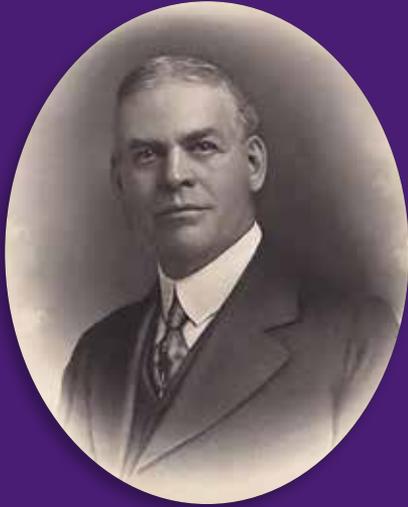


# Grand Masters of Massachusetts

by Rt. Wor. Walter Hunt



## Most Worshipful Arthur D. Prince

1920-22

*“Humanity’s Friend”*

*The twenty sixth installment in the continuing series focused on our past Massachusetts Grand Masters.*

*“To mark the successful culmination of the fine efforts for our Military Service Centers,” wrote Grand Master Arthur D. Coolidge in 1944, “I have designated June 28th as Arthur D. Prince Day—in tribute to one of the best beloved Masons of all time. . . For years he has been a tower of strength . . . an inspiration to Masons in humble as well as exalted stations . . . a Mason among Masons.”*

At the end of the Second World War, M. Wor. Arthur Prince was nearly eighty years of age, and was a quarter century a Past Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts. In 1934 he had become the second most senior member of that exclusive club (M. Wor. Melvin M. Johnson was, and remained, the senior PGM, and would outlive Bro. Prince by several years); where Bro. Johnson was respected, and certainly admired, Bro. Prince was beloved. His role as Relief Commissioner from 1931 until just before his death made him a well-known figure across the jurisdiction, whose work and devotion had helped many of his Brothers and their families through difficult times.

Arthur Dow Prince was born in Lawrence, Massachusetts (as was your author), in 1867; at four years of age he removed to Lowell, where he was educated, and where he entered business. He came into the Masonic Fraternity as a young man, receiving his symbolic degrees in William North Lodge of Lowell in 1891, where he served as Worshipful Master in 1904 and 1905. His skill and assiduity was quickly rewarded, as he was appointed Grand Steward by M. Wor. John Albert Blake in 1907, and as a District Deputy Grand Master in 1908 (and in 1909 by M. Wor. Dana J. Flanders). He was very active in the York Rite bodies, eventually being elevated to Grand High Priest (1916-1918) and Most Illustrious Grand Master (1924-1926). In the Scottish Rite, he was active in all of the bodies of the Valley of Lowell, receiving the honorary 33° in 1917, becoming Active in the Supreme Council in 1930 and Deputy for Massachusetts in 1940.

In 1919, M. Wor. Leon M. Abbott chose Bro. Prince as his Deputy, and he was elected Grand Master thereafter, serving from 1920 to 1922. This was the crowning achievement of his Masonic career, and in his inaugural address as Grand Master in December 1919 he was characteristically modest:

*“By a custom so long in practice that it has almost become a law, the Grand Master is expected to say a few words to the Brethren at this time. For a goodly span of years, we have been privileged to absorb inspirational thoughts, expressed in clear-cut English and framed in beautiful rhetoric . . . but the Brethren of Massachusetts have selected as their Grand Master a plain business man; a buyer and seller of merchandise. No longer, except as they may be — yes, must be — called upon to save the honor and reputation of the Grand Lodge will we be privileged to succumb to the spell of eloquence cast over us by these brilliant members of the legal profession.”*

Except, of course, that M. Wor. Bro. Prince was eloquent, and singularly well-spoken for a “plain business man.” He reflected on the changes in the world since he had last addressed the Feast as Grand High Priest: the devastations of the World War and its aftermath, the unrest in America, the changes wrought by technology and societal upheaval. To meet the challenges now before America, he proposed a sovereign solution: Freemasonry. But that imposed a burden and a responsibility on the Brethren:

**“ The Freemason, in order to sway public opinion, must be an exemplar of those principles which are taught in the Lodge. He must be familiar with the laws of justice, of liberty, of representative government**

*... and then he must go out into his community and exemplify the practice of those principles in his contact with other men. . . Our duty of humanity is to give better service to our fellow men . . . our duty today and in the future is to build up our own organization, to educate ourselves and become thoroughly imbued with our own principles, and we shall not then fear for the quality of our American citizenship.”*

As the leader of Massachusetts Freemasonry, he continued to espouse those ideals: that Masons needed to walk and act as such: to not simply speak the words, but practice the Craft in the community.

He came to the Grand East at a time when Freemasonry was growing rapidly. Massachusetts had just over 82,000 Masons when Bro. Prince was elected; by 1922, the total exceeded 110,000. He issued 30 charters during his three year tenure; in many cases these lodges were additional ones in cities and towns that already had one or more (greater Boston, Quincy, Worcester, Watertown, Lynn, Northampton, Winchester, Pittsfield, Newton, New Bedford, Brookline, Cambridge, Weymouth, Beverly, and Springfield); a few broke new ground (Manchester, Tewksbury, Walpole, as well as one in Panama and two in China); but the overall trend was in response to the enormous growth in the Fraternity. This numerical growth would make Grand Masters Wragg and Jaynes, 25 and 50 years hence, inordinately busy with anniversary celebrations—but regrettably, most of these organizations lost their individual identities during the merger-crowded last quarter century. Accordingly there are only a few lodges left from Bro. Prince’s era: West Roxbury (as West Roxbury-Dorchester); Norumbega (as Norumbega Fraternity); Samuel Crocker Lawrence (returned after merger and hiatus); Manchester; Budleigh; Wamesit; and Azure. Sadly, there are more Paul Revere lodges still in existence than Arthur Prince lodges.

Still, this should not disqualify the success of his term of office. Grand Master Prince, from the very beginning of his time as Grand Master, was active, involved and inspirational. Proceedings from the years 1920-1922 are full of special communications—anniversary celebrations, hall dedications and cornerstone layings and constitutions of lodges. In 1921 he was the first sitting Grand Master to visit the lodges in Panama (during which he constituted Chagres Lodge) and in 1922 he was the first to visit the lodges in China (including two new lodges, Hykes Memorial and Talien).

Wherever he traveled—and he traveled a great deal within Massachusetts as well—he was well received as a Brother and a friend.

M. Wor. Brother Prince made several rulings during his term, with particular attention to the conduct of Brethren within and without the Lodge. He addressed matters of decorum, of the need to respond to Grand Lodge communications, of the need for secrecy in public regarding lodge business, and for close attention to investigations. He also publically and definitively denounced the Ku Klux Klan, dismissing any association and cognizance of the organization. He said in part:

***“Without hesitation, I declare the Ku Klux Klan an un-Masonic organization, utterly without Masonic support or sympathy.***

***“Its avowed principles violate Masonic law at every point and it would be impossible for me to conceive of a Mason who could so far forget his Masonic teachings as to affiliate with an organization which advocates taking the law into its own hands, condemning men and women in secret trials, and imposing the punishment of the whip, the tar bucket, or unlawful banishment. . .***

***“This is not an edict against the Ku Klux Klan. We cannot prevent misguided men from joining it and the arm of the law will soon reach those who join in its overt acts. But we must protect the fair reputation of Freemasonry from being spotted by any connection, official or otherwise, with such an organization. No Masonic Temple or Apartments must be used for their purposes and let every Mason who is tempted to join the Klan consider well if he can harmonize his obligations as a Mason with the principles of the Klan.”***

His words were a declaration of moral clarity that left no margin for misunderstanding; they are an example of the just and upright character of the man who served as our Grand Master a century ago.

In September 1937, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of his elevation to the 33°, M. Wor. Brother Prince was celebrated at a testimonial dinner attended by more than 500 Masons, including the Grand Master, M. Wor. Claude Allen; Scottish Rite’s Sovereign Grand Commander, M. Wor. Melvin Johnson; and a number of other prominent Masons. It was ample evidence of the high regard in which they, and many others, held Arthur Prince. He returned that affection with interest. At a Feast of St. John some years after his term of office, he spoke of this, saying in part:

***“Past Grand Masters look back upon their service with gratitude and pleasure. We treasure the friends we have made in these contacts. It brings a flood of pleasant memories to clasp hands again with those with whom we worked in active days. As the years go by, these experiences grow more precious as they diminish in number. What we need, what we ask for is***

***The touch of human hands;  
That is the boon we ask***

*continued on page 32*