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# Masonic Connections in the War of 1812

**2-The War** The War of 1812 is often referred to as America's second War of Independence, or the Forgotten War. This three year conflict however, has had an impact on American history. Shaping the way we would view ourselves, and as others would view us on the World stage thereafter. The war would pit us against the British Empire caused in response to their ongoing conflict with France.

**3-Revolutionary War** We had just concluded our first War of Independence twenty-two years before. And now, the British were attempting to limit our trade with our ally France. They were stopping American merchant ships, confiscating the cargo and forcing by impressment the sailors into the Royal Navy. In addition, the British were attempting to halt our westward expansion by supplying weapons to Tecumseh and the First Nation tribes he had unified to join in that effort.

**4-Impressment**

**5-Tecumseh**

**6-War Declared**

As a result, we declared war against England in 1812 which lasted until 1815. Though the outcome would be considered as inconclusive, it did

7-Invaded have several lasting effects. At the beginning of the war, the British invaded Washington D.C., burning the Capitol Building and the executive mansion, charring the outside of the mansion so badly that it was to be forever painted white. Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star Spangled Banner" while 8-Star Spangled Banner being held hostage on a British warship that was shelling Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor. It would also launch the political career of Brother Andrew Jackson, who won a decisive victory at the Battle of New Orleans, which 9-Jackson incidentally took place after the Peace Treaty had been signed. Neither America or Britain had yet to be informed.

10-Plantation In a nutshell, the Battle of New Orleans unfolded like this. It took place on January 8th, 1815 on the Chalmette Plantation, about five miles south of New Orleans. Until now, the American forces had not done well against the better trained and better equipped British. General Jackson had been sent south with his rather rag-tag army to protect the Louisiana coast and especially the Port of New Orleans. The British forces were led by 11-Pakenham Lieutenant General Sir Edward Pakenham and eight-thousand troops. Earlier America had been informed that the British were gathering a large number of warships in the Caribbean and it was felt that New Orleans would be the next target. Jackson, arriving a few weeks earlier, had his

troops build a fortified earthen breastwork on the edge of the Rodriguez Canal.

12-Rodriguez  
Canal

On the day of the battle, Packenham had been duped. Having been told that the only place where he could land and be able to enter New Orleans would be from the north, as the coast was heavily fortified and only a small American force was stationed a few miles north of him. Packenham divided his troops into three groups. The largest force was in the center, and the smaller outer groups were to go past the Americans in a classic pincer movement. Shortly after marching north, they discovered the Mississippi made a sharp bend inward, forcing them into a tighter group.

13-River Bend

The outside troop soon found themselves in a very foggy swamp while the main force discovered themselves in a large open area. As the British marched forward toward the breastwork, the concealed Americans opened fire with their long guns. The British with their muskets didn't have the range to hit the Americans. The group in the foggy swamp, hearing all the gunfire, turned and were blindly shooting into their own group, thinking they were Americans and received gunfire from both the British and the Americans. The other outer group had been a regiment of Scottish Highlanders who had emerged on the river side and in front of the

14-Swamp

American cannons, led by Dominic You. They were decimated. At the end of the fight, the British lost over two-thousand men, including General Pakenham and most of his staff. The American losses were fewer than a hundred men. What was left of the British, retreated to their ships and left. These actions would later propel Jackson into the Presidency.

15-Long Guns

16-General/  
President

And now comes the Paul Harvey-ish "rest of the story". First, let's take a look at Andrew Jackson. He was a member of the Harmony Lodge No. 1 in Tennessee. He would be Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee in 1822 and then serve two terms as President beginning in 1829. Next, is Brother William C.C. Clayborn, a member of the Perfect Union Lodge No. 1. He was Governor of Louisiana beginning in 1812. Then there were the Lafitte brothers, Jean and Pierre. They started out as privateers but turned out to be very successful pirates with a base on a small island in Baratavia Bay. Their action and support for Jackson, helped win the battle, as we will soon see. A key part of that help would come from Brother Dominic You. He was one of Napoleon's best cannoners, leaving France after Napoleon's loss at Waterloo. He made his way to New Orleans and the Lafittes. He was a mason, but history has lost to which lodge he belonged.

17-Grand Master

18-Masonic  
Brothers

19-Holland/USS  
Carolina

Two others must be mentioned. Brother John Holland who would become Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana and Captain J.D. Hendly, captain of the USS Carolina. Captain Hendly was a nephew of Martha Washington.

So far in this war, America had not done well. With information about the British build up in the Caribbean, General Jackson was sent south to defend the Louisiana coast, and especially the Port of New Orleans. By now his rag-tag army of more volunteers than conscripts were in bad shape. They were in desperate need of shot powder and flints, and had no way for provisions, except for maybe one, the Lafittes.

20-Clayborn/  
Lafettes

Governor William C.C. Clayborn had a long going feud with the Lafittes. Clayborn was angered especially by the attitude of the Creole's who were viewing the Lafittes as "Robin Hoods" and he was determined to put a stop to it. Clayborn had "wanted" posters placed all over New Orleans offering a five-hundred dollar reward for the capture of the Lafittes. The

21-Reward Poster

next week, his posters were replaced by a thousand dollar reward posters

for Clayborn's capture. Clayborn was outraged! However, later, Pierre Lafitte was captured and put in prison.

22-Clayborn,  
Lafittes, You

Dominic You told Jackson he was willing to act as a liaison and talk to Jean Lafitte about the provisions. Lafitte said he would help, but only if his brother was released. Jackson went to Clayborn and asked for Pierre's release and after a strong argument, Clayborn flatly refused. The angry Jackson was now in a very bad situation indeed! As he had accepted Jean Lafitte's offer of provisions in exchange for Pierre's release. The situation was resolved a few days later, as Pierre had escaped. Jackson got what he wanted. But how did Pierre Lafitte escape? The rumor or legend was that the jailer that night was none other than Brother John Holland.

23-Holland

Jackson was also informed that Jean Lafitte had just been paid a visit by the British demanding a map of New Orleans. This was under the threat that if Jean didn't comply that after the British were done with New Orleans, they would come after him next. He was so angered by this threat, that not only did he send Jackson all he wanted for provisions, he would also send manpower as well.

24-USS Carolina

Jackson called all of his officers together to devise a plan. All the troops that he had sent out along the coast were called back to New Orleans. By Christmas day, a large number of British warships had arrived in Barataria Bay. A few days later, a single American warship, the U.S.S. Carolina, under the command of Captain J.D. Hendly sailed out to engage the much larger British fleet. Was Hendly nuts or was this a part of the plan? We will never know. But here is another part of the legend, the U.S.S. Carolina was soon overtaken, and the captain would be interrogated and maybe even tortured for information. The question remains, why did the British land at the point between the Rodriguez Canal and the Mississippi? We will never know.

25-Canal

26-Holland

However, the real hero was Brother John Holland, who at that time was jailer of the Cabildo Jail where Pierre was kept. Pierre Lafitte's escape was the catalyst for the rest that followed. Brother Holland would later become Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana from 1825 to 1828 and again from 1830 to 1839. On January 27th, 1836 he issued a charter for the first Lodge in the Texas territory. He later would issue two more. These three Lodges would coalesce to form the Grand Lodge of Texas.

From 1856 until his death in 1864, he was Grand Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of Louisiana.

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