

LOUISIANA FREEMASONRY

A BRIEF HISTORY

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(His biography is at the end of the article)

Louisiana is a unique State, as are all States within our republic called these United States of America. Louisiana is famous for its foods and flavors – it is the home of gumbo – and Masonry in Louisiana is described as just that – a gumbo.

Louisiana is situated at the mouth of one of the great rivers of the world – the Mississippi River. Almost the entire state is composed of sediment deposited from the Mississippi River over thousands of years. There are ridges along the northern edge with Mt. Driscoll, near Ruston, being the highest elevation at 534 feet above sea level. New Orleans, a great international city with many unusual features, sits on a mud bank along the banks of the Mississippi River near the mouth, with a very large and shallow Lake Pontchartrain on its northern limits, and has the distinction in places due to subsidence of being 22 feet below sea level. The shape of the state resembles an old shoe with the toes sticking out.

First settled as early as 6,000 years ago by paleolithic tribes who left behind such impressive structures as the Poverty Point mound complex, the region was first explored by Europeans as early as 1519 when Alvarez de Pindea's Spanish expedition discovered what was probably the mouth of the Mississippi River while exploring the Gulf of Mexico. Hernando de Soto's ill-fated expedition happened upon the Mississippi River probably around Natchez, Mississippi around 1542 as his troops transversed from Florida westward looking for gold. He was buried in the River when an unfriendly native's arrow permitted him to enter his Heavenly House of Gold. In 1682, Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, sailed from Canada through the Great Lakes and down the River and planted a cross near the mouth of the River, and claimed all of the territory drained by the River for Louis XIV, for whom Louisiana is named. Louis de St. Denis established Fort St. Jean Baptiste in 1715 on the Red River as the first permanent settlement in the Mississippi Valley – the Fort became the Town of Natchitoches. New Orleans was founded by Jean Baptiste Lemoyne de Bienville and his brother Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville in 1718 and named for Phillippe, Duc D'Orleans, and a cathedral was built the same year making St. Louis Cathedral the oldest in the United States.

In 1723, New Orleans replaced Biloxi as the capital of Louisiana. In 1751, sugar cane was introduced as a crop. Numerous French settlers, together with their African slaves, settled in New Orleans and began cultivating indigo, sugar cane and tobacco. John Law, Louis XIV's finance minister, settled many Germans from the Alsace's region north of New Orleans along the "River Parishes" in an area still known as the German Coast. In 1762, Louis XV gave the Isle of Orleans and the Louisiana Territory to his cousin, Charles III of Spain, prior to the signing of the Treaty of Paris ending the Seven Years' War (which we refer to as the French & Indian War). By that Treaty in 1763, England gained Canada and the Florida Territory which included the land east of the Mississippi River north of the Isle of Orleans and established New Richmond which had been and would again become Baton Rouge. In 1764, the first Acadian families (referred to as Cajuns) began arriving from Nova Scotia and settled in Louisiana northwest of New Orleans. Following the Revolutionary War, Spain regained all of the Florida Territory from England.

In 1800, Spain was forced to give the Louisiana Territory back to Napoleon, who in 1803 sold the Isle of Orleans and all of the Louisiana Territory to the United States for \$15,000,000. In 1804, the Territory was divided into the Territory of Orleans (south of the 33 degree latitude) and the Territory of Louisiana (north of the 33 degree latitude). William C. C. Claiborne was appointed Governor of the Territory of Orleans. In 1810, settlers in St. Francisville, north of Baton Rouge, revolted against the Spanish and captured Fort San Carlos (Baton Rouge), Biloxi and Mobile – all of the land west of the Perdido River to the Mississippi River and south of the 31 degree latitude and declared an independent republic called the Republic of West Florida. President Madison ordered Governor Claiborne to seize the territory and divided the land into southern Alabama, southern Mississippi, and the County of Feliciana in Louisiana. The Territory of Orleans and the County of Feliciana were admitted into the Union as Louisiana, the 18th State, in 1812. The War of 1812 had its last important battle in 1815 as Gen. Andrew

Jackson defeated the British at the Battle of New Orleans aided by Jean Lafitte. Baton Rouge became the capital in 1849. Louisiana seceded from the Union in 1861, briefly became a Republic, and then entered the Confederacy. It was readmitted to the Union in 1868. I give you this very brief history lesson on Louisiana because most of these events played an important part in the history of Masonry in Louisiana.

Now to the events that make Louisiana Masonry a gumbo and so interesting: Freemasons probably first arrived in Louisiana around 1745 from Bordeaux, France. They arrived in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi and traveled to New Orleans through Lake Pontchartrain, down Bayou St. John to the Basin Street wharf and the edge of the City of New Orleans. There was no way to come up the mouth of the Mississippi River due to delta development and mud flats. Thus all commerce came south to New Orleans on the Mississippi River, was transported off flat boats and keel boats to wagons and across the City to Basin Street where ocean-going vessels were able to dock on Bayou St. John. The early Masons were all merchants and practiced their Masonry in private. In 1750, there were approximately 5,000 people in the Territory.

In 1752, a warrant arrived from France to form la Parfaite Harmonie Loge (Perfect Harmony Lodge) which was French Rite. In 1757, a charter was issued to Perfect Harmony to also work in the Scotch Rite from Bordeaux. In 1763, Loge de Parfaite l'Ecosse (Lodge of Perfection) was opened under Scottish Rite ritual, and in 1765 a second Scottish Rite lodge, La Consolante Maconne, received its charter from Bordeaux. (These dates have recently been confirmed by materials returned to the Grand Orient of France. The materials had been confiscated by the Germans in 1941, recovered by the Russians in 1945 and returned to France in 1999.) This was all prior to Henry Franken opening his Albany, New York "Ineffable Lodge" in 1767. Scottish Rite first was practiced in North America in New Orleans! By the Treaty of Paris, New Orleans became Spanish, not French, and the residents were not happy. In 1766 the residents revolted and threw out the Spanish administrators and the small garrison. In 1767, an Irish born Spanish general named Don Alexandro O'Reilly, arrived and quieted the rebellion and executed all of the leaders – most of whom were Freemasons. Spanish rule was harsh and Masonry was not tolerated, mostly due to the Papal Bull of 1738 denouncing Freemasonry and being enforced throughout Spanish Territories. All lodges disbanded or met under cover of dark and outside of the French Quarter – the New Orleans city limits. American merchants and adventurers began arriving in New Orleans in the 1760's coming down the Mississippi River from the Ohio and the Tennessee Rivers. These "foreigners" were not readily welcomed and had to live outside of the city limits – most settled north of a wide canal bordering the city and began an area known as the American Quarter – today known as Downtown or the Central Business District. The canal was eventually covered and became Canal Street – the widest boulevard in the western hemisphere.

During the American Revolutionary War, the French and Spanish sided with the American Colonists and several important battles of the American Revolution were fought in the area – New Richmond (Baton Rouge) was captured in a large battle, the Battle of Bayou Manchac, and the Battle of Mobile Bay were the most noteworthy. These battles were all led by the new Spanish Governor, Don Bernardo de Galvez. Galvez worked to reconcile the French, American and Spanish people and he even "looked the other way" as several lodges openly reorganized. Governor Miro who followed Galvez followed the same philosophy – a older version of "don't ask – don't tell". Baron Carondelet, who followed Miro as Governor also favored Masonry by allowing meetings to actually take place within the City.

In 1793, Parfaite Union (Perfect Union) Lodge was organized by several Masons living in New Orleans and applied to the Grand Lodge of South Carolina for a charter. On March 30, 1794, Loge la Parfaite Union No.29, having been duly constituted as a York Rite Lodge held the first installation of officers. The first Master was Laurent Sigur. That same year Masons who practiced using the French Rite petitioned the Grand Orient of France for a charter for Etoile Polaire Loge (Polar Star). The Grand Orient had suspended all of its operations due to the French Revolution. The group then applied to the Provincial Lodge in Marseilles in 1796 for a charter. The charter was granted, but due to travel restrictions, the first installation of officers did not occur until St John's Day, December 27, 1798 with Duprelong Petavin as the first Master. The Grand Orient resumed labor in 1803, took action on the application and issued a charter in 1804 to Polar Star Lodge No.4263, and deputized Charles Tessier to deliver the document. The Lodge was reconstituted and the new officers were installed on November 11, 1804 with Andre Chastant

as Master.

When British Craft Masonry was first introduced into France about 1726, it spread quickly to all of the French colonies – especially those in the West Indies. Martinique had its first lodge in 1738, Haiti by 1749, and Guadeloupe by 1766. Haiti even had a Provincial Grand Lodge by 1778. The Grand Orient of France recorded over twenty-five lodges being formed between 1738 and 1776 on these islands. Many of these Masons influenced the development of Masonry in New Orleans. British Masonry and then American Masonry also influenced the islands as St. Lucia and Trinidad had lodges forming. By 1786, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania had issued charters in Santo Domingo and in the Lesser Antilles and even moved charters to Cuba when rebellion erupted due to revolution in Haiti. A great deal of Masonry was happening in the Caribbean area – most of which would influence Masonry in Louisiana as settlers who were Masonic leaders moved from the islands to New Orleans during insurrections, revolts and rebellions. New Orleans proved to be a safe haven, a place where families could reunite and where Masonry was appreciated and welcomed.

The first known Freemason in the Western Hemisphere was the Governor of Massachusetts, Jonathan Belcher, made a Mason in England in 1704. Daniel Coxe, in 1730 became Provincial Grand Master of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. In 1733, Henry Price assumed the same title over New England. Masonry was very influential in the development of colonial America and proved to be a very cohesive influence during the Revolutionary period. The American foreigners to New Orleans brought many of their ideas about self government and independence with them. Their Masonry also brought a new “flavor” to add to the gumbo – York Rite Masonry. Needless to say, in the Louisiana Territory, the Spanish authorities were watchful of these Americans, and the Masonic leadership in New Orleans that had always been French and Scottish Rites was watchful of this new form of Freemasonry.

While the two lodges, Perfect Union and Polar Star, were being instituted and operating, other events were occurring in New Orleans Masonry. Several Masons who had belonged to Candor Lodge No.12 in Charleston, SC, and that Lodge having been closed, had moved to New Orleans and were determined to reopen their old Lodge. These Masons applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a charter and were granted a charter for Candor Lodge No.90 on May 18, 1801 with Nicholas Definiels as the first Master. No record of any activity is known for Candor Lodge No.90; however, the same year another group of Masons applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a charter for Charity Lodge No.93, which was granted on March 1, 1802, and the same N. Definiels was listed as the Master, so something occurred that caused Candor Lodge to cease meeting not long after it began operating. Obviously, both Lodges worked under the York Rite system. There was a separation between the Anglo-Saxon “race” and the Latin “race” in New Orleans business and in New Orleans Masonry. Lodge membership followed along these racial lines for many years.

On February 15, 1806, Louis Casimir Elizabeth Moreau Lislet acting as Master of la Reunion Desiree Loge No.3013 under the Grand Orient of France, moved its charter from Haiti to New Orleans and applied to the Grand Orient to relocate and resume labor. A duplicate charter was received on July 20, 1807 renumbering it as No.3829. It was listed as a Grand Symbolic Lodge with a General Grand Chapter referring to its grade as a Rose Croix Chapter operating under the French Rite. Lislet was listed as the Master. According to its minutes, the Lodge did not operate after its November 27, 1808 meeting, but Moreau Lislet continued to be one of the most influential Masons in New Orleans. Polar Star No.4263 meanwhile applied to the Grand Orient for a Rose Croix Chapter and this charter was granted as Loge la Vertu Recompensee No.5001 with officers installed on May 24, 1807.

September 2, 1807 saw the first English speaking lodge chartered in New Orleans under the Grand Lodge of New York as Louisiana Lodge No.1 – Edward Livingston, the former Mayor of New York City and former Deputy Grand Master of New York, was the first Master. His Brother, Robert Livingston, was the Minister to France who negotiated the Louisiana Purchase. On September 15, 1808, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania granted a York Rite charter to Lodge la Reunion Desiree No.3829 renumbering it Lodge No.112. Louis Lusson was the Master – he had previously served as Senior Warden in the Lodge. In 1810, two new lodges were reorganized from refugees who arrived from Cuba holding charters from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania – Concord Lodge No.117 and Perseverance Lodge No.118, both dated October 7. That same date, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania granted Royal Arch Chapter charters to both Lodges – thus higher York Rite degree work officially entered Louisiana on

October 7, 1810. Late in 1809, a number of “Northern” Masons living in New Orleans organized themselves and applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a charter as Harmony Lodge No.122 – the second English speaking lodge in New Orleans. Maunsel White was the first Master installed on November 19, 1810. Interestingly, Moreau Lislet was the deputy for the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania during all of these charterings. (As a side story, Maunsel White was born in Ireland, became a merchant prince in New Orleans and died on December 18, 1863 at the age of 88 and as a very active Freemason.)

Polar Star Lodge No.4263 on March 24, 1811, applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a charter and Polar Star Lodge No.129 was reconstituted. This action created great discord and led to several members arguing for continuation with the Grand Orient. A lengthy document was drafted by Moreau Lislet that outlined the responsibilities and obligations by and between the former and latter numbered Lodge. (All of these documents are now held by the Supreme Council, AASR, Southern Jurisdiction, in their archives in Washington, DC.) Jean Pinard was installed as the Master on October 20, 1811 with RW James Milnor, Esq. signing as Grand Master and attested by George Baker, Grand Secretary. Again, Moreau Lislet was deputized to represent the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

On June 22, 1811, a group of Scottish Rite Masons obtained a charter from the Grand Consistory of Jamaica, issued on April 7, 1811, to meet as Bienfaisance Lodge No.1 with Jean Baptiste DesBois, 33°, as Master with thirty-three members. It was the first regularly constituted and distinctively Scottish Rite lodge. The Lodge operated for over a year and then all members transferred to Concord Lodge No.117, and it ceased to operate by May 27, 1812.

While all of this activity was taking place in New Orleans, Masonry had a presence in the outlying areas. There were approximately 80,000 people in the Orleans Territory, most of whom lived in New Orleans. Approximately 1,000 were Masons. The Attakapas country was the second most populace area – in the south central area of the Territory. The next most populous area was not a part of Louisiana – the West Florida Territory (south of the 31° latitude, east of the Mississippi River, north of Bayou Manchac and extending to the Perdido River and to East Florida – all Spanish possessions. On the western edge, Baton Rouge (renamed Fort San Carlos by the Spanish), Port Hudson and St. Francisville were the three most prominent trading centers – all located on the Mississippi River. A number of Masons lived in this area and had unofficially organized a lodge, on The Plains, probably east of Port Hudson near the present city of Zachary. While not chartered, these Masons met and enjoyed fraternal relationships. Most of these men resented the Spanish occupation, although most farmed on large Spanish land grants. In the summer of 1810, a number of these men met at Bayou Sara, near St. Francisville, and adopted a plan of government for Spanish West Florida. In September, Fort San Carlos fell as the settlers raised the flag of the Republic of West Florida – the blue banner with the single white five-pointed star in the middle. They had met “on the square” and under the five points of fellowship, and their flag symbolized their efforts. Fulwar Skipwith, a prominent planter and Freemason was declared the President of the Republic. Biloxi and Mobile also fell during the rebellion. The Republic extended from the Perdido River, just west of Pensacola and to the Mississippi River. St. Francisville was named the capital. For ninety days the Republic enjoyed its existence until Governor Claiborne troops, under General Wilkinson, seized the Republic and annexed it into the United States on December 6, 1810. President Madison divided the Republic into south Alabama with Mobile, south Mississippi with Biloxi and the County of Feliciana added to the Territory of Orleans with Baton Rouge, Port Hudson and St. Francisville. By this action, Alabama and Mississippi had direct access to the Gulf of Mexico. Claiborne was a member of Perfect Union Lodge, Wilkinson was a member of Concord Lodge and Madison was a member of a Virginia lodge. The Republic's flag was adopted later by the Texas rebellion and incorporated into the Texas state flag, and the flag later became known as the “Bonnie Blue Flag” during that period of the War of Northern Aggression, which some call the Civil War.

Between 1803 and 1812, the period when the Louisiana Purchase was known as the Territory of Orleans and the Territory of Louisiana, New Orleans and St. Louis were the leading centers of commerce and activity. Many different types of people came to live and settle the area. Refugees from the West Indies, adventurers, fortune seekers, political opportunists, and people hoping for a better life came to the area. Aaron Burr, the former Vice President, and the man who shot Alexander Hamilton in a duel also came to New Orleans. Burr, a Freemason, had intentions not totally wholesome. He was somewhat of a renegade in the eastern part of the United States, and decided to act as an agent for the British and

convince the Latin population in New Orleans that an independent Louisiana, fostered by the British between the Spanish to the west and American areas to the east and north, would be to everyone's advantage – mostly Burr's. His adventure came to naught and he died a broken, penniless man. General Wilkinson, Governor Claiborne's military head, was intrigued by Burr's proposition, but realized that he had better opportunities staying on the side of the United States. Wilkinson was later named Governor of the Louisiana Territory, and moved to the Territorial Capital in St. Louis where he became prominent in early Missouri Masonry.

In 1803, Jean Baptist Marie Delahogue arrived in New Orleans and affiliated with Charity Lodge No.93. He had received permission from the Charleston Scottish Rite to confer through the 18°. Delahogue had probably received all of his degrees prior to leaving France. In 1807 he conferred the 32° on Louis Jean Lusson and several other New Orleans Masons. In 1809, Lusson received the 33° from Gabriel Jastram who was deputized through de Grasse-Tilly, one of the founding members of the Scottish Rite in the New World. The Grand Consistory was chartered in 1811 and told to report all activities to Kingston, Jamaica and Charleston, South Carolina – the two headquarters for Scottish Rite.

In 1805, Congress allowed the Territory of Orleans to have an elected legislature and agreed to admit the Territory as a state when the population reached 60,000. A debate began in Congress in 1810 when the population reached almost 75,000 as to admission of the Territory as a state. On April 30, 1812, the Territory of Orleans became the eighteenth state known as Louisiana.

On April 18, 1812, Pierre Francois DuBourg, Master of Perfect Union, issued a call to form a Grand Lodge. Perfect Union No.29 (South Carolina), Charity No.93 (Pennsylvania), Louisiana No.1 (New York), Concord No.117 (Pennsylvania), Perseverance No.118 (Pennsylvania), Harmony No. 122 (Pennsylvania), and Polar Star No.129 (Pennsylvania) responded and met as the Grand Communication of Ancient York Masons. A second meeting was held on May 16 and Charity Lodge No.93 was not represented, and Louisiana Lodge No.1 decided not to be a party to the formation of a Grand Lodge. On June 13, the five remaining Lodges met and voted to organize the Grand Lodge of Louisiana. On June 20, the Lodges met and elected the officers with P. F. DuBourg elected as the first Grand Master, Moreau Lislet as Deputy Grand Master, Jean Blanque as Senior Grand Warden, Francois Pernot as Junior Grand Warden, Jean Pinta as Grand Treasurer, Jean Veron as Grand Secretary, Mathurin Pacaud as Grand Orator, Yves Lemonnier as Grand Pursuivant, and Augustin McCarty as Grand Steward. The RW Grand Master was duly, regularly and in proper form installed. During his address, DuBourg announced that Harmony Lodge decided to withdraw from the formation of the Grand Lodge. The two English speaking lodges having both withdrawn their support was disappointing in the formation of the Grand Lodge. The five remaining lodges were renumbered according to their entrance into the Grand Lodge. On March 27, 1813 the quarterly communication of the Grand Lodge announced that a Grand Royal Arch Chapter had been organized and attached to the Grand Lodge. (March 8, 1813, Concord and Perseverance RA Chapters, working under charter from the Grand Chapter of Pennsylvania, organized themselves into the Grand Chapter of Louisiana.) On April 13, 1813, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania recognized and extended fraternal correspondence to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, and on December 17, 1813 an extraordinary session of the Grand Lodge was convened to lay before the Grand Lodge that communication. It was “received with the liveliest demonstration of joy”, and the Grand Secretary immediately sent a copy to Harmony Lodge No.122.

When Gen. Andrew Jackson arrived in New Orleans in 1814 and prepared the City against a British invasion during the end of the War of 1812, he came as a Freemason with many other Freemasons. He attended Lodge with Governor Claiborne and held Masonic communication with Jean Lafitte and his brother, General Dominique You. Lafitte was considered a pirate, however Jackson was able to have any charges against Lafitte and his men dropped after their participation in winning the Battle of New Orleans in January 1815. It was all a very Masonic affair.

Intrigue continued as Joseph Cerneau, a French Mason who had become prominent in New York, practiced his own form of Masonry. He organized the Sovereign Grand Consistory of Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry, and proceeded to promote his form of Scottish Rite Masonry on the east coast. Due to the Grand Lodge of South Carolina being briefly declared irregular during this period, the Charleston Scottish Rite was also declared irregular, and “Cerneauism” took hold in Louisiana. In 1812, Emanuel Gigard, organized the Grand Council of Princes of the Royal Secret in New Orleans as a part of the

Cerneau movement, and many of the Charleston Scottish Rite members joined. Louis Lusson openly fought Cerneauism but was ridiculed by many of his brethren. After 1815, Lusson's name is not mentioned for almost twenty years. From 1815 until 1833, French Rite and Scottish Rite are rarely mentioned in the Proceedings of the Ancient York Grand Lodge.

There was one exception: In 1824, Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de Lafayette, arrived in the United States as the guest of a grateful nation and of President Monroe and the Congress. He toured the country and arrived in New Orleans in 1825 where he was lavishly greeted and entertained. He visited several French Rite lodges and spoke at Scottish Rite events also. He visited Charles Tessier in Baton Rouge and probably visited several lodges in the areas outside of New Orleans. From these reports, it is known that French Rite and Scottish Rite still operated within Louisiana. John Holland was Grand Master during this period and was known to favor reconciliation among the Rites.

In 1818, the Grand Lodge forbid any social intercourse with any lodge other than York Rite! By the close of 1818, nine new charters had been issued by the Grand Lodge – Friendship No.6 in Mobile, Reunion Fraternal No.7 in Havana, Los Amigos No.8 in Vera Cruz, True Reunion No.9 in Campeachy, Blazing Star No.10 in Baton Rouge, The Temple of the Divine No.11 in Matanzas, Truth No.12 in Donaldsonville, Union No.13 in Natchitoches, and Rectitude No.14 in Havana. The three lodges in Louisiana, Blazing Star, Truth and Union were admitted as full members of the Grand Lodge. Harmony No.122 continued to meet under their charter from Pennsylvania, and another lodge was found to have been chartered from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky in St. Francisville – Feliciana No.46. This was not discovered until 1828 when a new charter was ordered issued as Feliciana No.31. 1819 saw three new charters – Columbian No.15 in Alexandria, Eureka No.16 at Blakesley, and Washington No.17 in Baton Rouge.

Following the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the French monarchy, many republican refugees arrived from France and populated the lodges using French and Scottish Rite ritual form, thus creating a problem for the Grand Lodge. The old charter for Polar Star No.4263 was reconstituted, and the Grand Orient of France issued a new charter for Polar Star No.7474 using French and Scottish rituals. Almost all of the members also belonged to Polar Star No.5. The creation of a lodge using the Grand Orient of France's charter remained an issue until the mid-1820's, after Lafayette's visit, when the Grand Lodge realized that it had to amend its earlier requirement of recognizing only York Rite ritual lodges.

Humble Cottage Lodge No.19 was chartered in 1823 in Opelousas, and to this day remains the oldest continuously meeting lodge west of the Mississippi River. During the early 1820's Harmony Lodge No.122 had ceased meeting and had become extinct. The death of Harmony No.122 was not mourned because it had been the cause of great disharmony, disunity, mistrust and generally un-masonic behavior in New Orleans. In 1825 a number of former members reorganized and asked for a charter and were granted one as Harmony Lodge No.26 on March 4, 1826. Thus, an English-speaking lodge in New Orleans reappeared.

Masonry continued to grow outside of New Orleans and most of the lodges were English speaking. The official language in Louisiana was still French and all correspondence in the Grand Lodge was in French. While all lodges were encouraged to use their native tongue, official correspondence was in French. This created tension in areas outside of New Orleans where the Anglo-Saxon race was predominant. Only the true brotherhood of Masonry kept the Latin and Anglo-Saxon races from openly having disputes.

1826 saw the beginning of the Morgan Affair throughout the United States and the period known as the Anti-Masonic Movement. Louisiana Masonry did not suffer greatly during this period as did the rest of the country due to the hold of Cerneauism on Masonry. In 1831, Grand Master Holland convinced the Scottish Rite to rejoin the Charleston Scottish Rite and resume the title of Grand Consistory. Many records between 1828 and 1831 are missing from Scottish Rite documentation, and it is believed that Grand Master Holland who was serving as the head of most of the Grand York Rite Bodies may have removed records that disturbed the "peace and harmony" of Louisiana Freemasonry. In 1832, Holland was referred to as the Representative of the Charleston Scottish Rite. He formed a Council of Kadosh within the Grand Consistory during this period. Because of the Morgan Affair, the Charleston Scottish Rite ceased meeting for a period and in 1834, a new United Supreme Council of the Western Hemisphere was organized and the Grand Consistory in New Orleans changed its allegiance – John Holland quietly

retired from Scottish Rite after executing the Concordant of 1833 whereby the first three degrees were always under the control of the Grand Lodge. The United Supreme Council disbanded in 1839, and the Marquis de Santangelo organized the Supreme Council of the United States of America and named himself as Sovereign Grand Commander claiming jurisdiction over all of the United States and making the Grand Consistory in New Orleans his headquarters. The Grand Lodge and the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons, quickly recognized him. This all finally came to a close in 1852 when Albert Mackay appeared in New Orleans and “healed” Scottish Rite and brought Louisiana back under Charleston. But, did it? Albert Pike arrived in New Orleans in 1854 and served as head of the Valley for over two years - 1857-59. Today, on St. Bernard Avenue in New Orleans, the Supreme Council of Louisiana continues to meet and practice its own “original” form of Scottish Rite Masonry, not recognizing any other Masonic group in Louisiana as legitimate. What its offices, archives and library holds is unknown, but perhaps pieces of Louisiana's Masonic history that has long been missing. Hopefully, one day the information will be open for research and examination.

While Louisiana's Grand Lodge was not happy with other Grand Lodges chartering Lodges within its jurisdiction, it happily organized and chartered Lodges outside of Louisiana. With Lodges formed in Alabama, Cuba and Mexico, it also chartered two lodges in Arkansas – Morning Star No.42 in Arkansas Post and Western Star No.43 in Little Rock – both helped form the Grand Lodge of Arkansas in 1838. Support was given to Simon Bolivar, the Liberator of South America, and a very avid Freemason and was responsible for forming the Grand Lodge of Venezuela.

Texas Masons also looked to Louisiana for support. Mexico had Masonry by 1785, and a Scottish Rite Lodge was meeting in Mexico City in 1806. After the Mexican Masonic Civil War in 1828 between the the York Grand Lodge headed by General Guerrer and the Scottish Grand Lodge headed by General Bravo, Masonry fell into disrepute and was outlawed throughout Mexico. Joel Poinsett, the American Ambassador, who was an active Freemason, had sided with the York Grand Lodge and was expelled. The settlers in the Texas area, both Anglo and Spanish did not care for the dictatorial manner of former Mason and President General Santa Anna. Under a little grove of laurel trees, near Brazoria, Texas the first known meeting of Freemasons was held in Texas in March 1835. The six men decided to apply for Dispensation to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana to be called Holland Lodge in honor of their friend, John Holland. Holland Lodge No.36 met in the old courthouse in Brazoria on December 27, 1835 with Anson Jones as Master. James Fannin, Senior Deacon, would be killed with all of his men in February 1836 at Goliad, and the Alamo fell in March. Many of the heroes of these two battles were Freemasons including Davey Crockett from Tennessee, and Jim Bowie, a member of Humble Cottage Lodge in Opelousas. Meanwhile, the formal charter was issued to Holland Lodge on January 27, 1836. The charter was delivered to Anson Jones who placed it in his saddlebag where it remained throughout the Battle of San Jacinto, the final and decisive battle for Texas independence. The courthouse, Dispensation, officer jewels, aprons and records of the early meetings were destroyed by the Mexican troops when they burned the town of Brazoria. Other charters from Louisiana were issued to lodges in Nacogdoches and in San Augustine on September 22, 1837. These Lodges met in Houston on December 20, 1837 and formed the Grand Lodge of the Republic of Texas. Anson Jones was the first Grand Master. Just as Pennsylvania is properly acknowledged to be the Mother Grand Lodge of Louisiana, Louisiana can claim to be the Mother Grand Lodge of Texas.

On September 25, 1825, the Grand Lodge issued a charter to Numantina Lodge No.27, the first lodge that worked in the Spanish language.

On April 7, 1827, the Grand Lodge adopted a resolution stating that any Mason who lived in the City of New Orleans for more than six months and was not a member of any Lodge in Louisiana would be admitted as a visitor not more than three times; lodges were authorized to refuse admission to any Brother who came within meaning of the resolution. This was intended for the large number of Masons from northern states who had not affiliated with any lodge. Since most such visitors attended Harmony Lodge No.26, another English-speaking lodge in New Orleans was needed, Louisiana Lodge was quickly organized and chartered on June 28, 1828 as No.32. During this period, there were any number of incidents between the Anglo and Latin lodges including one Festival of St John on June 24, 1828 when Harmony Lodge refused admission to member of Triple Bienfaissence Lodge declaring it to be irregular since it met using French Rite. Finally after days of deliberation, the Grand Lodge acted to rescind its

1818 order concerning York Rite work, and recognized all Rites as equal.

In 1831, the Grand Lodge was determined to establish a Code of General Regulations. This Code was finalized and adopted in 1832 and was complicated, contradictory and generally over-stated. Among other issues, the Grand Lodge was divided into three chambers – Ancient and Accepted York Rite, Ancient Scotch Rite, and French Rite. The Grand Master was the presiding officer over a deliberate assembly of the three. It stated that all meetings must be held under the third degree (a change from using the EA when members were present who were not MM), candidates had to be twenty-one, be able to read and write, be of good moral character, and hold a respectable position in society. However, the son of a Mason could be initiated at age eighteen, although he could not become a Master Mason until twenty-one. Three black cubes were required to reject a candidate. One could not be a Master of a lodge unless over twenty-five, and no one could serve as Master of more than one lodge at a time, even if it were in different Rites.

By 1833, the Scottish Rite had gained prominence in the Grand Lodge and the French Rite had become an adjunct to the Scottish Rite work. Polar Star No.5 petitioned the Grand Lodge to change its work to Scottish Rite and become Polar Star No.1. Perseverance Lodge No.4 made the same decision. The Grand Lodge granted the distinction of having two No.1 lodges – Perfect Union No.1 (York Rite), and Etoile Polaire No.1 (Scottish Rite) on November 8, 1833.

A new Code was adopted in 1844 that was less confusing although it retained many of the original sections without rewording. It generally consolidated the three Rites into one working group and gave the Grand Master increased power. The Grand Lodge would meet using the York Rite, but the language would be French. Only delegates would be admitted to the Grand Lodge session unless visitors were officials from another Grand Lodge. The three principal officers had a vote as did all Past Masters at Grand Lodge. This created somewhat of an imbalance in power since Grand Lodge was always held in New Orleans and lodges from outside New Orleans had a hardship attending with large numbers of delegates. (This situation continued for many years until the Grand Lodge in 1977 began moving Grand Lodge sessions around the state.)

Another interesting event occurred in 1844. St Albans Lodge No.28 in Jackson – east of St. Francisville, organized in 1826, had stopped submitting returns to the Grand Lodge in 1833 and was declared extinct by the Grand Lodge in 1834. The Lodge however never stopped meeting and conferring degrees. In 1844, a report was received by the Grand Lodge of St. Albans existence. A committee reported that St. Albans was clandestine and needed healing. After great debate, St. Albans was readmitted to the Grand Lodge, allowed to retain its No.28, and scolded. The Lodge continues to meet today in one of the oldest lodge structures in Louisiana.

The War with Mexico in 1846 brought more Northern Masons to New Orleans and further divided the French and English speaking population, and many sojourning Masons could not understand the Rule concerning admission and the right to visit a limited number of times.

A number of Mississippi Masons resided in New Orleans and had to abide by the rule of visitation. Since most did not understand French when visiting a lodge, the rule affected only their desire to hold Masonic communication with their brethren. In discussions with their Grand Lodge of Mississippi, some of these men openly talked of having the English-speaking York lodges in Louisiana rebel and join the Grand Lodge of Mississippi. The Grand Lodge of Mississippi meeting in Natchez and with John Quitman as Grand Master in February 1847 offered to charter “certain Ancient York Masons in Louisiana” within the jurisdiction of “the French Grand Lodge” of Louisiana. Initially two charters were issued to George Washington Lodge in New Orleans and Lafayette Lodge in Lafayette. By 1848, Marion Lodge, Warren Lodge, Crescent City Lodge and Hiram Lodge – all within New Orleans – and Eureka Lodge were chartered. A yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans in 1847 moved the capital from New Orleans, first to Donaldsonville, and finally to Baton Rouge. St. James Lodge No.47 participated in the cornerstone laying of the new capitol building on the first high bluff along the Mississippi River. With all of the confusion of the War with Mexico, the yellow fever and the moving of the state capital, the seven lodges under Mississippi charter quickly organized themselves and created a rival Grand Lodge – the Louisiana Grand Lodge, Ancient York Masons. A number of Grand Lodges recognized the new Grand Lodge as the legitimate Masonic body within Louisiana. The Grand Lodge of New York however came squarely down on the side of the original Grand Lodge and censured the Grand Lodge of Mississippi for

creating a rival Body within a Grand Jurisdiction. Soon, other Grand Lodge followed suit – Alabama, Georgia, New Hampshire, the District of Columbia, Connecticut, South Carolina – with Mississippi turning a deaf ear to all. The Grand Lodge AYM was firmly established in Louisiana with twenty-five lodges. This entire period has become known as “The Mississippi Intervention”. Finally on January 28, 1850 the two rival Grand Lodges met and compromised their differences and reorganized into The Grand Lodge of Louisiana, Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons comprised of fifty-six lodges. John Gedge who had been the Grand Master of the rival Grand Lodge was elected Grand Master. The Grand Lodge of Mississippi was repudiated for having created the turmoil. At the same time, it was decided to publish all proceedings in French and English.

A total of seventy-six new lodges were chartered between the creation of the Grand Lodge, F&AM, in 1850 and the outbreak of the Civil War. A total of one hundred seventy-four lodges had been organized and chartered through the efforts of Masonry in Louisiana from August 15, 1812 to February 16, 1860.

The tragic period in American history referred to as The War of Northern Aggression or The War Between the States, or, more properly, The American Civil War created a challenge for Masonry in Louisiana. Many lodges ceased meeting. One lodge reported to the Grand Lodge that no meetings were held “owing to the Invasion of this section of country by the Federals.” Several Lodges that continued meeting refused to admit Federal soldiers who were Masons. This action prompted the Grand Master to issue the following reprimand: “To object to sit with a Brother who has proved himself such, because he is in the Army or Navy, or comes clothed in the garb of his calling, is highly unmasonic and will not be permitted in this Jurisdiction. It does not show a proper Masonic spirit, and what is more, tends to destroy the universality of Freemasonry.” While many stories have been told of heroic deeds, the fact remains that Brotherly Love and Fraternal Friendship gave Louisiana Masonry some wonderful stories during this period of destruction, desolation and deprivation. While Union Officers respected Masonic property and generally protected families who had Masonic relatives, the normal Yankee soldiers were conscripts, draftees, lower-class uneducated riff-raff who cared only about booty. Numerous lodges were broken open and robbed and buildings destroyed. When a Union soldier broke into St. Joseph Lodge No.79 in Newellton, on the Louisiana side, south of Vicksburg, and stole the silver officer jewels, his Union Commander inspected the saddlebags and had him arrested and the jewels returned with his personal apology. The jewels are displayed today in a special case. When the Plains Lodge No.135, west of Port Hudson, had its building destroyed by cannon fire during the siege of Port Hudson, the original Minutes Book was recovered and taken by a New York officer back to his home. He returned it to the Lodge after the War with a note of apology stating that he had entered the Lodge without the permission of the Junior Deacon. That Minutes Book is proudly displayed today in the Lodge. During the Battle of Baton Rouge, a Union officer posted a guard outside of St. James Lodge No.47 and allowed no one to enter who was not a Mason. The original surrender documents for Baton Rouge were found in the Minutes Book of the Lodge in 1985. Perhaps the most amazing story is called today, “The Day The War Stopped”, and on the second Saturday of June each year a reenactment occurs in St. Francisville. St. Francisville, an old and historic city still lies on the banks of the Mississippi River. With the Siege of Port Hudson, St. Francisville just to the north was strategic for the Union. The city was shelled unmercifully by Union gunboats, day and night for days. Then, one morning, under a flag of truce, a boat approached the shore and asked if any Masons were in the St. Francisville area. Feliciana Lodge No.31's Senior Warden was one of the defending commanders along the Confederate lines and responded. The gunboat's commander, Lt Commander Hart, a member of St. George's Lodge No.6 in Schenectady, New York, had died of a fever and had requested a Masonic burial. At the appointed hour, the gunboats pulled to shore and the men assembled in honor guard formation for their commander as his body was brought to shore. Likewise, the Confederate troops assembled and the Masons stepped forward to conduct the ceremony. Commander Hart was laid to rest in Grace Episcopal Cemetery, today across the street from Feliciana Lodge, with full Masonic rites. The Union troops marched back to shore, reboarded their boats and Confederate troops returned to the lines and the bloody battle resumed. (Each year a parade is held in St. Francisville honoring this event and an officer from the Grand Lodge of New York attends and lays a wreath on Commander Hart's grave.) Many lodges ceased meeting during the War, and today, Minute Books in many Lodges are blank between 1861 and 1865. Many of the members went to War; and some

of the members returned to continue their Masonry. Masonry resumed Labor following the War with renewed interest. While twenty-five new lodges were chartered between 1864 and 1870, bringing the total number of lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge to almost two hundred, membership did not increase in total numbers. There were almost eighty Royal Arch Chapters and almost fifty Councils and Commandries – and there was one Scottish Rite, the Grand Consistory in New Orleans. By 1900, the Grand Lodge had issued charter No.276, although the total number of Masons had actually declined since the Civil War. Almost all of these lodges were located in small communities, all away from New Orleans. While Lodges were organizing and Masonry was enjoying increased popularity and recognition, a number of Lodges also surrendered their charters and closed or they merged with healthier lodges – it was a period of Masonic awareness in areas – Lodges acted as community centers, area schools organized and met in Lodges (many of the first public schools in Louisiana trace their formation to Masons in the community who held the classes in the Lodge buildings), and businesses operated on the ground floor of many Lodges giving the Lodge added income, but also becoming the locational focus in the community (example - Mr. White's Hardware Store is on the ground floor of the Lodge).

In 1852, the Grand Lodge decided to appoint District Deputy Grand Masters and divided the state into eight regions. The need for uniformity, the use of several languages and remote locations proved this necessary. A “Grand Translator” employed by the Grand Lodge was used to send Grand Lodge messages outside of New Orleans into remote areas where French was unused. District Lodges were also authorized to be organized. It wasn't until 1892 that a Grand Lecturer was authorized and employed to visit Lodges to ensure uniformity of ritual work. It was not until 1927 that a standard Monitor was published to aid in the use of ceremonials and lectures used.

1900 saw a change in growth – industrial growth – sawmills, paper mills, refineries and oil and gas exploration brought economic advantages to the state. The period of Reconstruction that embittered many and brought economic disaster to many was a fading memory and rural areas declined as people moved to towns and cities to enjoy economic growth. Between 1900 and 1910, Masonic membership doubled. In 1920, a record number of 3,380 Master Mason degrees were conferred. By 1927, membership reached 35,191 with 267 active Lodges meeting. The area in and around New Orleans enjoyed the largest growth.

For many years, the Grand Lodge met in New Orleans in Perseverance Lodge Hall. In 1853, the Grand Lodge purchased a building in the American Quarter, on the corner of Perdido and St. Charles Streets for \$55,000. In 1872 a new building was authorized on Tivoli Circle (this Circle would be renamed Lee Circle with a large marble column atop which a bronze statue of General Robert E. Lee gazed “defiantly” to the north). \$60,000 was the purchase price and plans for a four-story Temple were made. The building was impossible to build due to foundation problems, and great cost was incurred. Finally, in 1890, the property was sold for \$112,500 realizing the Grand Lodge only \$50,000 after all expenses. A new building was built on the old Temple property on Perdido and St. Charles for \$100,000 and dedicated on June 24, 1892. It was an impressive five-story building with a statue of Jacques DeMolay on the very top. The Grand Master during this period was Charles F. Buck, a German born New Orleans attorney, who would become Deputy for Scottish Rite. Ten years after his death, his son Charles F. Buck, Jr. would follow his father as head of Scottish Rite in Louisiana and serve for over twenty years. This was one of a very few father-son teams to head Scottish Rite in the Southern Jurisdiction. (The first DeMolay Chapter in Louisiana was chartered in 1921 in Lake Charles, sponsored by the Scottish Rite, and named Charles F. Buck Chapter.) With the growth of Masonry in the early 1900's the need for a larger Temple was realized, since most of the Lodges in New Orleans met in the Grand Lodge building. By 1922, the Grand Lodge authorized building a new Grand Lodge building and set the price at \$2,250,000. On February 6, 1927, the new 18-story Grand Lodge building at 333 St. Charles Avenue was dedicated at a total cost of \$2,500,000. In 1996, that building was sold for \$750,000 and subsequently converted into first the Hotel Monaco and today, the Hilton Hotel. The Grand Lodge offices were relocated to the former Masonic Home for Children in the center of the state in Alexandria, and today a new building adjacent to the old Children's Home property – all on Masonic Drive.

While the York Rite enjoyed general success, particularly as Royal Arch Chapters associated with Lodges, Councils and Commandries usually were located in larger population areas. Today, there are 29 Chapters, 24 Councils and 15 Commandries in Louisiana. York Rite membership totals approximately

2,400 members today. A number of dedicated men have served the General Grand Bodies with several becoming General Grand High Priest – the first was Edward Livingston, and several others following; the last being A. J. Lewis. Eastern Star had general acceptance and began chartering Chapters in 1884, however a Grand Chapter was not organized until 1900. The high point came in 1960 when over 200 Chapters enjoyed a membership of over 30,000. Today, the number is one-half of that. The Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine first came to Louisiana in New Orleans in 1885 when Jerusalem Temple was organized. Since then, El Karubah Temple in Shreveport was organized in 1913, Habibi Temple in Lake Charles was organized in 1973, Barak Temple in Monroe was organized in 1981, and finally Acacia Temple in Baton Rouge was organized in 1986 – five Shrine Temples with a total membership of around 4,500. One Louisianian has served as Imperial Potentate – Voris King. Scottish Rite has played a major role in Louisiana Freemasonry through influence and through intrigue over the years. While much of the history has been discussed previously, Louisiana has had many prominent leaders in the Southern Jurisdiction – two have served as Sovereign Grand Commander – Illustrious James C. Bachelor and currently, Illustrious Ronald A. Seale. Several have served as Lieutenant Grand Commander, and many others as high ranking appointed officer on the Supreme Council. There are five Scottish Rite Valleys in Louisiana – New Orleans which was originally the Grand Consistory, Shreveport organized in 1913, Lake Charles in 1923, Baton Rouge in 1955, and finally Monroe in 1971. Scottish Rite membership totals approximately 5,000 members today. Other collateral Bodies also exist in Louisiana's Masonic Family – DeMolay, Rainbow for Girls, High Twelve, Grotto, White Shrine, Amaranth, Allied Masonic Degree, Rosicrucian, York Rite College, Red Cross of Constantine, Royal Order of Scotland, Knight Masons, Jesters, and others. These all add to the Gumbo of Louisiana Masonry.

Following World War I, from 1919, Freemasonry grew by over 50 new Lodges being chartered until 1931. The Depression years saw hardships with members demitting, many being suspended for non-payment, and Lodges closing. Only one Lodge was chartered between 1931 and 1942. However the spirit of Masonry prevailed and most of those men who demitted and many who were suspended returned to their Lodges as soon as they had jobs and money to pay Dues again. After World War II, again a growth in Masonry was unbelievable – over thirty new Lodges were chartered between 1946 and 1960. Since 1960, approximately twenty new Lodges have been chartered. Membership in Louisiana Masonry peaked in 1964 with 51,512 members. Today, there are approximately 22,000 members – in forty years, a loss of over one-half. While the Grand Lodge has chartered over 490 Lodges since 1812, there are about 260 Lodges meeting in Louisiana today.

While a true Gumbo is composed of anything on the table, in the refrigerator or caught, killed, or stolen that day, one ingredient is missing that always stirs discussion in areas outside Louisiana, and outside of the South: Prince Hall Masonry. Prince Hall Masonry is vibrant and strong in Louisiana. There are any number of African-American Masonic groups in Louisiana, not all Prince Hall – Sons of Solomon, King James Masons, and several claiming to be Prince Hall – New Orleans has six Prince Hall Grand Lodges, Baton Rouge has four. To my knowledge, Prince Hall Masonry has never approached my Grand Lodge and asked for or discussed recognition in Louisiana. While my Grand Lodge may have only a few African-American members, many learned and respected Masons in Louisiana will acknowledge that attitudes are changing. As younger men step forward and become the leaders in my state, the inside of a man will become the important factor relating to his membership qualifications. This is mentioned at the conclusion of this historical discussion only to anticipate questions that are raised concerning Louisiana's Masonic mix – after all, Pierre DuBourg, the First Grand Master, had a brother who was the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New Orleans, and our Jewish membership has always been strong in Louisiana. Spanish, French, German and Italian lodges are still practicing the Scottish Rite ritual and conferring the first three degrees in the Scottish Rite form. Hindu, Muslim, Druse, Deist and most Christian denominations are represented in Louisiana Lodges. At a time when membership is presently not increasing, Louisiana Masonry is not excluding people; but, the knock at the Outer Door must be made first by one who seeks to be recognized and to visit.

Many years have passed and many changes have been made – we do not call them innovations, we call them improvements. The Grand Master was originally a Right Worshipful, now all are Most Worshipful – and each retains that title for life. Our Grand Wardens were originally Senior and Junior Grand Wardens; now they are Grand Senior and Junior Wardens. Eighteen year olds may join; memory

work has finally been placed in a cipher booklet. An annual Wardens Retreat has been in place since 1998, and educational materials are being offered. Lodges are being reminded that they need only “be satisfied” with the proficiency of the candidate rather than requiring letter perfect examinations. Some Lodges are having to face the reality that their membership has an average age of 75–80, and that 90-95% of the members never attend. The idea that the 90% still pay their Dues has yet to be understood by the 5-10% who attend on a regular basis – the 90% still value their membership and perceive value from their membership – those 90% need to be cherished as they pay the bills. Understanding what Masonry really was by “The Greatest Generation” who joined immediately following World War II, is still hard. That generation returned to Lodges that Initiated, Passed and Raised men at every communication; then listened as memory work was repeated – that was the essence of every meeting! Real Masonic education never entered the Outer or Inner doors. The cycle must occur again however for continued existence. Just as Louisiana Masonry had the Anti-Masonic period, Cernaivism, the Morgan Affair, the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, the Great Depression, and now as we witness the departure of The Greatest Generation, during each period Masonry had a rebirth and revival because there were those who regrouped and looked to the true strength of the Institution and the meaning of our Gentle Craft; and it has survived and grown and flourished, as it will again.

Over two hundred and fifty years of Masonry in one small state is full of incredible stories, too many to relate here, but all are still important. Perhaps this short view of some important details has assisted in understanding another corner of the world where Masonry has played an important role. May we never forget that role.

March 19, 2010

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William Jules "Bill" Mollere, 33°

Ill. Mollere, was born on March 8, 1946, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and graduated from Louisiana State University with a degree in Political Science. His work with a research and development company dealing with health care, traffic safety, and environmental science led to his joining the staff of the Governor of Louisiana in 1973. For seven years, he worked on developing an environmental technology and policy group that became Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality in 1980. Appointed Administrator of the Waste Management Division, he fulfilled this role until 2000 when he was named the Senior Technical Advisor for the Department of Environmental Quality. In 1993, he was honored to receive the statewide Dunbar Career Service Award for Distinguished Public Service.

A former Sunday School Teacher, Deputy Mollere belongs to the First United Methodist Church of Baton Rouge where he has served on various Boards and Commissions. His interests include archeology and anthropology, he has served as President of the Louisiana Archeological Society, and he has been on "digs" throughout North and Central America.

His fraternal life began with DeMolay membership at age 14, serving his local Chapter, District, and State before becoming a Member of the International Supreme Council in 1975. He was Louisiana Executive Officer for 15 years and held the office of Grand Master of DeMolay International during the Order's 75th Anniversary in 1993-94. Following that, he was elected Grand Secretary of DeMolay International (1995-2001) and a member of the International DeMolay Board of Directors (1989- 2001). He currently serves as an Advisor at Pelican Chapter of DeMolay in Baton Rouge.

Ill. Mollere's Masonic career began in 1967 at age 21 in Baton Rouge Lodge #372 (Master 1980). He also belongs to East Gate Lodge #452 in Baton Rouge where he is an Honorary Past Master. He has served as President of his High Twelve Club, Illustrious Master of his Council, Sovereign Master of his Allied Masonic Degrees Council, Potentate of ACACIA Shrine Center, Venerable Master of the Baton Rouge Lodge of Perfection, Director of his Jester Court, and he is an active member in his Chapter and Commandery. He belongs to Eastern Star, Grotto, York Rite College, Rosicrucians, Red Cross of Constantine, Royal Order of Scotland, and many of the Allied Masonic groups.

His Masonic interest has been mainly in research areas, he served as the Charter Master of the Louisiana Lodge of Research, and he belongs to a number of Masonic research organizations including the Scottish Rite Research Society (Life Member).

Joining the Scottish Rite of Baton Rouge in 1968, he has served as an Associate Director of Reunions, Kitchen and Wardrobe Helper, Stagehand, and Degree Director. In recognition of his many services, he was invested with the KCCH in 1977 and coroneted a 33° in 1991. He has served as Personal Representative for the Orient of Louisiana since 1996. Effective on October 13, 2003, SGC Seale appointed William Jules "Bill" Mollere, 33°, as Deputy of the Supreme Council in the Orient of Louisiana and Crowned Active on August 26, 2007.