

# The Role of Men of Colour in the Early Period of Freemasonry

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**S**INCE THE FORMATION OF THE CURRENT GRAND LODGE SYSTEM IN FREEMASONRY, this peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols continues to reveal avenues for contemplation. This paper explores the myths, evidence, and role of men of colour in the early growth period of the institution. The reader will be able to gain a unique perspective of the lesser-understood participation among men of colour in Freemasonry outside a commonly and incorrectly perceived notion that the first black Freemason was a man by the name of Prince Hall. Key figures such as John Pine, Joseph Bologne, Angelo Soliman, Comte de St. Laurent, and John Bobey will be examined from a historical and Masonic perspective. The findings will illustrate and challenge conventional narratives which suggest that access to Freemasonry was categorically denied to men of colour. There are instances that provide a differing viewpoint with implications that transcend and question the legacy of this universal 'Brotherhood of Men.'

## John Pine (1690–1756)

John Pine was a famous English engraver and Freemason. He is known in the art world for several works of art. He was appointed as an engraver of the seals and then as Blue-mantle Pursuivant in the College of Arms, which brought not only a further salary but a residence in the College in London.

Some have suggested that Pine was one of the earliest Freemasons of colour, namely because of paintings by his friend Hogarth. Hogarth was well-known for his satirical painting ‘O, The Roast Beef of Old England or The Gate of Calais.’<sup>1</sup> Being very anti-French and anti-Catholic, Hogarth shows himself being arrested by some French soldiers, and caricatures Pine in the painting as a slobbering friar lunging after a huge piece of English beef being carried by a cook.

Andrew Prescott writes that ‘Pine pleaded with Hogarth not to mock him in this way, but Hogarth was unrelenting. Pine was known as “Friar Pine” for the rest of his life. Hogarth felt guilty about his treatment of his friend, and after Pine’s death, painted an affectionate portrait of him in the style of Rembrandt.’<sup>2</sup>

One will find several mentions of Pine’s race without any substantial proof being provided to support the conclusions that he was a man of colour.<sup>3</sup> For example, on a number of Prince Hall educational materials, the following appears under ‘Prince Hall, Myths, Legends and Facts’:

### WHO WAS THE FIRST BLACK FREEMASON?

A: If John Pine (born 1690, died 1756) was not the first Negro made a mason in England he was not far behind. He was a member of the lodge at Globe Tavern, Morgate in 1725 where his name was spelled ‘Pyne’. He was an engraver and a close friend of the painter Hogarth. He became famous in his day by being the engraver who produced the beautiful frontis-piece to Dr. James Anderson’s *Constitutions* of 1723. The same engraving was used again in the 1738 edition of Anderson’s *Constitutions*.<sup>4</sup>

## Joseph Bologne de Saint-George

Joseph Bologne was born on 25 December 1745 in Baillif, Basse-Terre, on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. He died on 10 June 1799 in Paris, France. He was the

<sup>1</sup> No1464 ‘The Roast Beef of Old England’ or ‘The Gate of Calais’, 1748. Oil on canvas 788•945 (31•37 5/8) Inscribed ‘For Mad.m Grandsire at Calais’ on label attached to the cloth under the piece of beef. Presented by the Duke of Westminster to the National Gallery in 1895; transferred to the Tate Gallery in 1951.

<sup>2</sup> A. Prescott, ‘John Pine: A Social Craftsman’, *Masonic Quarterly* 10 (July 2004); <http://freemasoninformation.com/2009/11/prince-hall-myths-legends-and-facts/>; Beaverbrook Foundation, Fredricton, New Brunswick; Beckett 1949, Fig.185.

<sup>3</sup> Prescott, ‘John Pine’, 2004; ‘John Pine Noted Masonic Engraver was Black’, *The Phylaxis Journal*, Vol. 2.3., Article 88 (September 1975). *The Phylaxis Collection One, January 1974–September 1976* (2017).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aul14.org/masonicfaq.shtml>;

son of George Bologne de Saint-Georges and Nanon, an enslaved Senegalese woman. In spite of current conventions concerning slavery and colonialism, it is an important context to note that in 1571 the Parliament of Bordeaux set all slaves in the town free, and declared slavery illegal in France. As a result, there were several free people of colour residing in France and integrating into society. In 1748 the family returned to France and were received by Joseph's uncle, Phillip-Guillaume Tavernier de Boullongne, who had attained high rank in French society with the title of Monsieur de Préninville, head of the regional treasury.

Joseph and his mother quickly settled into their new surroundings and in October 1756, at the age of thirteen, he entered the fencing academy of Nicolas Texier de La Boëssière, an elite boarding school for the sons of the French aristocracy. There he excelled academically in mathematics, history, foreign languages, music, drawing, and dance. Joseph trained in fencing alongside La Boëssière's son and became a friend of the family. The younger La Boëssière later wrote describing Joseph's (from now referred to as Saint-George's) superb skills as a man of arms.<sup>5</sup> His training in horsemanship took place under the guidance of the Chevalier Dugast, principal of the Tuileries Riding School, one of the royal academies controlled by the Grand Ecuyer de France, but it was his fencing skills that delineated his historic stature. In 1765 a fencer named Picard insulted Saint-George and challenged him to a duel. Saint-George at first refused, but his father promised him a new carriage if he fought and won, which he did with great ease. There are several stories about Joseph's fencing battles in France and England. It was in 1766 that he suffered his first defeat in a duel with the famed Italian fencer, Giuseppe Gianfaldoni, who praised Saint-George as the best fencer on the European continent.<sup>6</sup>

In a further example of his legacy, the fencing mask is said to have been invented in 1780 by the French master, Texier de la Boessiere, with help from the famous fencer and duelist, the Chevalier St-Georges. This device was a significant turning point in the sport's development, vastly reducing the risk of fatal injuries and enabling techniques and strategies to be radically reformed. La Boessiere, an influential member of the French Academy of Arms, advocated that fencers should not advance or retreat at all during their bouts, arguing that they should finish exactly where they started, and his mask facilitated such an approach.<sup>7</sup>

Several of France's leading composers had enjoyed Saint-George's father's patronage in the past, and young Saint-George in turn was able to benefit from their musical training. He is said to have studied the violin with one of the great French virtuosos, Jean-

<sup>5</sup> M. La Boëssière, *Traité de l'art des armes : à l'usage des professeurs et des amateur* (Paris, 1818).

<sup>6</sup> A. Guédé, *Monsieur de Saint-George: Virtuoso, Swordsman, Revolutionary: A Legendary Life Rediscovered* (Picador, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/fencing-unmasked>

Marie Leclair the Elder, and in addition he mastered the harpsichord. By the late 1760s he received a musical dedication from François-Joseph Gossec, the composer at the centre of Parisian concert life. In 1769 Saint-George joined an orchestra called *Le Concert des Amateurs*, directed by Gossec, as first violinist, and in 1773, when Gossec moved on to a different conducting post, Saint-George became the group's director.

He composed and conducted for the private orchestra and theatre of the Marquise de Montesson, wife of the King's cousin, Louis Philippe I, Duke of Orléans. By 1772 he had written several violin concertos (works for violin and orchestra) for his own use as a performer. In 1781 he was the director of the *Concert de la Loge Olympique* which comprised sixty-five to seventy musicians. This orchestra commissioned Joseph Haydn to compose six symphonies (the 'Paris Symphonies' Nos 82–87), which Saint-George conducted on the night of their world première. As a composer and musician he was also selected for appointment as the director of the Royal Opera of Louis XVI. An avid musician, Saint-George wrote symphonies, roughly twenty-five concertos for violin and orchestra, string quartets, sonatas, and songs. He also wrote at least five operas:

- *Ernestine* (1777)
- *La partie de la chasse* (1778)
- *La fille-garçon* (1787)
- *Aline et Dupré* (1788)
- *Guillaume tout coeur* (1790)

He also wrote the Ballet *L'amant anonyme* (1780). Not content to be known as a great musician, St-George was sought after as a philanderer, with several high-society French women regarding him as a champion in love. He was affectionately described as having teeth like two rows of pearls set upon black velvet by mistresses who had a great appetite for *le vit nègre*.

John Adams, 2nd President of the USA, who spent a considerable time in France, wrote the following in his diary on Monday 17 May 1779:

L. (Landais) gave Us an Account of St. George at Paris, a Molatto Man, Son of a former Governor of Guadaloupe, by a Negro Woman. He has a sister married to a Farmer General. He is the most accomplished Man in Europe in Riding, Running, Shooting, Fencing, Dancing, Musick. He will hit the Button, any Button on the Coat or Waistcoat of the greatest Masters. He will hit a Crown Piece in the Air with a Pistoll Ball.<sup>8</sup>

Having served as a military man, St-George was made a colonel of 1,000 volunteers of colour commonly called the Legion of St-George, which played a pivotal role in defeating the 'Treason of Dumouriez.' His Lt Colonel was Thomas-Alexandre Dumas

<sup>8</sup> J. Adams, *Diary 29, 2 March–13 July 1779* [electronic edition], 'Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive, Massachusetts Historical Society', <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams>.

Davy de la Pailleterie, who was the father of Alexandre Dumas. After a falling out with Dumas St-George was dismissed from the army on 25 September 1793. He was acquitted after spending eighteen months in jail, and then sent to Haiti as a commissioner to observe conditions of the revolutions there. He returned to France in 1796.

St-George is considered by most to be the first Black French Freemason. He was a member of *Les Neuf Soeurs* (Nine Sisters) in Paris under the Grand Orient of France. In 1784 François Jouve, the Worshipful Master of United Hearts Lodge, back in Guadeloupe wrote in defence of a Bro. Antoine Aurange, who was under scrutiny for marrying a mulatto woman, in the following manner: 'Did we not have as our brother, Brother Saint-George of the respectable Lodge of the Nine Sisters?'<sup>9</sup> It is estimated that St-George was initiated in or around 1773, and he is said to have been a member of at least three lodges (Social Contract, Lodge Olympic of the Perfect Esteem, and Nine Sisters).

His cousin was initiated into the Lodge of Reunited Friends in 1773, and his father, Guillaume-Pierre, in 1778. In the Minutes of the St John Scottish Lodge of the Social Contract dated 13 December 1780 it is stated that St-George was received and given a seat next to the Worshipful Master as a *Chevalier de l'Aigle Noir* (Knight of the Black Eagle).

The French city of Marseilles is said to have hosted the oldest chapter of *Chevalier de l'Aigle Noir*. This Marseilles chapter was also involved in hermetic Masonry which spread throughout southern France up to the time of the French Revolution. Therefore it is not surprising to discover one in Lyon being led by Jean-Baptiste Willermoz and his brother Jacques in the 1760s.

In a letter that Willermoz wrote on 2 March 1763 to Chaillon de Jonville, General Substitute of the Grand Master of the *Grand Loge de France* he followed his signature with the following titles: Scottish Master, Grand Architect, Royal Arch, Eastern Knight, of the West, of the Sun, of the Black Eagle, Rose Cross, GIGech.K. (ie Grand Inspector, Grand Elu, Knight Kadosh). The grades higher than the Eastern Knight were practised in a chapter of the Black Eagle Knights.

The rank is also found in the twelve-degree system called the *Rite Ecossais Philosophique* ('Philosophic Scottish Rite'):

1st to 3rd: were the Knight of the Black Eagle or Rose + Cross of Heredom of the Tower.

4th: Knight of the Phoenix.

5°: Knight of the Sun.

<sup>9</sup> *Correspondance des loges avec le Grand Orient de France. Loges des colonies. Loges de Guadeloupe. Basse-Terre. Loge Coeurs Unis. 1767-1856* (Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des manuscrits. FM2 (516), Basse-Terre, Coeurs Unis ark:/12148/btv1b52510081d <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc87367c/ca59723340744179>

- 6°: Knight of the Iris.
- 7°: True Mason.
- 8°: Knight of the Argonauts.
- 9°: Knight of the Golden Fleece.
- 10°: Great Inspector Perfect Initiate.
- 11°: Great Inspector Perfect Initiate.
- 12°: Sublime Master of the Luminous Ring.

Ritualistically, the following is found: So what is the esoteric significance of the Black Eagle?

The Eagle was in the ancient world and in the ancient East the symbol of the Judge of the Souls, the Protector of the Tombs, in a word from World of the Dead. Black on one side, it means the Immediate Beyond, White, it evokes the Eternal Orient of Masonry. He was still the image of the Angel of Death, who was called the Retributor, for his inflexibility.<sup>10</sup>

In a published ritual of the degree, the Grand Commander recites this prayer:

Supreme Architect of the Universe! Source of all good and all Perfection, Leader and Inspirer of our Brothers, You who lead all the Beings of Nothingness to Life, from Darkness to Light, and from Slavery to Freedom, we dedicate all our actions to you.

That the Immanent Justice inspires them, that the inexorable Rigor executes them, and may the Infinite Mercy temperate them! Deign to reveal the depth of our Mysteries to all those who will be worthy of it, illuminates our spirits and strengthen our hearts, soak our souls and strengthen our arms so that all those who, one day, were 'chosen' and 'set apart' in view of your service, remain forever worthy of this knighthood which they were granted, and worthy of the Black Eagle, his living symbol. Amen.

The fact remains that Chevalier de St-George was a man of colour , who had attained a seat at the table of high society in France while still competing with personal social ills at that time. He was a Freemason, celebrated as France's first member of colour . He interacted with several Freemasons and notable individuals in the music world, and in the contemporary scene of his personal life he was heralded as skilled in all that he set his hands upon.

### Angelo Soliman

Angelo Soliman was born Mmadi Make around 1721 in northeastern Nigeria or Cameroon. He was a member of the Kanuri ethnic tribe, and at about the age of seven he was enslaved and brought to Messina, Sicily. One story describing him indicated that he

<sup>10</sup> *Renaissance Traditionnelle* (1992), 89:31.



Fig. 1. Angelo Soliman

chose his name Angelo out of respect for a care-giver by the name of Angela.<sup>11</sup> In 1734 he was given as a gift to Prince Georg Christian Furst von Lobkowitz, the imperial governor of Sicily. He became the Prince's valet, confidant and travelling companion.

Soliman became fluent in six languages, was a master swordsman, navigator, and a music composer. After the death of the Prince he was transferred to the house of Joseph Wenzel I, Prince of Liechtenstein where he rose to the rank of chief servant and tutor to the Prince's son, Aloys I. It is said that he ascended in Vienna's high society and joined a Masonic lodge where he is described as being a major intellectual influence on Austrian Emperor Joseph II, Count Franz Moritz von Lacy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Josef Haydn.

There is an American based group that is rooted with a philosophy that people of colour are descendants of the Moors who ruled North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula for over 700 years. Followers of this contemporary ethnocentric philosophy have

<sup>11</sup> P. Nettl, 'Angelo Soliman – Friend of Mozart', *Phylon 1940–1956*, Vol. 7. 1 (1946), 41–46: [www.jstor.org/stable/271283](http://www.jstor.org/stable/271283).



developed a system called Moorish Science with a complementary quasi-Masonic order called the Ancient Free Moorish Rite that is not recognized as regular Freemasonry.<sup>12</sup>

The group teaches that the

Ancient Moors originated a system of salvation which other cultures throughout the world freely emulated. Freemasonry was that system. It actually began in Africa and was then carried everywhere else, specific and custom-fit for each land and culture, teaching the people through the norms they could best understand and embrace. The Moors occupied and governed the Iberian Peninsula, mainly, and other parts of Europe at the time. Freemasonry (not necessarily so called at the time), their primary discipline, was a sacred science carefully maintained by high Masters. The Moorish governments were Masonic. All government officials were Freemasons who governed accordingly. The powers of Europe, unwilling to tolerate Moorish Rule or the Moorish presence in Europe, moved violently against the Moors. And as European forces united to finally defeat the Moors, killing hundreds of thousands, they fractured Freemasonry and altered its course forever.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Moorish Rite Angelo is revered as the ‘Father of Pure Masonic Thought,’ ‘First Moorish Freemason,’ and a ‘patriarchal figure.’ In their history Angelo Soliman became the Grand Master of the lodge and helped change its ritual to include scholarly elements. This new Masonic direction essentially and rapidly influenced Masonic practice throughout Europe. In other words Angelo Soliman, the Moor, introduced esotericism and scholarship to Europeans, who adapted it for all of Freemasonry.

Fantastic as this story might be to learned scholars of history and Freemasonry, there are several who have a sound belief and utilize it to indicate how the origins of Freemasonry, as with other historical aspects of society and culture, have been co-opted from its indigenous creators in Africa, copied, and stolen by Europeans.

Fortunately there are records of Soliman’s activity in Freemasonry that do not lend themselves to hyperbole and conjecture. The lodge ‘True Harmony’ or *Zur wahren Eintracht* was originally a spin-off from the lodge *Zur gekrönten Hoffnung*, and it was founded on 12 March 1781. Its first Worshipful Master was a brother by the name of Ignaz Fischer, who was a court surgeon.

The Minutes of the Lodge of True Harmony show that Soliman attended for the first time on 20 July 1781 as a visiting brother. The ballot for his affiliation was held on 17 August 1781. There must have been one black ball cast in his ballot, as the Minutes reference the term *leuchtend*, which confirms this: otherwise it would have been *hell leuchtend*. An intervention by the Provincial Grand Lodge officer present at the meeting extolled Soliman’s virtue and value to the lodge; the brethren later decided to affiliate

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.moorishriteonline.net/moorishritefreemasonry.htm>

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*



him without a fee because of his financial situation. The Minutes show that they decided not only to affiliate him as a Fellowcraft Mason on 7 September but also to rectify him, which would be a 'healing' of this irregularity. He was healed because the brethren were unsure about the regularity of his mother lodge of the affiliation.<sup>14</sup>

This leads to the case and influence of Ignaz Edler von Born, also known as Ignatius von Born. He was a mineralogist and metallurgist, and a leading scientist during the 1770s in the age of Enlightenment. His interests included mining, mineralogy, palaeontology, chemistry, metallurgy, and malacology. The mineral bornite ( $\text{Cu}_5\text{FeS}_4$ ), a common copper ore mineral, was named in his honor. Ignaz Edler von Born was recommended to the lodge by Soliman within a year of the lodge's organization. He rapidly became the Worshipful Master of the lodge when Ignaz Fischer had to step down for emergency reasons. It was under von Born's leadership, and not that of Fischer as stated by Weisberger,<sup>15</sup> that the lodge was reformed and expanded to become an elite lodge with strong focus on literary, philosophical, and scientific exploration.

According to Lennhof/Posner, the German Masonic Standard Encyclopedia, Mozart was initiated in 1784 into the lodge *Zur Wohltätigkeit*. That lodge was later merged into a new lodge *Zur Neugekrönten Hoffnung*. Mozart was a regular visitor at *Zur Wahren Eintracht*, and through their influence he received his second degree there instead of his home lodge.

Minutes show Soliman and Mozart interacting several times. Soliman served as the Master of Ceremonies for several years in *Zur Wahren Eintracht*, assisting with the new members being prepared for entry and initiation. The tragedy of Soliman's life lies in the fact that instead of receiving a Christian burial (a fact lost on the Moorish Rite group who celebrate Soliman as a Muslim), Soliman's body was, at the request of the director of the Imperial Natural History Collection, skinned, stuffed, and made into an exhibit.<sup>16</sup> Decked out in ostrich feathers and glass beads, his body was on display until 1806 alongside stuffed animals, transformed from a reputable member of intellectual Viennese society into a disgusting specimen of inhumanity. Soliman's daughter, Josephine, and his friends protested continually about the horrendous treatment of his corpse, and begged that he be provided with a proper burial, but to no avail. It was a fire that destroyed the museum in the October Revolution of 1848 that brought this chapter to a close.

<sup>14</sup> H.-J. Irmen, *Die Protokolle der Wiener Freimaurerloge 'Zur wahren Eintracht' (1781–1785): Herausgegeben von Hans-Josef Irmen in Zusammenarbeit mit Frauke Heß und ... Bewegungen in Mitteleuropa 1770 - 1850* (Frankfurt: Broschiert, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> R. W. Weisberger, 'The True Harmony Lodge of Vienna', *Heredom* Vol 6 (1997).

<sup>16</sup> W. Seipel, 'Mummies and ethics in the museum', in K. Spindler, H. Wilfing, E. Rastbichler-Zissernig, D. zur Nedden, H. Nothdurfter (eds), *Human Mummies. The Man in the Ice*, Vol. 3 (Vienna: Springer, 1996).

## John Richardson Pimrose Bobey or Bobby

In the Exhibition Hall of the Royal College of Surgeons of England there hangs a painting of a child of African descent who has piebaldism. The condition shown is very rare; and the picture has many other points of interest. The inscription at the bottom right hand corner reads:

The true picture of Mary Sabina, who was born Oct. 12th 1736 at Matuna, a Plantation belonging to the Jesuits in the city of Cartagena in America, of two negro slaves named Martiniano and Patrona.<sup>17</sup>

Piebaldism is a condition characterized by the absence of cells called melanocytes in certain areas of the skin and hair. Melanocytes produce the pigment melanin, which contributes to hair, eye, and skin colour. The absence of melanocytes leads to patches of skin and hair that are lighter than normal. Approximately 90% of affected individuals have a white section of hair near their front hairline (a white forelock). The eyelashes, the eyebrows, and the skin under the forelock may also be unpigmented. People with piebaldism usually have other unpigmented patches of skin, typically appearing symmetrically on both sides of the body. There may be spots or patches of pigmented skin within or around the borders of the unpigmented areas.<sup>18</sup>

In most cases the unpigmented areas are present at birth, and do not increase in size or number. This is slightly different from Vitiligo, which is a condition that causes patchy loss of skin colouring or depigmentation. The average age of onset of vitiligo is in the mid-twenties, but it can appear at any age. It tends to progress over time, with larger areas of the skin losing pigment. Some people with vitiligo also have patches of pigment loss affecting the hair on their scalp or body.<sup>19</sup>

John Richardson Pimrose Bobey was born on 5 July 1774 near Kingston, Jamaica, to enslaved parents. At the age of twelve he was sent to Liverpool and three years later to London, where he was bought by a showman named Clarke. It was in Clarke's exhibition at Exeter Change that John Hunter saw and drew an illustration of him. In 1791 German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach visited London for the second time, and on this occasion saw the piebald youth, an illustration and description of whom he included in the third edition of his *Natural Varieties of Mankind*, published in 1795 and dedicated to Sir Joseph Banks.<sup>20</sup> Blumenbach is considered the father of

<sup>17</sup> J. M. S. Dobson, 'The Variegated Damsel', *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England*, Vol. 22.4. (1958), 273–278.

<sup>18</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine <https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/piebaldism>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. <https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/vitiligo>

<sup>20</sup> Dobson, J. Mary Sabina, The Variegated Damsel. *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 22(4), 273–278. 1958

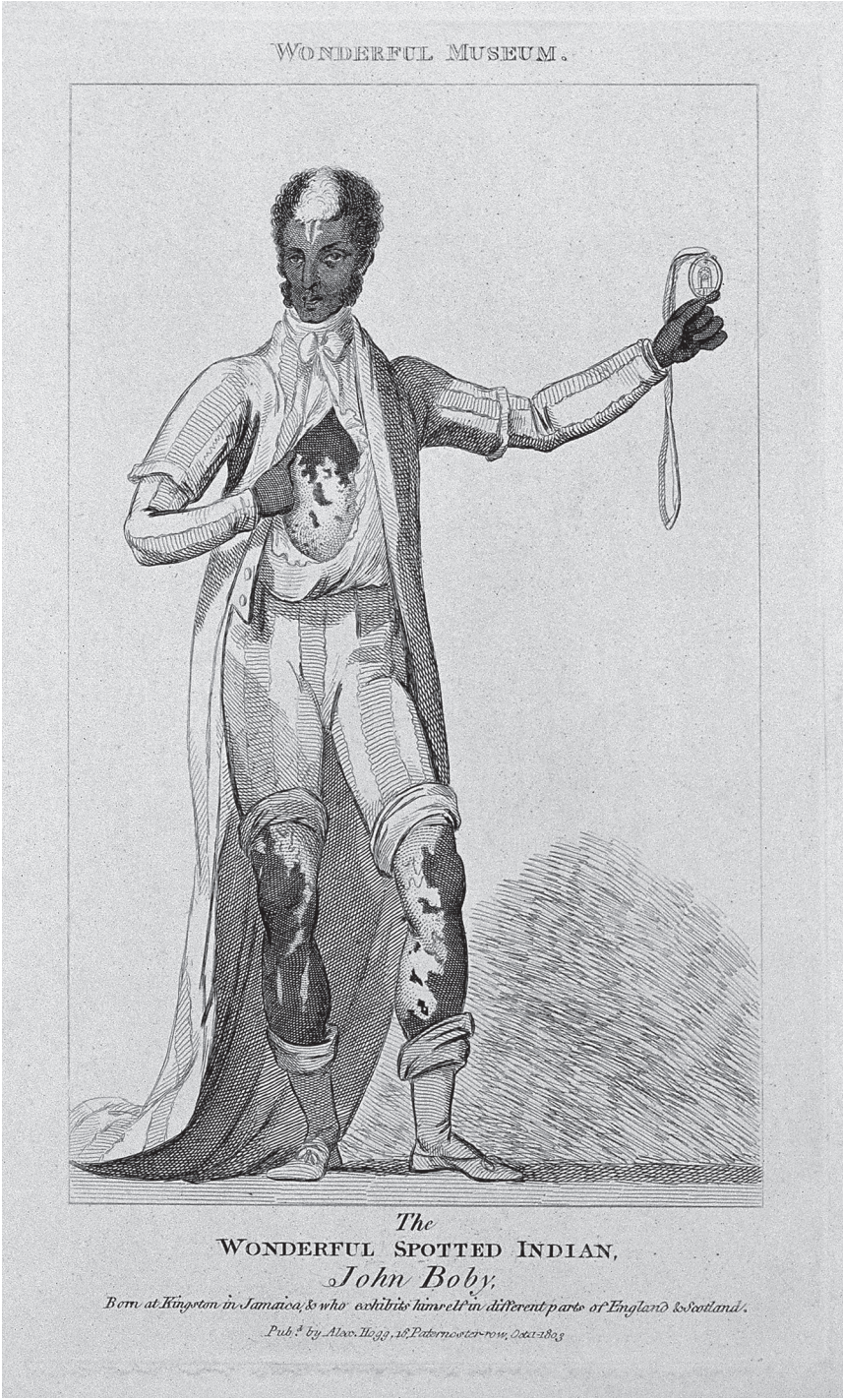


Fig. 2. John Richardson Pimrose Bobey



physical anthropology, and he had proposed one of the earliest classifications of the races of mankind.

By age twenty-three Bobey had been excessively showcased and described as a ‘Traveller a spotted Indian’ [a spotted Indn].<sup>21</sup> The following is a full description of his life and experiences from that period:

JOHN RICHARDSON PIMROSE BOBEY.

This Negro, who can scarcely be distinguished from any other black when dressed and with his hat on, may justly be considered as a very remarkable phenomenon of nature. Part of his forehead is white ; the hair and skin from thence to the back part of his head are as white as the finest wool, and shine like silver, while the rest of his head and hair is black as jet. On other parts of his body, on his breast, arms, and legs, the black is likewise intermixed with white spots, equal in delicacy to the color of any European.

This extraordinary man was born at Guangaboo, in the parish ‘of St. John, near Kingston, Jamaica, July 5, 1774, of black parents, who were slaves in the Rev. Mr. Pilkington’s plantations. His mother, who had four children, besides was so alarmed when she discovered this her youngest was spotted-skinned, that she could not be prevailed upon to give him the breast. Such an astonishing child soon excited the attention of his master, and other gentlemen in the plantations, but particularly of Mr. Blundell, an eminent merchant of Liverpool, who happened to be in Jamaica, when he was only a few months old, and declared him to be the greatest curiosity in nature he ever saw.

As soon as he had completed his second year he was, (at the suggestion of Mr. Graham of Kingston and others) exhibited as a public show and a likeness of him was painted and sent to England. It was afterwards deposited in St. Andrew’s college at Glasgow as a singular *lusus naturae*.

On the death of the Rev. Mr. Pilkington, the plantations and slaves, including poor Bobey, his father and mother, were sold to Arthur Mackenzie, Esq. the present proprietor, and with whom his relations still remain ...

Daniel Dale, Esq. uncle to Mr. Pilkington, is at present in the possession of many plantations in Jamaica, and likewise became the master of Bobey, who, at the age of 12 years was sent by him to England, and was christened at St. John’s church, Liverpool, by the Rev. Mr. Hudson; the addition of Richardson was made to his name in honor of a gentleman, a very reputable merchant at Liverpool, who was very partial to him. He was then sent to London, where he arrived on the memorable day when his Majesty attended by the most distinguished of his subjects went in procession to St. Paul’s cathedral to return thanks on his recovery in 1789. He was first exhibited in the Haymarket at 2s. 6d. each for about two months. Soon after his arrival in England, he was sent by Sir W. Bogle, of Bloomsbury-square, for the inspection of the University of

<sup>21</sup> W. Granger, ‘Account of John Richardson Pimrose Bobey, the wonderful spotted Indian, lately known by the name of Pimrose at Pidcock’s Menage, &c. and to most of the Nobility in the Kingdom’, in *The New Wonderful Museum, and Extraordinary Magazine: Being a complete repository of all the Wonders, Curiosities, and Rarties of Nature and Art, from the Beginning of the World to the Present Years*. Vol. II. (London: W. Allen, Paternoster-Row, 1804), 711–715.

Oxford. The gentlemen of science there, particularly Dr. Thompson, concluded that the extraordinary spots on his skin, being so beautifully variegated all over his body, could not have originated from a fright of the mother, as in such case they would have been confined to *one particular part*: nor could they in any degree account for so singular a work of nature.

Mr. Clarke, the then proprietor of the wild beasts, etc. at Exeter Change, visiting this curiosity at the Haymarket, purchased him as an apprentice, by indentures, of Mr. Dale for 100 guineas, and he was in consequence exhibited at Exeter Change. The principal nobility of the kingdom now visited the Spotted Negro, who was also presented for inspection at Buckingham-House to their Majesties by Mr. Tenant, of Pentonville. Prince William of Gloucester frequently came to see him at Exeter Change, and Bobey being then placed near an Arabian savage, which was particularly attached to him, the Duke would frequently pretend to beat Bobey, while the consequent rage of the savage afforded much mirth to the company.

In process of time Mr. Clarke sold his Menagerie by auction, and Bobey on this occasion assisted to bring forward the lots of monkeys, and other animals. As soon as they were disposed of, it came to poor Bobey's turn to be offered for sale, but having during his short stay in England acquired some notions of our free constitution – having already felt the blessings of liberty, and being convinced that mankind cannot be sold here like brutes, as in his native country, with honourable indignation he refused to come forward, and, declared he would not be sold like the monkeys. Mr. Pidcock, the purchaser of the wild beasts, however, bought the remainder of his time by indenture, of Mr. Clarke for 50 guineas.

Bobey, having enlarged the circle of his acquaintance, and learning from his friends that no apprentice in this country could be transferred without his own consent, agreeably to their advice, still refused his concurrence to the sale, but continued in the service of Mr. Clarke for some months after the auction. Not contented, however, with Mr. Clarke's situation, he engaged himself with Mr. Pidcock at Exeter Change at a more liberal salary than what he had hitherto enjoyed. He left Pidcock after about four months service, and became the husband of an English lady, whose brother is principal painter to the Circus. For some time they visited the fairs in company with the exhibitors of wild beasts and from the great encouragement they received, they now resolved to set up in business for themselves. By a proper application of their savings, they soon made up a good collection of monkeys, birds, beasts, &c, and notwithstanding the expence of travelling, and the maintenance of five horses and men, such are the exertions and industry of this couple, and the satisfaction they give at all the principal fairs, that there is little doubt but in a short time they will accumulate a decent fortune.

During their exhibitions Bobey has been frequently examined and rubbed by some ignorant people, who have imagined that his skin was painted; but they have been soon satisfied that there was no deception. He is about 5 feet 8 inches high, well proportioned, his features regular, and, for one of the African race, may be considered handsome. He has a remarkable manner of imitating singing birds, particularly the sky-lark, thrush, blackbird, nightingale, and various others; also the young pig, puppy,

and other animals. He has been for some years a member of the first masonic societies in this kingdom, both of the ancient and modern orders. He very willingly submits, when required, to be examined by the curious, with respect to the reality of his spots. In conversation he is affable, and in his dealings so very correct, that we may venture to say there are many *white* characters who would be found more *black* and fuller of blemishes than this Spotted Negro.<sup>22</sup>

With respect to the Masonic reference above it is known that Bobey was initiated in Union and Crown Lodge in Glasgow, under the Grand Lodge of Scotland. He was later exalted as a Royal Arch Freemason on 5 January 1798 in Minerva Chapter No. 363, Hull, which was attached to the Moderns' Lodge, Minerva Lodge No. 363, Kingston upon Hull. One interesting illustration of Bobey at the Royal College of Physicians shows him holding a Royal Arch jewel. This is an inspiring story of a man with genetic disorder, born into slavery, taken to England, and paraded around as a novelty circus object, examined for medical interest, and yet obtaining his freedom and stature to marry and gain acceptance and membership into the fraternity of Freemasonry.

## Marie Antoine Nicolai Alexandre Robert Joachim Roume de St Laurent

The French Masonic researcher Jean-Marie Ragon wrote in 1853:

Under these circumstances, a mason arrived in New York in 1832, by the name of Marie Antoine Nicolai Alexandre Robert Joachim of Saint-Rose, Roume de Saint-Laurent, Marquis de Santa Rosa, Count de St. Laurent. He took on the rank of very powerful Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the 33rd and the last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the Supreme Chief of the ancient and modern Freemasonry, for the Earth, South America, Mexico, etc. of both seas, the Canary Islands, Puerto Rico, etc.,

This mason of a thousand names was represented as invested with the full powers of the Supreme Council that he presided in order to negotiate his meeting with that of New York, to form one, which embraced all those of America, and thus to bring to an end all the schisms which divided Scottish Rite masonry in this part of the world. His proposals were accepted, and accordingly, in New York, a power of attorney was adopted which took the name of United Supreme Council for Western Hemisphere of the last degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, which had as its Grand Commander Brother Elias Hicks and filled the same functions in the last Supreme Council of New York.

The new body published a manifesto in which he announced and made known its motives, calling to all the Scottish Rite masons of America. In the declaration was

<sup>22</sup> G. H. Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror: Reflecting a Faithful and Interesting Delineation of Male and Female Characters, Ancient and Modern, Collected and re-collected, from the most authentic sources* Vol. 2. (London: J. Cundee, 1807), 28–33.

the text of the treaty of union, in sixteen articles, dated April 5th, 1832, and a profession of faith, the principal dogmas of which were the independence of the rites and Masonic toleration<sup>23</sup>.

In 1861 Robert Folger in his history of the Ancient Accepted Rite offered this description:

In 1832, there arrived in New York City, the man of many names and titles, the Count St. Laurent, who took upon himself the title of Most Puissant Sovereign Grand Commander, ad vitam, of the Supreme Grand Council of the Thirty-third degree, Supreme Chief of Ancient and Modern Freemasonry for Newfoundland, North America, Mexico on both seas, the Canary Islands, etc. He found the old Supreme Council sleeping, in consequence of political and Masonic troubles, and he set himself to work to resuscitate it again. He searched around for the old surviving members, and finally succeeded in organizing the body with the Illustrious Bro. Elias Hicks as Grand Commander. He fixed the name of the body as the United Supreme Council, and intended that it should embrace all the Councils in the United States. He called to its aid all the Scottish Masons in America. This new body, composed of all the living members they could find, published and put forth a manifesto, in which it explained in full its motives for the new organization. It contained a Treaty of Union, in sixteen articles, dated April 5th, 1832, and also a profession of its principles, of which the principal dogmas were, the independence of all Masonic rites, and Masonic toleration. This Supreme Council prospered for a while, but owing partly to the tone of public feeling, and partly to some dissatisfaction among themselves, in about two years or a little more its action ceased. At the end of this period the Count St. Laurent went to France.<sup>24</sup>

The identity of Count de St Laurent had been reviewed and contested by several historians for centuries. He is relegated as a charlatan by some and revered as a conscientious benefactor by others. However, the story of Count de St Laurent starts first with another man by the name of Philippe-Rose Roume de Saint Laurent.

Philippe-Rose was born on 13 October 1743 in the Caribbean island of Grenada. The history of Grenada goes back before the fourteenth century, when it was settled by the indigenous native Caribs, who had displaced the earlier population of the other indigenous group in the region called the Arawaks. Christopher Columbus visited the island in 1498 and named it 'Concepcion', before it was renamed by the Spaniards after their city of Granada. A group of London merchants tried and failed to form a settlement in 1605 due in part to the fighting and aggressive resistance of the Caribs. The French launched more attacks against the native populations, and by 1674 they had gained control of the island. By 1753 the Caribs had been exterminated, and Grenada was in French

<sup>23</sup> J. M. Ragon, *Orthodoxie Maçonnique: Suivie De La Maçonnerie Occulte Et De L'initiation Hermétique* (Paris, 1853).

<sup>24</sup> R. B. Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, in Thirty-Three Degrees; a Full and Complete History with an Appendix* (New York, 1862).



possession with 100 sugar mills and 12,000 enslaved Africans working the industry. Britain took over from France in 1763 under the Treaty of Paris, and again in 1783 under the Treaty of Versailles. Britain introduced the cultivation of cacao, cotton, and nutmeg. By the time of the emancipation of slaves in 1833 the slave population had reached 24,000.

When Grenada fell under British rule in 1763, Roume's loyalty to France led him to take up the position of the only French member of His Britannic Majesty's Council, but he and four others were expelled by the acting Lieutenant-Governor in 1776 for impeding governmental business. His allegiance to the French motivated his subsequent refusal to join the militia against France, which earned him open disapproval from the British in Grenada. These events were two of several factors that motivated Roume to leave Grenada and travel to Trinidad.

When Roume first visited Trinidad in 1777, the island was still largely undeveloped. He befriended the Spanish officer Don Juan de Catilla, who was surveying Trinidad for the purpose of producing accurate maps. Roume joined de Catilla on his exploration of the island, during which time they examined Trinidad's economic prospects. In their report Roume proposed incentives for settlers and, in the interest of the new colonists, advocated the appointment of a governor who would encourage unity and harmony between the settlers.

Before he finally relocated to Trinidad in 1781, Roume travelled around the West Indies, encouraging residents of the other islands to settle in Trinidad. Governor Salaverría encouraged Roume to travel to Madrid and present his ideas to the authorities there. Roume went first to Paris, where he took the opportunity to inform the Spanish Ambassador of the state of affairs in the Caribbean. Knowing that the future of the island of Tobago was an issue at hand, Roume called for Tobago to remain under French rule, which it did.<sup>25</sup>

After much difficulty Roume was denied any meetings in Madrid with Count Galvez, the Minister for the Indies. Galvez was unwilling to share any credit for the plans for Trinidad. However, on 20 November 1783 the *cedula*, including Roume's proposals for Trinidad's development, was granted, notwithstanding Galvez's elimination of any credit to Roume himself. In extensive debt by the end of his voyage, Roume submitted a claim for re-imbursement, which Galvez disregarded.

St Domingue, being a valuable colony, was seen as vital to the French economy, so the news of revolution on the island posed a significant threat. In 1791 Roume was appointed magistrate and civil Commissioner, and he became a member of the *l'Institut*

<sup>25</sup> *Mémoire de M. Roume, commissaire et ordonnateur de l'isle de Tabago, chargé par le ministre de la Marine de répondre aux réclamations des hypothécaires anglois, qui réfute un mémoire adressé à l'Assemblée nationale pour les créanciers anglois des habitans de la même isle, par MM. Tod et Francklyn ...* <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5772956q> (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1790).

*de France* by the National Assembly in Paris as part of a three-man commission to confront the situation in the colony. While hopes for the commission's success were high, the commissioners also held some loyalty to the ideals of the revolution, which did not sit well with the whites on the island. Two of the commissioners departed from the colony, fearing for their safety, and Roume followed by returning to France in June 1792.

In 1796 he travelled to St Domingue as part of the French government's third attempt at a commission. Roume supported measures in favour of the blacks in St Domingue. This deference was acknowledged by Toussaint L'Ouverture, who asked Roume to take over the position of sole Agent for France in St Domingue. Roume and Toussaint had forged an intriguing respect for one another over the years.

Toussaint incidentally held high standards of decorum. He forbade the easy extra-marital relations that had been so common in the colony until 1791 – between white men and women of colour and between the black and coloured officers and concubines of all descriptions afterward – a measure that resulted in a number of hasty marriages. It was under this pressure that Philippe-Rose Roume abruptly divorced his wife, Françoise Guillemine Lambert, who was then living apart from him on the island of Trinidad, married his long-term mistress, a coloured woman named Marie-Anne Elizabeth Rochard born in Grenada, and formally acknowledged his paternity of their ten-year-old son, Alexandre Robert Joachim.<sup>26</sup> Roume requested Toussaint's presence as a witness at his divorce hearing and second marriage in 1799.

However not all was good in the friendship. There is an account of Roume being locked up in a poultry-house in Dondon, and Toussaint taking his time to arrive on the scene and using the opportunity to extort a decree from Roume authorizing the occupation of the Spanish portion of St. Domingue. Toussaint attempted to explain his actions to the people of St Domingue in a letter:

In his quality as representative of the French government, the obligations of Citizen Roume position were to dedicate his moral and physical qualities to the happiness of Saint-Domingue. Far from doing this, he only took counsel with the schemers who surrounded him so as to spread discord among us, and to foment the troubles that have not ceased to agitate us. Nevertheless, despite the calumnies that he has ceaselessly cast against me in his letters to France, he will be sheltered from anything disagreeable. But my respect for his character cannot prevent me from taking the wisest possible measures in order to disable him from again scheming against the tranquility that I have finally had the good fortune of re-establishing after so many revolutionary upheavals. Consequently, in order to isolate him from the schemers who have constantly surrounded him, and in order to respond to the complaints that all the communes have made about him through their magistrates, the Brigadier General Moyse

<sup>26</sup> M. S Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

will see to it that two coaches and a secure escort are sent to said Roume. They will take him, with all due respect for his character, to the town of Dondon, where he will remain until the French government recalls him to render accounts.

Cap-Français, 5 Frimaire, Year IX (November 26, 1800)<sup>27</sup>

In 1799 Philippe-Rose appears as a member of the Truth Lodge of St John of Jerusalem. This Grand Orient lodge was located in Cap Francois in St Domingue. In the membership list he was recorded as being a Master Mason from York Lodge and held the title of Chevalier General under the Rose Croix chapter. The independence of Haiti was a victory for the blacks against France's attempt to hold on to the colony of St Domingue. This also marked the end of Roume's career; he was expelled from Haiti and returned to France where he died in 1804.

Before his expulsion from Haiti Philippe-Rose was instrumental in planning for the creation of a new school, supported by the French government with a respected educator and principal, Coisson, for up to thirty-two new pupils. There was 'not yet a central school in Santo Domingo', wrote Roume to the Minister of the Seas and Colonies, 'it is important to give the settlers a testimony of national benevolence.'

Roume chose a number of young creoles, including Francois Bellony-Lemau, whose father had died at Jeremie defending France, Régis Léveillé, the son of a general, two students from Liancourt (Charles Hippolyte, nephew of Lechat, whose sons were at the Institution, and Castaing dit Rozy), and finally his own son, Alexandre Robert Joachim Roume, who had been training at St Domingue as a ringmaster novice on a frigate named Syrene.<sup>28</sup>

Incidentally Toussaint's sons, Isaac L'Ouverture and his half-brother Placide, were sent to France in 1797 to be educated along with the other sons of elite Haitians and orphans of military officials. In February 1802 Placide and his brother arrived back in St Domingue with the troops of the French General Leclerc, after Napoléon Bonaparte had given orders to expel the siblings from France.

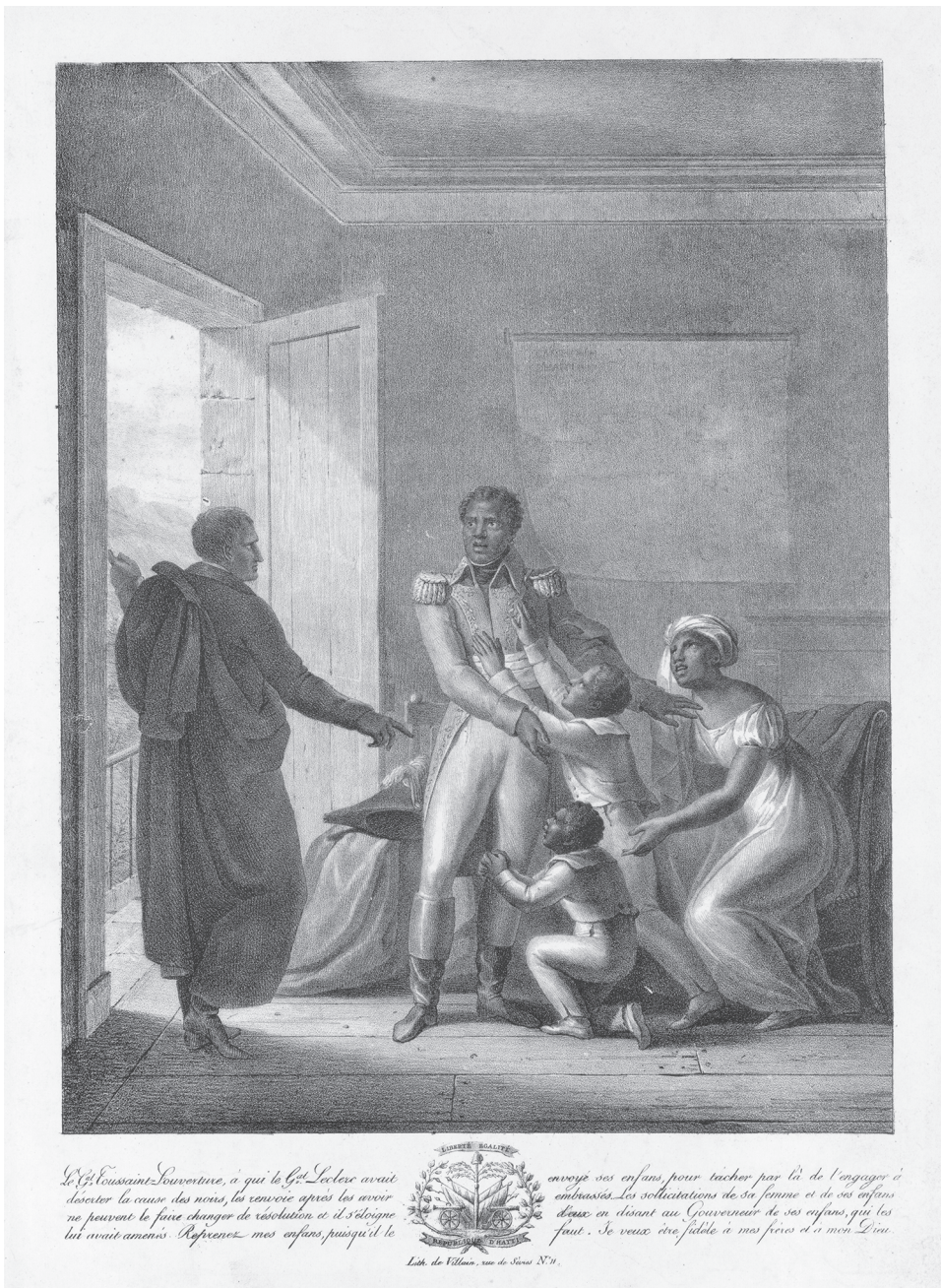
Regarding the Masonic perspective, Francois-Joseph-Paul de Grasse, Comte de Grasse and Marquis de Grasse Tilly, was the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the French Islands of America (1802), founder and Sovereign Grand Commander of Supreme Council of France (1804). Grasse Tilly wrote the following to Alexandre Robert Joachim Roume de St Laurent on August 16, 1816:

Sovereign Grand Inspector General and T Puiss Souv Gr Commander ad vitam of the Order for the Spanish Possessions of the Continent of South America and the

<sup>27</sup> V. Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Paul Ollendorf, 1889).

<sup>28</sup> M. Roussier, 'L'Education des enfants de Toussaint Louverture et l'Institution nationale des colonies', *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire Année 1977* Vol. 236, 308-49.





Le G<sup>l</sup> Toussaint L'Ouverture, à qui le G<sup>l</sup> Leclerc avoit  
déserté la cause des noirs, les renvoie après les avoir  
ne pouvant le faire changer de résolution et il s'éloigne  
lui avoir amenés. Représentez mes enfans, puisqu'il le



envoie ses enfans pour tâcher par là de l'engager à  
embrasser. Les sollicitations de sa femme et de ses enfans  
deux en disant au Gouverneur de ses enfans, qui les  
font. Je veux être fidèle à mes frères et à mon Dieu.

Lith. de Villiers, rue de Sévres N<sup>o</sup> 10.

Fig. 3. Toussaint L'Ouverture

Gulf of Mexico on the Two Seas and Member of our Supreme Council of the French Islands of America.

I give more and especially to my brother and colleague the Count of St. Laurent, the mission and the Power to represent me during my absence from the places of my domination and to exercise my authority in my name, as he exercises his own in the vast lands of his remembrance that he should be obeyed ...

Honoré Muraire, who was the Grand Secretary General of the Supreme Council of France from 1821 to 1825, and its Lt Grand Commander from 1825 to 1834, also sent a communication to St Laurent on 28 June 1822:

As for you personally Sup Cons for France which, by virtue of the merger of the Americas operated within it, the 7th day of the 3th month 5821, as you will see by pl printed below joined, is found to be complete, regretted not having the means to appoint one of its effective members; but wishing to give you a proof of his esteem and his attachment decided that you would be registered on his board, as an honorary member, and I will be pleased to send you the patent: in the meantime, the attached extract of the deliberation of Sup Cons will take place ...

The extract from 1822 Sup Council of France proceedings reads:

... stop again that, to recognize the zeal with which this Ill f lends itself to the propagation of the old and accepted Rit, and to multiply the relations of the Sup Council, his name will be worn and very honorably inscribed on the general picture of the order and of the Supreme Council with the quality of honorary member, and that by sending him expedition of this decree, it will be expressed to him, in the name of the Sup Council, the regret of not being able to give him for reasons of the distances and the eminent dignity of which he is already dressed in another Sup Council a quality and functions more active within it.

It clear that St Laurent was very active in the spread of his component of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. On 5 April 1832 a Treaty of Union was developed in New York between the Supreme Council of Saint Laurent and the Supreme Council of the United States of America, the latter being a descendant of the Supreme Council that Joseph Cerneau created in New York on 25 May 1812.<sup>29</sup>

On 23 February 1834 another treaty of alliance was formed between the Supreme Councils for France, Brazil, Belgium, and the United Supreme Council for the Western Hemisphere. This was essentially the first recorded international conference of Supreme Councils. St Laurent wrote to the Supreme Council of Belgium in June 1834:

<sup>29</sup> Massachusetts House Document No. 73. Investigation into Freemasonry by a Joint Committee of the Legislature of Massachusetts. March, 1834 Boston, MA.

You will find at the end of the treaty now ratified by the Ill.: and P.: Bro.: Duc de Choiseuil, Grand Commander of the Council of France, and by that Council itself, a translation made from the original Latin of the genuine Grand Constitutions of 1786.

This original, signed in his own hand by the Ill.: Bro.: de Wöllner certifying it Copy Conform from the Minute, (and) since signed by the Ill.: Bro. de Galvez, former Vice-roy of Mexico and by other Ill.: Grand Commanders who have had it and jealously guarded its deposit, was in my hands since 1795 in my capacity of G.:C of the S.: C.: of New Spain, &c. I communicated it to the Prince Cambaçères, to Bros.: de Lacépède, de Grasse (Tilly), &c., &c., but I was never agreeable to copies being made of it.

I have deposited it in the archives of the United S.: C.: of the Western Hemisphere as stipulated by the treaty of 1832, and of it I had the honour of sending you a facsimile to Brussels in 1833. It is from the copy of this precious document, officially inserted in my Golden Book that the convention has had printed the translation which you will receive with the treaty you have just signed.

The *Grand Constitutions* of 1786 was introduced for the first time with St Laurent's complete copy of the articles from the Latin version contained in his *Golden Book*. They are the guiding rules which all Supreme Councils throughout the world acknowledge. The articles start with a long preface which includes the reorganization of the degrees of the Rite of Perfection and which was given in the last chapter. Other parts of the preface are given later. Many of the Articles are purely administrative and might appear in any set of Masonic regulations.

St Laurent is also responsible for granting a charter for the first Masonic lodge in the Canary Islands. A document detailing the request reveals that St Laurent gave permission for the lodge to confer up to the Rose Croix and other degrees, required an oath of fealty, and advised the lodge members to stay away from the Grand Orient of France.<sup>30</sup>

St Laurent has had a substantial impact on Freemasonry, especially in supporting equality by providing access to the Scottish Rite degrees for people of colour in the United States of America. We need to consider the popularized history of the first Scottish Rite organization among African-Americans. This was the African Grand Council of 1820 in Philadelphia, which was referred to as a Council of Princes of Jerusalem. This council arose through West Indian migration, for Stephen Morin had propagated the rite there. The organization of the King David Supreme Council grew out of the conferring in Philadelphia in 1850 of the 33rd degree by Count de Saint Laurent of the Supreme Council of France and the Grand Commander of the Council of Spain on David Leary, the first black Inspector-General of the Prince Hall Scottish Rite.

In New York City a Supreme Council of the United States was established in 1864. Also in 1864 a separate Supreme Council was formed in New York, which was made up of

<sup>30</sup> Minneapolis Scottish Rite Archives St. Laurent letters.



members from the national compact Grand Lodge, from which a Southern Jurisdiction split off with the headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. From the Philadelphia council a Southern and Western Jurisdiction defected with headquarters at Washington, D.C. In 1871 a fifth was established in Philadelphia, and was named King Fredrick Supreme Council. Between 1881 and 1887 these five merged into two united Supreme Councils of the 33rd degree: one for Northern Jurisdiction and one for Southern Jurisdiction.<sup>31</sup>

St Laurent's *Golden Book* provided two names of stature in the 'List of Great Dignitaries... of the Supreme United Council of the Western Hemisphere', published in New York in 1832 and reproduced in Folger 1862, Document No. 27, pp. 221 and 226.

1. HENRY DUPONT FRANKLIN, Counselor at Law, Past Master, Sovereign Grand Inspector General, Thirty-third degree; Honorary 2d Lieutenant Grand Commander of the United States Supreme Council, and its Grand Representative in Hayti and vicinity. Port-au-Prince.
2. PIERRE EMILIE BERRYER, Merchant in the Island of Hayti; PRS, 32d deg. Deputy Grand Inspector General, and Representative of the Supreme Council in the south of the island.

Following this list is a Funeral Column of the First Grand Dignitaries which includes the following five names:

1. BERNARDO, Count of Galves, former Viceroy of Mexico, Founder and Mighty Sovereign Grand Commander of the former Supreme Council, 33°, of New Spain,
2. JOSE MARIA, Baron of Norona, former Lieutenant General of the Armies of His Catholic Majesty, Founder and Grand Commander of the former Supreme Council of South America,
3. A. DE JOACHIM, Earl of Santa Rosa, former Major of cavalry in the army of His Catholic Majesty, Founder and 1st Lieutenant Grand Commander, &
4. DON FRANCISCO DE SAAVEDRA, former Intendant General of Venezuela, and 1st Lieutenant Grand Commander &
5. DEWITT CLINTON, former Governor of the State of New York, former Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of that State, and Grand Commander of the former Supreme Council of the United States of America.

Bernardo de Galvez became the Viceroy of Mexico in 1781. He attacked Canada and ran the British out of Pensacola, Florida, when they were engaged with the French and Americans at Yorktown. In 1782 he assisted Grasse Tilly successfully at the Battle of the Saints, and was ready with a force of 20,000 to invade the British West Indies. He was later made a Count and Lt General for his services by the King of Spain. Galveston, Texas, was named after him.

<sup>31</sup> 'The History of the United Supreme Council NJ, USA': <http://uscnjpha.org/history/>



Don Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis (1746–1819) was a soldier and politician sent to the Americas in 1780 by Carlos III to enhance and raise money for the Spanish-French military alliance. He played a critical role in the American Revolution connection with Galvez family. He worked with Grasse Tilly of France on both the strategy and fundraising for the major 1781 naval battle of Yorktown.

There is much more to explore about the role in Freemasonry in the New World played by this man of colour, Marie Antoine Nicolai Alexandre Robert Joachim Roume de Saint-Laurent.

### Additional Honorable Mentions

The archives of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in the United Grand Lodge of England reveal that there were several men of colour who were recorded as members of the Craft in the early 1800s. While the race of a member is not primarily recorded as standard practice, there are several instances in the records where the race of member was questioned or investigated by the Antients Grand Stewards' Lodge. With the lack of similar Minutes from the Moderns' Grand Lodge it is difficult to conclude if this prejudicial treatment of members of colour was pervasive or just confined to one group.

One example is illustrated by the case of James Walker, who has been identified as a member after 1803 with a lodge certificate of membership from Caledonian Lodge No. 218 in Edinburgh under the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The proceedings of the Antient Grand Lodge Minutes indicate that Walker who was also of African descent applied for charity assistance. However, his certificate was confiscated on account of the fact that he was a black man. The records show that when his membership was verified, the membership certificate was returned on 19 February 1812, but his request for charity assistance was denied.<sup>32</sup>

Another example is that of Loveless Overton. Overton served as a Trumpeter in the King's Dragoon Guards and was initiated into Freemasonry at Royal Clarence Lodge No. 452 in Brighton, England, in 1806. A native of Barbados, upon his return to the island in 1823 Overton attempted to visit a lodge but was refused. He then decided to charter a lodge of freed former slaves. This did not meet with the approbation of the other Freemasons on the island, who were primarily plantation and slave owners. The thought of freed blacks forming a Masonic lodge was more than likely going to be bad for their businesses. In a letter to the Deputy Grand Master in London it was reported that an application had been made by 'some coloured men' to the Grand Lodge for a warrant for the establishment of a lodge.

<sup>32</sup> Antients' Stewards Lodge Minutes 1808–1809, ref: GBR 1991 ANT 1/2/6. Library and Museum of Freemasonry, UGLE.

The sentiment conveyed was that this could only serve to ‘injure the craft’ and there was an appeal to the Deputy Grand Master Harper to prevent it from happening. The opposition was centered on the question of the interpretation of the term ‘freeborn’. Later there were letters from two or three lodges in the West Indies to the Grand Lodge of England from 1839, pressing for a change to the wording in order to initiate former slaves, following the full implementation of anti-slavery legislation. The United Grand Lodge of England adopted the term ‘freed man’ instead of ‘freeborn’ thereby permitting former slaves to have official membership in an organization of which many had already been members.

Daniel Miller was initiated in Lodge of Industry No. 186, London, in September 1808. The Stewards’ Lodge of the Antients Grand Lodge opened an investigation over the questions of whether Miller was free-born. The decision was made to reprimand the lodge and rescind Miller’s membership. However, being a cook on a merchant ship on its way to the West Indies, Miller had already left London with his certificate.<sup>33</sup>

Another example was Frederick Geasbert Zeaglear, who was a licensed alcohol vendor in London. He received the first two degrees of Freemasonry in the Royal Grove Lodge No. 240, London. An investigation was conducted in November 1808 by the Antients’ Grand Lodge Stewards Lodge for ‘entering and crafting a Black person.’ The decision was made that he was not to be raised to the degree of a Master Mason and his money was returned.<sup>34</sup>

### William H. Hancock

In New Bern, North Carolina, there was the case of William H. Hancock, born in 1803, who was a free black house carpenter, who began his career in New Bern and later moved to New Haven, Connecticut. He learned his skills and came of age during New Bern’s early national period era of fine building and opportunities for artisans of colour. William affiliated with Christ Episcopal Church, where he and his wife, Mary Ann, had their children baptized, including Richard Mason Hancock (1832–99). In 1850 the census taker recorded William, aged forty-five, as head of a household that included Mary and their seven children starting with the eldest Richard, a carpenter aged eighteen, down to the baby, Colston. The parents and older children were all literate. William H. Hancock trained other free black youths, including his son, in the carpenter trade.<sup>35</sup>

St John’s Lodge No. 3 was chartered in 1772, and is the third oldest Masonic lodge in North Carolina. Hancock had the distinction of becoming a member in 1846 and

<sup>33</sup> Antients’ Stewards Lodge minutes 1808 – 1809, ref: GBR 1991 ANT 1/2/4–5. Library and Museum of Freemasonry, UGLE.

<sup>34</sup> Antients’ Stewards Lodge minutes 1808 – 1809, ref: GBR 1991 ANT 1/2/5 and Royal Grove Lodge minutes ref GBR 1991 ELM/1251. Library and Museum of Freemasonry, UGLE.

<sup>35</sup> Bishir, C. *Crafting Lives: African American Artisans in New Bern, North Carolina, 1770–1900* (2013).

officer (tiler) of St John's Lodge in 1847. The lodge's Minutes show that Jerkins was elected Worshipful Master of St John's Lodge in June, 1848, with Hayward, Senior Warden, Willis, Junior Warden, E. R. Stanly, Treasurer, Custis, Secretary, and William H. Hancock, Tiler. Outten was re-named Senior Deacon, and Lacy Phillips Junior Deacon. They were installed on St John's Day by the Grand Chaplain, A. P. Repiton.

Worshipful Master Jerkins was re-elected to the office in June 1849. Edward F. Smallwood was elected Senior Warden, Custis as Junior Warden, John M. F. Harrison as Treasurer, Stanly as Secretary, and Hancock as Tiler. Later Willis was appointed Senior Deacon, and T. R. Wilson Junior Deacon.

In 1852 Edward F. Smallwood was elected as Master, David S. Willis as Senior Warden, John D. Flanner as Junior Warden, Charles S. Allen as Treasurer, J. A. Hodge as Secretary, Charles C. Clark as Senior Deacon, J. W. Jones as Junior Deacon, The Revd J. M. C. Breaker as Chaplain and W. H. Hancock as Tiler.

Alonzo Thomas Jerkins, who joined the lodge the same year as Hancock, became the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in December 1850, serving three years until 1852.<sup>36</sup>

John P. Green wrote:

Mr. Hancock was the only tiler, of a white Masonic lodge, in a slave state, that I have ever heard of or seen, marching, with drawn sword, at the head of a white Masonic procession. Where he was made or how he won recognition in that town, twenty years before the Civil War, is more than I can explain; and what makes his treatment the more remarkable, lies in the fact that, though not a pure blooded Negro, yet his colour was pronounced – unmistakable.<sup>37</sup>

## The 1741 New York Conspiracy

In 1741 there was an alleged conspiracy to burn down New York City and murder the white elite residents. The alleged ringleader of this plot was a John Hughson, an Irish tavern owner, along with his wife and daughter and several slaves that frequented his tavern. A central focus of the conspiracy was a group called the Geneva Club led by enslaved Africans Caesar Varick, Prince Auboyneau, and Cuffee Philipse. It is alleged that they adopted the name when they stole barrels of Geneva liquor (gin) from Baker's tavern before selling the stolen gin to Hughson.

The same group were implicated in a tobacco store burglary. However, soon after their arrests there were several suspicious fires, starting with the city's fortress, Fort

<sup>36</sup> *Years of Light: HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S LODGE, NO. 3 A. F. & A. M. NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA 1772-1944*. <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/text/16929>

<sup>37</sup> J. P. Green, *Fact Stranger Than Fiction: Seventy-five Years of a Busy Life, with Reminiscences, of Many Great and Good Men and Women* (The Henry Ford Estate collection. Riehl Printing Company, 1920).

George. More fires that were accompanied by looting led to the question of suspected arson. A slave conspiracy was deemed to be at the root, and a number were arrested. They were paraded without a trial through the streets of New York on a cart and whipped at every corner. It is reported that Cuffee, as he was brought to the whipping-post, cried out 'Make Room for a Free Mason.' The prosecution of this suspected uprising lasted for over year, and ended with the imprisonment of 150 slaves and twenty-five whites, the hanging of eighteen slaves and four whites, the burning to death of thirteen slaves and the expulsion of over fifty slaves from New York to the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> A written account of the proceedings reveals:

There was a confederacy of negroes, of which Caesar (Varick's) and Prince (Auboyneau's) both hanged yesterday, and Cuffee (Mr. Philipse's) were the heads and ringleaders; who robbed, pilfered and stole whenever they had an opportunity and it happened about five or six years ago, a cellar of one Baker, a tavern keeper in this city, had one night been broken open, and robbed of same Geneva; many of the parties concerned were detected, viz. several negroes, of which Caesar and Prince were two principals; and all that were discovered were chastised at the public whipping post. From thence it may be supposed they became distinguished among each other by the name of the Geneva Club; for they used frequently to be junketting together at nights with Cuff, upon the produce of the spoils of their pilfering.

But it came out upon the examination of these negroes, that they had before that time the impudence to assume the style and title of Free Masons, in imitation of a society here; which was looked upon to be a gross affront to the provincial grand master and gentlemen of the fraternity at that time, and was very ill accepted; however, from this time the negroes may be supposed to have declined their pretensions to this title for we heard nothing more of them afterwards under that stile. But it is probable that most of this Geneva Club that were sworn (as Cuff said) were of the conspiracy; and it is likely that by the swearing, Cuff meant, sworn of the conspiracy.<sup>39</sup>

The *New York Gazette* paper wrote whimsically of the Geneva Club:

Last Saturday Night was Discovered here a new Club, Lodge or Society of Free Masons (as they called themselves) being a Company of Blacks or Generation of Vipers assembled together to carry on their private and obscure Works of Darkness ... As a further Mark of Honour and Respect due to this Fraternity or black Guard, their two Masters were waited upon the Thursday following by two carts one after

<sup>38</sup> H. A. Aptheker, *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States: From Colonial Times to 1910* (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), 23.

<sup>39</sup> D. Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy, Or A History of the Negro Plot, with the Journal of the Proceedings Against the Conspirators at New York in the Years 1741-2. Together with Several Interesting Tables, Containing the Names of the White and Black Persons Arrested on Account of the Conspiracy, the Times of Their Trials, Their Sentences, Their Executions by Burning and Hanging, Names of Those Transported, and Those Discharged. With a Variety of Other Useful and Highly Interesting Matters* (New York: Southwick & Pelsue, No. 3, New Street, 1810).

another ... and were continually complimented with Snow Balls and Dirt, and at every Corner had fives Lashes with a Cowskin well laid on each of their naked black Backs, and then carried home to Gaol.<sup>40</sup>

### Gabriel's Rebellion, Richmond, Virginia, 1800

Egerton details the attempt to revolt in 1800 by Gabriel Prosser, a literate enslaved blacksmith of Henrico County. On 30 August 1800 Gabriel led several hundred other slaves on a march in Richmond. Their plan was to obtain their freedom by capturing James Monroe, the Governor of Virginia. The rebellion was disrupted on the day of the planned revolt by two slaves, who had a change of heart and reported it to the white authorities. In addition bad weather on the day of the planned rebellion also interfered with their coordination, and essentially led to their capture. Twenty-seven slaves were placed on trial and executed for their role in the rebellion.<sup>41</sup>

In recruiting others to participate in the rebellion Gabriel's approach is of contextual interest. Would they 'join a free mason society?' Gabriel and other early leaders asked, 'a society to fight the White people for their freedom.'<sup>42</sup>

In both of these scenarios it is difficult to prove or disprove that these men were members of Freemasonry simply because of the colour of their skin. Needless to say, historians and others at that time in American society were quick to declare that thought to be illogical for the mere fact that they were men of African descent, and therefore were incapable of being legitimate Freemasons.

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In conclusion, the stories of these various men of colour in the formative years of Freemasonry are inspirational, eye-opening, astounding, and horrifying within the prism of history and culture. As more information becomes available to researchers and historians alike, it is the hope that a clearer picture of their contributions and access to Freemasonry as experienced by them will improve our understanding of humanity and a mantle of responsibility we shall hold for generations to come.

<sup>40</sup> *New York Gazette* 'Dishonourable Society of Black Masons', 1738.

<sup>41</sup> D. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> Testimony of Ben Woolfolk at trial of Sam Byrd, Jr., September 27, 1800, Negro Insurrection, Executive Papers; William Prentis to James Monroe, n.d., *ibid.*; R. C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York, 1964), 48-54, 66; testimony of Ben Woolfolk at trial of George Smith, September 19, 1800, Negro Insurrection, Executive Papers.

