

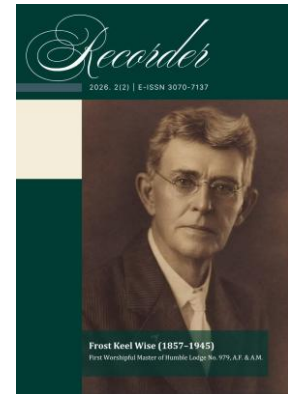
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### *Original Research*

## **Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas) during the First World War: Selected Pages**

Alexander C. Cherkas <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Cherkas Global University, Houston, USA

### **Abstract**

This article is devoted to the history of Humble Lodge No. 979, A.F. & A.M., Humble, Texas, in the period preceding and during the First World War. Particular attention is given to individuals and events connecting the lodge with the wartime period.

The study is based on the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas* for the years 1911–1918, which constitute an important source on the membership of lodges within the state of Texas. In addition, materials from American periodicals of the First World War era were used, specifically *The Houston Post* for 1918.

In conclusion, the author notes that Humble Lodge No. 979 during the First World War represented a dynamically developing Masonic organization, whose membership continued to grow even under wartime conditions. The analysis of the membership made it possible to identify a close connection between lodge members and wartime events, including the participation of individual brethren in military service. Particular significance is attached to the case of Phillip O. Davant, connected with the sinking of the transport ship *Tuscania*, demonstrating the involvement of lodge members in global processes. The results confirm the importance of local studies for understanding the social history of Freemasonry.

**Keywords:** Humble Lodge No. 979, A.F. & A.M., Humble, Texas, First World War, biographies of Masons, genealogy.

### **1. Introduction**

The history of American fraternal organizations during periods of war represents a significant field for studying the relationship between brotherhoods and broader social processes. In this study, using the example of Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas), we examine the lodge's involvement in wartime events and trace the influence of this period on its membership, structure, and the personal trajectories of its members. The work also includes brief biographical sketches of Masons who held the office of Worshipful Master.

### **2. Materials and Methods**

The materials for this study consist of the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas* for the period 1911–1918. These Proceedings serve as an important source on the membership of lodges within the state of Texas. In addition, materials from American periodicals of the First World War era were utilized, specifically *The Houston Post* for 1918 ([The Houston Post, 1918](#)).

Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of historicism, systematic analysis, and objectivity. The combined application of these approaches made it possible to reconstruct the overall picture of events, examine the personnel and membership of the lodge during the First World War, and consider these developments within a broader historical context.

### 3. Results

Humble Lodge No. 979 A.F. & A.M. (Humble, Texas) was chartered on December 3, 1908. It was held in Humble, Harris County, on the third Friday of each month. The first Worshipful Master of the lodge was Frost K. Wise (1857–1945), a local judge (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Frost Keel Wise (1857–1945)

Frost Keel Wise (1857–1945) – First Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979, F. & A.M.

Frost Keel Wise was born on February 21, 1857, in Plantersville, Grimes County, Texas, to Joseph Lacey Wise (1810–1886) and Lucy Eliza Wise (1820–1870).

In 1890, he married Jessie McKeever Wise (1871–1954), née Perkins.

From 1906, he was a resident of Humble.

In 1908, he became Justice of the Peace in Humble, serving until January 1945.

Frost Keel Wise was one of the organizers and the first Worshipful Master of F. & A.M. Lodge No. 979 in Humble.

He was also a member of the Royal Arch Masons and the Arabia Temple Shrine of Houston.

He passed away from heart disease on April 24, 1945, at the age of 88.

It is likely that Frost K. Wise remained in the office of Worshipful Master for several years. This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that in 1911 there was only one Past Master—Frost K. Wise ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#)).

In 1911, the total membership of Humble Lodge No. 979 was 46 ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#)); in 1912 it increased to 61 ([Proceedings..., 1912: 399](#)); in 1913 to 74 ([Proceedings..., 1913: 402](#)); in 1914 to 81 ([Proceedings..., 1914: 473](#)); and in 1915 to 85 members ([Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)). For 1916, the reports of the Grand Lodge of Texas have not been located; however, it is highly likely that the lodge’s membership reached approximately 100 at that time.

In the pre-war period, the lodge had six Past Masters: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, F. M. Burton, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, and P. O. Davant. The first Worshipful Master remained in the office of Secretary at least until 1915 ([Proceedings..., 1911: 889](#); [Proceedings..., 1912: 399](#); [Proceedings..., 1913: 402](#); [Proceedings..., 1914: 473](#); [Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)). In 1915, another Past Master, F. M. Burton, assumed an officer position as Tiler ([Proceedings..., 1915: 481](#)).

Henry Clay Duke (1867–1947)

He was born on November 7, 1867, in Mississippi. In 1910, he married Hunta Duke. In 1911, he became the second Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on December 3, 1947.

Frank M. Burton (1874–1916)

He was born on December 27, 1874, in Orange County, Texas. In 1912, he became the third Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on February 23, 1916.

Edmund Warren Corley Sr. (1872–1959)

He was born on September 3, 1872, in Mississippi. He was married to Lillie B. Corley. In 1913, he became the fourth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on April 28, 1959.

Thomas Edward Moore (1887–1946)

He was born on December 18, 1887, in Teague, Freestone County, Texas. He was married to Lizzie Mae Moore. In 1914, he became the fifth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. He died on October 13, 1946.

Phillip Orrie Davant (1879–1970)

He was born in Cross County, Arkansas. He was married to Lydia Louise Davant. In 1915, he became the sixth Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. In 1918, he was among the survivors of the troop transport *Tuscania*, torpedoed by a German submarine ([The Houston Post, Feb. 8, 1918](#)). He died on September 30, 1970.

In 1917, the year the United States entered the First World War, according to the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas*, the lodge had a membership of 116 ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

The officers of the lodge in 1917 were as follows:

A. J. Smith ..... W. M.  
 C. R. Maske ..... S. W.  
 W. H. Allen ..... J. W.  
 N. P. Ward ..... Treasurer  
 N. R. McKay ..... Secretary  
 J. A. Neath ..... S. D.  
 J. W. Thomas ..... J. D.  
 J. J. Dean ..... S. Steward  
 William Struwe ..... J. Steward  
 T. E. Moore ..... Tiler ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

Albert Jason Smith (1863–1934)

He was born on April 16, 1863. In 1917, he became the seventh Worshipful Master of Humble Lodge No. 979. At that time, one of the lodge members was Charles Albert William Smith (1893–1966), who was serving as a private in the U.S. Army and was stationed on the European front. He died on May 9, 1934.

By 1917, the lodge had five Past Masters: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, and P. O. Davant. Some of the Past Masters held officer positions in 1917. For example, Past Master T. E. Moore served as Tiler in that year.

Among the Master Masons were: Allen, W. H., Abercrombie, J. S., Bozarth, H. F., Bozarth, Rex, Black, W. M., Black, W. R., Bruner, E. L., Beard, J. W., Brown, C. W., Berry, E. A., Boehling, A. O., Brady, Mike, Boykin, T. S., Beaumont, E., Bennett, W. H., Brennon, G. C., Boydston, H. T., Bell, Jno. B., Clincy, W. D., Corley, E. W., Cameron, H. S., Cezeaux, E. A., Cezeaux, R. E., Carr, B. B., DuBose, J. B., Dickson, J. S., Dean, J. J., Duke, H. C., Davant, P. O., Epperson, G. P., Filson, W. W., Flowers, A. G., Flagg, W. D., Gunn, D. H., Gunn, H. B. W., Gillispie, G. S., Hollyfield, R. J., Hines, Isaac, Hancock, L. B., Hobson, R. R., Hester, J. M., Hester, S. R., Hardcastle, J. H., Hardcastle, J. A., Herring, G. R., Hails, P. G., Hillergiest, W. B., Jones, T. M., Jones, F. W., Jones, Olin, Johnson, L. O., Kiser, W. H., Kornegay, R. E., Long, F. M., Long, J. D., Meyers, N. A., Meyer, A. R., Moore, L. W., Moore, T. E., Moore, S. H., McKay, N. R., Martin, J. W., Martin, R. S., Martin, G. A., Morton, G. L., Montgomery, A. H., Maske, C. R., Nie, J. H., Nuby, J. C., Neath, J. A., O'Neil, J. R., O'Bryan, L. D., Patrick, S. H., Parks, Joe, Pruitt, J. F., Pray, G. L., Redmond, J. W., Rhodes, B. E., Rhodes, V. M., Rowe, I. G., Rowe, W. W., Rikard, Reid, Roark, J. E., Sutherland, J. S., Sharp, R. L., Smith, A. J., Smith, W. A. R., Smith, C. A. W., Schlottmann, Wm., Scheible, E. A., Sullivan, W. H., Sholars, W. E., Stokley, G. F., Shock, E. D., Shear, C. V., Sandlin, T. L., Sandlin, Dick, Struwe, Wm., Stanton, E. W., Thames, J. P., Thomas, J. W., Thomas, A. M., Vasser, E. A., Vasser, C. A., Wise, F. K., Wynn, W. W., Ward, N. P., Wolf, A., Williams, Chas. S., Willis, J. F., Weisenthal, I., Watson, P. F. ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#))

Entered Apprentices: Chas. E. Masoner, C. T. Rucker, J. E. Pearce, C. E. Eversole, Eugene Long, A. H. Gilcrease, I. K. Gaskin, R. G. Youngblood, D. W. Day.

Fellow Craft: T. E. Wintz.

Death: W. T. Dawson.

Expelled: A. A. Adams ([Proceedings..., 1917: 480](#)).

In 1917, the only deceased member of the lodge was William Thomas Dawson (1863–1917). William was born on October 11, 1863, in Trinity County, Texas. During his youth, he worked as a farmer in Trinity County; however, by 1900 he was residing in Harris County. He was married to Lucy Dawson. Only one photograph of William Thomas Dawson is known, which was most likely taken in Harris County (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** William Thomas Dawson in a carriage. Early 20th century.

William Thomas Dawson died on March 21, 1917.

In 1918, according to the *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas*, the membership of the lodge increased to 131 ([Proceedings..., 1918: 512](#)).

The officers elected in that year were as follows:

T. E. Moore ..... W. M.  
 W. H. Allen ..... S. W.  
 E. Beaumont ..... J. W.  
 F. K. Wise ..... Treasurer  
 N. P. Ward ..... Secretary  
 Jacob Leff ..... S. D.  
 Olin Jones ..... J. D.  
 G. C. Brennon ..... S. Steward  
 G. W. Norwood ..... J. Steward  
 G. N. Lacewell ..... Tiler ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512).

The number of Past Masters increased to six: F. K. Wise, H. C. Duke, E. W. Corley, T. E. Moore, P. O. Davant, and A. J. Smith ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512). In 1918, two Past Masters returned to officer positions in the lodge. T. E. Moore was elected Worshipful Master, and F. K. Wise was elected Treasurer.

Among the Master Masons were: Allen, W. H., Abercrombie, J. S., Alexander, F. M., Bozarth, H. F., Bozarth, Rex, Black, W. M., Black, W. R., Bruner, E. L., Beard, J. W., Brown, Chas. W., Berry, E. A., Boehling, A. O., Brady, Mike, Boykin, Thos. S., Beaumont, E., Bennett, W. H., Brennon, G. C., Boydston, H. T., Bell, John B., Bowen, S. M., Cline, W. D., Corley, E. W., Cameron, H. S., Cezeaux, E. A., Cezeaux, R. E., Carr, B. B., DuBose, J. B., Dickson, J. S., Dean, J. J., Duke, H. C., Davant, P. O., Durham, Oscar, Epperson, G. P., Filson, W. W., Flowers, A. G., Flagg, Wm. D., Flagg, Hugh E., Gunn, D. H., Gunn, H. B. W., Gillispie, G. S., Gilcrease, A. H., Holleyfield, R. J., Hines, Isaacks, Hancock, L. B., Hester, S. R., Hester, J. M., Hobson, R. R., Hardcastle, J. H., Hardcastle, J. A., Herring, G. R., Hails, P. G., Hillegeist, W. B., Haltom, J. B., Harrell, D. B., Jones, T. M., Jones, F. W., Jones, Olin, Johnson, L. O., Kiser, W. H., Karnegay, Roy C., Long, F. M., Long, J. D., Leff, Jacob, Leff, Ben, Leggett, R. B., Lacewell, Geo. N., Meyer, N. A., Meyer, A. B., Moore, L. W., Mooney, J. K., Mooney, F. W., Musselwhite, V. E., McKay, N. R., Moore, S. H., Martin, J. W., Martin, R. S., Martin, G. A., Morton, G. L., Montgomery, A. H., Maske, C. R., Moore, M. H., Moore, T. E., Nie, J. H., Nuby, J. C., Neath, J. A., Norwood, G. W., O'Neal, J. R., O'Bryan, L. B., Patrick, S. F., Parks, Joe, Pruett, J. F., Pray, G. L., Pylate, John Samuel, Redmond, J. W., Rhodes, B. E., Rhodes, V. M., Rowe, J. G., Rowe, W. M., Rikard, Ried, Roark, J. E., Reardon, J. E. G., Rainey, Claud, Southerland, J. S., Sharp, R. L., Smith, A. J., Smith, W. A. R., Smith, C. A. W., Schlottmann, Wm., Scheible, E. A., Sullivan, W. H., Sholar, W. E., Stokley, G. F., Shock, E. D., Shear, C. V., Sandlin, Dick, Strew, Will, Stanton, E. W., Smith, John William, Thomas, J. W., Thames, J. P., Thomas, A. M., Vasser, E. A., Vasser, C. A., Wise, F. K., Wynn, W. W., Ward, N. P., Wolf, A., Williams, Chas. S., Willis, J. F., Wiesenthal, I., Watson, P. F.

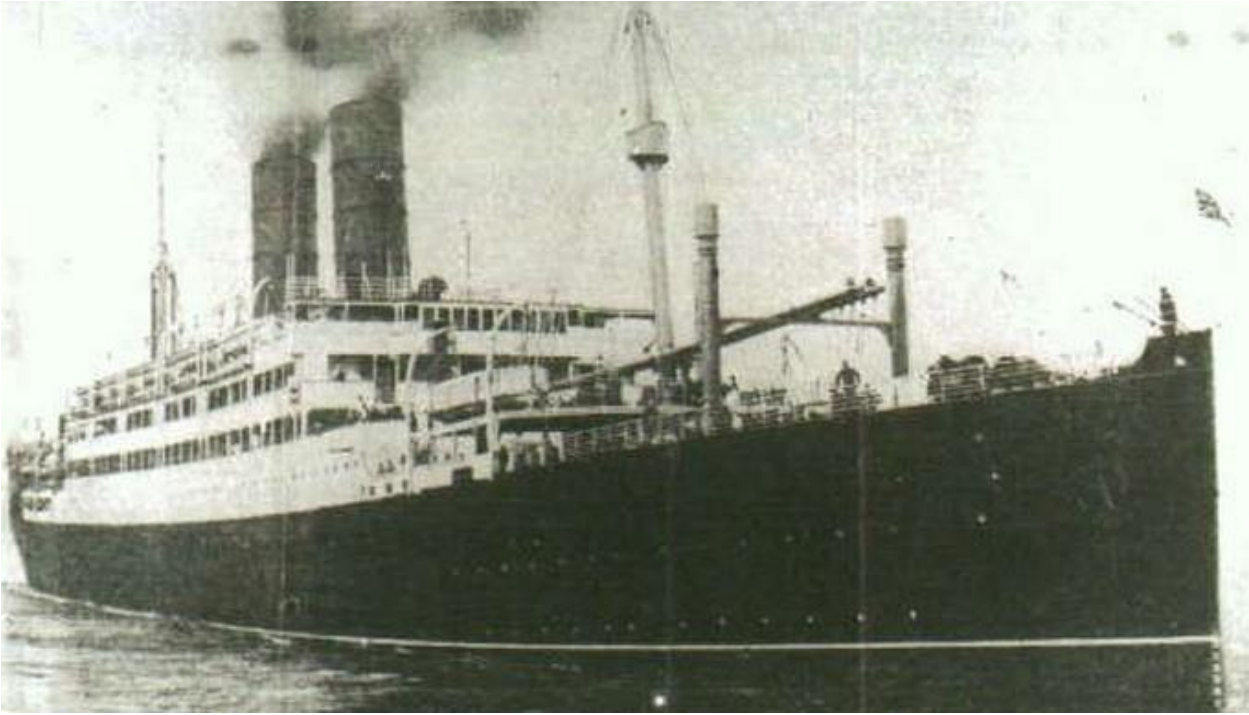
Entered Apprentices: H. E. Bowles, Philip Beavins, Floyd Chambers, Ira K. Gaskins, A. G. Harrison, Mike Long, J. H. Needler, J. E. Pierce, J. R. Posey, Eugene Long, W. I. Niel, R. G. Youngblood, Chas. H. Casoner, C. T. Rucker, C. E. Eversole.

Fellow Crafts: D. W. Day, L. E. Hoover, Chas. W. Ogden, Porter Williamson, T. E. Wientz.

Death: T. L. Sandlin ([Proceedings...](#), 1918: 512-513).

The only member of the lodge who died in 1918 was Thomas Latimer Sandlin (1891–1918). Tom Latimer was born on October 18, 1891, in Tenaha, Shelby County, Texas. In 1911, he married Eula Hendon. No photographs of Thomas Latimer Sandlin have been identified. He died on August 25, 1918.

In February 1918, an incident occurred that connected Humble Lodge No. 979 with the American troop transport *Tuscania* (Fig. 3), which was torpedoed by a German submarine.



**Fig. 3.** Troop Transport *Tuscania*

During the First World War, the transport ship *Tuscania* was engaged in carrying American troops to the European theater of operations. On February 5, 1918, while en route to Liverpool in the Irish Sea, the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine UB-77. There were 2,013 American servicemen and 383 crew members on board, and approximately 210 people were killed (Massie, 2004). Among the survivors was Phillip Orrie Davant, the sixth Worshipful Master of the lodge.

#### 4. Conclusion

The conducted study has shown that Humble Lodge No. 979 during the First World War represented a dynamically developing Masonic organization, whose membership continued to grow even under wartime conditions. The analysis of the membership made it possible to identify a close connection between lodge members and wartime events, including the participation of individual brethren in military service. Particular significance is attached to the case of Phillip O. Davant, connected with the sinking of the transport ship *Tuscania*, demonstrating the involvement of lodge members in global processes. The results confirm the importance of local studies for understanding the social history of Freemasonry.

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