



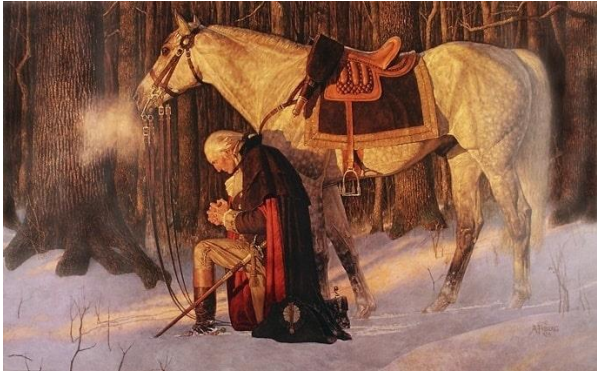
THE HOUSTON VALLEY HERALD

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Thanksgiving



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

What does it mean to be thankful? What do you have to be thankful for? Our days are filled with so many things these days and with the constant increase in technology and the instant and nonstop flow of information, from political turmoil, family life, and our professions; all keep us jumping from one foot to another almost every second of the day. It is critical that we stop and think about what we have in our lives to give thanks for.

First, let's approach our different faiths and see what some of our Holy writings say on the subject. In the Holy book of faith of our Muslim brothers, the Quran, it says *"Surah Lugman (31:12) whoever gives thanks benefits his own soul, and as for those who are thankless, God is self-sufficient worthy of all praise."* Our brothers who practice Hinduism, in the Bhagavad Gita, regarding gratitude, it says *"whatever I have achieved and whatever I wish to achieve, I am not the doer of these. O Madhusudan, you are the real doer, and you alone are the enjoyer of their results."*

Our Jewish brothers find in the Torah Psalm 100:1-5 *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful to him, and bless his name."* In the New Testament our Christian brothers' teachings are found in Thessalonians 5:16-8, *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

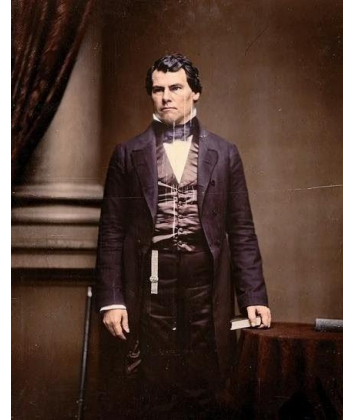
As Masons we have so much to draw from for divine light, and yet still sometimes it feels that we have nothing to be thankful for. We should be thankful in all things, not just the good days when we get a bonus at work or when our kids make good grades. The small things are what add up to be the most memorable and everlasting, such as having food on the table when want and need are rampant around the world. Not everyone is wealthy, but to be thankful that you have the means to pay your bills and perhaps take your love ones out for dinner or seeing the smile of a grandchild who greets you from across the room with your nickname can warm the heart.

When was the last time that you rolled down your window on a cool day and felt the breeze and sunlight upon your face? This and other small comforts are not something that should be overlooked when giving thanks, they are blessings from God. If we are to look at the small things in our lives as blessings, our attitude towards life will begin to change. Be thankful for membership in our beloved fraternity, where we find such good and honorable men who look forward to seeing you!

The first declaration of Thanksgiving for our country was made by our Brother George Washington. He sums up well what it is that we should be thankful for and to whom we should thank:

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"I do not wish to kill you!"



By Brett Laird Francis Doyle 32°

John Henninger Reagan (1818–1905), a prominent Texas politician and Confederate official, had a notable but intermittent involvement in Freemasonry, primarily affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Texas A.F. & A.M. His Masonic journey began in the mid-19th century and reflected his relocations and public service commitments.

Brother Reagan's initiation and earliest affiliation was when he petitioned for and received all three degrees of Freemasonry in Austin Lodge No. 12, located in Austin, Texas. While we are not sure of the date, we know this occurred sometime before 1851, during his time farming and practicing law in Kaufman County. He soon affiliated with Palestine Lodge No. 31 in or around 1851 or 1852, after relocating to Palestine, Texas. Brother Reagan, due to his stature and Masonic qualifications, was elected into the officer line and was installed as Junior Warden around this time.

In December 1852, he was elected and installed as the sixth Worshipful Master of the Lodge, a position he held for two consecutive years until December 1854. He served in this position while also holding public office as a district judge in Palestine from 1852 to 1857. Brother Reagan had a period of Masonic inactivity, from approximately 1886 to 1901, due to his demanding political career—including roles as U.S. Congressman, Confederate Postmaster General, U.S. Senator, and first chairman of the Texas Railroad Commission—which limited his Masonic participation. He did not actively petition nor affiliate with any lodge during these years.

While on the campaign trail, there is an interesting tale between Lemuel D. Evans and Brother Reagan involving a six-shooter: "So through town after town did the two veteran campaigners precede, each man fiercely and indefatigably attacking the weakest link in his opponent's armor. Evans had difficulty explaining his Know-Nothing associations, but he made it equally hard for Brother Reagan to escape the label of southern extremist. Much to Brother Reagan's chagrin, the oratorical contest in which he had few peers was becoming a standoff. But during the debate in Jefferson, Texas, the tide of battle suddenly changed.

"While Evans was making his usual tirade against secessionists and nullifiers, a young man went up to Brother Reagan and handed him a letter and stating that Mrs. J.M. Clough of Marshall had authorized him to use it. Swiftly, he examined its contents and as soon as Evans had ended his speech, Reagan approached

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"Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor-- and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness. Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be-- That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks--for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation--for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his Providence which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war--for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed--for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted--for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us. and also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions-- to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually--to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed--to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord--To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease (sic) of science among them and us--and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best."

"Journey Passport" Program

The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: acompass@yahoo.com

The Houston Valley Herald Email List

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 **The Houston Valley Educational Program Master Craftsman Zoom study group. If you are interested in taking classes please email acompass@yahoo.com. Open to any Master Mason in good standing.**

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Check out our latest episode of the Houston Valley Podcast, the interview of the Sovereign Grand Inspector General of Arkansas and Second Grand Equerry of the Supreme Council 33°, Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction Illustrious C. James Graham 33°.



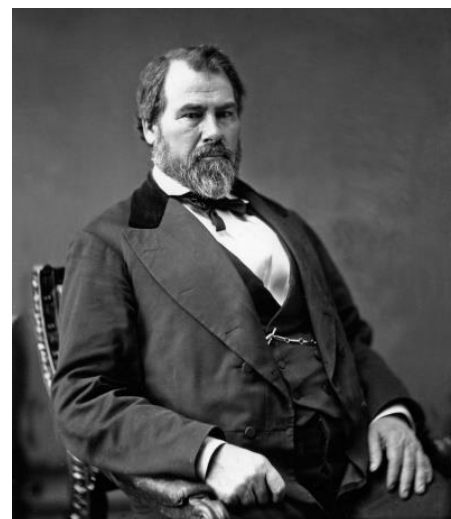
the rostrum with the letter in his hand and began to speak. For the sake of argument, he would admit, many Democratic leaders were firebrands and secessionists, but there was, however, one among us who had advocated disunion as early as 1850 and had eagerly desired that year to attend the Nashville Convention, composed of southern extremists. Such a man was he who wrote this note.

"Then quickly Brother Reagan proceeded to read to the audience the communication in which the author obviously had sought to be a delegate to the convention and had identified himself with nullifiers and secessionists. In conclusion, he asked, "Who do you suppose, fellow-citizens, wrote the letter?" Hesitating a moment for the curiosity of the crowd to mount, he turned toward Evans and said, "As the prophet Nathan said to King David, 'Thou art the man.' Beside himself with rage, Evans jumped to his feet, drew his six- gun, and denounced Clough for giving up a private letter and Brother Reagan for using it. But Brother Reagan, facing him squarely with gun in hand, replied: "Judge Evans, let's put up our six-shooters; I do not wish to kill you, nor do I wish to be killed. I want to go to Congress, and I am going there." And go to Congress he did. For on August 3, 1857, the people of the Eastern District of Texas gave him an overwhelming majority."

In his later life, Brother Reagan sought to reconnect with Freemasonry. He petitioned Palestine Lodge No. 31 for reaffiliation on November 4, 1901. After a delay, he was officially seated in the lodge on November 11, 1902. Soon after, on December 29, 1902, he was invited by the Worshipful Maste to attend a stated meeting, marking his return to active participation. Brother Reagan's contributions to Texas and his Masonic standing in 1910 led to the naming of Reagan Masonic Lodge No. 1037 A.F. & A.M, located in Houston Heights, shortly after his death. This lodge, the first in the Houston suburbs, honors his legacy as a judge, statesman, and framer of the 1876 Texas Constitution.

Masonic records show his involvement in appendant bodies like the York Rite such as on the occasion of March 18, 1851, Palestine Royal Arch Chapter No 10 of Royal Arch Masons. With the Royal Arch Chapter being formed that day, he became a charter member. His first officer position in the Royal Arch Chapter was that of Principle Sojourner on May 2, 1856.

Brother Reagan's Masonic career was shaped by his public life, with active periods bookending a long hiatus. At the age of 86, Brother Reagan had completed writing his memoirs. After realizing that he had left a copy at the Anderson County Courthouse, he saddled his horse (even though it was raining hard) and rode into town to retrieve them. As a result of this unnecessary trip at that particular time, he caught pneumonia and, unable to recover, succumbed to death on March 6, 1905.



Editor in Chief
Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH



Copy Editor
Eric R. Wylie 32° KCCH