

The Role Masonry Played in the Early History of Texas Education

Andrew S. Gorton

Rowlett High School

The Role Masonry Played in the Early History of Texas Education

The free public education system has roots deep in the heart of Texas. From its inception while Texas was an independent republic to our current iteration as we know it today, the system of free public education in Texas has been a product of tremendous progressions. These progressions were the result of a labor of love for the hallowed halls of knowledge and enlightenment by a plethora of important Texans. Texas never has existed without having direct ties to the Masons. Important ties include Masons such as Stephen F. Austin and all past presidents of the Republic of Texas. Establishment of a free public school system began in the late 1800's through the efforts of many, but championed by one heroic Mason who stands out, Mirabeau Lamar. Lamar is known as "The Father of Texas Public School System".

Lamar's work resulted in the State of Texas setting up the public school system Lamar served as the Republic's first Vice-President of the Republic of Texas. On December 19, 1838, he was inaugurated as President. It was obvious that Lamar had a fire lit inside of him, because in his inaugural address to the States Congress, President Lamar called for an appropriation of land to support public schools. The Texas Congress conceded this act on Jan. 26, 1839. This appropriation provided for 50 leagues of land to support the establishment and growth of two universities, later to become the University of Texas and Texas A&M. He helped pass legislation that granted three leagues of land within each county to enhance their own public schools.

Lamar's dedication to public education in Texas is best described by historian Frederich Eby, who wrote:

"Education in Texas is indebted to the courageous assistance of the
Masonic Brotherhood for their labors in championing the establishment
of its public school system at the most critical moment in its history...
The evidence leaves little doubt that Masons were using every means in

their power, in government, in private associations, in religious bodies
and with individuals, to bring about the creation of educational
institutions.”

In researching the importance of Masonic involvement in the Great State of Texas’s education system, I realized the high regard for education is an embodiment of the very fabric of what makes Texas such a great state. The ideas and precepts that govern the Masonic Lodge and its members are embodied in Mason’s concern for the children and adults. I once heard a Mason state that the Masonic organization wants to make a good man better; it appears this is also abundantly true of their concern for the youth of our State.

Realizing the scope and breath of what so many sacrificed, so long ago, to help those they would never know is inspiring to me as a student looking to continue my education. This paper has helped me to realize that I too must be ready to sacrifice to succeed in life and not just to succeed, but to give back so others may prosper is equally important. To know ones history is to honor what has come before so we can honor what we eventually do in life. For this I thank the Masonic Lodge for opening my eyes to a truth not known before, but one I can only strive to continue to honor and respect.

References

- Brown, D. (2011). Mirabeau B. Lamar, Texas Masonry and Public Education. Retrieved from <http://www.grandlodgeoftexas.org/node/1306> on March 22, 2011.
- East Fork Lodge, (2008). A History of Masonry and Public Schools in Texas. Retrieved from http://www.eastforklodge.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51:masonry-and-public-schools&catid=21:masonic-history&Itemid=53 on March 22, 2011.