

*Introduction to the  
History of Alabama  
Freemasonry*



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Grand Historian, 2021-22*

# History of Alabama Freemasonry

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he Mississippi Territory. While the vast expanse within the boundaries of Alabama was only slightly explored by men of European descent, men in search of adventure were drawn to settlements along the river systems of the region. Soon the towns of Huntsville (1805), Tuscaloosa (1817), Cahawba (1818) and Claiborne (1819) joined Mobile (1702) and St. Stephens (1789) as centers of commerce and government. Many of the men who sought out the challenges of the “Old Southwest” were Freemasons.

In 1811, the Grand Lodge of Kentucky responded to “A petition from a number of brethren, residing in the county of Madison, in the Mississippi Territory,” by issuing a dispensation to form a lodge. On August 28, 1812 a Charter was issued for holding a Lodge at Huntsville, to be designated and known by the name of “Madison Lodge No. 21” with Louis Winston the first Master, Thomas Fearn, Senior Warden, and John J. Winston, Junior Warden.

## Freemasonry comes to Alabama

(Pre-Grand Lodge– 1820-1821)



1811	<b>Madison #21 (KY)</b>	Huntsville
1813	<b>Friendship #6 (LA)</b>	Mobile
1818	<b>Halo UD (NC)</b>	Cahaba
	<b>Alabama #21 (TN)</b>	Huntsville
	<b>Washington #23 (TN)</b>	Hazel Green
1819	<b>Claiborne #51 (SC)</b>	Claiborne
	<b>Rising Virtue #30 (TN)</b>	Tuscaloosa
	<b>Eureka #16 (LA)</b>	Blakeley
1820	<b>Halo #21 (GA)</b>	Cahaba
	<b>St. Stephens UD (NC)</b>	St. Stephens
	<b>Halo #33 (TN)</b>	Cahaba
	<b>Moulton #34 (TN)</b>	Moulton
	<b>Franklin #36 (TN)</b>	Russellville
1821	<b>Marion (GA)</b>	Suggsville
	<b>Tuscumbia #40 (TN)</b>	Courtland
	<b>Farrar #41 (TN)</b>	Elyton
	<b>Mobile #22 (LA)</b>	Mobile

Lodges in red formed the Grand Lodge of Alabama

At the extreme southern end of the territory, only months after Spain yielded West Florida to the United States, Mobile masons petitioned the Grand Lodge of Louisiana and on September 4, 1813 Friendship Lodge No. 6 began its labor. The initial officers were: James Lyon as Worshipful Master, S. H. Garrow as Senior Warden, and Charles Stewart as Junior Warden. There are indications the Grand Lodge of North Carolina issued a dispensation for Friendship Lodge at St. Stephens in 1815, but details are somewhat confusing.

Other lodges began to organize after the creation of the Alabama Territory on August 15, 1817. Three lodges were formed in 1818: Alabama No. 21 (TN) at Huntsville; Washington No. 23 (TN) at Hazel Green; and a dispensation was issued for Halo UD (NC) at Cahawba. During 1819 three more lodges were organized: Claiborne No. 51 (SC) at Claiborne; Rising Virtue No. 30 (TN) at Tuscaloosa; and Eureka No. 16 (LA) at Blakeley.

During the eighteen months between Alabama statehood and the creation of the “Worshipful Grand Lodge of ancient Free Masons of Alabama” seven more lodges were organized by nearby Grand Lodges. Additionally, Halo Lodge received dispensations from two more Grand Lodges, Tennessee (No. 33) and Georgia (No. 21). St. Stephens would re-organize a lodge after the dispensation from North Carolina apparently expired. In 1820 the lodge’s new dispensation from the same Grand Lodge would list its name as “St. Stephens.”

## **FORMATION OF THE GRAND LODGE**

From this collection of lodges would be created the Grand Lodge of Alabama. Newspaper announcements indicate that masons from across the state met to discuss establishing a Grand Lodge during the November 1820 session of the state legislature. This led to a masonic convention being held at Cahawba on June 11, 1821. By that time there were twelve active lodges. Ten of these had representatives. However, due to the confused status of Mobile’s Friendship Lodge No. 6 (LA), it was not included as a founding lodge. Nonetheless, at the first Annual Communication in December, 1821, charters were issued to Mobile No. 10, Montgomery No. 11, Marion No. 12 while Sparta No.13 and Florence

No. 14 were granted dispensations.

As “Alabama Fever” attracted many newcomers to the state, Freemasonry grew rapidly. By 1827 the Grand Lodge had chartered or granted dispensations to thirty-one lodges including two in the Florida Territory. Jackson Lodge No. 23 in Tallahassee would help found the Grand Lodge of Florida in 1830 and is numbered 1 on their list of lodges. Unfortunately, a sizable number of the new lodges struggled with attendance at the annual Grand Lodge sessions and with submission of required reports.

**Masonic,**

The Regularly Constituted Lodges of Ancient York Masons, Chartered, Dispensed, or associated within the State of Alabama, are respectfully requested to meet, by their representatives, at the Town of Cahawba, as early as practicable after the commencement of the ensuing session of the Legislature, to confer on the expediency, form a constitution for, and organize a grand Lodge for the state.

By order of an association of Master Masons assembled at St. Stephens for mutual improvement.

Oct. 28th 1820.

Benjamin S. Smoote and Israel Pickens, Esqs. or either of them will represent this association. Printers who wish prosperity to the craft, will give the above an early insertion in their papers.

St. Stephens, Oct. 30th 1820.

The first record of a masonic cornerstone ceremony has the Senior Grand Warden officiating at the laying the cornerstone of Eunomia Hall on November 22, 1824. This “spacious brick edifice” housed Eunomia Royal Arch Chapter No. 5 as well as Madison and Bethesda lodges in Huntsville.

In the early days of statehood lotteries were regularly used to raise money for local improvements, establishing schools and constructing masonic halls. During the 1819 and 1820 sessions of the state legislature acts were passed which authorized lodges in Huntsville, Cahawba, Tuscaloosa and Claiborne to conduct lotteries “for the purpose of erecting and furnishing said masonic hall”. The profit from these fundraisers was capped at \$15,000. This is equivalent to \$330,000 in current dollars. This was done because members of the legislature understood that these buildings would support their communities. Frequently we read of lodge halls being used by schools, churches and the courts.

On other occasions lodges petitioned that their Grand Lodge dues be forgiven due to having “recently erected, at great expense” masonic halls. The first two were Mobile No. 10 and Rising Virtue No. 4 in 1824. Similar requests were made by

three other lodges the following year. Between 1820 and 1830 the population of Alabama increased by 142% and the addition of a masonic lodge in a town was considered a sign of stability and promise.

## **COLLAPSE AND RENEWAL**

Alabama's population in the 1830s was rapidly increasing and was also very mobile. Because of the small membership of lodges and the difficulties in traveling, many of the lodges failed to comply with Grand Lodge regulations. During the first eight years, the average number of lodges failing to make proper reports was over 35%. In 1828 this number had risen to 40% resulting in eight Lodges forfeiting their charters. Two lodges voluntarily surrendered their charters and two dispensations were not renewed.

This drastic reduction of twelve lodges left the Grand Lodge with only eighteen chartered lodges at the end of 1829. Membership which peaked at about 650 Master Masons, dropped to a low of perhaps 250 during 1834 and 1835 when the Grand Lodge failed to meet.

However, this was not the end of Freemasonry in Alabama. Representatives of six lodges met on December 6, 1836 and the Grand Lodge was reorganized. A new Constitution was adopted and Grand Officers were elected and installed. Then for the first time since January 10, 1834, as far as records indicate, the Grand Lodge was opened. While it appears the Grand Lodge of Alabama did not function for up to twenty-three months, Masonry in Alabama was not dead. The twelve lodges that had retained their charters and endorsed the new Constitution represented approximately 300 Masons. By 1840 the growing pains had passed with 38 lodges reporting a membership of almost 900.

## **EDUCATION BY THE MASONS**

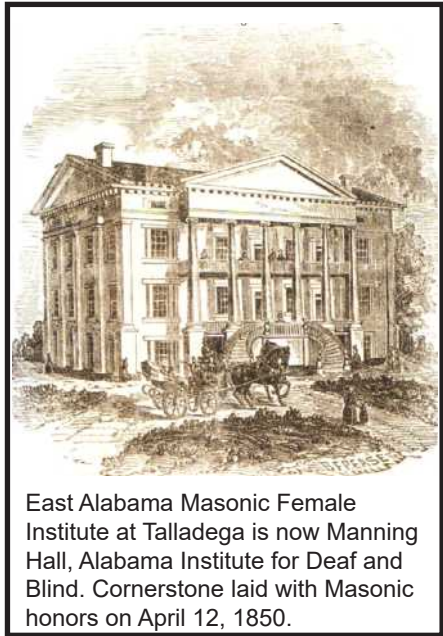
As Alabama entered the antebellum period Freemasonry entered a strong period of growth. By 1860 the Grand Lodge reported 250 lodges with a total membership of 8,454. In that year alone 996 men received the Master Mason Degree and another

330 were added to the rolls through affiliation. Most lodges remained small. Only Mobile No. 40 had over 100 members. The remaining lodges averaged 34 members. The influence of these men far outweighed their numbers. Three of the seven Governors during this time were members of the fraternity. Combining the desire to support education of both orphans of Masons and the general public, in 1841 the

Masters of subordinate Lodges, be instructed earnestly to recommend ... and take up a subscription, payable in equal installments for the purpose of establishing an Academy of a high literary character.

After two years of discussion and study by the Committee on Education, the proposal was rejected. However, individual lodges and groups of masons did respond to this need and a number of academies and colleges were sponsored.

In the Proceedings of 1851 the Committee on Education commended the Central Masonic Institute at Selma, Dayton Female Institute, Talladega's East Alabama Masonic Institute, the Masonic Institute at Union Town, Dadeville Masonic Institute, and the contemplated Tuscumbia Institute. The committee also noted the efforts of masons in Oak Bowery and Tuskegee to open schools at their locations. Additionally the committee recommended the Trustees make loans to schools under Masonic control



East Alabama Masonic Female Institute at Talladega is now Manning Hall, Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. Cornerstone laid with Masonic honors on April 12, 1850.

and direction at the interest rate of "one percent below legal interest per annum." Later in that decade Alabama masons would charter Auburn Female Masonic College and would join forces with the Oddfellows and Sons of Temperance to create Union Female College in Eufaula.



## ALABAMA'S RITUALS

In 1839, Alabama's Committee on Foreign Correspondence recommended a Convention, to be held in Washington City, for the purpose of establishing a uniform mode of work in the Lodges, throughout the United States, and to make other lawful regulations, for the interest and security of the craft.

The convention opened on March 7, 1842 and recommendations were agreed upon to have a more uniform operation among the Grand Lodges. One result was the encouragement of a system of Grand Representatives. Over the next several years the Grand Lodge proceedings had a number of resolutions making such appointments. The 1845 resolutions included "That Bro. Robert E. B. Baylor be appointed the Representative of this Grand Lodge near the Grand Lodge of Texas." Baylor, a member of Rising Virtue Lodge No. 4, served as Alabama's Deputy Grand Master in 1828 and moved to the Republic of Texas in 1839. He would become the name-sake of the oldest continuously operating university in Texas, Baylor University.

It was also recommended that a Convention of Grand Lecturers be held in Baltimore in May, 1843. At that time representatives of sixteen Grand Lodges met with the primary purpose of establishing a uniform mode of degree work across the nation. In his report, Grand Lecturer Edward Herndon stated "The work agreed upon by the Convention is substantially the same as that which is taught and practiced in a majority of the Lodges working under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge." None the less, the Grand Lodge approved the Committee on Work's recommendation that the mode of work contained in the Baltimore Convention's *Trestleboard* **not** be adopted for use in Alabama.

As early as 1840, the degree work used in Alabama relied heavily on *The True Masonic Chart or Hieroglyphic Monitor* first published in 1819 by Jeremy Cross. This book included a large number of illustrations, many of which are familiar to today's mason. By 1901 the increased requests for public ceremonies, including the laying of cornerstones and funerals, highlighted dissatisfaction with the Cross ritual. This led to the *Masonic Manual of the Grand Lodge of Alabama* developed by Brothers George A. Beauchamp and Dan A. Greene. This book combined

the written ritual adopted in the state along with the Constitution, Edicts, Decisions and Resolutions of the Grand Lodge. First published in 1904, this book also included a 16 page “Early History of Freemasonry in Alabama” as well as sample forms and the first “Directions to Secretaries.” The first edition of 2,000 copies sold out within two years.

The Grand Lecturer, for several years, had reported the lack of uniformity of degree work across the state. As the number of the lodges increased, it became impossible for a single Lecturer to maintain statewide conformity in the ritual.

In an effort to remedy this problem a resolution was passed in 1848 to create a committee of District Lecturers. The state was divided into seven districts, based on the Congressional Districts, and the committee was to meet each February “to work in the three first degrees of Masonry until they may have assimilated their work as near as may be having a strict regard to the ancient land-marks of the Order.” After which each member would be issued a certificate from the Grand Master and “upon request, visit the various subordinate Lodges within his district and instruct them in the work.” The following year the Committee on Work was designated a standing committee. This marked the beginning of our current system of District Lecturers and our Committee on Work.

Over the next forty years a number of variations of Grand Lecturers, districts and the Committee on Work were used, but each time the efforts to provide uniform ritual work in the lodges met with limited success. When this situation was again





addressed in 1890 it reestablished nine Districts in addition to the Committee on Work. And a new element was added allowing “That nothing in these recommendations shall prevent any county having five or more Lodges, from forming a Conference or Association of its own.” This paved the way for our extremely successful modern system of Masonic District Conferences and Lecturers. By 1909, the custom developed for the conferences to confer all three degrees on an actual candidate. This required the Grand Master to grant dispensations for conferring degrees “out of statutory time” and reduced the instructional value of the meetings.

The rapid increase in masons and lodges in the early twentieth century necessitated expanding the number of masonic districts. In 1910, with over 22,000 masons and 500 lodges, the state was divided into twenty districts. Each District Lecturer would demonstrate his proficiency in the “work and lectures of the three degrees” before the Committee on Work or the Grand Lecturer. At the same time Grand Master Lawrence H. Lee reminded all that the district conferences were “intended as schools of instruction ... not intended as meetings for degree work.”

## **THE FRATERNITY DURING WAR**

As the Grand Lodge opened its 1860 Annual Communication on December 3, Grand Master Ervin gave no hint of concern with the looming national tensions which would lead within weeks to the secession of states that would form the Confederacy. Yet only in the introduction of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence do we have a hint of the coming strife.

[E]ach one speaks of peace and harmony prevailing generally, among our great Masonic Brotherhood. Though a cloud may here and there obscure for a moment the beautiful covering of our Lodges, and cast a shadow upon the labors of our brethren, yet it soon passes away, only to show forth more clearly the beauties of our great Masonic edifice.

In May, 1861, these thoughts were continued by Tennessee Grand Master James McCallum when he called on the Freemasons of both the United States and the Confederacy to remember that the special bond of fraternity remained even across the terrible fields of battle. In a letter addressed to “the

Grand Lodge of New York and the Craft in general” he penned ... But if all efforts fail, if every appeal for peace shall be thrust aside, if the sword must still be the last resort, and accepted as the final arbiter, we beseech the Brethren engaged in the awful contest to remember that a fallen foe is still a Brother, and as such is entitled to warmest sympathies and kindest attentions. If war can not be averted or turned aside, let every Brother use his utmost endeavors, and, as far as lies in his power, rob it of some of its horrors. ...

By the time of the December 1861 Grand Lodge Communication, war had begun. Fort Sumter had been fired upon and the largest army ever before assembled in North America clashed with Confederate forces at Manassas Junction. Grand Master Stephen F. Hale was the Lieutenant Colonel of the 11th Alabama Infantry Regiment. While in command of the regiment at the Battle of Gaines’ Mill he would be “dangerously wounded” on June 27, 1862 and die after lingering for 22 days. His 1861 letter to the Grand Lodge assembly closed with

May God in mercy grant, when the perils and privations of this, contest are over ... that, then once more I may meet again my brethren of the Grand Lodge, within our own peaceful walls!

During the opening session, Grand Junior Warden Richard J. Dudley, who would later be elected Captain of Company A, 44th Alabama Infantry, proposed that it was the imperative duty of the Grand Lodge of Alabama to extend all the aid in its power to the relief of the gallant and patriotic volunteers ... now exposed on the tented field alike to the diseases incident to camp life as to the casualties, of war by the appropriation of twenty-five hundred dollars.

Alabama would also support its soldiers by issuing Letters of Dispensation to establish a total of nineteen Army Lodges. All but one were “traveling lodges” with the place of meeting being designated as a military unit. The first, Confederate Lodge No. 292, was to meet at Ft. Morgan, AL. When the 2nd Alabama Infantry was deployed to Tennessee in 1862, the lodge’s records, including the minutes, were sent to the Grand Secretary where they have survived to this day.

In his 1862 report, Alabama’s Grand Secretary Daniel Sayre wrote,

Arid yet, notwithstanding all the cruelties they have inflicted

upon our people, many well authenticated accounts reach the Grand Secretary of instances in which both life and property have been saved by means of our beloved institution; showing that even amid the license and excesses perpetrated by a brutal and licentious soldiery, masonry has still asserted its great power over the hearts and conduct of men.

At the first Annual Communication following the end of the war, at total of thirty-one lodges reported such destruction of lodge property, including loss of their charters that the Grand Lodge forgave payment of Grand Lodge Dues for twenty-one lodges and issued, free of charge, eighteen replacement charters.

Once again, fraternal relations connected the masons of the reunited nation. Bro. John G. Stokes began his report of Foreign Correspondence with these words,

The clash of arms—the boom of the cannon—the loud huzzas of contending hosts—the shrill blast of the war bugle—the dying groan—all these have ceased, and sweet and gentle Peace is upon us.

And as an echo, from New York's Grand Master, Clinton F. Paige, we read

Masonry is the daughter of peace; striving always and ever to promote conciliation and friendship, to unite men in acts of benevolence, to turn their minds from the bickerings and strife of the world, and to prepare them for the coming of that day when there shall be no war.

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## **Bro. George E. Dixon**

### **Commander of the Confederate submarine *Hunley***

The *Hunley* was the first submarine to sink an enemy vessel when it sank the *USS Hunsatonic* on February 17, 1864. The submarine was constructed in Mobile, Alabama and has a strong Masonic connection.

Horace L. Hunley, developer - Mr. Moriah Lodge (LA)

James R. McClintock, submarine designer - Mobile Lodge

John R. Fretwell, torpedo developer - Lavaca Lodge (TX)

Edgar C. Singer, torpedo developer, Lavaca Lodge (TX)

William A. Alexander, First Officer - Mobile Lodge

George E. Dixon, Commander - Mobile Lodge

The submarine was located in 1995 and raised in 2000. Mobile Lodge buried Bro. Dixon with Masonic honors on April 17, 2004 at Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston, South Carolina.

## **THE LONG EFFORT TO CARE FOR OUR WIDOWS AND ORPHANS**

In 1851 a committee studied the possibility of founding an “Orphans Asylum.” Reporting the next year, Bro. R. G. Earle offered a resolution for “the erection and endowment of an Orphan Asylum, for the benefit of the orphan children of indigent Masons.” Unfortunately, further consideration was indefinitely postponed. Mindful of the masonic duty to care for our widows and orphans a number of lodges were paying for the cost of educating orphans.

During Reconstruction, we read of interest in establishing a Masonic Orphans Home. In 1869 the committee recommended that “the Home be located at Monte Sano, three miles north of Huntsville.” To fund the project, it was suggested lodges pay \$1 per member plus \$1 for each degree conferred, affiliation, and demit granted to be placed in a “Masonic Orphans’ Home Fund.” However, the next year’s Grand Master rejected this idea stating “it is greatly better to let the subordinate lodges be the almoners of their own bounty, in respect of this as of other benevolent enterprises.”

James A. Bilbro, then Worshipful Master of Tuskegee Lodge No. 57, presented a resolution in 1882 to begin planning for a Masonic Home and College where the orphans of Masons, who died in good standing with their Lodges, could receive an education free of charge. A committee was appointed and returned its recommendations the following year. Recognizing the magnitude of the undertaking, they recommended funds be obtained through “an amendment to the constitution whereby each Lodge may be taxed per capita.”

For the next series of years this proposal was “laid on the table.” In 1887, Grand Master John G. Harris reintroduced the idea, expanding it to encompass widows as well as orphans. Again, after two years of silence, the 1890 Grand Lodge resolved to appoint a committee and “at the earliest day practicable, establish a Home for the indigent widows and orphans of deceased Masons.” The Masonic Home Committee presented a resolution at the 1892 Grand Lodge session to establish a Board of Directors for the “Masonic Home of Alabama” to solicit donations and obtain a charter from the Alabama General Assembly.

While in favor of an orphanage, Grand Master Francis L. Pettus reported the following year that he strongly felt widows should be cared for by the local lodges and not “sent as paupers to a Masonic poor house.” The following was adopted: “Resolved, That the Committee on Locating a “Masonic Home” was premature in its appointment and that the same be now discontinued.” Not to be deterred, a 1894 resolution was offered that would raise dues to the Grand Lodge from 50 cents to 1 dollar with the additional 50 cents being placed in a trust for the “use and benefit of a Masonic Home” and “That when a sum of not less than fifty thousand dollars has accumulated therein the Grand Lodge, at its discretion, may take active steps in ... building for a Masonic Home.” The vote of the lodges at their annual communication was in favor 104, against 228. 42 lodges did not vote.

With the installation of James A. Bilbro as Grand Master, Alabama masonry had met a dedicated force for the development of a Masonic Home. He devoted ten pages of his opening address at the 1897 Annual Communication to this project. In terms full of passion, he reminded the members of their call to charity and their obligation to care for widows and orphans. He attacked the objections and then cataloged the efforts of other Grand Jurisdictions.

Again I exclaim! How long, my Brethren! Oh! how long shall this be? The feeble step of that old indigent Brother, the careworn face of that helpless widow, the uncertain life being developed in that boy or girl who needs the aid and assistance of Masonic hands and Masonic counsel, surely are mute appeals we cannot resist.

Despite Bilbro’s heartfelt urging, only \$66 was collected and the resolution to increase the dues by 50 cents to fund a Masonic Home failed with 220 Lodges voting against it, 53 for it, and 106 taking no action. The following year only \$22.44 in voluntary contributions was collected for the Masonic Home Fund.

Grand Master B. Dudley Williams continued to urge members and lodges to contribute to the fund in his 1900 address, but in disregard to his praise for the project and references to the large number of other Grand Lodges who had established such facilities, Alabama masons continued to lag “behind in this great, this monumental charity.” In an effort to spur them to action, a committee of five Past Grand Masters was established to consider and report upon the most feasible method of establish-

ing and maintaining a Widows' and Orphans' Home.

In January, 1901, Grand Master R. M. Cunningham issued a circular letter which strongly urged Alabama masons to support a dues increase to fund the construction and operation of a Home. He closed his appeal with

Brethren, we must do something. Look at it calmly and conscientiously. From the beginning to the end of Masonry the burden of teaching is charity, charity, charity. And yet we have no organized movement based upon business principles for practical charity—a proof of our profession by our works.

Then in accordance with adopted resolutions he “appointed M. W. Bro. Jas. A. Bilbro, and Bro. Sol D. Bloch to prepare an address to the lodges on the Widows and Orphans Home. He also appointed a committee in each of the sixty-six counties to bring the W. & O. Home amendment before the Lodge in their respective counties. During his address in 1902 Cunningham reported the proposed constitutional amendment to raise dues to support the Home failed. 144 lodges voted in favor, 196 against and 45 made no report. To this he commented “While this is encouraging, compared with our past experience, it certainly destroys for the present any hope for a Widows and Orphans Home.”

The Finance Committee, after stating the amendment results, resubmitted the proposal along with a stern warning that all lodges are required to vote on such proposed amendments. This was sent to the lodges for consideration with the result that 159 voted in favor and 220 were opposed. Only 9 lodges did not vote. Again, the efforts to support a Home failed.

In 1905 a new resolution was introduced to raise funds for a Masonic Home through a \$1 increase in the Grand Lodge dues. At the same session, PGM Bilbro entered a resolution to create a committee to wage a campaign of education on the proposed constitutional amendment. This would also be turned down by the lodges. This time the vote was 135 for and 280 against. Ten lodges did not record their vote. Deputy and Acting Grand Master Ben M. Jacobs stated

“I am firmly of the opinion that





if the necessity of this Home was properly presented ... there would be no difficulty in gaining the same by an overwhelming majority.” He then called for the resolution to be resubmitted and sent to the lodges for further consideration. However, the amount of the increase was reduced to 50 cents.

With much gratitude, Grand Master Jacobs announced at the 1907 session the success of the year’s efforts to secure funds for the Masonic Home. Through his tireless efforts and those of the Campaign Committee the tally of lodges resulted in the amendment passing by the count of 392 to 50 with 2 failing to vote. As he continued “There was no help ... more effective than that of the Order of Eastern Star, five thousand letters sent out by the Grand Secretary of this Order during the campaign had untold influence with the subordinate Lodges.”

Two hundred and thirty-five acres of land, four miles east of Montgomery, were purchased and the cornerstone was laid during the 1911 Grand Lodge Session with over 1,200 masons in attendance. The doors of the Home opened for residents on January 18, 1913. At that time the assets of the Home were valued at \$127,000 (equal to \$3.3 million in 2020 dollars). By the end of the year 50 residents had been welcomed, 18 girls, 7 boys, 18 women, and 7 men.



## **THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY**

Building on the legacy of the Alabama Masonic Home, the Freemasons of Alabama strive to meet the needs of the families of our fraternity as well as members of our communities. Although health care and social services have changed dramatically over the past century, the desire of masons to extend a hand to a brother in need has not. As we look outside our fraternal family, we recall that “These generous principles are to extend further; every human being has a claim on our kind offices; do good unto all ...”

The Alabama Masonic Home, established in 1913, was the only significant charitable effort of the Grand Lodge. For the first 20 years it was primarily an orphanage. In 1928, residents included 271 children, 56 women and 11 men. By the 1950s the ratio had changed with only 19 children and 85 senior adults. This trend continued until by 1972 all of the residents were adults.

The average age of the residents of the Home increased and in 2002 the 29 residents were relocated to skilled nursing facilities across the state. The masons of Alabama paid the cost of private rooms, as well as all doctor visits, eye care, dental, clothing and any other needs. This care will be provided as long as the remaining residents live.

The Grand Lodge Charitable Endowment Fund was created soon after the Masonic Home opened and has grown to over \$14 million. After meeting all of the needs of our remaining Masonic Home residents, this fund supports a number of charitable projects including scholarships, social services and disaster support programs. Since its inception in 2006 this endowment has funded \$800,000 in scholarships and over \$1 million in other charitable lodge sponsored endeavors.



## **ALABAMA PROVIDING NATIONAL MASONIC LEADERS**

Masons of Alabama have been instrumental in advancing Freemasonry beyond our state's borders. Many served in regional offices, but listed are some of those who presided over national masonic organizations.

### **Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, S.J.**

James C. Batchelor, Grand Commander 1891-93

### **Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in N. A.**

Robert C. Coley, PGM, Chairman 1978

Jerry M. Underwood, PGM, Chairman 1999

**George Washington National Masonic Memorial**

Roger A. Simmons, PGM, President 2012-13

Jon Michael Taylor, PGM, Board of Directors, 2021-24

**International Order of DeMolay**

James C. McGee, Grand Master 1999-2000

**National Association of Masonic Scouters**

Wayne E. Sirmon, Charter President, 2007-13

**National Sojourners**

Edward May, President 1974-75



**FREEMASONS  
IN  
PUBLIC  
SERVICE**

Masons are instructed to be “true to your government and just to your country.” In percentages Alabama Masons involved in public service far outweighing the numbers, Alabama has benefited from Masons who have led our state. Twenty-six Masons with a combined 94 years of service have been our state’s chief executive. This includes eight of our first ten governors. Fourteen Grand Masters held elected public office at the state or national level, including two governors.

While difficult to compile a complete list, at the national level over 35 have served in the House of Representatives, 10 in the Senate, 2 on the U. S. Supreme Court, and 1 as Vice President. At the state level, in addition the 26 Governors, 3 were Lieutenant Governors, 7 served on the Alabama Supreme Court and countless others have and are serving as state senators and representatives.



## For Further Reading

Brief histories of the Grand Lodge of Alabama may be found in several of the Proceedings. These are available online at the Grand Lodge website [glofal.com](http://glofal.com) Enter the Member Database and then select **Resources/Forms**

*Proceedings of 1821* has a four page introduction which gives some of the details of the pre-grand lodge period.

*Proceedings of 1868* includes, beginning on page 42, a "Report of the History of Free Masonry in Alabama" by Samuel H. Dixon. He was in the process of writing a history of the Grand Lodge but this effort was not completed before his death in 1869.

*Proceedings of 1921* contains Oliver Day Street's address on "Masonry in Alabama One Hundred Years Ago."

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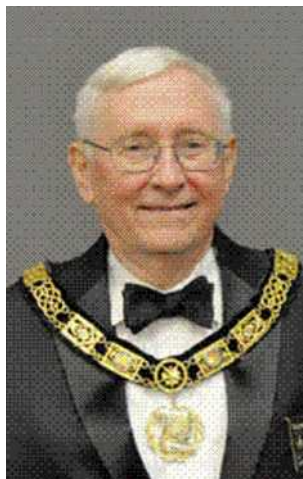
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***Wayne E. Sirmon***  
***Grand Historian***  
***2021-2022***

R. W. Bro. Wayne Sirmon is a Past Master of three Alabama Lodges (#40, #476, #874) and the Texas Lodge of Research. He has served the Grand Lodge of Alabama in a variety of roles including, District Lecturer, and a director of the Square and Compasses Foundation. Sirmon chaired the Bicentennial Committee and served as Chairman of the Masonic Education and Public Relations Committee for eight years. Additionally, he has served on Grand Lodge committees on Child Identification, Membership, Review of Edicts and as a judge and prosecutor with the Trial Commission.

Masonic Honors include the 33rd degree, Scottish Rite, York Rite College Order of the Purple Cross, and the DeMolay Legion of Honour. He has served as the Puissant Sovereign of St. Bernard Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine, Governor of Alabama College No. 3, York Rite College, President of Albert J. Yount Chapter, National Sojourners, Charter President of the National Association of Masonic Scouters, and is a George Washington Masonic National Memorial Ambassador.

Interests outside of Freemasonry include the Boy Scouts of America where he has served as Council Commissioner for the Mobile Area Council and served on staff for every National Jamboree since 2001. Sirmon has served as president of the General Galvez Chapter and as Secretary of the Alabama Society Sons of the American Revolution.

An active member of the Mobile community, he has served on numerous boards and commissions. In recognition of his support for the university's ROTC program he was awarded the Department of the Army Public Service Commendation Medal, Certificate of Appreciation for Patriotic Service, as well as being recognized by the National Infantry Association with the Order of Saint Maurice - Legionnaire.

Since 2010, R. W. Bro. Sirmon has served as adjunct faculty at the University of Mobile where he is an Assistant Professor of History and Honorary Fellow.



This history was first prepared for the 2020 edition of the Grand Lodge of F. &A. M. of Alabama Membership Directory.

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