

## HOLLAND NO. 36 ---LOUISIANA'S GIFT TO TEXAS

by

Edward N. Thompson, P.M.  
Jacques DeMolay Lodge No. 1390  
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A Little more than 150 years ago, Texas became a nation, and the Grand Lodge of Texas, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was formed. Playing a vital part in each of these events was Holland Lodge No. 36, the "Home of Texas Presidents" --- and Louisiana's Gift to Texas.

Freemasonry didn't just happen in Texas. It was the result of love, devotion, dedication, hardship, and suffering. This is the story of how it came about.

Freemasonry came to Texas from two directions. It was brought across the mountains, forests, and bayous from the Atlantic, and across the Rio Grande from Mexico and Spanish America.

The latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were called the Age of Revolution. Everywhere the Divine Right of Kings was being challenged, and with it the power of the Roman Catholic Church which sided with the absolute monarchists.

Because Masonic lodges prized intellectual thought, encouraged the free flow of ideas and the value of the human mind, they were seen as threats to the conservatives who supported the infallibility of the church and the monarchists who supported the King. As a consequence, on April 29, 1738, Pope Clement XII issued a Papal Bull outlawing Masonry.

Following the French Revolution, this system was changed when Napoleon Bonaparte, in May of 1808, forced Charles IV and his son and heir, Ferdinand, to renounce their claims to the Spanish throne. His brother, Joseph Bonaparte, the Grand Master of French Masons, was placed on the Spanish throne and all restrictions on Masons and Masonry were removed.

Scottish Rite Masonry had emerged on the Continent by promising initiation into greater and more profound mysteries supposedly preserved and handed down in Scotland. It had received its name from the followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Pretender to the throne of England and Scotland who had been defeated in 1715. He and many of his followers fled to France where Mary Stuart had served as Queen.

Scottish Rite Masonry then had its beginnings in political turmoil, evolving on the European Continent as a secret organization seeking a political goal. It was this form of Masonry, practiced in France and Spain after the coronation of Joseph Bonaparte, that was exported to the New World.

The monarchy of Joseph Bonaparte was to have a profound effect on Masonry throughout Latin America. It is well to note that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, both Louisiana and Texas

were possessions of Spain and followed the customs, regulations, laws, and religion of the Mother Country.

Prior to the French occupation of the throne of Spain, both France and Spain supported the Papal Bull of 1738. Since Masonry had been outlawed in Spain and its possessions, it is impossible to tell when Masonry first came to Louisiana.

We do know that as a result of a black insurrection in 1791 in the French West Indies, many refugees sought shelter in New Orleans. Among these was Laurent Siguer who, on April 28, 1793, with the assistance of eight Master Masons and five Entered Apprentice Masons, held a preliminary meeting to form a lodge. Siguer held a Rose Croix patent from Nancy, France, and presumed it was sufficient authorization to form a lodge and initiated two candidates in June. They gave the name Parfaite Union to this Lodge and applied to the Grand Lodge of South Carolina, York Rite, for a charter, which was granted. The first officers were installed on March 30, 1794. Masonry had officially come to Louisiana.

Masonry was still outlawed by Spanish Law. These early Louisiana Masons were prominent in the city and received the protection of Governor Carondelet and his successor, Governor Gayoso de Lemos. As a further precaution they met outside the city of New Orleans and concealed the times and places from all except known members.

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the subsequent transfer of territory from France to the United States made it possible for Masons to meet openly, without fear of repression.

On September 22, 1807, Louisiana Lodge No. 1 was chartered by the Grand Lodge of New York and became the first English-speaking Lodge in New Orleans.

On April 30, 1812, the Territory of Orleans was admitted to the Union as the State of Louisiana. On June 20, 1812, the Grand Lodge of Louisiana was formed. By this time, New Orleans had five French-speaking lodges that worked in English. The two English speaking Lodges, Louisiana No. 1 and Harmony No. 122, refused to send delegates to form a Grand Lodge of Louisiana. It would be many years before the Grand Lodge was able to end the friction between these lodges.

Meanwhile, Masonry was having its problems in Mexico.

There is reason to believe that a Masonic lodge may have existed in Mexico as early as 1785. There can be no doubt that Masons were in Mexico and that they were holding meetings under the "time immemorial" customs.

Father Figuel Hidalgo y Castilla was made a Mason in a Scottish Rite Lodge located in Mexico City in 1806. It was he who began the Mexican Independence movement with his cry of "Long live independence"---ElGrito de Dolores.

Hidalgo was defeated, excommunicated from the Church, tried by civil authorities and beheaded. The revolt was continued by another priest, Juan Morelos, also a Mason, who met the same fate.

In 1814, Ferdinand VII was elected to the throne of Spain. The Inquisition was restored and Masonry was again outlawed. Throughout Latin America, Spanish possessions were in revolt. The names of the Masons who led these revolts are known everywhere that freedom is held sacred: Simon Bolivar, Sucre, O'Higgins, Miranda, and in Mexico, Iturbide, Bravo, Guerrero, and Guadalupe Victoria.

Often, these seekers of freedom would have to flee because of reverses. Many of them ended up in New Orleans. It was in Louisiana that these Masonic fighters for freedom met others who believed as they believed.

David G. Burnet, the first President of the Republic of Texas, was a physician who met Miranda and Bolivar and returned with them to fight for the freedom of Venezuela.

Mexican Independence was achieved with ratification of the Treaty of Cordoba on August 21, 1821. Iturbide was crowned Emperor Augustin I of Mexico. Because of his excesses, he was removed in 1824. A constitution, based on that of the United States, was adopted. The presiding officer at the convention was Lorenzo de Zavala who would serve as the first Vice-President of the Republic of Texas. He not only was a Master Mason, but served for a time as Grand Master of the York Rite or Yorkino Grand Lodge of Mexico.

Mexico faced a period of chaos. Major leaders were all Masons, either members of the York Rite Grand Lodge (the Yorkinos), or of the Scottish Rite Grand Lodge (the Escoceses). Each faction fought for control. This resulted in the period of Mexican history known as the Masonic Wars.

The Masonic Wars reached their climax in 1828 in one of the strangest wars ever fought. Two opposing generals, each serving as Grand Master of a Masonic Grand Lodge, were to take arms against brother Masons, Nicholas Bravo who was Grand Master of the Escoceses and Vicente Guerrer who was Grand Master of the Yorkinos. The two forces met at the northern outskirts of Mexico City. Eight men were killed and six were wounded. General Bravo and his chief lieutenants were captured.

So divided was the country after the battle that a very strong anti-Masonic feeling developed. Joel Poinsett, the American Ambassador who had helped the Yorkinos establish their lodges, was expelled. A law was passed on October 25, 1828, which outlawed Masonry in Mexico and its territories.

Stephen F. Austin led the first group of Anglo colonists to Texas during the early 1820's. His father, Moses Austin, had been given a grant of land for colonization purposes, but died before he could begin the undertaking. His son, Stephen, who had been raised a Mason in Louisiana Lodge No. 109, St. Genevieve, Louisiana (now in Missouri), was to lead the colonists to the "promised land."

Austin was respected by Mexican officials because of his strict adherence to the laws of Mexico. This meant the colonists would learn to speak Spanish and become members of the Catholic Church. He even joined in drafting the Mexican Constitution of 1824.

It is believed that the first Mason to make Texas his home was Nathan Davis, a native of South Carolina, who came to Texas from Illinois in 1818; however, several Masons joined Austin when he established his colony at San Felipe on the Brazos River (about 50 miles west of the present day city of Houston).

As factions fought one another for control of the government, Austin had the job of dealing with them. One thing was certain; many of these officials were members of the Masonic fraternity. Because of his skill and the important part he played in the settlement of Texas, Austin is known as the "Father of Texas."

Like many Mexican officials, J. Antonio Padilla was a Master Mason. This secretary to the Governor of the state of Coahuila was a friend of Austin and very active with the Yorkino faction. While we have been unable to ascertain his title, we do know that Austin sought a Masonic charter for a Yorkino Lodge through him in 1828.

A meeting had been held at San Felipe on February 11, 1828, attended by Austin and six brothers from his colony. They determined to apply for the charter. The mails were very undependable and this first application for a lodge in what is now Texas was lost.

By this time, Mexico was torn by the Masonic Wars. It was the prudent choice that Austin took. He did not fill out a second application for a charter which had been requested of him. Austin, the loyal citizen of Mexico, was waiting to see which faction won. He wanted to leave his options open. With the Law of October 25, 1828, outlawing Masonry, the plans for a lodge at San Felipe under Mexican jurisdiction ended.

The adherence of Austin to Mexican authority was best stated in his letter to J. Antonio Padilla on July 13, 1830, when he said, "The idea that the colonists of Texas wish to separate from Mexico is entirely mistaken... Senor Poinsett has no adherents here. I for my part declare to you that I have no other rule but that of fidelity and gratitude to Mexico. I have fulfilled my duty to the extent of my ability."

He would change his mind!

Following the Masonic Wars, Mexico went through a period of utter chaos. From this chaos emerged a new leader, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. He was to dominate Mexican politics for the next thirty years since he knew the Mexican character and how to appeal to it. He had the charisma necessary to gain followers and had money and the sense to use it. He was a man of noble impulses, especially in his early career, but with an inordinate ambition that caused him to throw scruples to the wind.

During the Masonic Wars, Santa Anna had supported the victorious Yorkinos. He came to power as a supporter of the Constitution of 1824 with its liberal guarantees. In the 1830 election, he had the support of the people of Texas who were living on the northern frontier of Mexico.

Austin's colony declared for Santa Anna because they believed he would end the civil war that had engulfed Mexico. For the first few months of his term, President Santa Anna was a model leader. He tried to bring peace to his troubled land. But then something happened. Santa Anna denounced the Constitution and assumed dictatorial powers.

Events in far off Texas were casting a very long shadow. Mexican citizens living there, both Anglo and Hispanic, were far removed from Mexico City and had for some time practiced a form of self-government, but now that centralism was established, they determined to take matters into their own hands.

From exile in New Orleans, Mexican leaders called for a restoration of the Constitution of 1824 and removal of Santa Anna as dictator.

Lorenzo de Zavala had been serving as Mexican Minister to France when the government of the country was centralized. He resigned from his post and went to his estate on the San Jacinto River. He had written directly to Santa Anna, bluntly telling him that his earlier successes had been due to the principles for which he fought, but that liberalism and justice would overthrow opportunism in the end.

Texas was a land in ferment. Beginning with harsh restrictive laws in 1830, attacks were made against citizens and basic rights removed. By July, 1835, Santa Anna was openly denounced and armed conflict proposed as a means of ending his harsh rule.

In San Felipe, Austin, hearing that the dictator's brother-in-law had crossed the Rio Grande with a large army bound for San Antonio, called for volunteers. He said, "War is our only recourse. There is no other remedy. We must defend our rights, ourselves, and our country by force of arms."

Freemasonry had been outlawed in Mexico since 1828. Regardless, most of the leaders of the army and of the government belonged to the Fraternity. Because of their positions, they were protected from the Law.

Santa Anna had been initiated a Scottish Rite Mason and had switched to the York Rite when he felt it might further his interests. When he needed the support of the Church to finance his extravagancies, he repudiated the Craft.

This was the condition in the winter of 1834 and 1835, when a group of Masons began meeting looking toward the establishment of a lodge in Texas.

The motivating force behind these meetings was Anson Jones. Brother Jones was a physician who had received his Masonic Degrees in Harmony Lodge No. 52 in Philadelphia, being raised

in May 1827. Serving in all three chairs, he was Worshipful Master in 1832. After completing his term, he moved to New Orleans where he resided for almost a year. Because of his love of Masonry, he was known to visit often. Quite likely, he met the Grand Master, John Holland. Thus, when he moved to Texas in 1833, he had made many contacts in Louisiana Masonry.

Brother Jones told us of the formation of the first lodge in the Lone Star State in a speech delivered in 1840:

In the winter of 1834-35, five Master Masons, who had made themselves known to each other, consulted among themselves, and after various interviews and much deliberation, resolved to take measures to establish a Lodge of their own in Texas. This resolution was not formed without a full appreciation of its consequences to the individuals concerned. Every movement in Texas was watched at that time with jealousy and distrust by the Mexican government, and also spies and emisaries denounced some of our best citizens as factionists; already the future intended victims of a despotic power were being selected. It was well known that Freemasonry was particularly odious to the Catholic priesthood, whose influence in the Country at the time was all-powerful. The dangers, therefore attendant upon an organization of Masons at this time which was "trying men's souls," were neither few nor unimportant. But zeal for a beloved Institution, a belief that it would be beneficial at a period when society seemed especially to need some fraternal bonds to unite them together, predominated; all fears of personal consequences were thrown aside, and the resolution to establish a lodge, as mentioned above, was adopted.

In March 1835, Dr. Jones, together with John H. Wharton, Asa Brigham, James A.E. Phelps, Alexander Russell, and J.P. Caldwell, met in a little grove of wild peach or laurel. The place of meeting was back of the town of Brazoria in what had been a family burying ground. The spot was secluded and out of the way of "cowans and eavesdroppers," and they felt they were alone.

It was here at 10 o'clock in the morning that the first formal Masonic meeting in Texas calling for the establishment of the Craft was held. It was decided to apply to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana for a Dispensation to form and open a lodge, to be called Holland Lodge in honor of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of that body, John H. Holland.

There are several reasons why the name Holland might have been chosen. First, Holland was a distinguished Mason who had served as Grand Master of Louisiana since 1825. Second, it is highly likely that he was known by Anson Jones and others of the group who had spent some time in New Orleans. Third, Holland was remembered for his intervention with Mexican officials who had sentenced Adolphus Sterne to death for his support of the Freedonian Republic in 1828. This had been an attempt by Anglo colonists to set up a free republic in the Nacogdoches area. Sterne was the first known Scottish Rite Mason in Texas. Fourth, Texans have always been practical and probably felt naming the new lodge after the Grand Master might assure them a charter.

After some delay, the dispensation was received by Jones, and a meeting was called for December 27, 1835, in the second story of the old courthouse building in Brazoria, and Holland No. 36 under dispensation, was instituted and opened.

The officers were Anson Jones, Worshipful Master; Asa Brigham, Senior Warden; and J..P. Caldwell, Junior Warden. Little did they realize they would meet for only a short time in Brazoria, for Santa Anna had plans for Brazoria

Anson Jones tells us that, as difficulties with Mexico broke into open hostilities, many members were absent in defense of the country. Still a few others from time to time were introduced to the Lodge either by initiation or affiliation. The Lodge struggled on until February, 1836.

This last meeting was memorable because Brother James Fannin served as Senior Deacon. Less than a month later, he would surrender his troops to the Mexican commander at Goliad in the Battle of Coleta Creek. The Dictator ordered Fannin and all of his men shot, thus immortalizing these Texas heroes and giving Houston's men a battlecry for San Jacinto---Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!

In March, Brazoria was abandoned, and troops led by General Urrea took possession of the city. The courthouse was burned along with the rest of the town. The records, books, jewels, and everything else belonging to the lodge was destroyed. The brethren were scattered. Phelps, Wharton, and Jones joined the Texan troops on the Colorado about the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. The Alamo had fallen to Santa Anna on March 6, and the Dictator was advancing toward the east Texas settlements.

In the meantime on January 27, 1836, Grand Master John Holland had granted a formal charter to Holland Lodge No. 36. He placed this charter in the hands of John M. Allen of Louisiana Lodge No. 32. Brother Allen had been sent to New Orleans to recruit volunteers for the Texas Army.

The Texas Revolution was reaching a climax when the charter was finally delivered to Worshipful Master Jones on the prairie between Groce's plantation and the San Jacinto battlefield.

Hoping to strike fear in the colonists, and to capture the government of the republic, Santa Anna led his troops to New Washington. Finding that the government had fled by boat, he burned the town. While there, word reached him that Sam Houston had met a Mexican patrol near the city of Lynchburg. Santa Anna turned westward for his date with destiny.

The date was April 21, 1836. Overconfident, Santa Anna was taking a siesta along with most of his men when the forces of Sam Houston attacked at two in the afternoon. Within twenty minutes, the Texas Army, composed of men defending their homes and their honor, avenged Goliad and the Alamo.

Throughout this battle, the charter of Holland Lodge no. 36, remained in the saddlebag of Anson Jones. He was to say later that, had the Texans been defeated at San Jacinto, the charter would have been captured and lost to the Mexicans who had already destroyed the letters of dispensation which they found at Brazoria.

During the period between the Declaration of Independence at Washington on the Brazos on March 2, 1836, and the adoption of a constitution, the interim government was headed by two Master Masons. David G. Burnet was President and Lorenzo de Zavala was Vice President. We have already discussed the Masonic career of de Zavala.

Burnet was a soldier of fortune who had joined Miranda and Bolivar in the fight for Venezuelan independence from Spain. He practiced law in Louisiana for six years migrated to Texas in 1826, and was appointed one of the first three district judges to serve the Mexican State of Texas. He served eight months as the President of the Republic. In 1838, he was elected Vice President and, upon the illness of President Lamar, served again as President of the Republic. While Vice President, he was initiated into Holland Lodge, being raised on May 21, 1839.

It isn't easy to form a new government, write a constitution and establish a place in the family of nations. The men who were leaders prior to the Revolution were needed for this serious business. Masonry had to take a back seat. Santa Anna had been captured and was being held at the plantation of Brother James A.E. Phelps, one of the men who met beneath the Masonic Oak in Brazoria and petitioned for the formation of the first lodge in Texas.

As peace returned to Texas, the members of Holland Lodge No. 36 were too scattered to reconvene the Lodge at Brazoria during 1836 and 1837. The Worshipful Master, Anson Jones had been elected to the Texas Senate. The capitol of the Republic was the newly founded city of Houston. This city, named for the hero of San Jacinto, was less than a year old.

Dr. Jones called a meeting of Holland Lodge No. 36 to convene on November 8, 1838, at 8:00 PM, in the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol. At this meeting, the officers were installed and seven brethren came forward to affiliate.

Meanwhile, Grand Master Holland gave permission for Milam Lodge No. 40 to organize in Nacogdoches and McFarland Lodge 41 in San Augustine.

At the second meeting of Holland Lodge on November 13, 1837, a committee was appointed to invite the brethren of the Lodges at Nacogdoches and San Augustine to meet with Holland Lodge on December 27, 1837, for the purpose of forming a Grand Lodge.

At the third meeting, the By-laws were presented and adopted. Some of the customs followed by the lodge included work being conducted in the Entered Apprentice Degree and a very strict requirement for membership: one blackball, stopped for six months; two black balls, for a year; and three black balls, forever.



On December 20, 1837 representatives of Holland, Milam, and McFarland Lodges met in the Senate Chamber of the Republic of Texas and there formed the Grand Lodge of Texas. Presiding over the meeting was Sam Houston, President of the Republic.

Sam Houston is one of the most fascinating men in American history. He was a school teacher, soldier, Indian agent, lawyer, Governor of both Texas and Tennessee, President of the Republic of Texas, and hero of San Jacinto. He was a man of principles who refused to take the oath as Governor to support the Confederacy, because Texas had fought so hard to be a part of the Union. Sam Houston was made a Mason in Cumberland Lodge No. 8, at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1817. Demitting from that Lodge, he affiliated with Holland Lodge No. 36 in 1837.

Anson Jones was elected the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Texas, A.F. and A.M. It was determined the Lodge would follow the general rules of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana until new ones were adopted.

The brethren who formed the Grand Lodge of Texas came from many different jurisdictions and each followed a different form of the ritual. After much discussion that lasted for some time, Texas adopted the ritual then used in Tennessee.

Because of the many languages spoken in Louisiana and the confusion between the French speaking and English speaking lodges, it was felt that Texas should go elsewhere for its work.

With the election of Anson Jones as Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Texas, Holland No. 36 of Louisiana became Holland No. 1, the premier Lodge of the Lone Star State. Over 150 years have passed and Holland Lodge has celebrated its Sesqui-centennial. It is a lodge respected and held dear by every Texas Mason. Holland No. 36 is truly Louisiana's gift to Texas.

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