

Outline  
of the  
Rise and Progress  
of Freemasonry  
in Louisiana



by James B. Scot

Introduction by Alain Bernheim

Afterword by Michael R. Poll

Outline of the Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Louisiana  
A Cornerstone Book  
Published by Cornerstone Book Publishers

Copyright © 1995 & 2008 by Cornerstone Book Publishers

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American  
Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner with-  
out permission in writing from the copyright holder, except by a reviewer, who may  
quote brief passages in a review.

Cornerstone Book Publishers  
New Orleans, LA

This is a computer enlarged facsimile reproduction of the  
1873 First Edition of this work.

Second Cornerstone Edition

[www.cornerstonepublishers.com](http://www.cornerstonepublishers.com)

ISBN: 1-934935-31-X  
ISBN 13: 978-1-934935-31-6

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

*Outline of the Rise and Progress  
of Freemasonry in Louisiana*



# Introduction

by Alain Bernheim

## I. HISTORY AND MASONIC HISTORIANS

### THE RULES OF THE GAME

What is the basic purpose of history books? It is to try and understand events of the past, not to pass judgment on them: « *The function of a historian is neither to condemn some, nor to acquit others. In spite of a general belief, history does not have to judge, but to explain and allow others to understand. Judging is a very delicate matter [ ... ] because judges are not infallible. The motives of the acts, of the decisions, that is what must be brought to light* ».<sup>1</sup>

These words by an excellent French historian, who is not a Mason, show the necessity of asserting first under which circumstances something happened - an event, the issue of a document, etc. - before being able to appreciate its proper weight. They imply that bringing facts or documents into evidence is a long way from understanding how significant they are. In order to show what induced a person to act, a historian has to put himself in other people's minds. He should know how they lived, what they believed and which were the customs of their time. He has to find out what these people knew of the world they lived in and what they ignored. All this requires a basic knowledge of the period he writes about, of its laws and of its background. Two examples will show why:

Killing is strictly prohibited by law and punished with a heavy penalty. However, if it can be proven that someone killed in self-defense, a different law will be applied (which may result in an acquittal). Also, killing the enemy during a war brings medals. In another example, if the speed limit on a highway changed from 65 to 55 miles an hour on 1 January 1995, anyone driving 65 that day will commit a traffic offense, but driving at the same speed one day before was not violating the law. This means that before judging (if one insists upon it), it is first necessary to weigh the evidence: to ascertain under which circumstances something happened, what were the laws at that time and, if the laws changed, when were the new ones enforced.

Is this relevant to *Masonic* history? I think it is. In the first half of the 19th century, Freemasonry was revived in Louisiana by brethren from South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New York, the West Indies, France, Spain and Great Britain (not exploring the possibility that Masonry went underground in New Orleans following the New Orleans Rebellion of 1769). They brought with them their own experience and concept of Freemasonry. The human aspect of Freemasonry was probably not very different then from what we are familiar with today. But Masonic

rituals, customs and laws *were* quite different from our present ones. They were not the same because Freemasonry is alive and it grows and changes - just like the world we live in.

## **VARIOUS APPROACHES OF HISTORIANS**

When one reads a history book, it seems reasonable to grant a certain amount of confidence to the author. However, each of us has probably found out more than once that all Masonic history books are not equally reliable. There are many ways in which historians may, deliberately or not, mislead their readers. Let's have a look at some of them.

### ***Ignorance and imagination***

Not very many years ago, using a manuscript meant that it had to be loaned (serious libraries never liked the idea) or re-copied (for long documents, a nearly impossible task). As a consequence, historians of the past were often inclined to rely on secondary sources - books - rather than on original documents. Even if they knew that primary sources were extant at a distant place, they could not always get at them. This explains why some historians often used their imagination which, in the field of Masonic research, is characteristic of the not-quite-dead-yet 'romantic' school.

In our time, photocopying a manuscript takes a matter of minutes. If it is too brittle to be photocopied, a microfilm can be made. Accordingly, an author who does not, first of all, begin by looking for all available primary sources which have a bearing on what he intends to write about may be regarded as potentially dangerous and somewhat irresponsible.

### ***Difference between quoting and re-copying***

A historian may, at any time, wish to *quote* the writings of one of his predecessors if he is unable to check a fact or a text himself (an original document may have become lost after its text was published or it may be unavailable). There is an important difference, however, between *quoting* a document previously transcribed by a historian (and precisely mentioning the source of the information) and 'borrowing' a historian's *opinion* about a situation. Such a difference should always be made clear for the reader.

On the other hand, if a historian tends to be more lazy than fair, he may content himself with *re-writing* earlier books. Many amateur - as well as a few dishonest - Masonic authors still make use of that old technique. This explains why the same wrong facts, reproduced in dozens of Masonic books, are believed to be true, when they were merely *re-copied* by successive generations of historians who never dreamed of checking their veracity. It is easier to rewrite a printed page than to transcribe (and understand the meaning of) a manuscript, just as it is easier to repeat like a machine rather than to think for oneself.

Primary sources - that is, original documents - are mostly handwritten. They can be hard to decipher if they were written two or three hundred years ago and hard to understand if they were written in a foreign language (as in the case of Louisiana).

### ***Unscientific behavior***

Some historians are liable to behave unscientifically in good faith. It happened about a century ago to the very brethren who intended to establish a better way of writing Masonic history, namely the founding members of *Quatuor Coronati* Lodge No 2076, London. This is

the Lodge famous today worldwide for the quality of its yearly published Transactions, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*.

Here is what one of their present members recently said about them: « *The founders of this Lodge [...] did not [...] examine the basic premise from Anderson that Freemasonry developed directly out of operative masonry. This they appear to have accepted without question and, like Darwin, spent much time searching for missing links between operative masonry and the evidence that they were bringing to light about non-operative masonry. In this they were behaving most unscientifically, seeking for evidence to prove their theory rather than seeking evidence and analyzing it to see what could be deduced from it.* » <sup>2</sup>

The last fifteen words of the previous sentence are the heart and marrow of history as it is practiced today by the 'authentic school' of Masonic research.

### ***Other behaviors***

Some historians wish to demonstrate that our *present* Masonic laws have always existed. They *rewrite the past*, they judge what was right and wrong centuries ago, according to laws which did not exist then. Since basic principles of the present notions of territorial jurisdiction, of regularity and of recognition, were not defined the way we know them today before the end of last century and the beginning of the present one, a reader, who is unaware of this, will have difficulties perceiving that he has been misled, deliberately or not.

Others will pick out specific items in a document and deliberately fail to quote the parts which do not fit in their theories, or they jump over portions of time which do not suit them. In his 550 page *History of Freemasonry in South Carolina* (1861), Mackey skipped the years 1800-1807. His reluctance to write about that sensitive period may be related to his official Masonic responsibilities (Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina from 1842 to 1867 & Secretary-General of the Southern Jurisdiction from 1844 to his death in 1881). It is not unlikely that being on both sides of the fence at the same time resulted in moral dilemmas.

### ***Further potential problems***

From my own experience as a historian, I know that having full access to the archives of certain Masonic libraries is not always a matter of course. There are two reasons why old Masonic documents may not be readily available and seem to be 'classified': the knowledge of their contents may result in an 'agonizing re-appraisal' of the past, or they do not convey the all-round positive image considered as desirable by many Masons occupying posts of responsibility from the top to the bottom of the scale.

## **II. LOUISIANA'S MASONIC HISTORY AND ITS SOURCES**

### **SCOTT'S BOOK – A FIRST LOOK**

George Draffen, who was a brilliant Scottish Masonic historian and a friend of mine, defined once the 'Three Readings' of a book as such: « *First, to see what the book is all about; second, to see how the author deals with the Subject; third, to argue with the author on the points he makes*». The first time I read Scot's *Outline of the Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Louisiana from its introduction to the re-organization of the Grand Lodge in 1850*, Louisiana's Masonic history appeared rather obscure and sometimes hard to understand. The second

## *Outline of the Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Louisiana*

reading led me to suspect that the author could have been biased. By the third reading, I thought there was a lot to argue about the way that the Louisiana story had been told.

Scot ends his *Prefatory* by stating: «*In answer to the misrepresentations of Folger, Foulhouze and De Marconnay, we submit the following outline of the history of Masonry in Louisiana, so far as it relates to the question of Rites*» (p. 3), and the reader is forewarned. First, the book was written as a rebuttal to the writings of others. Second, the author takes for granted that *the question of Rites* can be considered as the separate theme of a book on Masonic history, which sounds unpractical and on the verge of being nonsensical. Lastly, the book was not written in order to allow a reader to decide for himself where the truth lies. Scot claims to know where it is, the reader is expected to follow his lead.

In all previous editions, the original one of 1873 and the 1911 & 1923 reprints, the book is not an easy one to read: its typography is small and the footnotes set in an even smaller, barely readable type, which is why the present 1995 reprint has been computer-enlarged. Many foot-notes are unusually long (except for two lines, page 56 is devoted to the middle part of a single footnote which begins page 55 and ends page 57). Scot uses his footnotes to follow a theme from another point of view or to jump from one period of time to another, which appears sometimes deliberate. When he mentions for the first time John Quitman, GM of Mississippi, in relation with events from 1844, a footnote of the same page 62 describes events of 1827 in which both Quitman and the Grand Lodge of Louisiana were involved. Since the first six chapters of the book are built in a strict chronological order, one is left with the unpleasant impression that the author intended to play down the interventions of Quitman and of his Grand Lodge throughout the Masonic life of Louisiana.

Various examples in the book reinforce the feeling that Scot was biased in many ways. For instance, he makes an interesting distinction between whom he defines as 'political adventurers' and 'enterprising citizens': «*Although the purchase of Louisiana by the United States [1803] was at first attended by an influx of political adventurers, it was soon followed by the arrival of enterprising citizens from the Northern States*» (p. 8). His next words explain that among the latter (better) sort were the founders of *Louisiana Lodge*, chartered in 1807. *Louisiana* was the first English-speaking lodge in New Orleans, but since it was the seventh lodge chartered in the city, Scot's remark is not altogether friendly to the founders of the six earlier lodges. The same bias reappears in Scot's use of the expression *Latin race*, as opposed to the *Anglo-Saxon race* or *American Masons*. His bias, also, appears in his overt dislike for the French language, for the French Rite and even for the Scottish Rite (although he received the 33d degree from the Southern Jurisdiction, 5 November 1870, three years before his book was issued).

I do not believe that 'races', rites, or Masons are either all bad or all good. But it can prove convenient to divide them into over-simplified categories if history is to be used as a weapon to justify instead of a mirror to learn. Wouldn't it be more constructive to try and understand the reasons brethren had for acting the way they did, rather than stamping them with extreme labels? If everything hangs together, according to the *bootstraps' theory* used in modern physics, any attempt to separate parts from the whole prevents history from making sense. It is no more a sensible approach to consider the history of Louisiana by itself, than that

## Introduction

of any other state or country in the world. What happened in New Orleans was the result of local situations having developed in (among other areas) Charleston, New York and Natchez, St. Domingo, Kingston, London and Paris. Without an understanding of these situations and of *their mutual ties*, history ends up by making no sense at all.

This brings us back to Scot's disconcerting way of telling Louisiana's Masonic history. He likely lacked an overview (or had a over-simplified one) of the history of Freemasonry as a whole. However, it should not be forgotten that in Scot's time, Masonic history was in a stage of infancy. Many documents concerning the birth and development of the Rite in 25 degrees in the West Indies and in America, as well as that in 33 degrees in the United States had not been published yet. Do we know better today? Many old documents have been rediscovered for the past hundred years which allow a more authentic understanding of the last two centuries of our history. But they are often scattered in old out of print periodicals, and very little effort has been made to bring together the story that they tell. Indeed, if various efforts were made in re-cent years, some were directed the other way round, in an attempt to over-simplify the past - or to 'gild the pill' - rather than to look for the truth.

### NEW AND OLD HISTORICAL SOURCES – AN OVERVIEW

Scot wrote that the first Masonic lodge was established in Louisiana in 1793. No one knew in Scot's time that documents bearing upon Louisiana's earlier Masonic history were still extant. They belonged formerly to the archives of the *Partaite Loge d'Ecosse*, an *Ecosais* Mother-Lodge founded at Bordeaux by Estienne Morin about 1745. At the beginning of the 20th century, these archives belonged to *L'Anglaise No 204*, a very old lodge founded by Irishmen at Bordeaux in 1732. Their existence was first made public about 1925 by Bro. N. S. H. Sitwell who transcribed some of them in a paper published in 1928, referred to below. Since 1952, what remains of the archives of *L'Anglaise* belongs, under the name of *Sharp Documents*, reside in the Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, USA. These events are explained in two Appendixes to a paper published in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* in 1988.<sup>3</sup>

With some help provided by Ill. Bro. Phil Walker, 33°, Secretary of the New Orleans Scottish Rite bodies, Bro. Michael R. Poll, 32° recently rediscovered an original Minutes-Book of one of the earliest 'high-degree' bodies having existed during the first half of the 19th century in Louisiana. His discovery represents a milestone in the knowledge of Louisiana's early Masonic history. Bro. Poll was kind enough to send me a full photocopy of the manuscript which is more than 300 folios long. He deserves my deepest gratitude for his brotherly gesture. His discovery is one of great importance since much of what relates to the Grand Consistory of Louisiana, its origin, its activities, the Masonic bodies with which it stood in amity, was, up to now, surrounded in clouds. Scot, who commented at length upon the part the Consistory played in Louisiana's Masonic history, had not seen this document and mentioned in his book « *the records of the Grand Consistory which have not yet been recovered*» (p. 38). The limits of the present Introduction do not allow an exhaustive analysis of the whole manuscript. Hoping to contribute to a better knowledge of the early Masonic history of Louisiana in the near future, I will only show here some of the most salient points revealed by the Minutes-Book.

Besides manuscript sources, mention is made below of various books and publications which include documents pertaining to the Masonic history of Louisiana during the first half of the 19th century or which help to understand it better. Some of them do not seem to have received the attention they deserve because their significance appears only once they are correlated with each other.

This is followed by a short sketch of the early Masonic history in South Carolina and of the situation in New York from 1813 on, the knowledge of which is necessary in order to understand events which took place in Louisiana.

## **MANUSCRIPT SOURCES**

### ***The archives of the Mother-Lodge at Bordeaux***

*La Parfaite Harmonie* in New Orleans asked the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of France for a charter on 13 December 1751. In March 1752, the Master of the lodge, Louis François Tiphaine, and his wardens, Alexis Philippe Cartier and Joseph Villeré, deputized three brethren, Fooks, Caresse and Batard, to go to La Martinique. They met there with brethren of *La Parfaite Union* who granted them a 'charter of affiliation' as their daughter-lodge, as well as a copy of their own Rules.<sup>4</sup> In April 1756, *La Parfaite Harmonie* deputized Bro. Roussillon to go to Bordeaux, entrusted him with a provisional text of Laws for a *Loge de Parfaits d'Ecosse*, two Certificates,<sup>5</sup> and an accompanying letter. Roussillon went to Bordeaux, became a member of the Mother-Lodge which granted him the title of Deputy Grand Master and a warrant for an *Ecossais* lodge in New Orleans. Back home, Roussillon opened, on 12 April 1764, a *Grande et Magnifique Loge de Parfaits d'Ecosse* as a daughter of the Mother-Lodge of Bordeaux. On 16 July 1765, a Craft lodge, *La Consolante Maçonne*, was warranted in New Orleans by *L'Anglaise* of Bordeaux.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Minute-Book of the Grand Council [later Grand Consistory] (1822-1846)***

This recently rediscovered manuscript comprising 310 foolscap folios, is the Minute-Book of a body which, in 1822, was named *Souverain Grand Conseil* (Sovereign Grand Council) *des Princes du Royal Secret pour l'Etat de la Louisiane*. Scot named that body *Grand Consistory* throughout his book, because he - and all historians after him - did not realize that the Grand Consistory of the 1840s (with which he was familiar) had changed its name after it was founded. The Minutes (written in French) begin 7 September 1822 and they end 9 October 1846 (in all, 102 sittings).<sup>7</sup> Although the pagination runs through from 1 to 310 (with the exception of two folios, 128 and 129, which appear to be missing), there are no Minutes between January 1823 and July 1825, October 1828 and February 1831, January 1833 and March 1834, December 1841 and March 1843. No mention is ever made in the Minutes of an interruption of the meetings. This leads me to believe that pages have been torn out and the present pagination inscribed at a later date, though it does not seem possible to tell when this was done. Internal evidence makes it likely that the pagination was added after the Minute-Book was completed, since the *Repertoire* at the end of the manuscript fits with it. Remarkably enough, the periods when Minutes appear to be lacking mostly precede the mention of events of a major impor-