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A HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY
IN CUBA

An Address* by

WARREN H. MURPHY, P.M.

Senior Deacon, Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research, No. 281, F. & A. M.
Seattle, Washington

Past Master, Maritime Lodge, No. 239, F. & A. M., Seattle, Washington

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THE HISTORY of freemasonry in Cuba is tragic and violent. Much of it was, and is, tied to the political picture of its day. Out of 163 years of Masonic history only sixty have been years of comparative peace and freedom.

On December 17, 1804, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania chartered at Havana, a Lodge, Le Temple des Vertus Theogales, No. 103, with Joseph Cerneau as first Master.

During the Negro revolution in Haiti, 1793 to 1810, three Lodges originally constituted there were reorganized at Santiago de Cuba in 1805-1806. Dispersed in 1808, many of their members moved to New Orleans in 1809, where on October 7, 1810, two Lodges amalgamated as Concord Lodge, No. 117, under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, by which body a charter was granted to Perseverance Lodge, No. 118. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania also chartered four Lodges in Havana, Nos. 157 and 161 in 1818, and Nos. 166 and 167 in 1819; No. 175 in 1820 and No. 181 in 1822, at Santiago de Cuba, for a total of seven Lodges. All except the last two had ceased to exist by 1822, and four years later these two Lodges, Nos. 175 and 181, had their charters revoked, because they had failed to meet for more than a year.

During the same period the Grand Lodges of Louisiana and South Carolina and the Grand Orient of France assumed the warranting of Lodges in Cuba. The Grand Lodge of Louisiana chartered No. 7 in 1815 and Nos. 11 and 14 in 1818. In 1818 the Grand Lodge of South Carolina chartered La Constancia Lodge, No. 50, and in 1819, La Aménidad Lodge, No. 52. The Grand Orient of France established a Lodge and a Consistory in 1819 and two

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other Lodges, La Constante Sophie and L'Humanite, in 1821, for a grand total of fifteen Lodges, all operating during this period.

The Grand Lodge of South Carolina received a communication from the Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons in Havana in 1821, stating that a Grand Lodge had been formed to which La Amenidad Lodge, No. 52, desired to transfer its allegiance. A favorable reply was returned, but La Constancia Lodge, No. 50, was retained on the rolls of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina for a few years, after which the warrant was surrendered by its members "in consequence of the religious and political persecutions to which they were subjected."

At this time it must be remembered the assembling as Freemasons was forbidden by Spanish law. For many years Masonry subsided; its members practiced their rites in secret for fear not only of deportation, but also of confiscation of their property. However, several of the captains general and other officers who ruled the island were Masons and, therefore, from time to time, the Craft was tolerated. But its members were forced by these circumstances to work in absolute secrecy, even to the practice of using Masonic names to avoid the discovery of their true identity. At length, however, a revival set in and a warrant was granted November 17, 1859, by the Grand Lodge of South Carolina, to San Andres Lodge, No. 93, which with the two Lodges, Fraternidad and Prudencia, already existing on the island, enabled the establishment of a Grand Lodge. This was accomplished on December 5, 1859, with the founding of the Grand Lodge of Colon. The Lodges became Fraternidad Lodge, No. 1; Prudencia Lodge No. 2; and San Andres Lodge, No. 3; in the newly established Grand Lodge.

On December 27, 1859, a Supreme Council of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 33°, was founded by Andres Cassard, under the sanction of the Supreme Council, 33°, for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America, Charleston, South Carolina. These two bodies soon amalgamated and formed the Grand Orient of Colon. The name *Colon* (Spanish for Columbus) was used to help conceal the nature of the organization from the general public.

In 1867, under Grand Master Andres Puente, the Grand Lodge established a constitution of its own, in which, while recognizing its continued membership in the Grand Orient, the Grand Lodge claimed the exclusive power to enact its own by-laws, issue charters, and regulate Lodges. This constitution was approved in September, 1867, and a corresponding notification was sent to the Supreme Council. Albert Pike publicly gave approval to this separation of power. However, the Supreme Council refused to accept the step

taken by the Grand Lodge, and, after prolonged and unsuccessful negotiations, arbitrarily dissolved the Grand Lodge and assumed control of all degrees of the order. On September 30, the Grand Lodge suspended its constitution until a meeting of the Grand Orient could be held, at which all the Lodges of the Jurisdiction were to be represented. This assembly was to have taken place on November 25, 1868, but was never held, because, on October 10, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, the Worshipful Master of Buena Fe Lodge at Manzanillo, raised the battle cry against Spain and thus began the Ten Years War. With this outbreak of hostilities the Grand Orient could not meet, and Freemasons, being regarded by the Spanish Government as revolutionaries, had to suppress their activities.

In the winter of 1869, at Santiago de Cuba, Gonzales Boet, an officer of the government, seized without warrant eighteen persons and had them immediately shot, without trial, for being Freemasons. One of the victims was the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Colon, Andres Puente. Many others were arrested and sent to prison for the same reason. On March 5, 1870, a meeting was called by San Andres Lodge, No. 3, to honor the late Grand Master. This was known publicly and when the temple was full armed police entered the building and seized forty or more of the Brethren; others were able to flee, among them being Brother Edward Godwin, an employe of the customs house, who carried the charter to safety. The prisoners were held for one hundred days, during which time they displayed true Masonic ideals, even to the taking up of a subscription of sixteen hundred and thirty-two dollars with which they redecored the chapel of the Catholic Church. The Priest and their doctor were so impressed that they used their influence to obtain the prisoners' release.

The number of Cuban Lodges, which, in 1868, was about thirty, had fallen to seven in 1870 when the Supreme Council organized a Provincial Mother Lodge at Havana, over which act the Grand Lodge protested. The warrant to this Mother Lodge was soon recalled, but the friction between the Supreme Council and the Grand Lodge continued.

On April 11, 1873, the Grand Lodge resumed work openly, and the next year entered into an agreement with the Supreme Council whereby the Grand Lodge would have exclusive jurisdiction over Symbolic Masonry and of the chartering of Lodges. The Grand Lodge of Colon held five meetings in August, 1876, and on August 26 declared that it was free from all other authority, a sovereign Body with full and unlimited powers over its subordinates. This

action was precipitated by an event which had taken place on August 1, 1876, when the representatives of nine chartered Lodges and four under dispensation (these four from the Provincial Mother Lodge) met at Havana and formed the Grand Lodge of Cuba. This Body, from the very first, kept itself free from the entanglements of the so-called "higher degrees," which it willingly consented should be ruled in Cuba by the Grand Orient of Spain. The Grand Lodge of Colon had on its register thirty-six subordinate Lodges with 8,000 members in September, 1876, while the newly formed Grand Lodge of Cuba had an apparent following of seventeen Lodges. A year later, 1877, a second Grand Lodge of Colon, at Havana, was added to the existing Grand Bodies. It was formed by some of the representatives of the Havana Grand Lodge who seceded from the old, or original, Grand Lodge of Colon, at Santiago de Cuba.

Thus we find three organizations, each claiming to be the regular Grand Lodge. This condition could not long endure and in 1879 the three original founding Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Colon, at Santiago de Cuba, and four other Lodges joined with the Grand Lodge of Cuba. The remaining Lodges were under control of the Grand Lodge of Colon, at Havana. In 1880, the two Grand Bodies united under the title of the United Grand Lodge of Colon and the Island of Cuba. The Grand Master of one Grand Lodge became Grand Master and the Grand Master of the other became Deputy Grand Master, and the newly constituted Grand Lodge entered upon its career with a roll of fifty-seven Lodges and between 5,000 and 6,000 members.

This Grand Lodge continued in authority until the Cuban revolution in 1895, which, like our own American Revolution, had among its leaders a number of patriotic Masons and had the sympathy of the people of the United States. With the destruction of the battleship Maine, in 1898, the United States embarked on the war against Spain and defeated her in all theaters. With the treaty signed in Paris, December 10, 1898, the United States acquired Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands. The fear of Spanish control now removed, there evolved from the United Grand Lodge of Colon and the Island of Cuba the present Grand Lodge of Cuba with almost 400 regular Lodges and a model Grand Lodge, in spite of many political upheavals and setbacks to representative government. But, from the time of the revolution many of their genuinely democratic reforms have been led by members of the Craft.

Masonry has been an active force in the growth of democracy

in Cuba. The Ten Years War (1868-1878) was inspired and waged by patriots—many of whom were Freemasons—who helped frame the Constitution of Guaimaro (1869), a genuinely democratic document. The War of Independence, initiated in 1895, was headed by patriotic Masons such as Brothers Jose Marti, Antonio Maceo, and Maximo Gomez. For this participation in the interest of Cuban freedom, the first National Congress of History, celebrated in Havana, resolved to proclaim that "Masonry has been at all times, since its foundation, the institution that has provided most elements for independence, liberty, the culture and the progress of Cuba, as much ideological as the sample of sacrifice, heroism and perseverance offered by its affiliates in order to give Cuba a life of human decorum, of equal and social fraternity and a regime of sane democracy."

With the successful revolution of Fidel Castro in 1959, however, and the installation of a Communist regime, the Grand Lodge of Cuba again was forced to recess all normal activities. The Grand Master, Dr. Juan Tarajano Gonzalez, and the Grand Secretary, Eduardo R. Lopez Bobadilla, fled to Florida after making the following decree:

1st: It is decreed by the Grand Lodge of Cuba, that a recess of all normal Masonic activity in Cuba now is in effect, and accordingly no normal Masonic activity can be properly or legally undertaken or engaged in.

2nd: Further that an appeal to all Cuban Masons is herein made to defend democratic institutions and principles which have been suppressed and/or destroyed in our beloved country.

3rd: It is further decreed and declared that any Masonic activity undertaken by any Masonic group which is sympathetic with or partial to the present Communist Government of Cuba is herein determined spurious, improper and unlawful.

4th: It is further decreed and declared that there shall be no activity of any Masonic Youth Association which by this declaration is likewise declared to be in recess.

5th: It is further decreed and declared that any statement or decree or communication or expression of any kind purporting to come from any person or group under any so-called Cuban Masonic name is illegal, unlawful and fraudulent; that no such communication or expression shall be accepted or recognized by any person, unless said expression or communication or declaration or decree is under the signature of Juan Jose Tarajano-Gonzalez and Eduardo Lopez-Bobadilla, who are respectively the Grand Master and the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Cuba of A. F. & A. M. now in exile.

Grand Master Tarajano Gonzalez said this action was necessary because Castro had confiscated all Masonic properties including the beautiful Masonic Temple in Havana. Upon his arrival in Florida, he made a formal request of the Grand Lodge of Florida for permission to reside and transact and conduct the affairs of the

Grand Lodge of Cuba in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida. This permission was granted by Proclamation of Most Worshipful Brother Edwin Larson, Grand Master of Masons in Florida, March 6, 1961.

PROCLAMATION

TO: The Masters, Wardens and Brethren of the Particular Lodges of the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, F. & A. M., and to our Sister Grand Jurisdictions of the Masonic World.

Whereas, the Grand Master of Masons in Cuba has informed me that the records, paraphernalia, membership lists and other records and property of the Grand Lodge of Cuba have been seized and confiscated by the civil authorities of Cuba and that the Grand Master of Masons in Cuba, for the preservation of his life and safety, has been compelled to flee from the boundaries of that nation and has sought and found refuge in the United States of America, and is presently residing in Miami, in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, and

Whereas, the Grand Master of Masons in Cuba has requested that I, as Grand Master of Masons in Florida, grant unto him permission and authority to reside in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida in his official capacity as Grand Master of Masons in Cuba, and to transact and conduct the affairs of the Grand Lodge of Cuba and to take such official action as Grand Master and in the name and behalf of the Grand Lodge of Cuba may be appropriate under the circumstances, and

Whereas, in a spirit of fraternal fellowship and good will, I have extended to the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in Cuba, and to the Grand Lodge of Cuba, a most cordial invitation to reside and abide in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida and to conduct the affairs of the Grand Lodge of Cuba from this Grand Jurisdiction and to take such official fraternal action as may be appropriate, and

Whereas, I have carefully examined the credentials presented to me by the Grand Master of Masons in Cuba and find therefrom that he is in truth and fact the duly and regularly qualified Grand Master of Masons in Cuba; now,

Therefore, in order that my action in this matter may be known; I, J. Edwin Larson, as Grand Master of Masons in Florida, do now proclaim and direct:

That the Grand Master of Masons in Cuba be, and he is hereby granted full permission to reside and abide in his official capacity as Grand Master of Masons in Cuba, in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, and the Grand Lodge of Cuba be, and it is hereby granted permission to have its official residence and home within the boundaries of the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, and the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in Cuba and the Grand Lodge of Cuba be, and they are hereby authorized and permitted to take such official and fraternal action in Masonic affairs as is appropriate under the circumstances to the same extent and in full measure as they would or could do within the boundaries of the Grand Jurisdiction of Cuba.

That this Proclamation shall be read at the next regular meeting of all particular Lodges of the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida after receipt hereof.

That the Grand Secretary make such distribution of this Proclamation to the Masonic World as shall be appropriate.

This Proclamation made and issued and to be effective from this, the 6th day of March, A. L. 5961, A. D. 1961

Attest:

WM. A. WHITCOMB
Grand Secretary

J. EDWIN LARSON
Grand Master of Masons in Florida

A year later, March 15, 1962, a further edict was issued by the Grand Lodge of Florida reaffirming the previous proclamation and, in addition, directing that the Grand Lodge of Florida does not recognize any Masonic fraternal ties with the Grand Jurisdiction of Cuba except with respect to acts approved by Dr. Jose Tarajano Gonzalez, Grand Master of Masons in Cuba in Exile. Text of Edict follows:

EDICT

TO: The Masters, Wardens and Brethren of the Particular Lodges of the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, F. & A. M.

Whereas, Most Worshipful Brother J. Edwin Larson, on the 6th day of March, A. L. 5961, A. D. 1961, during his tenure as Grand Master of Masons of Florida, issued a Proclamation, granting full permission to Dr. Juan Jose Tarajano, Grand Master of Masons of Cuba, to reside and abide in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, and to take such official and fraternal action in Masonic affairs as is appropriate under the circumstances, as is more fully set forth in said Proclamation, and

Whereas, further investigation has shown that the situation in Cuba is such that liberties and freedoms have been denied our brother Masons, and the Temple of the Grand Lodge of Cuba has been seized and confiscated by the present governing regime in Cuba, and

Whereas, the threat of Communist infiltration is ever lurking outside the Masonic Lodges of our Grand Jurisdiction due to the influx of many peoples of Cuba to American shores, including alleged Masons, and

Whereas, the present totalitarian head of State of Cuba has openly declared that he is and always was a Communist, and

Whereas, Totalitarianism and Communism are incompatible with Free Masonry [sic] and everything that is represented by Free Masonry [sic] as defined in the Constitution of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Florida;

Now, therefore, I, Fletcher G. McQueen, Grand Master of Masons of Florida, in order to protect and safeguard Free Masonry and Masonic Lodges in the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida from the threat of such Communist infiltration, do now issue this Edict and I hereby direct:

That the Grand Lodge of Florida does not recognize any Masonic and fraternal ties with the Grand Jurisdiction of Cuba, except with respect to acts and directions issued and approved by Dr. Juan Jose Tarajano, Grand Master of Masons in Cuba (in exile) as set forth by proclamation of M. W. J. Edwin Larson above referred to.

Be it further ordered and directed:

That, until further notice, no Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction of Florida, F. & A. M. nor any of its Masters, Wardens and Brethren, recognize or admit any Brother claiming Masonic affiliation through a Lodge of Cuba, except and unless such Brother present and produce a card bearing the Great Seal of The Grand Lodge of Cuba as well as the signature of Dr. Juan Jose Tarajano, Grand Master of Masons of Cuba in Exile, duly approving such Brother, and which said card shall be dated on or after the 24th day of February, A. L. 5961, A.D. 1961; or unless said Brother bears a card issued by Caribbean Naval Base, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Cuba, and which bears the imprint of the Great Seal of the Grand Lodge of Cuba and the

signature of Eduardo R. Lopez Bobadilla, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Cuba in Exile; and in addition to the above requirements the applicant for visitation shall also be subject to full, complete and thorough Masonic examination and interrogation by the Committee of not less than three members of the Lodge into which admission is sought, said Committee to be appointed by the Master of the Lodge, and shall make their report to the Master, and said report shall be submitted to a majority vote of the Lodge as to whether the applicant for visitation shall be allowed or denied such right, and if the Lodge allows the visitation, then the applicant therefor shall be granted the privilege, otherwise the privilege shall be denied, and the applicant required to immediately retire from the Lodge premises.

That this Edict shall be read at the next regular meeting of all particular Lodges of the Grand Jurisdiction of Florida after receipt hereof.

That the Grand Secretary shall make such distribution of this Edict to the Masonic World as shall be appropriate.

This Edict, made and issued, and to be effective from this, the 15th day of March, A.L. 5962, A.D. 1962.

(Seal)

WILLIAM A. WHITCOMB
Grand Secretary

FLETCHER G. MCQUEEN
Grand Master of Masons of Florida

These acts were reaffirmed the succeeding year by the Grand Lodge of Florida, and Grand Master John T. Rose, Jr. of Florida (1963) issued an edict recognizing Dr. Juan Jose Tarajano Gonzalez as the last duly elected Grand Master of Masons in Cuba.

Some 400 regular Masons have founded three Lodges in Miami, Florida, under the Grand Lodge of Cuba in Exile. As with most other Cuban Lodges, these Lodges are unnumbered; their names are Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

Not all of the Grand Lodges in the United States and other countries share the opinion of the Grand Lodge of Florida. Many are unwilling to withdraw recognition of the Grand Lodge of Cuba in Cuba, because of conflicting information from Cuba. The 1967 *List of Lodges Masonic* reports 334 Lodges operating in Cuba, as against 340 Lodges in the 1960 list.

The July, 1967, publication of the Masonic Service Association of the United States, *Foreign Grand Lodges Recognized By the Forty-nine Grand Lodges of the United States*, shows thirty-eight Grand Lodges, including the Grand Lodge of Washington, in fraternal communication with the Grand Lodge of Cuba, in Cuba.

In 1965 the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts (Committee on Foreign Relations) stated:

Because there has been no change in the relations between the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and the Grand Lodge of Cuba, in Cuba, we would reaffirm the fact that we welcome as visitors to our Lodges all members of the constituent Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Cuba who can verify their membership.

◆ The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts has granted a dispensation to Caribbean Naval Lodge, situated at Guantanamo Naval Base, which has surrendered its charter to the Grand Lodge of Cuba and is now working under the Massachusetts dispensation.

So, again, in Cuba political events are shaping the destiny of Freemasonry, and we find two Grand Lodges, each claiming to be the regular Grand Lodge, and each with legitimate reasons to sustain its claim.

The Grand Lodge of Cuba in Exile claims that Freemasonry cannot exist under a Communist regime, because it will be subverted and used as a tool by the Communists; that is, that the sovereignty and right of free and independent action have been removed. It states that the majority of the officers of the Grand Lodge of Cuba have escaped and are now in the United States. On the other hand, the brethren in Cuba say that those who deserted Cuba left the Grand Lodge of Cuba as "a sinking ship," and that those who remain had no other alternative than to elect new grand officers and continue their work. They claim that Castro has not interfered with their work and that they meet with complete freedom. The Castro government has taken over a large part of the new Masonic Temple in Havana (one of the largest and most impressive buildings in the city), but allows the Grand Lodge and appendant bodies space for offices and meetings.

Our most authoritative information on the situation comes through the Commission on Information for Recognition, of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America. This is a blue-ribbon committee composed of six Past Grand Masters of various Masonic Jurisdictions in the United States. Rev. Thomas S. Roy, Secretary, has served on the committee since its establishment in 1952. It is through Dr. Roy's office that all information on foreign jurisdictions is channeled. The committee's latest report, dated February 23, 1966, reads:

Direct from Havana, Cuba, there comes to us the information that the Grand Lodge of Cuba, in Cuba, is still working. The annual communication was held on March 28-29, 1965, and the Grand Master and other officers were elected and installed for the ensuing year. The Grand Master is Dr. Francisco M. Condom Cestino, and the Grand Secretary is Dr. Jose Alvarez Rivera Maldonado.

Reports have come to us by way of Florida, reflecting unfavorably upon the Grand Lodge of Cuba, in Cuba. Because of their nature we believe that the conditions giving rise to these reports warrant further investigation. We shall explore every possible source of information, and report the results as soon as possible to the Grand Lodges of this conference.

It is my earnest hope that when a free, truly representative government is again established in Cuba, and, when tyranny and fear no longer run rampant, these two Grand Bodies will reconcile their differences and unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness.

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A HISTORY OF JAPANESE MASONRY

A Paper by*

HARRY L. STEINBERG

*Secretary, Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research No. 281, F. & A. M.,
 Seattle, Washington*

Member, Mount Olive Lodge No. 506, F. & A. M., Los Angeles, California

PART I—JAPAN AS OPEN MASONIC TERRITORY

THE FIRST Masonic activity in Japan was the establishment of Sphinx Lodge, No. 263, I.C. (Irish Constitution), in 1864 when a detachment of the British 20th Regiment arrived in Yokohama for garrison duty. A Brother Blackmore and some other civilians were admitted to membership in the Lodge. Apparently they were the first permanent residents of Japan to join the order. In September, 1865, resident Masons of Yokohama met to petition for a Masonic charter from the Grand Lodge of England. This resulted in the establishment of Yokohama Lodge, No. 1092, duly constituted on June 26, 1866, under the English Constitution. Of all Lodges constituted prior to 1880 only three still survive—Lodge Hyogo and Osaka, No. 498, and Lodge Star in the East, No. 640 (both Scottish Constitution), and Rising Sun Lodge, No. 1041, the only one under the English Constitution.

The first District Grand Lodge was opened in Japan on August 15, 1874, under a patent granted by the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England and appointment of Brother Charles Henry Dallas to be District Grand Master. In 1886, Brother William Henry Stowe succeeded him, followed in 1900 by Brother Edward Flint Kilney. In 1904, Brother Stowe was reappointed, followed in 1911 by Brother George Harvey Wymand, in 1929 by Brother Stanley Edward Unite, in 1931 by Brother Percy Hamilton McKay and, finally, in 1934 by Brother Harold Sidney Isitt.

The Masonic Temple at 61 Yamashita-cho was destroyed by earthquake on September 1, 1923. The last meeting of the District Grand Lodge was held in that building on March 10 of that year. The Masonic Earthquake Relief Fund, which was subsequently established, allocated nearly one hundred thousand yen to the building of a new Yokohama Temple at 3 Yamate-cho. This

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