



THE OCCASIONAL BULLETIN

Texas Lodge of Research
October 2023 Number 3

December Meeting
Saturday, December 16
Meeting 2pm

Hosted By
Harmony Lodge No. 6
2128 Church St.
Galveston, TX 77550

Host Hotel
Moody Gardens
7 Hope Blvd
Galveston, TX 77554

\$179/night plus tax

Registration Link:
tinyurl.com/tlrdecember2023

No-host Dinner
Friday Night, 6pm
Shrimp N Stuff
2506 Avenue H
Galveston, TX 77550



From the Master's Desk

As we move into the second half of the TLR year, I must express my sincere gratitude to our host lodges for their hospitality this year. Fredericksburg Lodge No. 794 rose to the challenge and provided a welcoming atmosphere and spirit of brotherhood as our September venue.

The weekend in Fredericksburg started with a pleasant tour of Becker Vineyards on Friday afternoon. Many thanks to PM James Peterson and his wife for setting up the tour.

On Saturday morning, the lodge had a private tour of the National Museum of the Pacific War and Nimitz Galleries. Fredericksburg Lodge provided a fantastic lunch, and the weekend ended with a productive meeting.

I was pleased to present my latest paper at the meeting on “The Texans Named as Masonic Conservators.” These nineteen men were included as a list of supposed members of Brother Rob Morris’ short-lived Conservator Movement of the 1860s. While there is no evidence that they were active participants of that movement, their personal and Masonic biographies are an interesting study of the caliber of Masons that Brother Morris may have been trying to recruit as members. Thank you to all who attended, and I would like to extend a special commendation to the officers of our lodge who helped to make the meeting a success.

There are several reasons to be excited as we continue into winter, particularly about publications. Volume 51 of the Transactions of Texas Lodge of Research has been sent to the printer and will soon be distributed. This volume will cover PMs (R.:W.:) Dibrell and Livingston's years. We hope to have PM (R.:W.:) Dodson's Transactions as volume 52, with PMs Maddox and Moore as volume 53. If all goes according to plan, we will have all three volumes printed and distributed by the end of our Masonic

year. This will catch us up to where we need to be. PM Schlaudroff and I will share volume 54, to be published next year.

Our winter meeting will be held in Galveston on Saturday, December 16. Harmony Lodge No. 6 will be our host lodge, and we will meet in the beautiful Egyptian Room of the Galveston Scottish Rite Cathedral at 2:00 p.m. The meeting will be one of our signature academic regalia meetings, and all members and guests are encouraged to wear regalia if they have it. All levels of academic achievement will be celebrated.

Our host hotel will be Moody Gardens, located at 7 Hope Blvd, Galveston, TX 77554. They have extended a rate of \$179 per night for single king or double queen rooms, a significant savings over their usual rate of \$279/night. This rate includes complimentary self-parking on-site. There will be a hospitality suite on Friday night at the hotel, with details to be shared once the room number has been assigned.

The Friday no-host dinner will be in the private dining room of Shrimp N Stuff, located at 2506 Avenue H, Galveston, TX 77550. Our reservation is at 6:00 p.m. The restaurant is owned by the Worshipful Master of Harmony Lodge No. 6.

I have been in touch with the

Galveston Historical Foundation, and they are trying to arrange for a docent to give us a personal tour of one of the historic homes on Galveston Island on Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. Once the tour has been scheduled, the website will be updated with the relevant information. The rest of the meeting information above is available on the website, including the hotel booking link.

Our March 2024 meeting will be held at Lufkin Lodge No. 669 and will be our annual election and installation of officers. More details will be shared as they become available.

Thank you again to the officers and members for helping to make this a successful year for Texas Lodge of Research, and we look forward to seeing you in Galveston!

Masonry Bits

(originally appeared in The Sacramento Beehive October 2023 issue, and reprinted with permission of Sacramento Lodge No. 24, Alamogordo, NM)

Samuel Gilbert Bratton was born in 1888, in Kosse, Texas (southeast of Waco). He attended public school and graduated from a state Normal School. At the time, a Normal School was a high school level education that taught primary education teachers.

Bratton then taught school at Claude and Hereford, communities near Amarillo. While teaching, he read law and was admitted to the Texas Bar in 1909. He then began practicing law in Farwell, Texas.

Sam Bratton became a Mason in Farwell Lodge No. 977, which no longer exists. In 1918, he affiliated with Clovis Lodge No. 40.

In 1915, Bratton moved to Clovis, New Mexico where he continued to practice law. He served as a District Court Judge for Curry County from 1919 until 1923, when he was appointed Associate Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court. The following year, he resigned to run for the U.S. Senate.

In 1924, Bratton was recruited to run against incumbent U.S. Senator Holm Bursum. The election proved to be close and accusations of election tampering ensued. Bursum claimed ballots were mutilated, irregular residency issues and vote tally errors. In the end, Bursum only presented incorrect tally sheets which had been corrected during the election canvassing process.

In 1933, Brother Bratton resigned from the Senate to accept an appointment to a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. He later served as the Chief Judge until 1961, when he took senior status.

In 1908, Brother Bratton married Fannie Rogers and they had one son, Howard C. Bratton. The younger Bratton (not a Mason), attended the New Mexico Military Institute and served as a captain during WWII. He then attended Yale law school. He was eventually appointed as a Federal judge in Las Cruces. Judge Bratton was a revered icon in the Federal judiciary in the District of New Mexico. He was well known for his understanding of complex legal issues and for his ability to run a disciplined courtroom.

Brother Samuel Gilbert Bratton died on September 22, 1963, in Albuquerque. He was buried in Fairview Park Cemetery.

The Influence of Freemasons on the University of Houston

(By Erickson Ybarra, Senior Deacon)

At the March meeting of Texas Lodge of Research hosted by St. Alban's lodge, Brother Pete Normand, Past Master and Fellow of TLR, gave a great presentation on the Texas A&M Masonic Club. Being a proud alumnus of the University of Houston and Mason, I was inspired to investigate any Masonic connections there may have been with my alma mater. I'm excited to report my findings to you here.

While I found no evidence of a similar Masonic club at UH, I did find that Masons had an enormous impact on its creation and evolution. Please note that I don't contend Masonry, the institution, had a direct impact on UH. I simply want to highlight the achievements and impacts of several prominent Masons in the formative years of the University as well as some of the buildings and campus colleges that bear their names.

In 1923, the Texas Legislature voted to remove Houston's schools from the municipal government and the new Houston Independent School District (HISD) was formed. The Board of HISD then went on an extensive search for its first Superintendent of Schools. The position was offered and accepted by Edison Ellsworth Oberholtzer who was then serving as the highly notable Superintendent of Schools in Tulsa, OK. Oberholtzer was raised in Tulsa Lodge No. 71 and was a Master Mason when he moved to Houston. He later affiliated with Holland Lodge No. 1 on 13 February 1936.

Oberholtzer made incredible strides in his first few years as superintendent including restructuring curriculums and even introducing the unusual concept of junior high schools to Houston. His first motivation to start another college in the Houston area came when he spoke privately to a group of recent graduates from a local high school. He learned that there was

a need for a university which served the students who fell into the gap of high school graduates who weren't the top 10% of ALL Houston students accepted to Rice University (founded and named for William Marsh Rice, a Master Mason belonging to Holland Lodge No. 1) and those who couldn't afford to leave Houston to attend college; a working man's institution. This led to Oberholzer creating Houston Junior College in 1927, organized under HISD, within just 3 years of him taking over the district.

The first class was 232 students and 12 professors. In 1934, Houston Junior College restructured, becoming a private four-year institution and renamed itself The University of Houston. The university steadily grew and in 1936, donations of land by Ben Taub and the trust of Julius J. Settegast gave the college 110 fresh acres for their own campus. Taub, an enormously successful businessman, philanthropist, and civil servant, was a member of Holland Lodge No. 1. Though I couldn't find any definitive Masonic record for Settegast, he indeed came from a family of Masons; the most prominent of which was his older Brother, William J. Settegast, who served as Master of Gray Lodge No. 329 in 1877, District Deputy Grand Master in 1881, Grand Senior Deacon in 1882, and Grand Marshal in 1883.

As Houston grew, so did the

University and in 1947 a law school was founded on campus. It was later named the Bates College of Law after Col. William Bartholomew Bates, a prominent lawyer, philanthropist, former Board President of HISD during UH's initial years, and former Chairman of the Board of Regents during a huge growth period for the University. Bates Residence Hall, one of the original dormitories in "The Quad" was also named for him. Bates was raised in Bay City Lodge No. 865.

In 1950, The Ezekiel W. Cullen Building was opened. Probably the most recognized building on campus, the building was designed by prominent Houston architect, Alfred C. Finn. Finn also designed buildings on the campus of Texas A&M University, the Rice Hotel, the Galveston Scottish Rite Cathedral, and The San Jacinto Monument. Finn was a member of Gray Lodge No. 329, the same lodge his son Alfred C. Finn, Jr. served as Worshipful Master in 1953.

In the many years that have passed, there have been numerous other prominent Masons who have graduated from, taught at, or had influence over the University of Houston. However, any expansion on this article may be held for some other presentation where they can be given due attention.

Cloaked in Symbolism: Decoding the Masonic Apron

*(by Bro. Chuck Springer, PM
Marshal, TLR 2023-2024)*

How often when you are asked, “*What is Freemasonry?*” do you respond automatically with the common answer that Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols? Do we truly seek to understand that there MAY be numerous meanings to each of the symbols that we use in the Craft?

Let us take the example of the first gift that a brother is given, a white leather apron. We are first told that “the lambskin or white leather apron is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a mason,” (Monitor of the Lodge, Grand Lodge of Texas, A. F. & A.M., Waco, TX: Waco Printing Co., 2012 page 17) The Masonic white apron is one of the most recognizable and significant symbols in Freemasonry, next to the Square and Compasses.

PGM Jewel P Lightfoot, expounded that the apron serves as a mode of investiture, bearing a mystic symbolism that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries, being present in numerous cultures, around the world, down through the ages. (Jewel P. Lightfoot, PGM, *Lightfoot's Commentaries*, Reprinted from

Lightfoot's Manual of the Lodge of Monitorial Instructions in the Three Degrees of Symbolic Masonry, Waco, TX: Waco Printing Co., 1934, p.15). So, this item is not unique, but uncommon today.

The symbolism of the Masonic white apron encompasses a multitude of interpretations. These are just a few to consider:

- Purity and Innocence:

The white color of the apron signifies purity of heart and innocence. It serves as a reminder for us, as Freemasons, to maintain virtuous conduct and to approach life with moral integrity.

- Labor and Industry:

The apron is a working tool and represents the idea of labor and industry. It reminds us that we should diligently work to improve ourselves and our communities, using our time, talents, and energies for the betterment of humanity.

- Modesty and Humility:

The apron's plain design and the act of wearing it tied around the waist symbolize humility. It teaches us to be modest in our actions and

avoid pride or arrogance, and more importantly, control our ego.

- Connection to Masonic History:

The use of aprons in Masonry can be traced back to the medieval stonemasons who wore aprons as protective garments (“*The Legacy of the Masonic Apron*“ <https://scottishritenmj.org/blog/what-is-a-masonic-apron>, accessed 30 July 2023) while working. Modern Masons carry on this tradition, drawing a link between our present-day fraternity and the historical origins of the craft.

- Mystical Number Seven:

A square has four sides, and a triangle has three sides. This adds up to seven. The Ancients considered the number seven a perfect number because it contained a square and a triangle combined, 4 + 3. Albert G. Mackey, in his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, writes more than two pages on the number seven, claiming: "*Seven is a sacred number in Masonic symbolism.*" (Albert G. Mackey, *Mackey's revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, The Masonic History Company, Chicago,

Illinois 1946, volume 2 page 930 to 932).

- Immortality and Everlasting

Life: “...it is a combination symbol comprised of the square and triangle the square representing physical reality, the world, the animal nature within us; and the triangle symbolizing God and things of the spirit...a spiritual side must always be in control of our animal side. Our development as spiritual beings is a progression, or a journey, which must be started and continued all our lives” (Robert G. Davis, “*In Search of Light*”, Building Stone Publishing 2021, p114)

How many more symbols do you know about the Masonic Apron?

Ultimately, it needs to hold a special place in our hearts and serve as a constant reminder of our commitment to upholding the fraternity's principles and values, thereby inspiring us to lead lives of virtue and improving ourselves. Embracing the wisdom encoded within these symbols not only elevates our individual journey but also strengthens the bonds of brotherhood as we collectively venture on a quest for self-improvement and spiritual enlightenment.

Editor's Notes

"Fidelity"

(by Bro. Cody Cockroft)

Freemasonry, our gentle and ancient fraternity, engenders (or should engender) in each of us a special relationship to our brother Masons. We often speak of this relationship as brotherly love. But, if we carefully examine the meaning of the obligations that we all took of "our own free will and accord", we will discover the relationship of brother to brother has many more dimensions than some abstract notion of brotherly love.

Our obligations are not just an exercise in memorization – they are the very definition of what it means to be a Mason. And, taken as a whole, they set forth a very demanding structure of how we deal with one another. They require an extraordinary standard of behavior toward our fellow Masons. And, although the word is not used in any of the obligations, I like to think that the best description of that behavior is fidelity.

Fidelity refers to the strict observance of promises and duties. It is a difficult standard to maintain and requires us to be always aware of our obligations. It imposes upon each of us standards of mutual respect, courtesy, and trust. Being human, we will sometimes fall short of this high standard. But it is

incumbent upon us as Masons to always strive to meet that standard.

A very real part of fidelity is trust. I have always assumed that the word of a brother Mason is the truth. That doesn't mean that a Mason will not tell a lie or that such lie will not have serious consequences. But it does mean that when I am told something by a brother Mason, I first assume it to be true – an assumption I do not generally extend to non-Masons.

So, I ask you to carefully consider the obligations you have taken as a Mason and understand the totality of what those promises mean, particularly regarding your brother Masons. You should not feel constrained by those obligations – you took them upon yourself. Surely, none of us will live up to them in every instance, but we can try. Michaelangelo has quoted, "the greatest danger for most of us is not that we aim too high and miss the target; but we aim too low and achieve the mark."

Remember, it is your obligation that makes you a Mason.



Photos above and below: Texas Lodge of Research members and significant others enjoy a fabulous tour of the Becker Vineyards Estate Winery in Fredericksburg, Texas.



TEXAS LODGE OF RESEARCH 2023 – 2024 OFFICERS

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TRESTLE BOARD

December 16, 2023 (2 pm)
Academic Regalia Meeting
Hosted by Harmony Lodge No. 6
Egyptian Room, Galveston SR
2128 Church Street
Galveston, TX 77550

March 16, 2024
Election and Installation of Officers
Hosted by Lufkin Lodge No. 669
508 N John Redditt Dr., Lufkin,
Texas 75904



From the Secretary's Desk

Texas Lodge of Research members can now order directly from Eternity Creations at sales@eternitycreations.com. The cost for a name badge is \$23.50. If you have had a change of address and have not let me know, please email me or send me a note to the Lodge mailing address: P.O. Box 686, Hereford, Texas 79045-0686.



Petition for Membership Texas Lodge of Research

Any Master Mason who is a member in good standing of a regular Texas lodge, or of a jurisdiction in fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of Texas, shall be eligible to become a member of Texas Lodge of Research upon being proposed by a Full Member of Texas Lodge of Research and elected by a majority vote of the members present at a meeting of the lodge.

The proposed member shall furnish the lodge Secretary with a copy of his current dues card, or a Certificate of Good Standing, and a photo identification (a photocopy is acceptable) with the petition. Membership will continue so long as the member is in good standing in a regular Texas lodge, or of a lodge in a jurisdiction in fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of Texas, and the annual dues are current.

Full Name: _____ Texas Member ID No: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Work: _____ Fax: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Name & Number of Subordinate Lodge: _____

Lodge City: _____ Lodge State/Country: _____

Grand Lodge of _____ List additional lodge memberships, if any, on reverse side.

Past Master of a subordinate lodge: _____ Current Grand Master: _____ Past Grand Master: _____

Petitioner's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Recommendation of a Full Member of Texas Lodge of Research

Full Member Printed Name: _____

Full Member's Signature: _____

Membership Dues are \$35 per calendar year and are payable in advance.

Electronic Payments can be made at: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/TexasLodgeOfResearch>

Endowed Memberships are \$500 payable to Texas Lodge of Research

Mail petition with \$35 check, a copy of your current dues card, and a copy of a photo ID to:

Texas Lodge of Research, PO Box 686, Hereford, TX 79045-0686



2023 – 2024 Officers of Texas Lodge of Research

(left to right: Erickson Ybarra, Chris Galloway, David Hill, Russell Brown, Billy Hamilton, Ken Cochran, Mark Dermit, Truitt Bradly, Tyler Rowe, Chuck Springer, Cody Webb, Stephen Moore)