



T E X A S

# FREEMASON

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Portrait of Brother G. W. Wright

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**A WORD FROM THE  
Grand Master**



Brethren of the Mystic Tie,

I want to congratulate the newly installed Worshipful Masters and officers of the constituent lodges. May the coming year be filled with light, prosperity, and joy, and may the Great Architect grant you wisdom, give you guidance, and provide the harmony reflected in His divine purpose.

As I searched for inspiration before writing this article, the word that kept coming to mind was “connectivity.”

We live today in an interconnected world. Like many of you, I was born in a more or less pre-digital age: no World Wide Web, no cell phones, and a tiny global supply chain. I had the good fortune to grow up in a small community where people knew one another and largely looked after each other. Most of us today live in large cities, devoid of that kind of community. The things we buy aren't produced locally and, as we have learned from recent circumstances, our economies and even personal prosperities can be profoundly affected by interruptions in the global supply chains and fluctuations in global markets. Even the availability of items manufactured locally, for instance, can be delayed by the lack of a microchip or other component produced half a world away.

The way we communicate has drastically changed as well. Personal conversations that use to take place at the coffee shop or grocery store have been replaced by digital communications to an extent unimagined a generation ago. How often nowadays do you receive a personal letter brought

to you by the postman? Texting, direct messaging, and social media are even challenging email, creating an explosion of instant information that commands significant amounts of our time and attention. Not all of it is useful or constructive, of course. Digital platforms are tools, and we must learn to use them wisely.

On the Masonic level, brothers can enjoy fellowship like never before. It is very easy for me to keep up with my Masonic friends in New Jersey, California, New York, Missouri, Georgia, and North Carolina. Just a few minutes on almost any one of the social media sites, and you can be caught up on most of the Masonic activities of your interest. Connectivity is here. Connectivity is key.

If Masonry is to remain relevant, we must actively strive to communicate the ageless truths of our Craft – to the extent that they can be expressed publicly – by using today's communication tools. Doing so not only improves the delivery of our message to men immersed in these platforms but positions us to take advantage of future technologies. With this new technology, we have new ways to reach good men, who may have not heard of the Craft otherwise, and new platforms on which to showcase Masonry as a space where men of differing backgrounds, commitments, and opinions can be linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection.

But new forms of communication can only open new gates. They can erect new windows into who and what we are. What they cannot do – and we should never attempt to do – is replace our in-person experience. Above all else, we are a Brotherhood, and our focus must remain on the community of the Craft built upon a foundation of direct personal relationships. We are builders. We are here to change lives, and so change the world, one living stone at a time. It is our chief objective and our principal attraction. Good men want purpose. They want guidance. But above all, they want personal connection with like-minded men. Freemasonry has stood the test of time because we are a community of brothers, and we must never lose sight of that fact. There is no substitute.

While we must remain firm in our Masonic obligations and continue to value all forms of interpersonal communication, the success and

significance of our Fraternity today and in future requires that each of us embrace connectivity as it is, both among ourselves and especially in our external interactions.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not end with a few upcoming opportunities to come out and enjoy our great Brotherhood in person (see the Grand Master's calendar for times):

**September 30th – October 2nd**

The “Come and Take It” weekend, like the Alamo, is a pilgrimage all Texans should take during their lives, especially if they are Masons. This year, we have surrounded this historic occasion with a number of awesome events: a Texas-size BBQ Charcuterie in Lockhart, a Clouded Canopy cigar night, the Shriners and Prophets Shiner Brewery Tour, and a very special 175th celebration of Gonzales Lodge No. 30. We will also celebrate the first shot of the Texas revolution on October 2nd with the Daughters of the Republic. If ever there was a reason to go, this IS the year!

**October 28th & 29th**

If you enjoy the Hill Country or Texas Masonry's early connections with the Texas Rangers, this weekend is for you. We will start off in Luckenbach on Friday night and end with the statewide meeting of Major John B. Jones Masonic Ranging Company in Fredericksburg, all while taking in the beautiful and relaxing scenery of one of Texas' most sought-after vacation destinations

See y'all down the road,

Brad Billings  
Grand Master 2022





## GRAND LODGE

### A WORD FROM THE Grand Secretary



What can you do to ensure your  
Lodge can thrive after you're gone?

Brethren,

As the Masonic year ends and a new one begins, I would like to start by thanking all the previous year's Lodge Officers for their hard work and dedication to our fraternity. It is no small task to take on a leadership position in a Lodge, and I want to express my gratitude to each of you. To the Brothers who have assumed new leadership roles this year, I wish you all the best and I am confident each of you will excel in your new role.

A short message to the new Worshipful Masters: As the leader of the Lodge, it is your responsibility to think and plan not only for the year that you are in the East, but for those years to come. Each Worshipful Master starts their term eager and brimming with ideas. However, the most important idea should always be "what can I do to ensure my Lodge can thrive after I am gone?" As Master, you have the ability to steer the Lodge in a particular direction. Work with your officers and pick one area you would like to see improved and lay the foundation that the Worshipful Masters after you can build upon. Take this opportunity to "lay the cement" for the future.

Lastly, I would like to speak to you about the home of every Mason in Texas, the Grand Lodge Memorial Temple. Opened in 1949 (though the bottom floor was not completed until 1953) this magnificent edifice has been a staple of not only Texas Freemasonry but the City of Waco for nearly 75 years. Within the walls of the Grand Lodge building the modern history of Texas Freemasonry has taken place. While its primary function is to be the headquarters of our fraternity the building also acts as a Library and Museum. Over the years the various archivists and curators have amassed a stunning collection. The Republic of Texas room has artifacts and documents from the early years of Masonry in Texas. The Memorial Room is dedicated to those Brothers who gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect this country and is illuminated by a stained glass window that was saved from the building we occupied right up the road from where

we are located now. The bottom floor contains several centuries-old Bibles and Masonic Memorabilia from all over the world, as well as a great display pertaining to Masons and Freemasonry during World War II. This short description in no way does the collection the justice it deserves. The next time you are here I would ask that you take some time to really look at the Library and Museums artifacts and allow yourself to be fully engrossed by its history.

I look forward to seeing you all at the next Grand Annual Communication. As always should you or your Lodge need any assistance, please contact my office. My staff and I are always happy to help you in any way we can.

Fraternally,  
Justin B. Duty  
Grand Secretary



**MASONIC**  
CHILDREN &  
FAMILY SERVICES  
— OF TEXAS —

# HELP COMES TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

It doesn't matter if you are tall, short, silly, serious, boy or girl – any child in need, is worth helping. And that's what we've been doing for over a century.

While once serving as a campus providing education and housing to disadvantaged youth, MCFS continues our legacy of helping Texas children receive critical services they desperately need.

The struggling economy has our phones ringing more than usual these days. Families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. For those with limited income, trying to decide if they can pay the rent or buy gas to get to work is a real dilemma. During the Covid pandemic, we assisted thousands by providing basic human needs, such as rent, utilities, and food. While the pandemic is not the primary reason for the enormous number

of applications we receive now, the economy is undoubtedly a significant factor.

As we offer a helping hand to children and families, we ask you to consider supporting our mission. You can do this by attending one of our events, Banding Together for Kids, or Cigars Under the Stars. More information is available on our website. You can also consider donating to our quarterly fundraising appeals.

Online donations are an option for those who want to make a difference today. Together we make a tremendous impact in the lives of each child we serve.

For more information on ways to help, contact Sandy Shelby-Lawrence, Director of Development, Masonic Children & Family Services of Texas, at [sandy@mcfstx.org](mailto:sandy@mcfstx.org) or call **817-503-1510**.





# Science in Freemasonry

By Sammy Larbi, PM Sugar Land Lodge No. 1141, Contributing Writer

During the preparation of a candidate for the Entered Apprentice degree, the Senior Deacon recites to him, in part, the following from Texas Monitor of the Lodge:

[Freemasonry's] grand purposes are, to diffuse light; to banish ignorance; to promote peace and happiness among mankind; to relieve distress; to protect the widows and orphans of our brethren; to inculcate a wider knowledge concerning the existence of the Grand Architect of the Universe, and of the arts and sciences connected with His Divine laws. In fine, the design is to make its members wiser, freer, better and consequently happier men. (Monitor, page 8)

The part on which I want to focus is inculcating a wider knowledge of science. In particular, I want to cover why we should study science, what constitutes science, and if, like me, you ever felt our focus on Geometry and Astronomy do not allow a deep treatment of all of science to dispel that seemingly limited scope.

### Why Study Science?

Freemasonry is fond of saying one of our main purposes is “to take a good man and make him better.” I think this is most often said in the context of morality, but that is not the only way to make a man better.

In my own Masonic experience, I've gone from being petrified of speaking in public to doing so with regularity. When I first joined, I had trouble introducing myself to a stranger and holding a conversation with him. Now I do that with regularity. Clearly, these things have nothing much to do with morality, but am I a better man because of them? I think so.

In that light, I want to focus on the importance of studying science. Science is too often discarded outside of the homage we pay to it in the Fellowcraft degree. Although it is mentioned as part of the Master's lecture, I don't think we discuss that part much outside of the Monitor anymore.

### What Is Science?

The practice of science consists of the 5 steps of the scientific method (Khan Academy), which are:

1. Make an observation.
2. Ask a question.
3. Propose a hypothesis.
4. Make predictions.
5. Test the predictions [with an experiment].
6. Iterate.

Freemasonry is fond of saying one of our main purposes is "to take a good man and make him better." I think this is most often said in the context of morality, but that is not the only way to make a man better.

It is our best tool for understanding the natural world, and has brought incredible progress for civilization. We ignore it or dismiss it at our peril.

Let's also note that without the five senses, which are also discussed in the Monitor, we could not so much as start this process.

### What Does Freemasonry Say About Science?

Now that we've reviewed the process of science, what does the Monitor say about science? Several things:

The monitorial part of the 3rd section of the Master's Degree tells us the 47th problem of Euclid “teaches Masons to be general lovers of the arts and sciences.” (Monitor, page 57)

In contrast to that brevity, Science is covered thoroughly in the Fellowcraft portion of the monitor. For example, under The Use of The Globes, it says:

[The globes] are the noblest instruments for improving the mind, and giving it the most distinct idea of any problem or proposition, as well as enabling it to solve the same. Contemplating these bodies, we are inspired with a due reverence for the Deity and his works, and are induced to encourage the studies of Geometry, Astronomy, Geography, and Navigation, and the arts and sciences dependent upon them (Monitor, 31)

duration of times and seasons, years and cycles. In fine, geometry is the foundation of architecture, and the root of mathematics.

## Astronomy

Is that divine art, by which we are taught to read the wisdom, strength and beauty of the Almighty Creator in those sacred pages, the celestial hemisphere? Assisted by astronomy, we can observe the motions, measure the distances, comprehend the magnitudes, and calculate the periods and eclipses of the heavenly bodies. By it we learn the use of the globes, the system of the world, and the preliminary laws of nature. While we are employed in the study of this science, we must perceive unparalleled instances of wisdom and goodness, and through the whole creation, trace the glorious Author by His works. (Monitor pages 39-40) (Emphasis mine]

I want to separate the explanation of Geometry:

## Geometry

This science treats of the powers and properties of magnitudes in general, where length, breadth, and thickness are considered, from a point to a line, from a line to a superficies, and from a superficies to a solid. (Monitor, page 39)

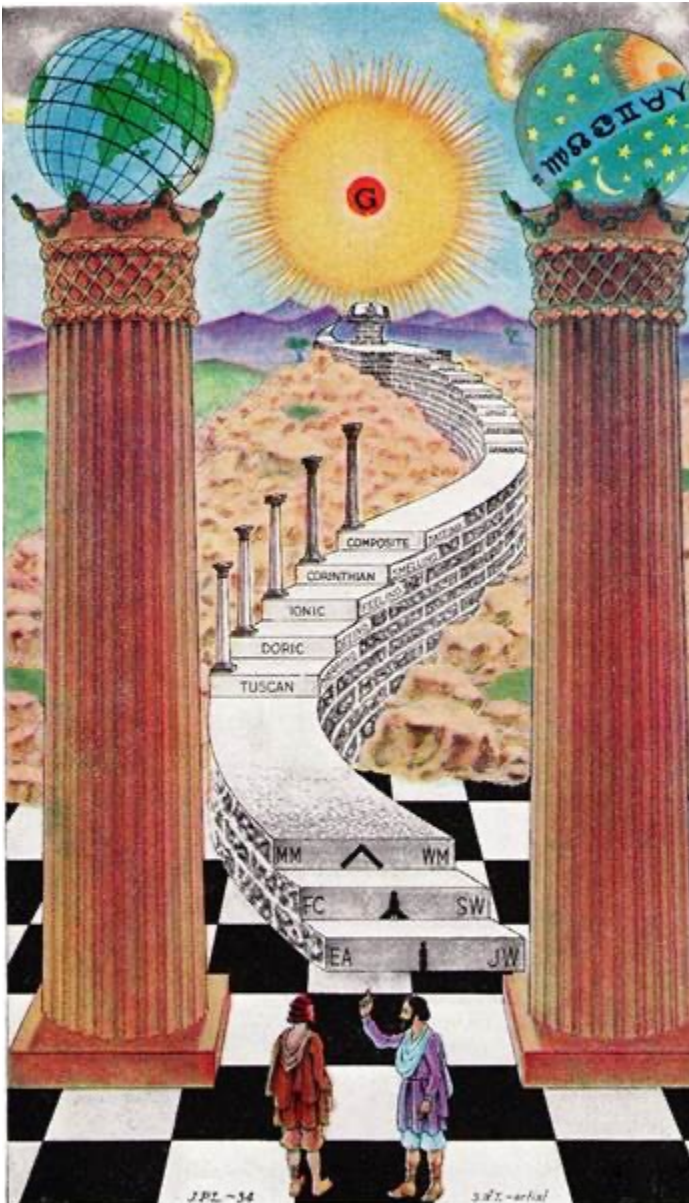
In addition, it goes on to cite the common definition of those terms. It clearly says that Geometry is the root of mathematics, and necessary for astronomy. But, is it more than that?

## Expanding Geometry

Until recently, I was not convinced, but Geometry is much more than points, lines, surfaces, and solids. The Clockwork Universe illustrates this fact. This passage about Isaac Newton's Principia, which describes "the mathematical principles of natural philosophy" (a.k.a. "science") caught my attention enough to be the catalyst of this presentation:

Two features beyond the difficulty of its mathematical arguments made the Principia so hard to grasp: the first reflected Newton's hybrid status as part medieval genius, part modern scientist. [It is important to remember that science in the late 1600s had not yet progressed to what we know it as today.] Through the whole vast book, Newton relies on concepts from calculus -- infinitesimals, limits, straight lines homing in ever closer to curves -- that he had invented 2 decades before. But he rarely mentions calculus explicitly or explains the strategy behind his arguments, and he makes only indirect use of calculus's labor-saving machinery.

Instead he makes modern arguments using old-fashioned tools. What looks at a glance like classical geometry turns out to be a more exotic beast, a kind of mathematical centaur. Euclid would have been baffled. "An ancient and venerable mathematical science had been pressed into service in a



The Winding Stairs - Lightfoot's Manual of the Lodge 1934

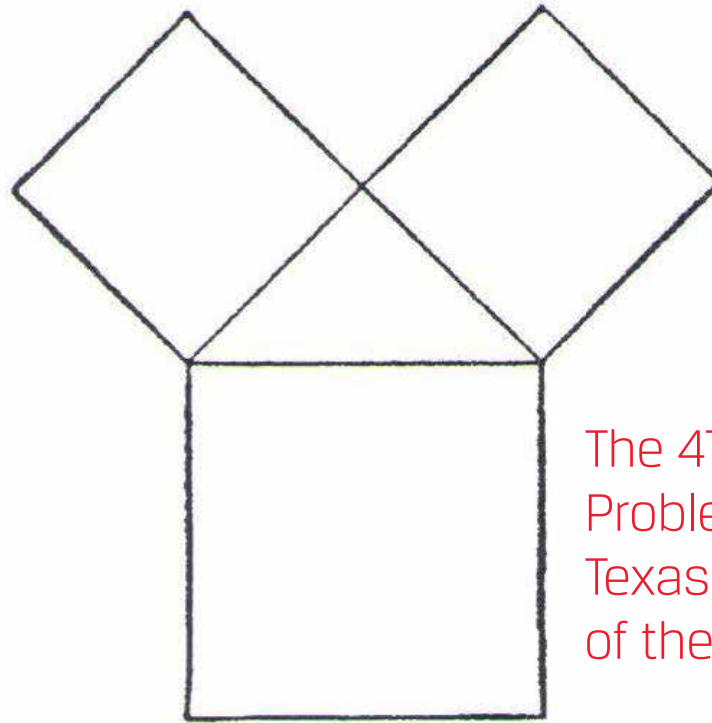
It also lays out a definition of Geometry, its advantages, and talks of Astronomy. I'll start with

### The Advantages of Geometry

By this science, the architect is enabled to construct his plans, and execute his designs; the general to arrange his soldiers; the engineer to mark out ground for encampments; the geographer to give us the dimensions of the world, and all things therein contained; to delineate the extent of the seas, and specify the divisions of empires, kingdoms and provinces; by it, also, the astronomer is enabled to make his observations, and to fix the

## EDUCATION AND COMMITMENT

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### The 47th Problem of Euclid – Texas Monitor of the Lodge 2021

subject area for which it seems inappropriate,” writes one modern physicist. “Newton’s geometry seems to shriek and groan under the strain, but it works perfectly.” (Dolnick, 316)

Consider what we just heard: today we use Calculus to describe the behavior of the physical world, but Newton, through his description of planetary motion, unites Geometry and Astronomy.

Thus calculus is shown to be reducible to geometry in the work that underlies much of science.

Before finishing, I’d like to quote the Fellowcraft charge:

The study of the liberal arts and sciences, that valuable branch of education which tends so effectually to polish and adorn the mind, is earnestly recommended to your careful consideration; especially the science of Geometry, which is established as the basis of our art.

Geometry, or Masonry (originally synonymous terms), being of a divine and moral nature, is enriched with the most useful knowledge; while it proves the wonderful properties of nature, it demonstrates the more important truths of morality. (Monitor, page 43)

Truly, as the monitor says, Geometry is the noblest of sciences:

By Geometry we may curiously trace nature, through her various windings, to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, wisdom and goodness of the Grand Artificer of the

Universe, and view with delight the proportions which connect this vast machine. By it we discover how the planets move in their different orbits, and demonstrate their various revolutions.

By it we account for the return of seasons, and the variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye (Monitor, 42)

That is not just a monitorial platitude. Geometry underlies calculus, which gives us physics, and from physics, we get engineering and chemistry, and through chemistry, biology, which combine into untold numbers of technologies and insights about our world.

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# Masonic Widows and Orphans Committee

By Jerome Weilmuenster, Staff Writer

In this issue we will profile the most recently established Grand Lodge Committee, The Masonic Widows and Orphans Committee – Dedicated to the Welfare of Masonic Widows and Orphans.

When the Masonic Home and School of Texas was operating as a distinct entity in Ft. Worth, there was a Grand Lodge committee entitled The Masonic Graduates Advisory Committee. According to former Article 118 of Grand Lodge law:

*The Masonic Graduates Advisory Committee shall work in cooperation with the Board of Directors of the Masonic Home and School and under its direction, to assist the graduates of said Home and School in securing employment and to become established in the business and social life of the State.*

For many years, the Masonic Graduates Advisory Committee fulfilled its task. However, with the passage of time since the closing of the Masonic Home and School in 2005, the statutory task no longer existed.

Past Grand Master Ken Curry noted in his travels the inconsistent manner in which lodges cared for their widows and orphans. A few lodges consistently supported and interacted with their widows while others did not know if they had widows. There were a few lodges who thought that they had orphans but were not aware of the current status of those children. Most lodges did not know if they had orphans.

Believing such situation to be entirely inconsistent with the obligations of Masons, PGM Curry put forward a Grand Master's Recommendation to rename the committee "Masonic Widows and Orphans Committee" and amend Article 118, adding the obligation to of providing comfort and support of Masonic Widows and Orphans. The recommendation passed, and Article 118 now sets forth the following tasks of the Committee:

**1**  
*In cooperation with the office of the Grand Secretary and District Communication Officers compile and maintain a list by name and current address information of a) unmarried widows of Texas Masons and b) orphans of Texas Masons who are under the age of eighteen.*

**2**  
*In cooperation with the Masonic Home and School provide to Texas Masonic unmarried widows and under age eighteen orphans such support and assistance as may be determined by the Committee and the Masonic Home and School appropriate.*

**3**  
*Maintain liaison with all alumni groups of the Masonic Home and School and provide a program each year at the Grand Annual Communication highlighting one or more graduates of the Masonic Home and School.*

Thus far, little information has been forthcoming to the Masonic Widows and Orphans Committee. In spite of their requests, the Committee has received almost no information from constituent lodges or District Communications Officers regarding Masonic widows and orphans. If you know a Masonic widow or orphan, please pass along a name and address to your lodge secretary or District Communication Officer. We all have taken an obligation to help the widows and orphans, and it is a quite simple thing to do.





# On the Masonic Road

By Bill Crow, Staff Writer

This “On the Masonic Road” is about the hard driving and hardworking settlers and Masons that populated the Northeast Texas landscape in the 1700 and 1800’s, and Paris, Texas Lodge No. 27, the Last Texas Masonic Lodge chartered during the Republic of Texas era...

In the 1700’s and early 1800’s, land that was sovereign to both Spain, and then Mexico, began to receive settlers, “pathfinders,” from the East and other countries near and far. The Northeast Texas landscape that became a part of the Republic of Texas, and later the State of Texas, was highly sought after, but was a very dangerous place to settle. Spain and Mexico were engaged in a battle to retain or gain as it maybe, the territory that would ultimately become a part of Texas.

Our Great Masons of legend of South Texas fought and won the battles for the Texas Republic and likewise, the settlers or “pathfinders” of Northeast Texas fought for the right to settle lands that offered hardship, savagery, and often death, at the hands of the Spaniards, Mexican militia, and menacing Indian tribes.

In 1819, the revolutionary forces of the Republic of Mexico gained sufficient momentum to begin to drive the Spanish from all of their posts along Red River. Before 1819, the Indians along the Red River had been for the most part friendly, the settlers traded with them freely. When the Spanish began to see that their days of dominion and domination were rapidly drawing to a close, they began to do what they could to stir up strife between the Indians and the settlers, as well as the Mexican soldiers. During that time of conflict, Mexican soldiers could go back to Mexico after they had evicted their Spanish enemies, but the settlers were forced to remain unprotected and caused to bear the brunt of Indian warfare alone. During the years of 1819 and the 1820s, the families of the settlers did not know what security of life really meant.

As the westward movement from the East began crossing into Tejas Territory or Texican land, as it was often called, and then across the Red River, into what became Texas, “liberty” and “Justice” were not prerogatives that were taken for granted nor expected.

A point of entry that many settlers traveled was located on the Red River, crossing over into land that became Lamar County, Texas, land that had “danger and treachery” embroiled into its history. It was a place where settlers were surrounded by native Indians, some tentative but friendly, and others that were savage and deadly.

On December 11, 1809, George Washington Wright was born east of Carthage, Tennessee. In March of 1816, his father, mother, and three servants, packed up their belongings onto a keelboat and began a six month long trip to the far frontier, “Texican Land”, property thought to be owned by the United States. The journey took the family down the busy Cumberland, the scenic Ohio, and wide Mississippi Rivers, and then up the Red River. This was a great adventure George W. Wright would describe in detail often during his lifetime. Finally, in September of 1816, when George was six years of age, the family obtained land and settled and established their home west of the Great Bend of the Red River.

So, who was George Washington Wright?

George Washington Wright was a frontiersman, a farmer, and a legislator. His family was among the first settlers in what was to be Lamar County, Texas, during the reign of Spain and Mexico and during the Texas Revolution, the Republic, and early statehood. George W. Wright, who with Claiborne Chisum, and their families shared the distinction of being the first settlers in Lamar County.



George W. Wright's young adulthood was spent learning how to survive in the wilds, whether it was hunting buffalo on the prairies west of what is now Paris, Texas or near Madill, Oklahoma, or hiding from the feared Osage Indians who came through the Red River Valley now and then to raid the settlers or hunt for game.



George W. Wright was a Mason, a Royal Arch Mason, and an Odd Fellow. He was the second Worshipful Master of Paris Masonic Lodge No. 27, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Texas, chartered on St. John the Baptist day, June 24, 1845.

George W. Wright was a principal organizer, along with others, that founded the Paris Lodge and sought a Charter from the Grand Lodge of Texas. A Lodge that has

that has not only survived since 1845, but became a central figure in Texas Masonry for over 177 years.

Brother Wright served Paris Masonic Lodge No. 27 as Worshipful Master from 1851-1852. He also served as the first High Priest of LaFayette Chapter No. 48, Royal Arch Masons, when it was chartered in 1855.

Brother Wright offered fifty acres out of his property for a new city to be named Paris. Thus, on April 29, 1844 Lamar County first used the site called Paris as its meeting point. Early in 1845, the city of Paris, Texas, was chartered as a town. The city was surveyed by George W. Stell, incorporated the next year, and the final deed transaction for the city of Paris, Texas was presented to the court in 1848.

When reading the manuscript records of the Paris, Texas, Masonic Lodge history from 1845 to 1935 following ninety years of continuous operation, it was clear that George W. Wright was an influential Mason who helped organize and charter many lodges in the Red River area in or near Lamar County, Texas. The record of the Lodge is detailed and purposeful in listing the former officers and Lodge history in a booklet compiled as a legacy of the Lodge.

The June 24, 1845 Charter establishing Paris Lodge No. 27 was the last Charter issued by the Grand Lodge of Texas during the Republic of Texas period. The Lodge was a refuge for transient immigrant Masons and was an important stopping place for settlers and "pathfinders" crossing into what became our State of Texas.

Paris Lodge No. 27, noted for its charitable and civic contributions, has been in continuous existence since 1845. In 1873, 1956, and 1961, a member of the Paris Lodge No. 27 served as the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Texas. Right Worshipful William Bramlette Served as Deputy Grand Master for then M.◌. W.◌. Thomas A. J. Anderson until his death in August of 1871 while serving as Grand Master. R.◌. W.◌. Bramlette served the remaining ten months of the Grand Master Anderson's term and in 1872 was elected as Grand Master. R.◌. W.◌. William W. Boothe served as Grand Master in 1956 and R.◌. W.◌. William G. Proctor, served as the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Texas in 1961.

During the early history of Lamar County, we find in a Paris Lodge No. 27, manuscript; records of other Lamar county Masonic Lodges organizing after Paris Lodge No. 27. There is a lodge known as Lost Lake



From left to right: William Bramlette, William W. Boothe and William G. Proctor

When we look pointedly at the history and legacy of Paris Masonic Lodge No. 27, it not only holds the distinction of being the last Masonic Lodge chartered by the Grand Lodge of Texas during the Republic of Texas, but also holds a distinction of being a Masonic Lodge with a great heart.







# Masonic Philosophy 101 and the Breakfast Tacos of Champions

By James C. "Chris" Williams IV, Staff Writer

The noise was so loud that it felt like my head was going to explode. I couldn't figure out where it was coming from. Suddenly something hit me in the back....hard.....that's when I woke up from a sound sleep. It was the phone ringing and the blow to the middle of my back came from Pam followed by an order to "ANSWER THE PHONE"!!!

There wasn't time enough to focus and read the caller ID so I when my hand finally found the handset I just pressed the button. That was my first mistake of the day. The second was that I didn't just hang it up right then. I still wasn't awake all the way, and the voice sounded familiar.

He was talking way too loud and way too fast...

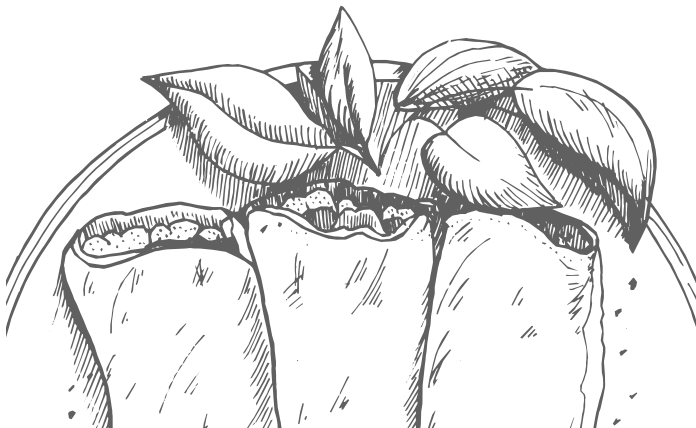
"Halloos Brother Chris, I thought I would catch you on your way to work and see if we could have breakfast." By the time he finished the first sentence my mind had cleared, I had glanced at the clock and had realized it was John Deacon.

"What the heck are you calling me at.....I looked again at the clock..... oh my God John it's 4:30 in the morning," I yelled into the phone causing another blow to my back and a different order. "Are you crazy? It's too early to even have breakfast."

"Awwwww quit whining, my Brother," he said. "I need some direction. I am hungry and I need to know where to go."

By this time having been rudely awakened, sarcasm and anger were starting to kick in and I flatly said, "I'll tell you where you can go." And before I could relay that special destination to him, one more blow landed to my back with an admonition, "be nice." Grrrr, in my then condition being nice was not my first choice. I realized that I was not going to win this with the enemy on both sides, so I took a deep breath and told him to meet me at Bill Millers in 30 minutes. I heard him whining about not wanting BBQ for breakfast as I hung up. He would find out in a few minutes that Bill Millers has pretty darn good breakfast tacos. I know because I have one almost every morning of the year.

I hurried through my shower and when I got to the restaurant, John was already inside. They had just opened up and were heating the food up as



he stood there looking at the menu smacking his lips. As I walked up next to him, I smiled at Sarah who knows me as "potato, egg, and cheese taco, with an unsweetened iced tea refill" cause that's what I get every day.

She already had my taco and drink ready and nodded to John and got a questioning expression on her face. I told her that he was becoming "one" with the menu and he would speak at some point. "He has been staring at the menu for several minutes," she said. "I thought he had fallen asleep." "Nope, he's not asleep," I answered. He is just coming up with a plan."

Without taking his eyes off the menu he growled, "You know, I can hear you both. And neither of you are funny." And then looking down at Sarah he began to order. "Since my Brother Chris is buying breakfast, I think I will have three of those potato, egg, and cheese tacos. I also want three carne guisada with cheese. I just have to try a couple of sausage and egg and a couple of bacon and egg, and add about four bean and cheese for later and I will be in good shape.....and I will have some tea also."

"I don't think that good shape is something you ought to worry about Brother John unless you consider watermelon a good shape." As he glared at me, I silently calculated in my mind and as best as I could figure, he was getting ready to consume along with generous portions of sausage, bacon, potatoes, beans, and carne guisada, at least a dozen eggs and a dozen tortillas. Heck, that wasn't breakfast, it was a whole week's worth of groceries.

Sarah handed us our drinks and called out the cavalry to get busy on making tacos. When they were done it took two trays to haul it all out to our table and one for the tacos and one for all the hot sauce and pico de gallo to put on everything. For those of you dear readers who are out of the country, Texas, that is; "pico de gallo or peck of the rooster" is fresh jalapenos, onions, tomatoes, and cilantro, all mixed together. I looked across the table at the mountain of breakfast tacos and heard John oohing and aaahing over how good it all tasted, and realized he was going to be a while and called Leonard to tell him I was going to be a little late.

I was not going to be dragged out of bed this early by John and not get something to put in the newsletter, even if I had to force it out of him. The morning crowd was filing in to get their tacos and John's pile attracted a lot of attention. I just kept my head down and avoided eye contact and waited. Soon he was done, and I informed him that it was rude to wake someone up as early as he did me without a day's prior warning. He told me he had a big meeting early that morning and had gotten to town the night before and spent the night and woke up hungry. I listened closely, but never got anything that remotely resembled an apology so I just shook my head and moved on. "I hope you have something really good for me this month," I said evenly. "And you need to start talking because I have to get to work." "Well," he said. I don't have much but one thing has been making me think since it happened." I groaned...the day looked like it was going to get worse. I leaned back and motioned for him to bring it on.

Visit <https://grandlodgeoftexas.org/masonic-philosophy-101-and-the-breakfast-tacos-of-champions/> for the rest of the story.

# Brother Mickey Allen Takatch

By jim hoffpaur, Staff Writer

Not your everyday Freemason. No, this guy has carried it a step further. You might say ... on the operative side. You see, this Brother forges his symbols of the craft in iron.

Who is he? Mickey Allen Takatch, a 39-year-old Corpus Christi native, raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason before nearly two hundred onlooking Brethren from across the state, aboard the USS Lexington docked along North Shore Blvd., in his hometown on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

Brother Takatch's journey began with his Initiation as an Entered Apprentice into Oso Naval Lodge No. 1282 of Corpus Christi in June of 2021. Six weeks later he was Passed to the Degree of Fellowcraft. Some eleven weeks after his Initiation he was Raised on the Lexington.

What got him into Freemasonry? "Though the closest family I had in Masonry were distant cousins in Oklahoma, I became interested in the craft while working in the local refineries where I befriended several Masons," commented Brother Takatch. While on break during long shifts at the plant, Mickey listened as Brethren talked about Freemasonry and their fellowship around the Lodge. "They were all good guys and I was interested in what they had to say. It wasn't long before I asked the right questions."

Brother Takatch was raised by his grandparents, Mickey and Mary Nichols in Orange Grove. He attended grade school and high school in the Orange Grove Independent School District. Graduating in 1986, he attended Del Mar College back home in Corpus Christi, studying Process Technology and Auto Mechanics.

"I started out in Process Technology to become an operator. I didn't make it through to receive my degree because a better job presented itself before I could finish. Although Del Mar offers a certification program in welding, I learned to weld on the job at Flint Hills Resources working as a contractor in the tanks," says Mickey. "I enjoy welding: tearing things apart, refitting them, and welding them back together."

In 2017 Mickey married his "best friend" Laura Haley. "We were introduced by a mutual friend who played in a band with me. She commented in a post on Facebook about the band. I asked the friend to introduce us and the rest has been the adventure of my life," says Takatch. Laura had four children before they met: Haley (24), Cadence (19), Victoria (16), and Max (12). "These guys have filled my life," beams their proud step-father.

What got him into the art of blacksmithing? Brother Takatch lost his position at Flint Hills in 2019 on his birthday, October 12th - four



Early stages of forging Oso Naval Lodge No. 1282 Tiler's sword made from 68 Camaro leaf spring.

months before the Covid-19 pandemic started. At the time he was working in the piping department as a welder. He had been in this contractor position for two years.

One day, during that period of downtime, he saw a show on the History Channel titled Forged in Fire. Jesse James was the focus of the documentary he was viewing. Lots of metal work, forging, and such, caught his eye. "I think I can do this stuff," was his eager response after studying the screen intensely. Mickey immediately started out on his own making things. Displaying his work on Facebook soon brought interest from the local newspaper and television channel.

He then went to work for James - the legendary fabricator and founder of West Coast Choppers - in Dripping Springs. James is well known by Discovery Channel enthusiasts as host of the popular reality shows Monster Garage and Jesse James is a Dead Man. James' operation's adventures in custom motorcycles, guns, hot rods, and custom cars earned Mickey's strong admiration.

Later, back home, Brother Takatch setup a forging operation in his garage. His forge consists of an old barbecue pit powered by propane. Typically, it runs between 1500-2000 degrees Fahrenheit





First use of a new 2 x 72 -inch belt grinder that brought skills set to a new level.

with a firebreak inside designed and insulated to produce and hold that temperature. The use of two burners usually means ambient temperatures approaching 115-20 degrees in the garage itself. Add sand saw, buffer, angle, welding table – with vise, anvil, and a drill press along with protective gear consisting of a leather apron, safety glasses, welding cap and a pair of welding gloves, you are good to go. Oops! That is, unless you decide somewhere along the way to toughen up your hands – see photo.

Injuries and scars? Over time they do add up. Getting in a rush one afternoon, Mickey put his glasses down while stamping his maker's mark. A hot piece of slag flew into his eye – burning the edge of the eyelid. A rush inside and a prolonged eye-flush with copious amounts of water saved the day. Small burns, and an occasional burning off of finger tips do occur.

Close calls ... no, unless you consider an open-lid, ammo-canister quench tank, full of oil ignition, as relative. Brother Takatch can confirm that catching such a device on a closing garage door is rather unwise. Once you see your mistake, be sure not to let the hanging item drop back down on a hot forge and create a blaze. And should you do so – with luck – it might not be too disruptive.

Injuries and scars?  
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What is he producing? Mickey started out forging meat cleavers, chef and paring knives, hunter skinning, bowie, and fillet knives. He also forges his own Damascus steel comprising a composite of two forged steels which creates dark and light patterns. Swords: Viking, Templar, and Tiler's. Knives with square and compasses – all in a day's work.

Damascus steel, as mentioned above, receives its distinctive two-tone coloring when the high carbon and nickel content of two metals are hammered into one shape, sanded down to a fine polish, and dipped in ferric chloride for a period of time. The high carbon material darkens while the nickel shines. Due to the time and labor involved, items made of Damascus steel are priced at double that of single tone items.

Swords require special production measures. Made of 51-60 spring steel the blade – though rigid – needs flexing qualities. Mickey's first sword blade was made from a leaf spring taken from a 1968 Chevy Camaro lying around in a friend's garage. The cross guard of the sword was forged from a simple railroad clip found on any railway track and made of low-carbon steel, soft, and well known in the blacksmith shops worldwide.

## ACROSS THE STATE



Forging a "Texas Brisket Slicer," intended to be a Bowie knife, it became a popular design and a best seller



Testing sharpness and durability as per Jason Knight knife challenge.

His second sword was styled from that of the Knights Templar and presented to Oso Naval Lodge No. 1282 as a Tiler's Sword dedicated to his mentor, departed Brother Steve Pure. "I started it before I was raised. Brother Steve thought it would be a cool idea to present it to the Lodge. I was most happy to oblige after all he did for me," Mickey laments.

Posting a photo of a knife featuring the Square and Compasses on the Texas Masons Facebook page one evening Brother Takatch was taken aback when a Brother texted him asking if he could make more. Soon inquiries grew numbering between 150 and 180. Shortly thereafter, along with donations to Lodges in various states to help in their fundraising projects, Mickey was awash in nonstop work. Now that he is going back to a full-time position, he doesn't have much spare time.

One Facebook contact that really took him aback came from Tennessee, when Damascus steel wizard Steve Schwarzner posted "you will never walk alone again" on his page. "I knew right away that he was a fellow brother Master Mason," Mickey laughed.

Since, Brother Takatch has found out that Jason Knight, one of the judges on History Channel Forged in Fire, writer, consultant, longest continuous serving ABS Master Bladesmith, owner of Schwarzner Bladesmith, and considered one of the top mosaic Damascus specialists is also a member of the Masonic craft. Schwarzner offered him a tryout on Forged in Fire. He was interviewed with many questions but, after not making the cut, was told to try again for one of next season's episodes.

### *What can he do for Freemasonry?*

"My work at the forge means something to my fellow Brethren," Brother Takatch observes. "It means something to them and that warms my heart." He would love to help other Masons learn the craft of blacksmithing. One young Brother, just out of military service, is handling Mickey's sales order and bookkeeping duties after having contacted him through his mother. He is now enrolled and attending college at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. "I only hope that I can be of service to my fellow Brethren in the years to come."

To contact Brother Takatch, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/mickeymetal>







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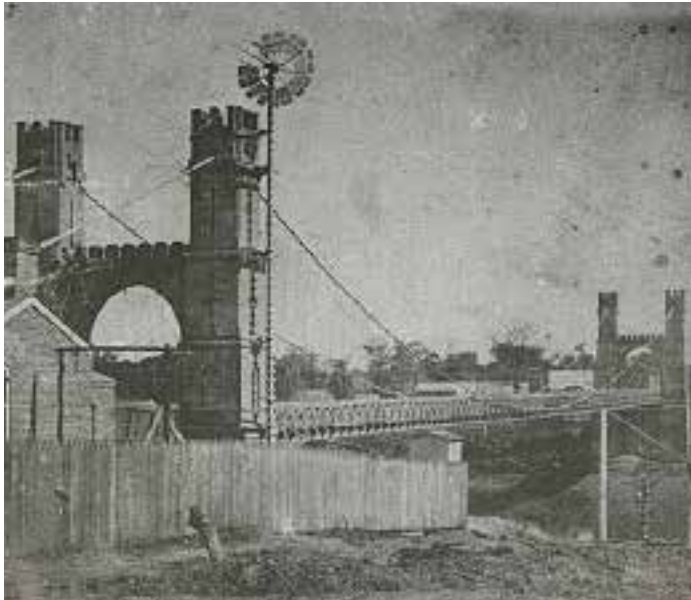
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## EDUCATION AND COMMITMENT

# Prather Influence In Waco

By Robert Marshall, PM Waco Lodge No. 92, Contributing Writer



First photograph of the Suspension Bridge. Shows toll-keeper's cottage and yard.

Benjamin Franklin Prather (1772-1851) was an early settler in Tennessee and the father of George Washington Prather (1806-1874). Growing up on the Prater farm (both spellings of the name were used) in Roane County was filled with memories that George held dear later in life. Chief among them were the frequent visits by Sam Houston. Benjamin Prather's reputation for raising the finest horses caused Houston to establish a friendship and business relationship. This relationship probably piqued the younger Prather's curiosity when he heard the heroic stories of Houston's leadership in Texas in the 1830s and perhaps is why he eventually made his own way to Texas.

In 1847, George Prather was ordained in the Methodist Church. Shortly after the death of his father, he made his way to Texas, where he settled near Waco in 1854. Immediately upon his arrival in Texas, he purchased and began farming 3,000 acres along the Bosque River. Brother George, as an ordained minister, along with farming, was also preaching at the local Methodist Church.

Brother George Prather was one of the primary investors that made the historic Waco Suspension Bridge possible. This suspension bridge, completed in 1870, was a major crossing point

for cattle drives, contributing greatly to Waco's economy. Brother Prather also played a key role in the Waco Lodge No. 92 project that established a new school which eventually evolved into TCU, now in Fort Worth.

His son, William Lambdin Prather (1848-1905), was only six when the Prather family moved to Texas, but he quickly adapted to the lifestyle in Waco and eventually became one of its most celebrated sons. Evidence in local newspapers suggests that William Lambdin Prather, like his father, was also member of Waco Lodge No. 92.



William Prather received his law degree from Washington and Lee University in 1871. After returning to Waco he practiced law for twenty-eight years, serving as city attorney from 1875 to 1878. From 1899 until his death in 1905, Prather served as the president of the University of Texas. In his position on the board of regents and president, William

led the movement for the adoption of the "Eyes of Texas" as the school song. In addition to the well-known version of this song, he also helped to produce another tune celebrating Waco Lodge's 50th anniversary. This celebratory tune subsequently became used at other lodge anniversaries and feasts. It begins, "The eyes of Texas are upon you, Men of 92..." The lodge members sang it once again in June of 2021 at a Festive Board held inside the official Texas Ranger Hall of Fame where on the grounds of which, Brother George Prather was buried almost 150 years ago.



## A Look Back



### When the Strength and Wisdom of Man Faileth

By ELMO B. WHITMORE, 32 °, K. C. C. H. –  
The New Age Magazine, Oct. 1922

ONE OF the unchangeable Land marks of Masonry is the legend of the Third Degree. The lessons which it inculcates are many and varied. One of the outstanding ones is the efficacy of prayer. How many Masons, however, when some calamity seems about to overwhelm them or a situation arises when human wisdom fails to bring about a solution, heed the admonition of “our worthy companion of Tyre” and seek that “inexhaustible supply above?”

It is interesting to note some of the circumstances prevailing at the time this wise advice was offered and that they parallel those of practically every Mason at some period of his life. There seemed to be a distinct and irreparable loss to the remarkable work being carried on by reason of the removal of one of those under whose guidance it was going forward so well, and it is little wonder that King Solomon, even with his renowned wisdom, felt keenly the absence of that wonderful talent which was being manifested in the construction of the Temple to the Most High. We have all been in the same predicament. Each one of us, in building his temple, has, at some time, reached the point where it seemed the whole thing must come to a standstill because of the lack of either strength or wisdom to carry it forward. Then did we remember the lesson taught in Masonry and seek the help so badly needed, from the source which is in exhaustible, or did we merely submit

to the circumstances and accept them with a certain amount of self-pity and resignation to fate? The advice given to King Solomon was neither of a hesitant nor speculative nature. It was most positive assurance, and no doubt he who proffered it had often resorted to such a source and proved its efficacy. Our ancient brethren evidently were men of action and did not believe in sitting down and doing nothing under adverse circumstances, and the result of their action changed the entire situation. We are all builders, and our Wise Master has given us the pattern by which we are enabled to erect our building faultlessly. Should we not, then, keep our eyes fixed on this pattern as laid down by Him rather than try to inject some of our own innovations or ideas as to how it should be constructed? His plans call for the perfect building, and nothing less will fulfill the requirements. If we attempt to add anything not called for in these plans or misinterpret them, we must tear down and build anew. Does some brother ask where these plans may be found? Look then, my brother, to the Great Light in Masonry; your complete plans are there.

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