

## ***Brother against Brother***

### When Masons must fight each Other

Throughout history, Masons have fought other Masons in battle. This happened several times in the wars that have been waged by the United States of America, and Texas herself.

A bronze statue to Masonic relief sits on the battlefield at Gettysburg to remind Masons and non-Masons alike that even in the midst of a great civil war, Masonic ties are stronger than the hatred of one ideology for another. In the midst of the Gettysburg battle, Confederate General and Brother Lewis Addison Armistead fell mortally wounded on the battlefield. Union Captain and Brother Henry Harrison Bingham, aide to Union General Winfield Scott Hancock heard his cries for help and attended him. On learning Captain Bingham was both a Masonic Brother as well as General Hancock's aide, General Armistead pressed Captain Bingham to deliver his watch and other personal items to his longtime friend, Union General and Brother Thomas Hancock, who was himself badly wounded in the battle. This Masonic benevolence has been captured for all time in a bronze statue showing Brother Bingham comforting Brother Armistead as his life slips away. Armistead-Bingham Lodge of Research is named to commemorate this event.

Another example from the American Civil War is that of a Union doctor visiting a Union POW camp and handing out such money as he had to several Confederate prisoners he passed. When asked by a companion why he did so, he replied that they were Brother Masons. His companion then asked if the doctor expected to be reimbursed his generosity. The doctor replied that if the Brothers could repay the debt that they would, but that it was nonetheless his duty to aid them in their need as best he could.

Three examples of Masonic Brotherly Love are an integral part of Texas history.

The first example of Brotherly Love concerns a Masonic Monument located in the Masonic Cemetery in Richmond, Texas. This is a monument to Brother Gillespie, a Scottish Mason who succumbed to injuries sustained when he was accosted by robbers while traveling through the Richmond area. Brother Morton, an operative stonemason and a resident of Richmond, took Brother Gillespie in and tried unsuccessfully to nurture him back to health. Brother Morton, true to his obligation as a Mason, erected a stone and brick monument to honor his Masonic Brother. He erected the monument in 1826, making it the first Masonic monument west of the Mississippi. In early 1836, as the Mexican forces under General Santa Anna swept eastward across south Texas and entered Richmond, Mexican lancers tied ropes to the monument to pull it down. They succeeded in pulling it out of plumb before one of their officers, a Mason, saw the square and compasses thereon and ordered them to stop. This monument was restored by Morton Lodge #72 of Richmond, and stands today.

The second example is from the American Civil War, and concerns a Brother from Texas who was a member of the Terry Regimental Lodge, U.D. This Brother was a Captain in the 5<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry (Terry's Texas Rangers), who became separated from his unit and was making his way back to his lines when he was captured by Union forces. As he was not in the "proper uniform" of a Confederate soldier, he was tried and convicted of being a spy, and ordered to be hanged. Although a number of Union Masons visited him several times and sought to have his sentence commuted, the Brother was subsequently hanged.

The third account is also from the American Civil War. In October of 1862, Federal ships blockaded the port of Galveston. On Christmas day, they landed troops and secured the island. Simultaneous to the blockade, Confederate General John Magruder was assigned to command the War Department of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. General Magruder planned an attack the Union forces to take back the island and break the blockade. The attack would involve both land and sea forces. The capture or destruction of the *USS Harriet Lane*, a Federal gunboat, was critical to success. On January 1, 1863, two Confederate steamboats, the *CSS Bayou City* and *CSS Neptune*, took cannon and cotton bales aboard and attempted to ram and sink the *Harriet Lane*. *Neptune* was sunk in the exchange, but *Bayou City* was able to ram *Harriet Lane* and board her. In the hand-to-hand combat that ensued, *Harriet Lane* suffered two casualties she could ill afford.

Commander Johnathan Wainwright, Jr. was killed and Lieutenant Commander Edward Lea was mortally wounded. Major Albert M. Lea (from the *Bayou City*) boarded *Harriet Lane*, recognized his son, who he had not seen since the war started. As Major Lea knelt by his son, who recognizing him, the son whispered, "My father is here," and then expired.

General Magruder then sent word to Commodore Renshaw (whose flagship *USS Westfield* had run aground) that he had three hours to surrender his fleet. The Commodore tried to scuttle his flagship but was killed in the explosion. The two remaining Union gunboats, the *USS Clifton* and *USS Owasco* then sailed from the harbor still flying the white flags of truce. The Union ground forces surrendered upon seeing their gunboats leave. In the aftermath of battle, Masons aboard the *USS Harriet Lane* affirmed that Commander Wainwright was a Mason in good standing and requested a Masonic funeral be given their late Commander.

Major Philip Tucker, Worshipful Master of Galveston's Harmony Lodge #6, opened a Lodge of Sorrow for the purpose of interring Commodore Wainwright's body. Wainwright and Lea were buried together in a single grave. Harmony Lodge #6 presided at the Masonic funeral ceremony, and Major Lea, father of Lt. Commander Lea, read the Episcopal Grand burial service over the two officers.

The minutes of Harmony Lodge #6 of January 2, 1863, contains the following statements:

*"the members of this Lodge, appreciating the spirit and force of Masonic ties, will not allow their feelings and prejudice and love of righteous cause to obliterate from their hearts and minds the merciful teachings of the Order; that it does not conflict with their duties as patriotic citizens to respond to calls of mercy by a prostrate political foe, or to administer the last rite of the Order to the remains of a Mason of moral worth, although yesterday they met as an armed enemy in mortal combat in which the deceased parted with his life. ..."*

*A public procession formed in which appeared both friends and foes wearing the insignia of the order, and accompanied with a proper military escort under the command of Col. And Brother H. B. Debray, among which was the Major General Commanding J. Bankhead Magruder. ..."*

Although the minutes of Harmony #6 does not mention it, Gen. Magruder was at the time an Entered Apprentice Mason.

These few examples clearly show how fervently Masons of the past have honored their obligations. We would do well to emulate them.

- *Compiled by Bro. Sam Whitley, 2008 Texas History Committee*

*Information for this Texas History Moment from:*

*PGM Duncan Howard, Texas Mason, Spring 1994.  
Grand Lodge of Texas Masonic History articles  
Diary entries, Terry's Texas Rangers  
History of Morton Lodge #72  
Friend to Friend monument brochure (Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania)*

*Additional Sources of Masonic Brotherhood stories include*

*M.W. Samuel E. Cowan Friend to Friend (Scottish Rite Journal)  
Sheldon A. Munn Freemasons at Gettysburg  
Allen E. Roberts  
House Undivided  
Masonry Under Two Flags (pub. Masonic Service Association, 1983)  
Richard Eugene Shields Befriend and Relieve Every Brother: Freemasonry During Wartime*