

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIRST  
SESQUICENTIAL CELEBRATION ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

The most worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Jurisdiction of Florida, assembled in the Convention Hall of the Sheraton Twin Towers hotel, Orlando, Florida, on Monday, April 28, A.L. 5979, A.D., 1980, at 9:00o'clock A.M. and the following skit was portrayed:

REENACTMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION  
OF THE M.:W.: GRAND LODGE F. & A. A. OF FLORIDA  
IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, JULY 5, 1830:

MONOLOG OF SKIT PRESENTATION  
By Arthur Adler

NATIONAL-FLORIDA STATE AND MASONIC HISTORY  
THRU AND ABOUT 1830

The forests would be silent if only the best birds sang, let me repeat that, the forests would be silent if only the best birds sang.

To me my Brothers that could only mean that Masonry survives only because it takes *all of us* to accomplish what we do in this greatest fraternity of men in all the world. Masons make efforts of varying degrees, but large or small, collectively the impact is a constructive power to be reckoned with in these times as it was back in 1830 when our Grand Lodge was formed.

Andrew Jackson was in office as President of the United States, from North Carolina and Grand Master of Tennessee in 1822-1823. His Lodge is actually unknown to Masonic Historians, but he is said to have attended Clover Bottom Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

Yes, Masonry had it's dark days too, especially following the Morgan Affair which occurred in Western New York beginning at Batavia in 1826, a wave of anti-Masonry broke over the fraternity. It is not certain that this stemmed entirely from the Morgan Affair. Prominent Masons renounced Free Masonry and devoted their lives to its vilification. Conventions were conducted against our Fraternity, churched were recommending that Masons be excommunicated. The frenzy increased after 1830 and covered more and more territory. Politicians ran on anti-Masonic tickets, but, thru all the turmoil Andrew Jackson during this very period in our history was elected President in 1828 and ran again in 1832 and yet he never once waived in his loyalty to the Fraternity both privately and publicly.

Masonic Temples closed down, as an example of how wide spread the anti-Masonic feelings were, the Grand Lodge of New York had 480 Lodges in 1826 with about 20,000 members. But, between 1827 and 1839 only 50 to 90 Lodges were reporting to Grand

Lodge. In 1835 only 75 Lodges were on the rolls. For a time in Vermont not a single Lodge was working.

Anti-Masonic movements were world wide in scope while the lowest point in Free Masonry in the United States was about 1840 and it required an additional 20 years after that date for Free Masonry to have everywhere recovered. After that, it grew rapidly and soon exceeded its former self and in the midst of it all the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Florida was born and has flourished ever since. Why? Because not only the best birds sang. All Masons who had strong and true feelings for the value of the philosophy of our Fraternity made efforts large and small to hold it together, and collectively they succeeded.

On March 3, 1513, the 52-year-old Ponce De Leon left Puerto Rico with three small ships and spent 25 days sailing among the Bahamas looking for Bimini. On March 14<sup>th</sup> they passed San Salvador, where Columbus first landed. Although Florida was sighted on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1513, they proceeded on a course of west-northwest and anchored near the land in about eight fathoms of water. Thinking the land was an island, they named La Florida, because it had a very beautiful view of many cool types of woodland, it was level and uniform, but moreover they discovered it in time of their countries Feast of Flowers as Florida in Spanish means Land of Flowers. They wished to conformed in the name for these reasons.

Many years passed after the purchase of Florida from the Spanish, but eventually a bill to admit Florida as a state passed the National House of Representatives 1845 and the US Senate on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1845. The 11<sup>th</sup> President James K. Polk, also a brother Mason of Columbia Lodge #31 signed it two days later, making March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1845, the date of Florida's entry into the Union. The news reached Tallahassee five days later, and Governor Branch finally received an official copy of the act ten days later. In Tallahassee there was much rejoicing with the ringing of bells, firing of cannons, bonfires, and a gala reception in Live Oak, the Governor's residence.

The people of the twenty-seventh state move rapidly to establish their new status. The Legislative Council met on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1845 and set elections for May 26<sup>th</sup> of that year. Voters would at that time choose a Governor, a member of the National House of representatives, seven state senators, and forty-one house members. June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1845 was set for the meeting of the First General Assembly.

In 1830 the Federal Census indicated that he population of Florida was 34,730, all rural residents. The slave population was 15,501. Also in 1830 it is indicated that 24,837 immigrants entered the United States consisting of mostly people with no occupation at all and a few laborers, farmers, professionals, commercial, and servants.

In 1830 Legislative Council established what is now known, as Orange County was just a part of Mosquito County, which in fact included all of the future Orlando metropolitan area, on December 29, 1824. It embraced all the country southward from near St. Augustine to Monroe County and westward to Alachua County. The county seat

was New Smyrna. The 1830 state records show Mosquito County had a population of 733 persons. These hard pioneers had forged their way into the new territory and settled north of Lake Monroe.

One of the first acts of the State Legislature after statehood was change the name of Mosquito County to Orange County in 1843. On September 19<sup>th</sup> 1857, the United States Post Office officially recognized the name Orlando, Florida and most popular belief to have been named after Orlando Reeves, a volunteer United States soldier killed by an Indian arrow as he warned his fellow soldiers of the Indian attack and saved their lives in September 1835.

And so my brethren, look upon all of that has happened up to the year 1830, certainly after 1830, but most especially July 5<sup>th</sup> 1830, 105 years ago when Free Masons met to form the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Florida. All of these things could not have come to pass, if only the best bird sang.

#### PART

#### PORTRAYED BY

Moderator.....	Art Adler
Isham Green Searcy, Worshipful Master.....	Biff Hayes
Of Jackson Lodge No. 23	
Francis Cash.....	John Fletcher
Of Washington Lodge No. 1	
John Lines.....	Deem Raimy
Of Washington Lodge No. 1	
Henry Gee.....	Sam Lewis
Of Washington Lodge No. 1	
John P. Duval.....	Art Forrester
Of Jackson Lodge No. 23	
Thomas Munroe.....	Dick Carr
Of Jackson Lodge No. 23	

Plus non-speaking participants: Jerry Blum, Clyde Dickson, T. Fugate, Ernest Fuste, Fred Goodwin, R. Greenlaw, Vern Mann, Wallace Meyers, Floyd Michael, Russ Miller, M.J. Morrison, Robert B. Shurgart, C. Warren, D. Wilson, and Bob Young.

#### START

#### CURTAINS TO OPEN

During the following monolog by the Moderator, the 5 stagehands will mingle with additional Brethren coming into the scene. In all, a total of (24) WILL BE PRESENT DURING THE FIRST SCENE. They will arrive singly, in pairs, and triples onto the

stage. They will speak no words but will go about shaking hands, visiting, etc., as would be typical in any lodge prior to a meeting. A casual atmosphere at the time should prevail.

#### MODERATOR

The symbolic scene before is a representation of the old Jackson Lodge No. 23, at Tallahassee, in the Territory of Florida. The time is a few moments before 10 AM, Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1830. The morning is particularly humid following the thunderstorms of the day, before, and consequently many of the Brethren present are in shirt sleeves.

It was in this Lodge Hall, a scant two months prior to this scene, during it's regular May meeting that a Resolution had been presented before the Lodge. The Resolution was read and the Lodge subsequently adopted it.

That RESOLUTION was:

Be it resolved that the officers and members of Jackson Lodge No. 23, in the city of Tallahassee, in the Territory of Florida, under the grand jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Alabama, do invite the members of Washington Lodge, in the Town of Quincy, Gadsden County, in the Territory of Florida and Harmony Lodge, of Marianna, Jackson County, in the Territory of Florida, to send delegates to Jackson Lodge No. 23, to meet at 10 a.m., on the first Monday in July, 1830, for the purpose of discussing and organizing a Grand Lodge for the Territory of Florida.

As the hour of 10 a.m., approaches we notice that the Worshipful Master, Brother Isham G. Searcy, of Jackson Lodge approaches the head of the table, and...

WORSHIPFUL MASTER OF JACKSON LODGE NO. 23 (Isham G. Searcy) portrayed by Biff Hayes.

(He raps his gavel to gain attention a couple of times and...) Brethren, can we please find a seat and let us come to order.

(DONE)

Brethren, on behalf of the Officers and Members of Jackson Lodge No. 23, I bid you welcome here this morning. I am pleased that so many of you have turned out for this gathering, but then it is too hot to be in the fields anyway. It feels as though it may get quiet warm in here today, so I solicit your attention that we may move on with our purpose as possible. We are gathered here for possibly one of the greatest works we as Mason may undertake in our lifetimes, and as we have always been taught, let us call upon the Supreme Architect for his Guidance. Brother Francis Cash, would you lead us in prayer?

(Worshipful Master raps 3 times...all Brethren including Grand Lodge present to rise.)

FRANCIS CASH: portrayed by John Fletcher

(Prayer) Almighty and most merciful father, in whom we place all faith and trust, and in whom we give all thanks for the privilege of meeting together in thy holy name to accomplish worldly ends, we do beseech thee to be with us in the preceding of this meeting, that the results will be as thou didst direct, and that any selfish motives shall be made insignificant and ground under by thy power and will, so that in generations to come, yea, even 150 years from now, man will realize that we gathered here as free men and free Masons, working thy will, for any results forthcoming. Strengthen that great Masonic virtue of tolerance within us and fortify our love for our fellow man, reformatory us with charity towards those less fortunate than ourselves and rekindle within us the forgiveness of those that would trespass against us. And now, O Lord and Master of the universe, subdue our passions and prejudices, and allow brotherly love to prevail through this meeting and may the end be to thy favor and liking, for it is through thee only that all things of endurance must come. Amen.

BRETHREN: (respond) So mote it be.

WORSHIPFUL MASTER: (raps gavel to seat brethren) Brethren, we all know the purpose of this meeting, and in order for it to proceed in proper fashion, I feel the first order of business will be for us to select a chairman and secretary. I feel that this should be someone other than a Lodge Master in chair, so I rule myself ineligible.

JOHN LINES: (portrayed by Deem Raimy)

(arises and) Worshipful Master, I myself would be greatly please with your chairmanship, but since you have chosen to decline this favor, I move that the oldest Past Master among us be unanimously elected to be chairman of this meeting, and that he in turn select a secretary of his choosing.

HENRY GEE: (portrayed by Sam Lewis)

(arises and) Worshipful Master, our elders have always taught that with age comes wisdom, so I would be pleased to so second the motion on the floor.

WORSHIPFUL MASTER: Brethren, we have heard the motion made and seconded that we elect to the chair, the oldest Past Master among us, and that he in turn appoint a secretary. May I hear any discussion of the motion...there being none, all those in favor of the motion vote by the usual sign of a mason at the sound of the gavel. (done) Those opposed, same sign, same sound. (done). Brethren, there can be no doubt as to your favorable vote, and by it there is no doubt that you have selected Brother John P. Duval to chair this meeting. Brother Duval, will you accept this assignment?

JOHN P. DUVAL: (portrayed by Art Forrester)

(Arises slowly) Brethren, I am both favored and hurt by this appointment. I am favored that you deemed me worthy for this important duty but hurt, that you consider me the old man in the group. However, I will allow my hurt to subside and do humbly accept this important duty.

(Searcy and Duval then exchange places at the table.)

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, again I would like to thank you for your confidence in me. It is with humility that I should govern, but with a strong faith that we shall favorably accomplish what we are here to do.

Brethren, since you have invested in me the authority to appoint a secretary, I would like to appoint Brother Thomas Munroe to serve as secretary of this meeting. His quick skill with the pen should make him a valuable asset in setting down the happenings of this meeting. Brother Munroe, would you accept this appointment and make yourself a place here at the head of the table. We would be pleased if you would make record of the happenings of this assemble up to this point and to continue as we proceed.

THOMAS MUNROE: (portrayed by Dick Carr)

(Munroe rises and moves to a place at the head of the table and before seating himself) Thank You, Brother Duval, I am pleased to be of some useful purpose.

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, it is getting well along into the morning, and I note that our brethren from Harmony Lodge over in Marianna have not yet arrived, and it would be folly for us to proceed without their due representation. I am sure that the storm of yesterday has muddied up the roads and impeded their travel, but I feel sure that they shall arrive in short time. Therefore, I would entertain a motion that we adjourn until 1 P.M. this afternoon.

FRANCIS CASH: Brother Chairman, I will so move. (Rises as he speaks)

JOHN LINES: Brother Chairman, I will second the motion.

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, it has been moved and seconded that we adjourn until 1 P.M. this afternoon. Those in favor, vote.

(All brethren vote favorably)

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, we stand dismissed until 1 P.M., I understand that the wives of the Jackson Lodge Officers have prepared some chicken in the courtyard for our convenience.

CLOSE CURTAINS

## OPEN CURTAINS

HOUSE LIGHTS DOWN (All participants will be up and milling about again as the lights dim and then come up again in a very short time. As the house lights COME BACK UP, enter three delegates from Harmony Lodge. This causes milling brethren to greet and shake hands with them. As this transpiring JOHN P. DUVAL approaches the head of the table, and raps the brethren to order. As the brethren are seated, DUVAL remains standing and...)

JOHN P. DUVAL: We are pleased that our brethren from Harmony Lodge have arrived, and may I present them to the Brethren who may not be acquainted with them. Brother James W. Exum (he rises), Brother William J. Watson, (he rises), and Brother Jacob Robinson, delegates sent from Harmony Lodge over in Marianna. Brethren, lets give them cheer for their long journey.

(Brethren respond with applause) (Three delegates take seats) (DUVAL raps gavel to again gather order)

Brother Munroe, will you read the roll of those present and brethren, would you respond as the secretary calls your name.

THOMAS MUNROE: (He reads the roll, seated for convenience)

From Jackson Lodge No. 23, Brothers:

Isham Green Searcy	Richard C. Allen
David M. Sheffield	John P. Duval
John Lauderman	Robert W. Williams
William P. Duval	Justian F. Davis
Robert Butler	James Hughes
Richard K. Call	James Bryan, Jr.
Romeo Lewis	Purr H. Duval
Lewis Willis	Thomas Brown
James G. Ringgold	William G Purgess
And myself, Thomas Munroe	

Washington Lodge of Quincy:

Henry Gee	John Lines
Isaac Nathans	Francis A. Cash
James A. Dunlap	

Harmony Lodge of Marianna

James W. Exum	William J. Watson
Jacob Robinson	

(The secretary then rises and directs himself to the chairman)

Brother Chairman, I find present, 27 brethren, and amongst them the necessary representation and delegates from the necessary three lodges, to form a proper convention, which enables us to properly discuss the formation of a Grand Lodge. This being so, Brother Chairman, I move the convention now be formally opened.

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, you have heard the report of the secretary. He has reported that there is present necessary delegates from the three lodges in the Territory of Florida, to form a convention, to act upon the matter of the formation of a Grand Lodge. The secretary has moved that a convention for this purpose be now formally formed. Is there a second to this motion?

JOHN LINES: Brother Chairman, I would be honored the privilege of seconding this motion.

JOHN P. DUVAL: We have a second to the motion that a formal convention to discuss the formation of Grand Lodge now be opened. Is there to be any discussion?

There being none, let us vote. All in favor of the motion to open a formal convention for the discussing of the formation of a Grand Lodge will vote by the usual sign of a mason at the sound of the gavel. (Done...all voted favorably) Those opposed, same sign, same sound....

Brethren, your overwhelming favorably vote on this matter clearly shows that we are in complete harmony as to our mission here. With the aid of the almighty God, may we continue in this spirit of brotherhood and carry our purpose to a successful conclusion.

(He raps the gavel three times, brethren rises)

Brother Cash, will you give thanks to our maker?

FRANCIS CASH: Supreme Architect of the Universe, is whom we live and prosper, we beseech thee to touch the consciousness of each of us with wisdom from on high to carry our beliefs to a conclusion that will meet with thy holiness be allowed to adorn our labors, for it is thee that we place our trust. Amen.

ALL BRETHREN REPSOND: So mote it be.

JOHN P. DUVAL: (raps gavel to seat brethren) Brethren, we begin now in formal convention, for the purpose of discussing the formation of a Grand Lodge, for the Territory of Florida, and all the necessary prerequisites to this discussion having met the order of business is for the convention to select a President to preside over the convention. May I hear discussion on the subject?

JOHN LINES: (rises) Brother Chairman, Has not your father ever admonished you, to never change horse in midstream? I move, Brother chairman, that you continue on as president over this Convention and that Brother Munroe continue on as secretary.

ALL BRETHREN RESPOND: (with hands clapping and with a “hear, hear, hear”)

JOHN P. DUVAL: (raps gavel somewhat embarrassed) Brethren, you honor me greatly, but we must continue in a orderly fashion....

FRANCIS CASH: (rises and) May I express the will of the Brethren present, and to preserve proper orderliness, may I be permitted to second the motion by Brother Lines.

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, you have heard the motion presented and duly seconded that I, John Duval, continue on as President of this convention, with Brother Munroe as secretary. I invite further discussion of this motion and invite future nominations. (The Brethren remain silent and after a brief delay) There being no further discussion on the motion, all brethren in favor of the motion vote by the usual sign of a mason at the sound of the gavel. (Strikes gavel). (He directs his attention toward Brother Munroe) Brother Munroe, the convention has selected you to continue as the convention secretary, will you accept this responsibility?

THOMAS MUNROE: (rises) I will be happy to serve the brethren to the best of my ability and thank them for their confidence in me. (Sits)

JOHN P. DUVAL: I too, thank you my brethren for this vote of confidence.

BRETHREN RESPOND: (with applause)

JOHN P. DUVAL:(raps gavel) Brother secretary, as a matter for the records of this convention, will you give report on the credentials of the delegates here assembled. (Sits)

THOMAS MUNROE:(rises) Brother President, and members of the convention: There is represented here assembled three lodges of Ancient York Masons, delegates from which have presented proper credentials and I have found them to be all in proper order. The lodges represented are: Jackson Lodge of Tallahassee; Washington Lodge of Quincy; and Harmony Lodge of Marianna. This according to precedent and ancient usage constitutes the necessary quorum to proceed.

JOHN P. DUVAL: (remains seated) Thank You, Brother Secretary.

HENRY GEE: (rises) Brother President, I have the following resolution, which I would like to present in the form of a motion for the consideration of the convention, and to become a matter of record for the proceedings of this convention...

Resolved that it is expedient for the convention, interest, and prosperity, of the craft in the Territory of Florida, that a Grand Lodge be constituted. Be it further resolved, that three regularly warranted lodges of Ancient York Masons are fully represented in this

convention, and according to precedent and authority, they have the right to establish a Grand Lodge for the Territory of Florida.

JOHN LINES: (rises) Brother President, it is with pride that I be allowed to second this motion and resolution.

JOHN P. DUVAL: Brethren, you have heard the resolution, presented in form of motion, and duly seconded. May I hear discussion...there being no discussion; the resolution just heard will be voted upon. All Brethren in favor of the adoption of the resolution will vote by the usual sign of a mason at the next sound of the gavel. (Strikes) (Done) Those opposed, same sign, same sound (strikes) Brother secretary, will you so record the adoption of the Resolution. (Strikes gavel) (Rises and makes the following statement) The Florida Lodge is now in existence.

(All participants rise and applause and as the curtains close 2 feet, freeze into position, as the moderator commences...)

MODERATOR: By the adoption of this Resolution, 150 years ago, by the delegates to the First Convention of Masons of Florida, they did establish the Grand Lodge of Florida. The following day the convention adopted suitable By Laws and Rules for the government of the Grand Lodge in the form of a Constitution. The first Grand Lodge officers were elected and appointed, and in ample form. The first Grand Master, John P. Duval, did order Warrants issued to the three represented lodges, Jackson Lodge of Tallahassee, No. 1, Washington Lodge of Quincy, No. 2, Harmony Lodge of Marianna, No. 3. The original Warrants of these three lodges were returned to the issuing Grand Lodge along with letters requesting recognition and correspondence with them. The first Grand Lodge was closed in ample form to meet the following January in its first Annual Convention.

Close curtains completely, slowly as narrator continues.

MODERATOR: And thus it was so...and as the ages have captured our ancient brethren...none have captured their motives and the Grand Lodge of the Territory of Florida did flourish and it has prospered down thru the ensuing 150 years to bring us, the traditional privilege of meeting together as Brothers. May we realize that we are ever under the watchful eye of that Supreme Architect and that we should always call upon Him to continue to favor us with His guiding hand...To Him, may we always be grateful...ever humble, and forever thankful for the great favor He has bestowed upon us as Free Mason, may He find us worthy in this 150<sup>th</sup> Grand Lodge Communication, so that we too, may be remembered through the next centuries, not so much as for who we are, but for the motive that bring us together...to Him...we do owe all things.

END