

FREEMASONS. FELICIANA LODGE NO. 31 (ST. FRANCISVILLE, LA.)
RECORDS
Mss. 4777
Inventory

Compiled by
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2006
Updated 2021

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SUMMARY

Size	9 linear feet, 31 volumes
Geographic Locations	Louisiana
Inclusive Dates	1840-1966
Bulk Dates	1900-1958
Languages	English
Summary	Records of the Freemasons of Feliciana Lodge No. 31 in St. Francisville, Louisiana, include correspondence, financial items, printed items, membership information, and volumes.
Access Restrictions	None.
Reproduction Note	May be reproduced.
Copyright	Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Related Collections	Freemasons. St. James Lodge No. 47 (Baton Rouge, La.) Records, Mss. 2860 Freemasons. St. Alban's Lodge No. 28 (Jackson, La.) Records, Mss. 4932.
Citation	Freemasons. Feliciana Lodge No. 31 (St. Francisville, La.) Records, Mss. 4777, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location(s)	W:98-105, OS:F, J:29-31

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Feliciana Lodge No. 31 (St. Francisville, Louisiana) is part of the body of Masons under the Grand Lodge of Louisiana. It was originally organized and chartered under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky in 1817 as Felician Lodge No. 46 and was the first English speaking lodge in the state outside of New Orleans. In 1828 the Lodge was granted a warrant by the Grand Lodge of Louisiana and became Felician Lodge No. 31, F & A M. (Until this point all reports by the Lodge had been made to the Grand Lodge of Kentucky). It was not until 1996 that the Lodge forwarded a report to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana requesting that a charter be prepared for them (previously their charter had only been from the Grand Lodge of Kentucky).

The Lodge is said to have been organized in the early 1800s at the Skillman home, "Rosale Plantation," located north of St. Francisville, Louisiana; it was the ancestral home of Marine General Robert Barrow. The Lodge had met in New Roads, Louisiana, until 1840 when it moved back to the Lodge Hall in St. Francisville, located at the old Spanish Market Place on Royal Street. In July of 1927, the Lodge relocated again to the corner of Ferdinand and Prosperity Streets, to a building across from the Parish Courthouse and diagonal to Grace Episcopal Church where it still resides today.

Meetings were suspended at the Lodge from May 1862 to July 1865 because of the Civil War (1861-1865). However, during the war a Lieutenant in the Union Navy by the name of John E. Hart became ill while his gunboat "Albatross" was on the Mississippi River off the town of Bayou Sarah. Upon his death the Felician Lodge accommodated him with a Masonic burial, as his officers delivered to them his request for a Masonic funeral. In 1956 he received a new headstone at his grave located behind Grace Episcopal Church in the Masonic burial lot.

The Lodge is led by the Worshipful Master and a committee that includes the offices of secretary, treasurer, tyler, and chaplain. A large part of lodge business is taken up with membership procedures – candidates for masonry progress through the three degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft Mason, and Master Mason. The lodge members place great emphasis upon charitable works, with the Felician Lodge coming to the aid of distressed masons and their families, victims of the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, and World War I and II families - through the greater efforts of international masonry.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Records document the activities of Feliciana Lodge No. 31 through correspondence, membership files, financial documents, and printed items. The predominant topics of conversation involve lodge membership, the payment of dues, and charitable concerns. Correspondence, membership applications, registers, and minute books document the membership base of the lodge, while account books, bank statements, and receipts paint a picture of its financial standing. The primary printed items are the circulars distributed by the Grand Lodge of Louisiana; they list dates, lodges, member names, and other official data.

Although this collection includes materials for the years of World War I and II, there is not much evidence of the wars. Masons were accommodating World War II soldiers regarding the conferring of their degrees with their duty to the Armed Forces, with some correspondence being received from military bases.

Other lodges are represented throughout these records, as the Feliciana Lodge consulted other lodges and socialized with them. They are most prevalent in the correspondence, membership subseries, general printed items, and some miscellaneous manuscript volumes. The lodges most represented are: Eastern Star, Louisiana Relief Lodge, St. James Lodge No. 47, Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons, Capitol Lodge No. 399, Plains Commandery Lodge No. 1, and the Grand Lodge of the State of Brazil.

Feliciana Lodge records from 1817 to 1840 are scant, apparently lost in a fire at the office of Judge Samuel Powell, a former Grand Master. Except for any records obtained by the Grand Lodge of Kentucky for those years, only records after 1840 exist.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1865-1958, 1963,

- Subseries 1. General, 1865-1958
- Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana, 1879-1958
- Subseries 3. Masonic Lodges, 1866-1958
- Subseries 4. Administrative, 1865-1957
- Subseries 5. Business, 1879-1958, 1963

Series II. Administrative Papers, 1822, 1861-1958

- Subseries 1. General Administrative, 1822, 1861-1955
- Subseries 2. Membership, 1866-1958

Series III. Financial Papers, 1880-1959

- Subseries 1. General Financial, 1880-1959
- Subseries 2. Bank Statements, 1825-1943

Series IV. Printed Items and Writings, 1859-1958

- Subseries 1. General, 1859-1958
- Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana, 1866-1953

Series V. Manuscript Volumes, 1831-1966

- Subseries 1. Register of Members, 1875-1966
- Subseries 2. Account and Cash books, 1846-1940
- Subseries 3. Minutes of Lodge Meetings, 1840-1963
- Subseries 4. Tunica Lodge #63, et al, 1831-1954

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**Series I. Correspondence, 1865-1958, 1963 (3 linear feet)**

Regarding the correspondence for this collection, there is some information that traverses many subseries. Many lodge members corresponded on the company letterhead of their employer, whereas copies of letters from the Feliciana secretary will frequently be on the back of scrap paper or copy paper. Correspondence regarding the Union Civil War soldier, Lt. John E. Hart (1927, 1951-1956), being buried at Grace Episcopal Church Cemetery is discussed in the General, Grand Lodge, and Masonic Lodge subseries' as well as being supplemented by news articles and photographs in the Printed Items series. Masonic misconduct is covered under all Correspondence subseries since different levels of Masonic government were involved.

Arranged chronologically within respective subseries.

Subseries 1. General , 1865-1958

Most correspondence in this series consists of letters between the secretary of the Feliciana Lodge and lodge members regarding the payment of dues, instruction in Masonic catechism, providing character references, and requesting transfer of membership to another lodge. Members would write to ask the lodge for assistance in caring for infirmed Masons or charity cases (such as Elizabeth White, letters dated 1926 to 1927), to request financial assistance, or to arrange for the burial of a Mason or his family. Requests for financial aid are particularly numerous starting in 1928 and continuing through the Depression, when members frequently could not pay their dues; the repercussions of which surfaced in the years 1933 to 1936 when the Grand Lodge of Louisiana was considering closing the Feliciana Lodge for not remitting the percentage of dues owed to the Grand Lodge.

There is little correspondence addressing World Wars I and II. Letters dated 1918 to 1919 contain a few accounts of men who happened to be Masons, briefly writing about their experiences in the War, and a letter dated February 25, 1918 describes a training camp for the army. Letters from 1939 to 1945 speak generally about World War II: opinions and involvement from lodge members, with the lodges making exceptions to accommodate the deployment of Masonic members overseas. A letter dated December 4, 1939 discusses what Freemasons are doing in aid of Great Britain during the war in Europe.

Other topics of discussion include a long running attempt by the Feliciana lodge to authenticate their George Washington portrait located at the lodge and find a buyer for it; the emergence of tuberculosis in hospitals around 1953; and correspondence about funding the Louisiana State University Acacia Masonic fraternity chapter.

Typically, when the Grand Lodge of Louisiana is consulted or involved, the correspondence may be found in the "Grand Lodge of Louisiana" subseries. This often involves the conference of degrees, questions regarding members, or when other Masonic lodges are consulted.

Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana, 1879-1958

Much of the correspondence sent from the Grand Lodge of Louisiana is issued from the grand masters and secretaries and is distributed to all the lodges in the state of Louisiana; this includes "service letters," information about notices and resolutions, and circulars that were much like newsletters, but addressed and signed as correspondence. Correspondence between the Grand Lodge and Feliciana Lodge mainly concerns disputes over dues owed to the Grand Lodge, members, and annual returns and balances due from the Feliciana Lodge. The effects the Depression had on the Grand Lodge are evident in the correspondence *indirectly*, but not discussed overtly. In 1928 there is discussion of serious debt among the Louisiana lodges, with members being unemployed and unable to pay their dues.

There is little correspondence addressing World Wars I and II. A circular dated December 10, 1914 is directed to all Louisiana Masons requesting charity for the "Masonic War Relief Association of the United States." In 1918 there are a few more references to the war including a letter asking families of fraternal organizations to give up wheat products, restrict meat consumption, etc during the war (May 14), and another that encourages brethren to buy Liberty Bonds (October 1). Masonic efforts to help Europeans and Jews impacted by World War I are scattered, along with a reference to an influenza epidemic (November 7, 1918).

Other topics include the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and how the Grand Lodge of Louisiana provided funds for flood relief for affected Masons (1928); and a 1956 letter discussing the construction of Acadia Masonic Fraternity House on the Louisiana State University campus (June 9). Correspondence also includes discussion of finances and receipts for annual returns for other Masonic Lodges in Louisiana.

Subseries 3. Masonic Lodges, 1866-1958

Correspondence among Louisiana lodges in which they request that a brother be instructed in the ways of the order, perform reference checks on prospective and existing members, request a local lodge to check in on an ill Mason, request information on former lodge members, and make funeral arrangements. Some correspondence is from Feliciana lodge or the Grand Lodge concerning the status of a member, history, or recommendations.

Subseries 4. Administrative, 1865-1957

Includes correspondence and summons for members to appear for trials. Masonic trial cases are concerned with "unmasonlike conduct," such as a 1926 case regarding a mason who had an affair with an African American woman. Other correspondence is from Masonic committees who are reporting their findings on finances, appointments, returns, etc. Please consult other Correspondence subseries as they may contain peripheral information and opinions related to topics discussed in the Administrative subseries.

Subseries 5. Business, 1879-1958, 1963

Largely concerned with the ordering of Masonic supplies: aprons, ledger books, receipt books, etc, and other items as needed to operate the Feliciana lodge. Other correspondence is between Feliciana and the Anti-Tuberculosis League (circa 1920-1929) or concerns the payment of taxes and bonds.

Series II. Administrative Papers, 1822, 1861-1958, undated (0.5 linear feet)

Subseries 1. General Administrative, 1822, 1861-1955,

Miscellaneous items of business including upcoming events, reports, lists of committees, history of the Feliciana lodge, and loose meeting minutes.

Return books from the Feliciana Lodge to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana for the years 1917 to 1930 are a record of the lodge's annual returns. These books are completed by the secretary and list the officers, and names of certain members with their current standing in the lodge; a summation of the yearly membership figures are recorded in the back of the books.

Subseries 2. Membership, 1866-1958

General items (2 folders – 1918-1956, undated) consist mostly of miscellaneous lists of members and war service records of Masons. Remaining files are applications (petitions) filed by would-be members as well as notifications to and from other lodges as to who has applied. Note: The Correspondence series also mentions who petitioned for acceptance, was awarded degrees, and applied for demits. Oversized items consist of two documents from the St. James Lodge No. 47 certifying members of their lodge in good standing (1886, 1897).

There is also a small box containing member's due stubs and cards (1925-1955) for Feliciana and Eastern Star lodges. The stubs do not indicate the lodge name; assumed it is Feliciana unless otherwise indicated.

Arranged chronologically by function.

Series III. Financial Papers, 1880-1959, undated (1.5 linear feet)

Subseries 1. General Financial, 1880-1959, undated

Receipts and vouchers for the Feliciana Lodge expenditures and payments made. If they were expenses incurred regularly they have been separated by function (such as rent, utilities, printing service, insurance, etc.) The folders are interspersed with handwritten calculations on scrap paper resulting in balances. This subseries also includes (in a separate box) stubs for expenses paid, which are assumed to be for Feliciana, but some stubs are printed, "Service Committee, The Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana." 1920-1927, 1942-1950. Arranged chronologically by function.

Three oversized items consist of two balance sheets from the treasurer (1879), and a notarized document describing the sale of land from Hannah E. Town to the Feliciana Lodge No. 31 (1919).

Subseries 2. Bank Statements, 1925-1954

Bank statements (including some checks) for an account the Feliciana Lodge had with the Bank of Commerce in St. Francisville, Louisiana (1925-1954). The checks are filed with the statements they were bundled with upon processing and may also include slips from an adding machine roll. Arranged chronologically.

Series IV. Printed Items and Writings, 1859-1958, undated (2.5 linear feet)

Subseries 1. General, 1859-1958

General items include lists of Masonic supplies, copies of "The Bulletin," (1931-1936), invitations, death notices, and other miscellany. Included in greater number are the Official Warning circulars (1908-1931) distributed by the Masonic Relief Association that list masons by name, physical description, and what Masonic crime they are accused of - some include photographs. Speeches and writings (1917-1969) consist of speeches, addresses, eulogies, and short writings reproduced and distributed among the lodges. Most news clippings either concern deceased masons or coverage of the 1956 Masonic dedication of the new grave marker for Union soldier John E. Hart; the few photographs in the collection also relate to the grave. Arranged chronologically by function.

Oversized items include a 1951 certificate from the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the bottom half of a poster for Thomas Dixon's *Birth of a Nation*, and a drawing of a roof ceiling (assumed for a lodge).

Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana, 1866-1953

Monthly circulars from the Grand Secretary's Office of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana (1866-1953) to be read in all the lodges at the first stated meeting of the month. Lists dates, lodge, member name, age, occupation, residence, and the action taken by the lodge for the member. Also includes two folders containing progress reports of money raised for the Grand Lodge Temple Campaign (1941-1942), and an oversized item titled "Synopsis of Action of Grand Lodge" (February 1876).

Series V. Manuscript Volumes, 1831-1966.

Unless otherwise noted, all volumes are the professional records of Feliciana Lodge no. 31, St. Francisville, Louisiana.

Subseries 1. Register of Members

Eight volumes dated 1875 to 1966 that include a register of members as well as some annual returns and register of visitors to the lodge.

Subseries 2. Account and Cash books

Eight volumes dated 1846 to 1940 that include ledgers of lodge accounts and cash books.

Subseries 3. Minutes of Lodge Meetings

Nine volumes dated 1840 to 1963 that record the proceedings of lodge meetings.

Subseries 4. Tunica Lodge #63, et al

Three volumes for Tunica Lodge #63 dated 1831 to 1866 that include meeting minutes and a membership register for the years 1850 to 1851. Three additional volumes include the following materials for the Feliciana Lodge: one receipt book (1876-1954), one day book that includes some meeting minutes (1872-1877), and one roll book that includes information for the lodges of Feliciana no. 31, Bayou Sara R. A. chapter, and Laurel Chaplin no. 44.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

Term	Series and Subseries #
Acacia Fraternity (Louisiana State University)	I.1,2
Depressions--1929--United States.	I
Floods--Mississippi River Valley.	I.2
Freemasonry--Lodges.	All
Freemasons--Addresses, essays, lectures.	IV.1
Freemasons--Charities.	I
Freemasons--Equipment and supplies.	I.5, IV.1
Freemasons--Finances.	I.4, IV.1
Freemasons--Lodge management.	All
Freemasons--Louisiana.	All
Freemasons--Membership.	I, II.2, IV, V
Freemasons--Records and correspondence.	All
Freemasons. Feliciana Lodge No. 31 (St. Francisville, La)	All
Freemasons. Grand Lodge of Louisiana.	I.2, II, IV.2
Grace Episcopal Church (St. Francisville, La)	I, IV.1
Hart, John E., -1863.	I.1,2,3, IV.1
Secret societies--Louisiana--St. Francisville.	All
Tuberculosis--United States--Societies, etc.	I.5, IV.1
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.	I.1,2,3, IV.1
Washington, George, 1732-1799--Portraits.	I
World War, 1914-1918.	I.1,2, II.2
World War, 1939-1945.	I.1,2

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
Series I. Correspondence			
Subseries 1. General			
W:98	1	1-42	General correspondence (1865-1939)
W:99	2	1-22	General correspondence (1940-1958, undated)
Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana			
W:100	3	23-50	Grand Lodge of Louisiana correspondence (1879-1944)
		1-13	Grand Lodge of Louisiana correspondence (1945-1958, undated)
Subseries 3. Masonic Lodges			
		14-47	Masonic Lodge correspondence (1866-1958, undated)
Subseries 4. Administrative			
		48-57	Administrative correspondence (1865-1957, undated)
Subseries 5. Business			
		58-67	Business correspondence (1879-1958, 1963, undated)
Series II. Administrative Papers			
Subseries 1. General Administrative			
W:101	4	1	General administrative papers (1938-1955, undated)
		2	Loose meeting minutes (1822, 1861-1927, 1950, undated)
W:105	11	--	Return books from the Feliciana Lodge to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, (1917-1930)
Subseries 2. Membership			
W:101	4	3-4	General membership papers (1918-1956, undated)
		5	Certificates (1866-1940, undated)
		6-22	Petition and forms (1890-1958, undated)
W:105	12		Member's due stubs and cards (1925-1955)
OS:F	--	1	St. James Lodge No. 47 certificates (1886, 1897).
Series III. Financial			
Subseries 1. General			
W:101	4	23	Bank of Commerce (1924-1953)
		24	Bonds (1944-1946)
		25	Gulf States Utilities Co. (1947-1959)
		26	Home Ice & Gin Plant (1945-1958)
		27	Insurance (1918-1949)
		28	Lodge drafts (1917-1926, 1948-1949)

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
W:101	4	29	Receipts for registered articles (1927-1957)
		30	Rent statements (1943-1948)
		31	St. Francisville light service (1917-1928)
		32-33	Southern Bell telephone (1927-1939, 1950, 1958-1959)
		34	Miscellaneous statements (1952-1957)
		35	Town of St. Francisville, gas (1948-1958)
		36	True Democrat printing services (1909-1959)
		37	W.W. Staplin electric (1930-1932)
		38-54	General financial, miscellaneous (1880-1959, undated)
		OS:F	--
W:105	10	--	Stubs (1920-1927, 1942-1950)
Subseries 5. Bank Statements			
W:102	5	1-5	Bank statements (1925-1930)
		6	Bank statements (1932-1943)
		7	Bank statements (1947-1954)
Series IV. Printed Items and Writings			
Subseries 1. General			
W:103	8	1-4	Official Warning circulars (1908-1931)
		5-6	Speeches and writings (1917-1956, undated)
		7	Clippings (1938, 1946, 1955-1956)
		8	Photographs (circa 1948-1950)
		9	Masonic supplies (undated)
		10	"The Bulletin" (1931-1936)
		11-18	General, misc. (1859-1958, undated)
		OS:F	--
Subseries 2. Grand Lodge of Louisiana			
W:104	9	1	Grand Lodge of Louisiana, general (1943-1946)
		2-3	Temple Campaign (1941-1942)
		4-29	Monthly circulars (1928-1953)
OS:F	1	--	Monthly circulars (1866-1919)
	2	--	Monthly circulars (1920-1928)
OS:F	--	1	"Synopsis of Action of Grand Lodge" (February 1876)

LIST OF VOLUMES

<u>Stack location</u>	<u>Volume number(s)</u>	<u>Contents</u>
J:29	1-3	Register of Members and Annual Returns (1875-1919)
	4-8	Register of Members and visitors (1956-1966)
	9-11	Ledgers – account books (1846-1886)
	12	Ledger – account book, including membership dues (1911-1928)
	13	Ledger, account book (1946-1961)
J:30	14	Cash book (1917-1928)
	15-16	Cash book (1929-1940)
	17-21	Meeting minutes (1840-1896)
J:31	22	Meeting minutes (1898-1922)
J:30	23-25	Meeting minutes (1915-1963)
J:31	26	Receipt book (1876-1954)
	27	Day book, including meeting minutes (1872-1877)
	28	Roll book: Feliciana no. 31, Bayou Sara R.A. Chapter, and Laurel Chaplin no. 44 (1911-1924)
	29-30	Tunica Lodge no. 63, meeting minutes (1831-1866)
	31	Tunica Lodge no. 63, membership register (1850-1851)