

## **The Difference between Masonic Jurisdictions in the United States**

From an article found at the "Masonic Lodge of Education" website  
( <http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/af-and-am-vs-f-and-am-states.html> )

In the U.S. there is no national Grand Lodge. Each state's Grand Lodge is sovereign within its jurisdiction and every regular Lodge is under the jurisdiction of its state Grand Lodge. Some of these Grand Lodges are designated "Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons" (A.F. & A.M.), and others are "Free and Accepted Masons" (F. & A.M.). Another one is known as "Ancient Free Masons" (A.F.M.), while another is also designated as "Free and Accepted Masons" however it uses the initials F.A.A.M.

What is the difference? Is the quality of experience or fellowship different between these different jurisdictions? In actuality, it does not matter whether you join an A.F. & A.M. Lodge, an F. & A.M. Lodge, an F.A.A.M. Lodge or A.F.M. Lodge in the United States. The Masonic experience is essentially the same in each of these jurisdictions, and the fellowship is certainly similar.

All Freemasons trace their allegorical history back to the building of Solomon's temple in the Holy Scriptures.

Due to a disagreement about ritual, English Lodges separated into two groups and from 1751 to 1813 there actually were two Grand Lodges in England. The difference in A.F and A.M. versus F. and A.M. goes back to this disagreement.

The older group, was labeled the "Moderns" to discredit them, and became known as the Free and Accepted Masons. The other, newer group, was called the "Antients," and became the "Ancient" in A.F. and A.M.

Freemasonry was exported to the British Colonies in North America from the Grand Lodge of England as well as from the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland. They chartered offspring or "daughter" Lodges, and organized various Provincial Grand Lodges. The differences in England between the "Antients" and the "Moderns" carried over into the Colonies, and continued even after the American Revolution, when independent U.S. Grand Lodges were formed within each state.

The disagreement In England was later healed around 1880, but by that time, there were Lodges and Grand Lodges all over the United States that were descended from one group or the other, and each group kept the corresponding initials with which it was formed – which also is the reason for small differences within the various U. S. Grand Lodges in ritual wording, By-Laws and procedures.

Most Grand Lodges in the U.S. recognize each other and treat each other's members as valid Masons, regardless of the A.F.& A.M, F.& A.M., F.A.A.M. or A.F.M. designations. Moreover, all of the U.S. Grand Lodges recognize, and are recognized by, the official Grand Lodges of England, Ireland, Scotland and the Grand Lodges in most of Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, Thailand, India, etc.

Historically, the regular (mainstream) Grand Lodges did not recognize the Lodges under the "Prince Hall" Grand Lodges. As many of you know, Prince Hall Free Masonry began during the War of Independence, when a black man by the name of Prince Hall and fourteen other free black men were initiated into Lodge No. 441, Irish Constitution, attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot of the British Army garrisoned at Castle Williams...now called Fort Independence, at Boston Harbor on March 6, 1775. Later, they applied for and received a Charter from the Grand Lodge of England.

After Prince Hall passed away, the Lodge ceased to function. Many years later, black Masons established their own Prince Hall Masonic Grand Lodge and subsequently issued charters to form subordinate Lodges. All of these Prince Hall Masonic Lodges trace their origin back to that Lodge in Boston.

Today, many Prince Hall Masonic Grand Lodges are recognized by the regular (mainstream) Grand Lodges. In other states, they are termed as affiliated. But any Prince Hall Masonic Grand Lodge, or other Grand Lodge, which is not recognized by its regular counterparts is termed irregular (non-mainstream) Lodges. I would note that all Prince Hall Lodges are designated as F.& A.M.

The few intrinsic differences between A.F. and A.M. versus F. and A.M. or the variants, the A.F.M. and F.A.A.M. are minimal. All exist in amity despite these small differences, for example, in ritual wording and some officer titles.

To sum up, then, there are twenty-five Grand Lodges that are designated A.F. & A.M. They are: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

There are twenty-four Grand Lodges that are designated F. & A.M. They are: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. In addition, we include here all Prince Hall Grand Lodges.

And as noted earlier the one A.F.M. jurisdiction in the United States is South Carolina, and the one F.A.A.M. jurisdiction in the United States is the District of Columbia.