[22] The National Archives, Kew, UK. PCC Wills PROB 11/1110/2.

On Wynter's death the brethren insisted that they should have the right to select their own Provincial Grand Master, and they did just that. They convened a Provincial Grand Lodge where Jasper Hall, a wealthy Kingston merchant, and Master of the Mother Lodge was elected and 'with proper ceremony recognized.' Only then was a formal petition sent to the Premier Grand Lodge giving notice of Wynter's death and Hall's appointment with a request that their choice be ratified and 'due to the distance' they be given the power 'to elect future provincial grand masters'.[23]

Jasper Hall subsequently asked Grand Lodge to seriously consider their petition

> as the only means to restore harmony and concord among us, for it is impossible the Grand Master of England can receive any information relative to a proper Brother to preside over the Craft in this Island equal to the knowledge of the brethren who are upon the spot.[24]

The logics behind this argument left Grand Lodge little choice but to concede. Jasper Hall was a prominent slave factor who invested in transatlantic slaving voyages that touched Jamaica before proceeding to other colonies. Hall's slave trading activities were summed up in one sentence by the Board of Trade and Plantations in London: 'He entered into engagements for extending this valuable commerce beyond what it was ever extended to before.'[25]

Reporting on the state of Masonry in 1772, Jasper Hall had noted that seven regular lodges were now working under the English Constitution in Jamaica with a total of 292 Freemasons. Another active lodge was the St Andrew's Scots Lodge (or Scotch Lodge St. Andrews), the first lodge to be warranted in Jamaica under the Scottish Constitution in 1760 at Morant Bay. But since the Scottish Craft in Jamaica did not expand at all between 1760 and 1844, and the few Irish lodges during this time were mainly military lodges with travelling warrants, this study focuses on the English Constitution.

Jasper Hall presided over the formation of four more lodges before his death in 1788, when Rear Admiral Sir Peter Parker, the commander-in-chief of the naval station at Port Royal, assumed the chair. This venerable old sea dog had worked his way through the ranks, receiving a knighthood for his services in 1772, the same year that had seen his appointment as Senior Grand Warden. Parker's promotion to commodore at the outbreak of the American War of Independence saw him sailing off to provide naval support

[23] Thomas Gray, Provincial Grand Secretary, Jamaica, reporting to Grand Lodge on meetings held between 22 May and and 3 August 1772. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC/22/B/2.

[24] Jasper Hall, 1772 report.

[25] K. H. Ledward (ed.), 'Journal, January 1765: Volume 72', in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 12, January 1764-December 1767* (London, 1936), 132–143.

for loyalists in the southern colonies. Further north Parker participated in the capture of New York City, and commanded the squadron that seized Newport, Rhode Island.

Jamaica had felt the full brunt of the revolutionary war after 1778, when France allied herself with the American rebels and Spain declared war on Britain creating a *de facto* alliance with the Americans. While Parker's time was mostly taken up with threats of Spanish and French invasions, local government tackled another threat from within. A proclamation issued throughout December 1780 offered a handsome reward of some £300 (£25,831) for 'the taking or killing the rebellious Negro Three-Fingered Jack', so-called because he had lost two fingers of one hand in a fight. Deemed 'the terror of Jamaica', this runaway slave turned bandit preyed on planters and soldiers, and robbed and killed unsuspecting travellers, although he never harmed a woman or child. The sound of his name struck fear into every heart, for Jack's natural bravery was protected by his powerful *obeah* – the word used in Jamaica to denote magic whereby supernatural powers are summoned for personal protection, or employed for the destruction of enemies. Yet still within a month the death was announced of 'that daring freebooter' after Jack was surprised by three Maroons. But the end of his life was the beginning of his story. Jack became a legend of heroic proportions for many decades to come, after Bro. Dr Benjamin Moseley introduced Three-fingered Jack to the British public by way of a supplement to his *Treatise on Sugar*, where he narrates Jack's life and his use of *obeah* to maintain his power.

Moseley had studied medicine in London, Paris, and Leyden before his migration to Jamaica in 1767 as a surgeon apothecary and later surgeon general. He was fond of study and local folklore, especially *obeah*, and had an unusual introduction to Freemasonry. During a visit to the Bay of Honduras Moseley was captured by the Spanish and incarcerated alongside several brethren of the Amity Lodge including its Master, Dr Walter Davidson, and a host of British logwood cutters. Moseley and Davidson were among those who made good their escape to Kingston, where the Amity Lodge continued to meet, and Moseley was one of its new initiates.[26] Dr Davidson had a great reputation for curing cancers and set up a joint medical practice with Moseley, who began writing his compelling tale of Three-fingered Jack:

> I saw the *obi* of the famous Negro robber, Three-fingered Jack … The Maroons who slew him brought it to me … [it] consisted of the end of a goat's horn, filled with a compound of grave dirt, ashes, the blood of a black cat and human fat, all mixed into a kind of paste … They came upon Jack before he perceived them. He was roasting

[26] Davidson, reporting to Grand Lodge, 10 June 1782, on the relocation of Amity Lodge, and enclosing funds to record five new members including Moseley. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 22/B/8.

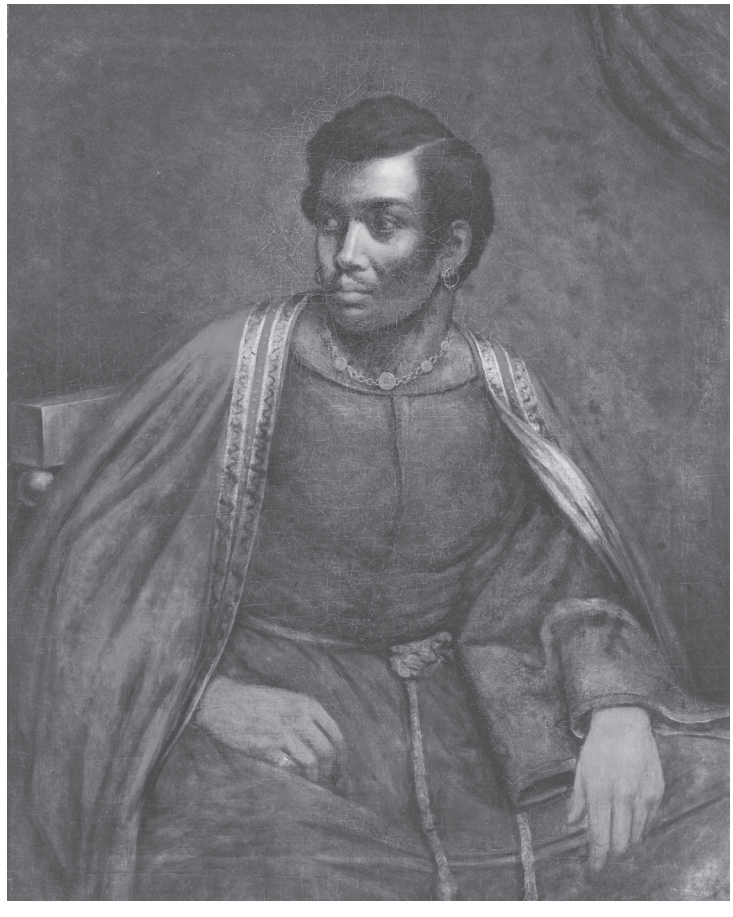

Fig. 1. Bro. Ira Aldridge as Othello. He played the role of Three-fingered Jack to packed theatres throughout Britain and Ireland. © National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

> plantains by a little fire on the ground, at the mouth of a cave. This was a scene not where ordinary actors had a common role to play …[27]

Moseley's vivid prose turned into a transatlantic publishing phenomenon. Jack became the subject of plays, musicals, pamphlets, and several novels. One of them, *The Life and Exploits of Three-Fingered Jack* by William Burdett, went through ten editions, and a serio-pantomime *Obi; or, Three-finger'd Jack* opened at London's Theatre Royal in 1800, and was staged in New York the following year. The original cast was entirely white, per-

[27] B. Moseley, *A Treatise on Sugar: With Miscellaneous Medical Observations* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1799), 173–180.

forming the roles of the enslaved in 'blackface' – essentially burnt cork or tallow mixed with soot to achieve a sable hue – until 1830, when the script was adapted as a melodrama with the renowned African American actor, Ira Aldridge, playing Three-fingered Jack. In addition to enthralling audiences with his Othello Ira Aldridge won fame for playing other Shakespearean roles including Shylock, Macbeth, Richard III, and King Lear all in 'whiteface', that is wearing white make-up and a wig. Aldridge not only revolutionized transatlantic theatre performance, but he also played a similar role in Freemasonry. According to the Irish registers Ira Aldridge was initiated in Lodge No. 588, Donegal on 26 March 1838, and was exalted into the Grand Royal Arch Chapter, Dublin the following year. He romanced his role as a Freemason while addressing the brethren of St Patrick's Lodge No. 50, Dublin: 'To be sure, I am that *rara avis* in Masonry, that black swan in the existence of which the ancients disbelieved.'[28]

From its earliest days as an English colony Jamaica had attracted touring and professional actors, but the high point of colonial theatre in the island occurred during the American Revolution, when the Continental Congress clamped down on all forms of frivolous entertainment including plays. The American Company thrived in Jamaica at this time, although its actor manager, David Douglass, and most of his troupe originally came from London, and at least nine of the members including Douglass were Freemasons.[29]

In 1782, when Jamaica faced the deadly threat of a combined French/Spanish naval/military invasion, the American Company scheduled several performances to help relieve the tension. The actors played on, and on, until a dispatch boat swept into Port Royal with news of a British sea victory at the Battle of the Saints. Jamaica went wild with joy and the Freemasons held a charity performance of the comedy *The School for Scandal* with a Masonic prologue and epilogue. It was customary in those days for a Grand Master to request a play, which he attended with his officers and brethren in full regalia. During such performances the leading actor and actress would deliver a specially written prologue and epilogue extolling the virtues of Freemasonry. On this occasion the prologue featured two Freemasons, Thomas Wignell as Sir Timothy Tattle, a fop, and William Moore in the role of a Master Mason. Following the play, the wife of Bro. Owen Morris recited a Masonic epilogue, and Bro. Stephen Woolls, the company's vocalist, had the audience swaying in unison as he sang a Masonic song to the tune of *From the East breaks the Morn*.[30]

[28] *Dublin Evening Packet*, 27 December 1838, 3.

[29] Douglass was the actor manager responsible for the expansion of professional theatre in the American colonies prior to the Revolutionary War, although his theatre career had begun in Kingston around 1751, when he arrived as one of a troupe of players recruited in London. He was a member of the Williamsburg Lodge (Virginia) and the Charles Town Lodge (South Carolina).

[30] *Royal Gazette*, 27 April 1782, 1.

Shortly afterwards on 6 July 1782 William Moore published the first Masonic book in Jamaica, *The Elements of Free-Masonry Delineated.* This neat little volume opens with an informative register of all the lodges in Jamaica under the English Constitution, their officers, and meeting places. There follow several of the popular serenades and prologues performed at the theatre in Kingston before continuing with items from Robert Trewman's *The Principles of Freemasonry Delineated* (published in 1777), on which several eighteenth-century Masonic handbooks were modelled. Heading the list of subscribers is Adam Anderson, the grandson of James Anderson, the Scottish Presbyterian and historian who compiled *The Book of Constitutions* for the Premier Grand Lodge in 1723. When Anderson died, his widow Ann left London to live in Jamaica where their son, a medical doctor also named James, had settled with his wife and son, Adam.[31] Like his father before him Adam Anderson was sent to Aberdeen to study medicine, and he returned to Jamaica, where he purchased a pimento walk in the parish of St Ann and named it Huntly.[32] He continued to practise as a doctor, marry, have a large family and enlarge the Huntly acreage in partnership with Cosmo Gordon, a Scottish merchant from Aberdeenshire and Master of the Seville Lodge in the same parish.

Sir Peter Parker went from strength to strength on his return to London, ultimately becoming Admiral of the Fleet and Deputy Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge from 1787 until his death in 1811. It was Parker who broke Jamaica's tradition of electing Provincial Grand Masters 'upon the spot' by recommending Thomas Howard, 3rd Earl of Effingham as Jamaica's Provincial Grand Master in 1790. This was a timely appointment, since Effingham had recently been selected as the new governor of Jamaica. Following family tradition Effingham had entered the army after leaving Eton, and was well-known for resigning his commission at the outbreak of the American Revolution because he refused to draw his sword upon a fellow countryman. A dedicated Freemason, Effingham had served as Acting Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge from 1782 until 1789, the most remembered event of his tenure being the granting of a charter to Prince Hall of African Lodge No. 459 of Boston, Massachusetts in September 1784.

Effingham's Jamaica posting coincided with the historic slave rebellion in the neighbouring French colony of St Domingue that began in August 1791. But Effingham, not a well man, was dead by November and Major General Adam Williamson, the Jamaica garrison commander, not only assumed governorship of the island, but as a time-honoured Freemason he neatly stepped into Effingham's shoes as Provincial Grand Master. Then came word that the French King Louis XVI had been guillotined. In the weeks that followed the French Republic declared war on Britain, and Williamson received

[31] Dr James Anderson (Jnr) had married in London and it was probably he and his wife Jane who baptized their son, Adam, at St Anne Soho in February 1740. I am grateful to Professor Susan Sommers for sharing this citation.

[32] Indenture dated 6 June 1767. Liber 223, f. 57. Island Record Office, Jamaica.

orders to invade St Domingue, quell the insurrection, and occupy the country. Despite a devastating outbreak of yellow fever the British troops captured Port-au-Prince, and in the optimism that followed Williamson was appointed governor of St Domingue, although his governorship became notorious for military losses and escalating costs. Fluent in French and fond of drinking, Williamson spent lavishly, both his own money and the government's, in his efforts to foster support for British rule. He was recalled, the British withdrew, the French failed in their bid to retake the colony, and ultimately the rebel armies were victorious. On the first day of January 1804 Haiti, the black republic, declared its independence.

Where did Jamaican Freemasonry stand at this time? The answer is simply that no new lodges had been warranted by the Premier Grand Lodge and the candle of their life together was about to go out. Before Effingham left London, he had been warned by a Jamaican informant that 'the brethren' were being seduced from 'their allegiance to the truly ancient Grand Lodge of England by the Antients.'[33]

It is well known that the Antients Grand Lodge was founded in London in 1751 mainly by Irish brethren who had been ostracized by the Premier Grand Lodge. The new lodge members called themselves 'Antients', cementing their claim as the only ones who preserved the ancient customs of Freemasonry. As a result their rivals in the Premier Grand Lodge were automatically dubbed 'Moderns', and the two lodges set to compete for the next sixty-two years, neither recognizing each other as 'regular' until 1813, when they amalgamated to form the United Grand Lodge of England. Even though the Moderns had warranted their last lodge in Jamaica (the St Andrew's) in 1778, they would continue to dominate Freemasonry in the island until the late 1790s when the Antients became pre-eminent. Yet the pace of shift during those twenty years was more of a leisurely seduction rather than the violently expressed claims of 'invasion' and 'reprisals' in the literature.

The Antients had warranted their first Jamaican lodge at Old Harbour in 1763, but no returns were made and the lodge lapsed. Their second lodge, the Harmony, chartered nine years later in 1772 at Green Island, also appears to have lapsed, since there is no record of it after 1773.[34] And there's the rub. When the Moderns warranted Lodge No. 483 at Green Island two years later, Masonic historian, Robert F. Gould, claimed that the Antients saw this as an assault on their authority and retaliated by constituting Lodge No. 233 in Kingston, the heart of Moderns territory. But there was no lodge working in Green Island at that time. As for the supposed Antient Lodge No. 233 in Kingston it never saw the light of day, the warrant never being opened. Apparently several of the petitioners had opted to join a Scottish lodge, and when the Antient warrant arrived

[33] Letter dated 30 October 1789 in R. Wright, 'Freemasonry on the Island of Jamaica', *Transactions of the American Lodge of Research,* Vol. III, No. 1, 135.

[34] For reasons unknown this lodge continued to be listed in *Ahiman Rezon* for 1804, 1807 and 1813.

they gave it to a Liverpool merchant with instructions to return it on their behalf.[35] *The Jamaica Almanac* of 1784 records an earlier Antient Lodge, the St James, working in Kingston alongside another lodge, the Jerusalem, possibly consecrated at an even earlier date. Both these lodges had sketchy, short lifespans and were soon off the roll.

By 1794 we tread on firmer ground. Four lodges had been warranted to form the core of Antient Freemasonry in Jamaica: first Union No. 257 in Kingston, and two in Port Royal – the Artillery established by members of the Royal Train Artillery, and Harmony 281 which made its debut with a robust membership of tavern keepers, shopkeepers, shipwrights, and maritime pilots. Then came the Royal Lodge No. 282 at Kingston, which is still working under the same name as No. 297, the oldest lodge in Jamaica. Originally constituted as No. 699 by a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1789, the brethren developed 'a hearty desire for the prosperity of the Craft of Antient Freemasonry' and successfully petitioned the Antients for a warrant in 1794. Whether it was a case of seduction or simply an expedient move at the time, Irish 699 made the transition to Antient 283 with its identity intact, since the Antients themselves were unmistakably Irish in origin. As such the naked hand holding the trowel taken from the arms of the Operative Craft, which all Irish Lodges were constitutionally bound to have impressed on their seals, remains the distinguishing feature of the Royal Lodge banner and seal to this day.

All four Antient lodges, the Union, Artillery, Harmony, and Royal were active from the start and their make-up reveals more artisans and middle-ranking men who continued to work in apparent harmony with the Moderns. Bro. James Fannin, a Past Master of the Union Lodge, Montego Bay, and publisher of the *Cornwall Chronicle* in the same town, reported in 1788 that a major Masonic event held in Kingston to lay the foundation stone for a Presbyterian Meeting House was 'attended by the brethren of the different Lodges, Antient and Modern.' And this was still true in 1791, when the St Andrew's Lodge celebrated the Festival of St Andrew 'with a great number of visiting brethren both Antient and Modern.'[36] On this occasion a soul-stirring sermon by the Rector of St Andrew Parish Church, the Revd Bro. John Campbell, focused on 'unity' peaking with the passage from Romans 12:5, 'and every one members one of another'. Perhaps the clerical Freemasons of Jamaica helped smooth the path of acceptance between the two Grand Lodges, so harmony triumphed over rivalry in a truly Masonic way. The only friction appears to have been between the Antients themselves, as they adapted to different

[35] Ebenezer Daniell, Secretary, Royal Lodge reporting to Robert Leslie, Antient Grand Secretary, 1 May 1795. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 22/C/11. There is no record of these Masons joining a Scottish lodge, they eventually joined Antient lodges.

[36] *Daily Advertiser*, Kingston, 6 December 1791.

rituals with the act of 'passing Master Masons through the chair near creating a schism amongst us,' reported the secretary of the Royal Lodge.[37]

The Antients held their first Provincial Grand Lodge in Jamaica in December 1797 and from that time many lodges under the Moderns ceased to work, and we find the Jews playing a far more prominent role in Freemasonry. Despite the membership of several Jews in various Moderns lodges over the years, the early membership indicates they had little or no involvement in their formation and very few officers. By 1797 however thirty-six of the forty-eight members of Union No. 257 in Kingston were Jews, and they petitioned for a new lodge, since 'we' in the Union Lodge 'were too numerous'.[38] This led to the chartering of the Friendly Lodge of Kingston, which continues to flourish to this day, although it always had some and now several non-Jewish members.

From 1819 to 1840 no English lodges were warranted in Jamaica, and between 1831 and 1858 there was no Provincial Grand Lodge in the island. All lodges reported directly to the United Grand Lodge of England, while Jamaica adjusted itself to the new social order created by Emancipation. Before this was achieved much heated public and parliamentary debate took place in England, while in Jamaica itself there had been many individual responses to the central objective of civil rights and the end of the hated slave system. From 1829 *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press* published in Kingston by two prominent free men of colour, Edward Jordon and Robert Osborn, waged a relentless campaign for civil rights for the free coloureds and blacks. Running in tandem with their efforts came Bro. Moses Delgado of the Friendly Lodge, the foremost agitator for Jewish emancipation.[39] Despite their freedom to worship openly in Jamaica Jews were disbarred from public office, could not vote, or serve on juries. Partly because of *The Watchman's* efforts the Jamaican Assembly passed a General Privilege Bill in 1830 making free coloureds and blacks the legal equals of whites, and the following year the Jews gained full political rights thanks mainly to the work of Bro. Delgado. Once they had won their own battle, Edward Jordon and Robert Osborn used *The Watchman* as a weapon for the anti-slavery struggle, Jordon himself being charged with treason and imprisoned for sedition after publishing an editorial concluding:

> We shall be happy with other friends of humanity to give a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, until we bring the system down … knock off the fetters, and let the oppressed go free.[40]

[37] Ebenezer Daniell to Robert Leslie, Grand Secretary (Antients) 20 December 1794. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 22/C/7.

[38] Solomon Morales, Provincial Grand Secretary to Robert Leslie, 17 June 1797. UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 AR/1303/3.

[39] And Acting Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 1828.

[40] *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 7 April 1832, 5–6.

Jordon's trial came in the wake of Samuel Sharpe's Christmas rebellion of 1831, Jamaica's largest and last slave revolt that engulfed the western parishes. And yet that was not the plan of its organizer, who belonged to Samuel Sharpe, a lawyer of Montego Bay and a member of the Cornwall Lodge in that town. The enslaved Sharpe had taken his master's name with servile custom and some measure of respect having 'no reason to find fault with the treatment he had received as a slave.' In truth the enslaved Sharpe was an educated man, married with a family, and a Baptist deacon with the freedom to travel and preach in that capacity, but he 'felt acutely the degradation and the monstrous injustice of the system, and was bent upon its overthrow.'[41] Under the cover of Baptist religious meetings Samuel Sharpe planned a sit-down strike of all the enslaved in the western parishes. He appointed a delegate on each of the estates who would inform the overseers when they returned from the Christmas holidays that the slaves would withhold their labour until the owners agreed to pay them for their work, and thus affirm their freedom. Regrettably, militant elements took over Sharpe's carefully formulated plan, and roamed the countryside setting fire to several estates. The terrified planters and their families fled, leaving some 60,000 slaves suddenly freed and uncertain of what to do next. It took two weeks for the military to regain control of the affected areas and Sharpe gave himself up claiming all responsibility for conceiving this bid for freedom. He died on the gallows and Bro. Sharpe tried in vain to obtain his namesake's body for a decent burial, but such an act he was told would have an 'evil effect upon the minds of the slaves.'[42]

The plantocracy blamed the dissenting missionaries for Sharpe's rebellion. Indeed it was dubbed the Baptist War, because so many of the insurgents were associated with that church. As a result an extremist organization of proslavery die-hards, the Colonial Church Union, was formed dedicating itself to silencing the Nonconformist missionaries by driving them out of Jamaica. The founders were two Freemasons, Col. James Hilton, a planter of St Ann parish, and the Revd Bro. George Wilson Bridges, the Anglican Rector of St Ann, both members of the Seville Lodge in the same parish. Bro. Bridges had started stirring the pot of contention shortly after his initiation in 1827. He accused the Nonconformists of forcibly drawing the enslaved from the authority of their masters with a sermon preached before the Seville Lodge brethren at the Parish Church:

> They are teaching the labourers that they must adopt a different religion from the owners of the soil … Let it be said that the seeds of moral reformation were, in Jamaica, sown by Masons … let it be recorded that Jamaica owes the effort which res-

[41] J. Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1853), 118.

[42] Revd C. S. Reid, *Samuel Sharpe: From Slave to National Hero* (Kingston: Bustamante Institute for International Affairs, 1988), 94.

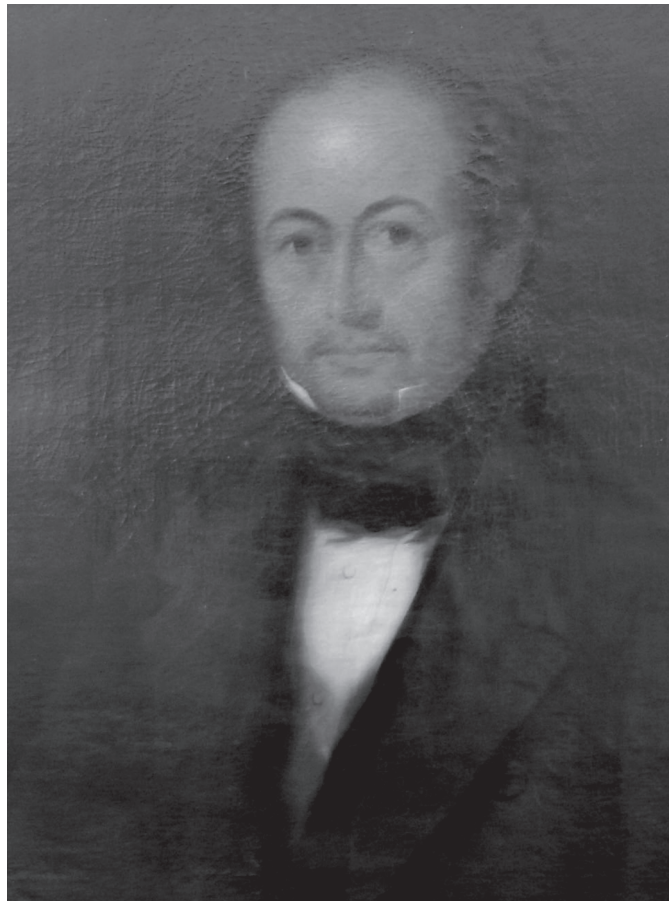

Fig. 2. Bro. Edward Jordon. © Dennis Ranston

> cues her from the grasp of the dissenters to the venerable example of our noble Institution. It will indeed be the most valuable jewel we can boast.[43]

The renegade Anglicans did not have the support of their church but certain newspapers applauded their 'good work' as they demolished Baptist, Methodist, and Moravian chapels and rectories, tarring and feathering the missionaries and their supporters in the process. The Union gutted seventeen chapels before a Royal Proclamation declared their organization illegal and a new Jamaican governor, Lord Mulgrave, publicly disgraced their leaders. Col. James Hilton was stripped of his command in the local mili-

[43] 'A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of St Ann, Jamaica before The Worshipful Master, The Officers and Brethren of The Seville Lodge by George Wilson Bridges.' Printed in Jamaica by Alex. Holmes, Falmouth, 1827. National Library of Jamaica.

Fig. 5: Bro. Robert Osborn. © Zoë Ranston

tia and his role as a magistrate along with eleven others. As for the Revd Bro. Bridges, he issued a Confession of Faith to his parishioners before leaving Jamaica to live in the wilds of Canada, as he himself said, 'under the heavy hand of an offended God'.[44] The Seville Lodge survived under new leadership and continued to meet regularly until it was erased in 1862, although its original warrant and Minute Books were never found.[45]

By some quirk of fate the activities of these misled Masons contributed to the emancipation process. Henry Whiteley, a young Methodist bookkeeper, forced to leave Jamaica under threat of having his throat cut, published a book in London that became

[44] O. Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (Kingston: Twin Guinep, 2003), 124.
[45] UGLE Library and Museum of Freemasonry. GBR 1991 HC 22/F/13.

another publishing triumph. His simple, striking descriptions of his own treatment and the relentless unmitigated cruelty meted out to the slaves sold two hundred thousand copies within a fortnight, providing gourmet grist for the mill of the abolitionists.[46]

Even before full freedom on that first day of August 1838, men of colour began joining the Jamaican lodges. In January the intrepid newspaper editor Edward Jordon was initiated in the Friendly Lodge of Kingston, and in May Robert Nunes, a livery stable keeper, joined the Royal Lodge.

By 1843 a Jamaican contributor wrote in the *Freemasons' Quarterly Review* that

> the number of brethren is certainly increasing; perhaps the most numerous is the Friendship [*sic*] of Kingston – being over 90 – consisting of Christians, Jews, and persons of colour, and it is delightful to witness the general harmony that exists.[47]

Edward Jordon's business partner, the printer Robert Osborn, was initiated in the Royal Lodge in 1845, appointed Junior Deacon the following year and installed as Master in 1849. He had become an influential politician after being elected to represent the parish of St Andrew in the House of Assembly. The son of a Scottish planter and a woman of colour, Osborn described himself as 'an immediate descendent of the Negro'[48] but made no mention of his mother's name or her legal status, and several sources suggest that he was born a slave. And yet if Osborn was enslaved at birth he would not have qualified to become a Freemason in 1845. From the first *Book of Constitutions* it was made quite clear that among other qualifications a Masonic candidate had to be 'free born', and although the Emancipation Act had freed all men the majority were not free born. For many years Bro. Dr Robert Crucefix, an English surgeon, had advocated replacing 'free born' with 'free agent' to allow previously enslaved men to participate in the benefits of Freemasonry.[49] Many Masons however considered these words an unchangeable ancient landmark, and it was not until 1 September 1847 that the incumbent Grand Master, Thomas Dundas, 2nd Earl of Zetland, addressed the United Grand Lodge of England on this matter.

> There are at the present moment, many men in Jamaica and other places who are free by the law of emancipation, and yet, their mothers having been slaves, they cannot conscientiously sign such a declaration knowing it to be untrue, and in the absence of that preliminary act we cannot initiate them. I should be glad to see it altered.[50]

[46] H. Whiteley, *Three Months in Jamaica, in 1832: comprising seven weeks on a sugar plantation* (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1833).

[47] Volume 1, London, 325. This almost certainly refers to the Friendly Lodge of Kingston.

[48] *Morning Journal*, 8 March 1844. There is no reference to his birth in the registers.

[49] *The Freemasons' Quarterly Review* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1847), 320.

[50] R. Macoy and G. Oliver, *General History, Cyclopedia and Dictionary of Freemasonry* (New York: Masonic Publishing Co., 1870), 314.

And Grand Lodge passed a resolution that saw the words 'free man' substituted for 'free born' wherever it occurred in the constitution or ritual. In years to come a Jamaican governor and non-Mason, Sir Sydney Olivier, found it especially gratifying that Masonry had taken root and continued to flourish in Jamaica.

> It is a great testimony of the true spiritual vitality of the Craft to observe a population recruited from different continents, and different races, gradually fusing themselves into one community.[51]

[51] *Daily Gleaner*, 12 March 1909, 4.