



# THE MASONIC TRAVELER

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San Antonio, Texas

July 2, 2011



## Telling Our Own Story: Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum Unveiled

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M.W.P.H.G.L. of Texas

**FORT WORTH, Texas** – By the authority vested in the office of the Grand Master and in accordance with the constitution of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons of Texas, the Honorable Wilbert M. Curtis hereby called all Prince Hall Masons of Texas into the Grand Lodge’s 136th Annual Grand Communication held at the Grand Masonic Temple, June 24 - 25.

On June 25, the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum was officially opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony and name unveiling at the Grand Masonic Temple.

The Library Museum adds another repository for the collection of Prince Hall Masonic History in the city. It will possess collections and preservation of Prince Hall Masonic History and activities in Tarrant County and throughout the state in the form of photos,



*G.M. Wilbert M. Curtis and his wife, Lanell, enter the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum, June 25. “The Library Museum has been on the Trestle Board of the Grand Lodge for many years. Now it has come to fruition,” said G.M. Curtis.*

paintings, books, articles, original lodge charters, cornerstones, ledgers, uniforms, a Lodge Room, etc. Many of the items date back to the late 1800’s.

Government officials from Tarrant County and the Texas House of Representatives, officials from the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society and the Fort Worth Public Library were in attendance. Special guests included Grand Masters of Prince Hall Grand Lodges: G.M. John Miller of Arizona, G.M. Arvin Glass of Tennessee, G.M. Cleveland Wilson of Arkansas, G.M. Anthony Stafford of Florida, and G.M. Deary Vaughn of Oklahoma, who also serves as the Sovereign Grand Commander, United Supreme Council, Ancient &





Photo by: G.E. Burrell Parmer

*An overwhelmed G.M. Curtis gives remarks after the ribbon cutting of the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum. In the background are D.G.M. Anderson, G.S.W. Hardin, G.J.W. Jackson, and G.Mar. Gerac. The Deputy Grand Master and Grand Wardens performed the Consecration of the Library Museum.*

Grand Commander Ronald Gerac of the Lone Star Grand Commandery of Knights Templar Masons of Texas.

After the opening prayer by Deputy Grand Chaplain Rev. F.D. Sampson Jr. and the occasion delivered by Grand Junior Warden Frank Jackson. Grand Marshal Ronald Gerac made the Proclamation and the Consecration was then performed by Deputy G.M. Michael Anderson, Grand Senior Warden Bryce Hardin I, and G.J.W. Jackson overseen by the Hon. Edwin B. Cash, the only living Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge.

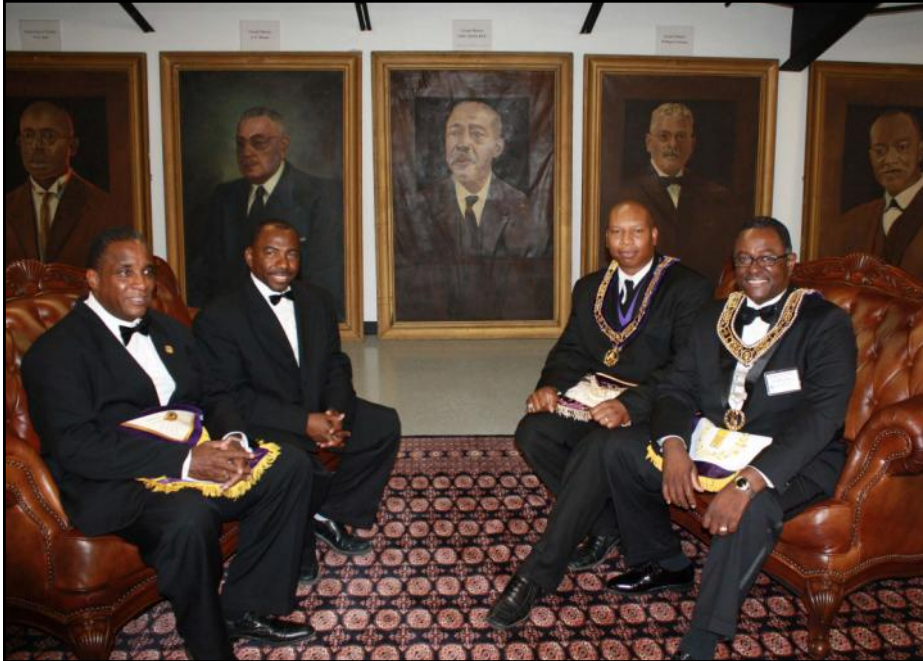
With the Consecration of corn, wine, and oil complete, G.M. Curtis with tears in his eyes cut the ceremonial ribbon and provided comments.

Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, Southern Jurisdiction.

Every Texas Prince Hall Masonic Organization was represented to include Grand Worthy Matron Martha Wolridge and Grand Worthy Patron Robert B. Calloway Jr. of the Norris Wright Cuney Grand Chapter; Grand Most Ancient Matron Jackie Livingston and Grand Joshua Isaac Cary Sr. of the Grand High Court, Heroines of Jericho; Grand Princess Caption R. Lucille Samuel of the Lone Star Grand Guild, Heroines of the Templars Crusade; State Grand Loyal Lady Ruler Shirley Gideon of the Texas Council of Assemblies, Order of the Golden Circle; Most Excellent Grand High Priest Willie Tate of the Most Excellent Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Holy Royal Arch Masonry; and Right Eminent



*G.M. Curtis shakes hands with Territorial G.M. Dr. Osiefield Anderson of Fla., who was the guest speaker for the Masonic Banquet in the Lodge Room of the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum, June 25. Lt to Rt: Standing behind them are G.M. Miller of Ariz., G.M. Stafford of Fla., G.M. Wilson of Ark., G.M. Vaughn of Okla., G.M. Glass of Tenn., and Grand Secretary Albert Kelly Sr. of La.*



*Lt to Rt: P.M. Willie High Coleman, Jr., Chairman of the Prince Hall Charitable Foundation of Texas, Chairman of Archives P.M. Tucker, Grand Editor Burrell Parmer, and G.J.W. Jackson sitting in front of portraits of Past Grand Master and officers of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, F.&A.M. of Texas in the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum June 24. The portraits are on loan from the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society.*



Photo by: G.E. Burrell Parmer

*G.M. Vaughn and G.M. Curtis share a moment in front of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Exhibit at the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum. G.M. Vaughn also serves as the Sovereign Grand Commander, United Supreme Council, A.A.S.R., P.H.A. Southern Jurisdiction.*

“We will now be able to tell our own story,” said G.M. Curtis. “I hope that the city of Fort Worth, Tarrant County, and the state of Texas will embrace this Library Museum and utilize it as a research resource.”

“The Library Museum has been on the Trestle Board of the Grand Lodge for many years. Now it has come to fruition,” said G.M. Curtis. “Getting to this point of the grand opening has been a rewarding

experience not only for me but also for the team members that assisted me.”

After G.M. Curtis comments, he opened the door to the Library Museum and guests began to pour in to view its treasures.

The original design of the Library Museum was conceived by Nicole Hawthorne, daughter of Past Master Benny Tucker, the Chairman of the Archives Committee.

Hawthorne, a graduate of Baylor University with a Bachelors of Art in Interior Design, had been performing interior design since 2007. She was asked in June 2010 by her father to produce some drawings.

According to Hawthorne, she wanted to create something that reflected what the space would be used for.



*G.M. Wilson of Ark. speaks with P.M. Tucker and his daughter Nicole Hawthorn, the Library Museum’s original designer, after the opening ceremony of the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum.*

“I wanted the look and feel of the area to resemble a turn-of-the-century, new world library. The antiquated, over-sized portraits displayed there were inspiration for the rest of the design and everything else branched from them,” said Hawthorne. “The design of the Library Museum was intended

to be like a time capsule with a rich historic atmosphere.”

G.J.W. Jackson, who also serves as the Grand Lodge Historian, provided background on the Library Museum’s conception.

“The Library Museum is a labor of love, it came from a vision by G.M. Curtis and we are thankful for him and his leadership. One thing that alarmed us was that we were losing a lot of our history and archives at a very disturbing rate,” said G.J.W. Jackson. “If we were to look forward from today, maybe 50 to 100 years, it will be highly likely that people will know our story and I truly believe that you cannot really tell the story of Texas without telling the story of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas.”

“We are proud of our legacy, we are proud of our heritage. If we don’t tell our story, no one is going to tell it for us,” said G.J.W. Jackson. “We have numerous materials. We haven’t even been able to go through all the archives, and materials are still being donated.

Currently the Library Museum only shows you just a glimpse of our treasures. So when people come here, we want them to see the vision that our Grand Master has shared with us and for researchers to see the culture and history that Prince Hall Masons have contributed to the great state of Texas.”

The mission of the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum is as follows:

To collect, organize, describe, make available, and preserve primary and secondary resource materials emphasizing the historical documentation of the M.W.P.H.G.L. of Texas and its



*Ctr: G.M. Curtis is interviewed by CBS News (KTVT 11 Fort Worth) after the opening ceremony of the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum. The Library Museum contains exhibits from each Appendant and Concordant Body.*

impact on the cultural milieu on the broader local communities, the state of Texas, the Jurisdictions under its authority and the larger



*Lt to Rt: G.J.W. Jackson, P.M. Tucker, and P.M. Coleman read through pages of a ledger belonging to the Fraternal Bank and Trust in the Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum, June 24. Numerous books and records can be found at the Library Museum to include the Homer Drew Collection.*

expanse of human kind.

To provide adequate facilities for the retention and preservation

of such records.

To serve as a resource and research center to stimulate and promote creative teaching and learning through the use of primary research materials; and provide instruction in the use of those materials.

To promote research and scholarship by providing access and encouraging the use of its collections by members of the Masonic Family and the public at large.

To implement records management by formulating policy and procedures that will ensure the collection and preservation of the Library Museum’s materials.

The Library Museum is available to the public by appointment Monday thru Thursday from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Information about the Library Museum can be obtained by contacting the Grand Lodge Office at 817-534-4612 or by visiting [www.wmctphlm.com](http://www.wmctphlm.com).

*This article is a representation of my personal observations and opinions and does not imply endorsement by any Masonic, federal or private organization. For any comments, I can be contacted at [parmermasonictraveler@hotmail.com](mailto:parmermasonictraveler@hotmail.com).*