

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCOTTISH RITE AND ITS LEADERSHIP IN LOUISIANA FREEMASONRY

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Louisiana is one of the most confusing places in the world in the development of Freemasonry. Depending on which “authority,” tradition, or rumor you follow, Freemasonry could have been introduced into Louisiana as early as the 1740s in New Orleans. This would have been through a small group of French Freemasons who brought the French Rite from Bordeaux. However, we must rely on written record since all else has been lost or is conjecture¹.

In 1828, the Masonic Manual (Manuel Maconnique) discusses Louisiana Masonry and the early history of the Grand Consistory (as the Nor Orleans Scottish Rite was once called). The Manual states that in 1752, Perfect Harmony (la Parfaite Harmonie) Lodge was chartered in New Orleans with dual York Rite and French Rite charters. In 1757, a Scottish Rite charter was also issued from the Mother Lodge in Bordeaux. In 1763, a Lodge of Perfection (Lodge de Parfaits l'Ecosse), using purely Scottish Rite ritual, was opened in New Orleans. This was four years before Henry Franken founded the Albany, New York “Ineffable Lodge” which was supposedly the first Scottish Rite Lodge in North America. In 1765, a second Scottish Rite Lodge (La Consolante Maconne) was chartered in New Orleans by a Bordeaux Masonic Lodge.

The Louisiana Territory, which included all of the center of the United States and the “Isle of Orleans,” was secretly ceded by France to Spain following the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which ended the French and Indian War. Spain outlawed Freemasonry in Louisiana, so for almost thirty years groups met in secrecy or out of the confines of New Orleans. Tradition indicates that, in 1769, Spanish Governor O'Reilly arrested and executed a number of citizens in New Orleans following an unsuccessful coup. All of the men were supposed to be prominent businessmen and Freemasons who wanted to be rid of the Spanish. All records of any Masonic activity in New Orleans between 1765 and 1769 were either lost or destroyed.

In April 1793, fourteen Scottish Rite Masons in New Orleans, who had all attained at least the 14°, petitioned the Grand Lodge of South Carolina for a York Rite Lodge charter. Jason Lawrence installed the officers of Perfect Union (Perfaite Union) Lodge No.29 in November 1793, being careful to keep the activity secret from the Spanish government. In 1794, the Grand Orient of France chartered Polar Star (Etoile Polaire) Lodge No. 4263, and in 1801, American Masons, originally from Charleston now living in New Orleans, petitioned the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a lodge. Finally in 1802, Charity Lodge No. 93 was chartered, although not formally constituted until May 1804.

¹ A deep debt of appreciation is owed to Joan K. Sansbury, Librarian and Curator of the Library and Museum of the Supreme Council 33°, A.A.S.R., Southern Jurisdiction, for her research and assistance in gathering historical information and biographies on Louisiana's S.G.I.G.'s.

In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory, including the Isle of Orleans, from Napoleon, more than doubling the size of the country. Masonry throughout the Territory had been practiced more openly since Napoleon's brother became King of Spain, as he was also Grand Master of the Grand Orient. Masons began meeting openly again, and an interesting and very confusing period of Masonry began in Louisiana.

In 1807, a number of Masonic happenings occurred. Polar Star No. 4263 attached La Vertu Recompensee Lodge No.5001, a Rose Croix chapter; the Grand Lodge of New York, not wanting to be outdone by the Grand Orient or the Grand Lodges of South Carolina and Pennsylvania, chartered the first English-speaking lodge - Louisiana Lodge No.1 – with Edward Livingston as Master²; and, refugees from Santo Domingo reorganized one of their lodges, Reunion Desiree Lodge No.3829, and were reissued a charter from the Grand Orient. In 1810, Freemasons who were refugees from Cuba, originally from Santo Domingo, received charters from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for Concord Lodge No.117, and Perseverance Lodge No.118. A group of Americans received the second English language charter from Pennsylvania in 1810 as Harmony Lodge No.122.

Over the next fifty-year period, Scottish Rite Masonry in Louisiana experienced many changes in allegiance and affiliation. Much of this was due to individuals who promoted their causes or themselves. Some of it was due to irregularity in the Grand Lodge of South Carolina which influenced the Scottish Rite headquarters – a true gumbo. Freemasonry had come to Louisiana from many places, and each place claimed the true and pure practice of the Craft.

In 1803, Jean Baptiste Marie Delahogue arrived in New Orleans and affiliated with Charity Lodge No.93. In 1804, he received permission from the Charleston Scottish Rite to confer through the 18°. He had probably received all of these degrees prior to leaving France. In 1807, Louis Jean Lusson conferred up to the 32° on several members in New Orleans. In 1809, Lusson received the 33° from Gabriel Jastram, a 33° Mason through de Grasse-Tilly, one of the founders of Scottish Rite in the New World. In August 1810, Jastram, acting as a representative of the Supreme Council in Charleston, chartered the first Scottish Rite body in fifty years in Louisiana, Bienfaisance Lodge No.1, a Lodge of Perfection. In December 1810, the Rose Croix Chapter was chartered, and in March 1811, the Grand Consistory was chartered. The members were ordered to report all activity to Charleston South Carolina, and Kingston, Jamaica, the joint headquarters of Scottish Rite.

From this interpretation, Gabriel Jastram, would appear to have been the first true head of Scottish Rite in Louisiana, beginning sometime in 1810. Soon thereafter, the confusing period began with allegiances changing with each new faction that appeared on the scene.

² Livingston came to New Orleans in 1804 after his brother Robert had negotiated the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon for \$15 million. He had served as Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York, as a United States Congressman, as the United States Attorney, and as Mayor of New York City. After settling in the Louisiana Territory, he served in the Territorial Legislature, and went on to become a Congressman, United States Senator, and the Ambassador to France. Livingston Parish is named after Edward Livingston. He served as General Grand High Priest of all Royal Arch for three consecutive terms beginning in 1829, bringing further honor to Louisiana Masonry.

Louisiana became the eighteenth state on April 30, 1812, with a population of almost 80,000. It was formed by the Territory of Orleans, the area of the Louisiana Purchase south of the thirty-third parallel, the Isle of Orleans, and the Florida Parishes which had been a part of the short-lived Republic of West Florida³. Masonry was in existence throughout the new State, either as organized Lodges or as groups of Masons meeting together in homes, businesses, or under trees. The vast majority of Masonry was located in New Orleans, and all but two lodges used French as the ritual language and Scottish and York Rite forms equally. On June 20, 1812, the Grand Lodge of Louisiana was constituted with a membership close to 1,000⁴.

Joseph Cerneau, a Scottish Rite Mason from France who practiced his own form of Masonry, became prominent in New York, and his “Cerneauism” took hold, particularly in Louisiana. In 1807, he formed the Sovereign Grand Consistory of Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry⁵. Only Louis Jean Lusson openly fought the Cerneauism in Louisiana. In 1814, Lusson published a denunciation of Cerneau and was ridiculed by many of his fellow Masons. The Charleston Scottish Rite Grand Commander, de la Motta, appointed Lusson as the “Representative of the Scottish Rite of Charleston in Louisiana,” thus Louis Jean Lusson became the second leader of the “regular” Scottish Rite in Louisiana.

During this turbulent era, in December 1812, Emanuel Gigard, an adherent of Cerneauism, formed a provisional Grand Council of Princes of the Royal Secret. He won over many of the Charleston Scottish Rite Masons, and after 1815, Lusson’s name is not mentioned for over twenty years in New Orleans Masonry. Gigard functioned as the main leader of Scottish Rite for almost two decades.

In fact, little is known of Scottish Rite activities within the bounds of the Grand Lodge since the proceedings, known as the “Annuaire,” carefully excluded mention of French or Scottish Rite until 1833, with one exception. General Lafayette toured Louisiana in 1825, and the French Rite and Scottish Rite were still in existence and were very popular during the visit, particularly in New Orleans. While the “Morgan Affair” crippled Freemasonry in general throughout the United States from 1826 through the 1830’s, Louisiana Cerneau activities thrived.

In 1831, John Holland, the Grand Master and a 33° Scottish Rite Mason, influenced the Grand Council to rejoin the Charleston Scottish Rite, and resume the title Grand Consistory. Strangely enough, the records of the Grand Consistory appear to have been tampered with between

³ In 1810, a group of prominent planters, all Freemasons, gathered in Bayou Sara near St. Francisville, and adopted a plan of government for Spanish West Florida – an area from the Perdido River to the Mississippi River and South of the 31° Parallel. In September, the Fort at Baton Rouge fell and the Republic of West Florida was declared to be sovereign. The blue banner with the single white star in the middle, symbolizing the five points of fellowship under which the ringleaders met, was adopted as the official flag of the Republic. The flag would later be used in the Texas Rebellion, and it became the “Bonnie Blue Flag” in a later conflict. On December 6, 1810, Territorial Governor Claiborne, under order from President Madison, both Freemasons, incorporated West Florida in the Louisiana Territory. Thus ended the three-month-old independent nation led by Freemasons. A much more detailed version can be found in *The Story of The West Florida Rebellion*, by S.C. Allen.

⁴ Greene, Glen L. *Masonry in Louisiana, A Sesquicentennial History*, 1962.

⁵ Denslow, W.R. *10,000 Famous Freemasons, Vol 1, Pg 195*.

October, 1828 and February, 1831, and are missing. Some believe that Grand Master Holland, who was serving or had served as head of all of the Grand York Rite Bodies, decided to remove information that disturbed the “peace and harmony” of Louisiana Scottish Rite. In 1832, Holland was referred to as “the Representative of the Charleston Scottish Rite” replacing Lusson. Holland soon formed a Council of Kadosch (sic) within the Grand Consistory. But all of the controversy was not over. The Charleston Scottish Rite was particularly hurt by the Morgan Affair, and for a period ceased meeting.

In 1834, a new Scottish Rite Supreme Council appeared in the United States – the United Supreme Council for the Western Hemisphere. The New Orleans bodies changed allegiance to this Supreme Council and Auguste Douce was named the Grand Commander in Louisiana. John Holland quietly retired from Scottish Rite work, but only after executing the Concordat of 1833, in which the Grand Consistory turned over control of the first three degrees to the Grand Lodge.

In 1839, the United Supreme Council disbanded, and the Marquis de Santangelo organized the Supreme Council of the United States of America, claiming jurisdiction over the entire United States, and naming himself as Sovereign Grand Commander. His headquarters was the Grand Consistory in New Orleans. The Grand Lodge and the Grand Royal Arch Chapter quickly recognized it.

By the early 1840’s, Masonry in the United States was recovering from the Morgan Affair, and Grand Lodges were reorganizing and even examining their York Rite origins. Into this period in Louisiana came the event called the “Mississippi Intervention.” The Grand Lodge of Mississippi, under Grand Master John Quitman, chartered seven lodges in Louisiana – all outside of New Orleans. In March, 1848, these lodges declared their independence from Mississippi and formed the Louisiana Grand Lodge, Ancient York Masons. In June 1850, the two competing Louisiana Grand Lodges met, under the leadership of John Gedge, and agreed to merge and abolish the “cumulation of rites and other non-York practices.”⁶

The Supreme Council, headquartered in New Orleans, and facing loss of support from the Grand Lodge, quickly revived its correspondence with the Charleston Scottish Rite. In 1852, Albert Mackay, the Sovereign Grand Commander in Charleston, appeared in New Orleans and constituted John Gedge and fifteen others as Princes of the Royal Secret, and named Gedge as Commander and his Representative.

John Gedge remained the leader of Scottish Rite in Louisiana for several years, probably until the Civil War when Louisiana Masonry was again in turmoil. Only in New Orleans was Scottish Rite organized in a body; however, many “country” Masons traveled to New Orleans for the higher degrees. During the Civil War, Masonry in Louisiana continued to meet and was protected by the Union forces, with many officers who were Masons attending meetings.

Following the War in 1866, the Grand Lodge, the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch, the Grand Council, the Grand Encampment and the Grand Consistory began functioning again and attempted to take hold. There were almost two hundred lodges, almost one hundred chapters and

⁶ Greene, Glen L., MASONRY IN LOUISIANA, 1962

almost fifty councils and commanderies total. There was one Grand Consistory – and Samuel Manning Todd was named the Deputy for Louisiana.

Albert Pike became Sovereign Grand Commander of Scottish Rite in Charleston, which now titled itself the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America. He reorganized Scottish Rite Masonry and helped restructure the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. He also initiated correspondence with foreign Scottish Rite bodies and thus became the unifying factor throughout all of Scottish Rite Masonry.

In 1868, Todd was elected an Active Member of the Supreme Council and named the Sovereign Grand Inspector General of Louisiana. Born in Utica, New York, in 1815, he moved south at an early age, and like Albert Pike who was also born in the North, espoused the cause of the Confederacy, served in the army rising to the rank of Captain. A successful merchant, he was not ambitious for civic or military honors. His chosen field was Masonry, a field in which he labored for almost sixty years.⁷ He became a Mason in Mobile, Alabama, in 1847, moved to New Orleans and joined Marion Lodge No.68, and served Louisiana as Grand Master in 1859, and 1869-73. He was Grand High Priest 1868-70; Illustrious Grand Master 1866-68; and, Grand Commander 1866 to 1870. He died in 1905, after serving for almost thirty-seven years as an Active Member of the Scottish Rite Supreme Council.

In 1870, another strange thing happened. A second Louisiana Scottish Rite Mason was elected an Active Member of the Supreme Council – John Quincy Adams Fellows. Born in Vermont, in 1825, he grew up on a farm, attended the University of Vermont, became a teacher and moved to New Orleans in late 1850 where he obtained a position in the public schools. He attended and graduated from Tulane University in Law in 1852, and began the practice of law where he became well known for handling cases of local distinction. He was not interested in public office, but devoted his time to his profession and to Masonry. He became Grand Master of Masons in 1860 and held office for six years, guiding Masonry through the Civil War. He was Grand High Priest in 1859; Illustrious Grand Master in 1869; and Grand Commander in 1865. He was Grand Master of the Grand Encampment 1871-74. He joined Scottish Rite in 1856, and served as Commander in 1864. He served in several offices on the Supreme Council, was chairman of many committees, attempted to join the Northern and Southern Supreme Councils, and was one of the ablest lawyers to ever sit on the Supreme Council. The Grand Master of England, the Prince of Wales, conferred the Order of the Grand Cross of the Temple upon him – the only American of the membership limited to thirty. He died at his home in New Orleans in 1897⁸.

Following the death of SGIG Todd in 1905, Charles Francis Buck was named the Deputy. Born in Baden, Germany in 1841, his family moved to New Orleans. Following brief action during the Civil War, he returned to New Orleans and studied for the bar, became an attorney and gained great success. He joined Masonry following his college days, and became a Scottish Rite Mason in 1887. He was Grand Master in 1891, when a crisis over the Grand Lodge Temple gave him a true leadership role. The first Grand Lodge Building was in the French Quarter and was

⁷ “PIKE’S FIRST DECADE”, NEW AGE MAGAZINE, Pg. 17, 1928.

⁸ “PIKE’S COMMANDERSHIP”, NEW AGE MAGAZINE, Pg. 399-400, 1928.

sold following the Civil War. A new one was built at Tivoli Circle, and was declared unusable. It was sold and a new Temple on St. Charles Avenue at Perdido Street, in the American Quarter, or downtown, was built and occupied in 1892. In 1907, Buck was elected Grand Prior, the third ranking officer in the Supreme Council in 1915. He died in 1918 in New Orleans⁹.

A.L. Metz of New Orleans was named Deputy in 1918. He resigned in late 1919. Little information is known on this Scottish Rite Mason¹⁰.

Lee E. Thomas was named Deputy in 1920 and served until 1929 when he died. He was never elected an Active Member. Thomas was an influential Mason from Shreveport who worked in all branches of Masonry and served as Grand Master. He was responsible for organizing the Lake Charles Bodies chartered in October 1923¹¹.

In 1929, an attorney from New Orleans, born in 1872, was appointed Deputy—Charles Francis Buck, Jr. – the first time a son followed closely after his father in such a position. He was elected an Active Member in 1931, and rose through the years to become Grand First Equerry in 1943. He served in that position until his death in November 1952. He received his Scottish Rite degrees in 1910 and worked in all branches of Masonry¹².

Jared Young Sanders, Jr. was named Deputy in 1952. Born in 1912 in Franklin, he moved to Baton Rouge where he practiced law, and formed the premier law partnership of Sanders, Miller, Downing, Rubin, and Kean. It survives today as the Kean, Miller law firm. A Past Master of St. James No.47, he joined the Grand Consistory in 1923. He served as a State Representative, a State Senator, and as the Sixth District Congressman. He was considered an “Anti-Long” political activist, and much of his early energy focused on removing Huey Long and his supporters from power. Interestingly, he was suspended as a Mason from December 1932 until March 1937. Due to no openings on the Supreme Council, he served for seven years as a Deputy, until 1958 when he stepped down to concentrate on his duties as a Grand Lodge officer. He died in November 1960, preparing to become Grand Master in February, 1961, and planning for the 150th Anniversary of Louisiana Masonry in 1962. He was responsible for organizing the Baton Rouge Bodies, chartered in October 1955¹³.

In December 1958, Dee Alphonso Strickland, a very successful Monroe dentist, was named Deputy by Sovereign Grand Commander, Judge Luther A. Smith. He was born in Harrisonburg in 1902, became a Mason in Harrisonburg Lodge No.110 in 1923, affiliated with Mt., Vernon Lodge No.83 in Logansport where he served as Master in 1932 and 1933. He moved to Monroe and affiliated with Western Star Lodge No.24, and served as Master in 1939. He served as Grand Master in 1941. He joined the Shreveport Scottish Rite in 1932, became a KCCH in 1949 and a 33° Mason in 1953. In October 1959, he was elected an Active Member of the Supreme Council and became Sovereign Grand Inspector General. Dr. Strickland was successful in

⁹ Records of the Supreme Council, 33°, and Greene, Glenn L., MASONRY IN LOUISIANA.

¹⁰ Records of the Supreme Council, 33°

¹¹ Records of the Supreme Council, 33°

¹² Records of the Supreme Council, 33°

¹³ Greene, Glen L., *Masonry in Louisiana* and *New Age Magazine*, pg. 36, March 1961

organizing and chartering the fifth Scottish Rite Valley in Louisiana – the Monroe Bodies in September 1970. He served as Lieutenant Grand Commander, the second highest office in the Supreme Council, under Grand Commander Henry Clausen. He died in Monroe in January 1977¹⁴.

Dietrich Walter Jessen, a civil engineer born in 1914 in Lake Charles, was appointed Deputy in January 1977, and elected an Active Member and named Sovereign Grand Inspector General in October, 1977. He was then serving the Grand Lodge as Grand Senior Warden. He became Grand Master in February 1979. A member of Rudolph Krause Lodge No.443 and Calcasieu Lodge No.400, he received his Scottish Rite degrees in Lake Charles in 1951. He became a KCCCH in 1959 and a 33° Mason in 1969. Under his leadership, the Scottish Rite philanthropy of speech and hearing clinics were established in New Orleans and Shreveport. He also founded the Scottish Rite Foundation of Louisiana. Reaching the mandatory retirement age of 80 in 1994, he stepped down to be elected an Emeritus Member in 1995¹⁵.

Ronald Armbrust Seale, born in 1948 in Baton Rouge, this Past Master of East Gate Lodge No.452 joined Scottish Rite in 1970. An attorney, he was appointed a Deputy in early 1995 and elected an Active Member in October 1955, and named Sovereign Grand Inspector General. While most of his illustrious career is yet to be written, he has continued the work begun in the Speech and Hearing Clinics by expanding the clinics and working to increase the work of the Foundation. He is the youngest member of the Supreme Council.

The leadership of Scottish Rite in Louisiana has been diverse and interesting. All working to better their fellowmen and improve the Brotherhood offered by Scottish Rite Masonry. Louisiana is unique and the better for having this long list of men who have given their time, their talents, and their presence to Scottish Rite Freemasonry¹⁶.

¹⁴ Greene, Glen L., *Masonry in Louisiana*, and *New Age Magazine*, pg. 703-704, December 1959

¹⁵ Records of the Supreme Council, 33°.

¹⁶ Many historical dates were verified through information supplied in Vol. 4, 1995, *Heredom*, “An Historical Sketch of Pre-1851 Louisiana Scottish Rite Masonry” by Kent Walgren.