

Early Sketches Of Andrew Jackson

By

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Andrew Jackson was of Scotch-Irish ancestry. His ancestors migrated from Scotland to Ireland, taking up residence in Carrick Fergus in County Antrim on the Northern coast. The 1760's were a period when the Colonies were growing greatly in population and expanding in territory. In 1765 the family migrated to America.

Some historians believe the Jacksons arrived at Charles Town (renamed Charleston by the General Assembly after the war of independence) and traveled the southern route to the Waxhaws. At the time, Charleston was under strict British control and His Majesty's Council kept precise records of all passengers arriving in that port from 1761 through 1775. No record could be found showing the Jacksons' debarkation there.

Andrew Jackson Senior had a brother who served as an officer on a ship that carried passengers between Larn, County Antrim and ports in the Middle-Atlantic region where there were numerous Scotch-Irish settlements. Many of the early settlers in the Waxhaws had traveled this Northern route from Pennsylvania through Virginia and North Carolina to their new homes. Andrew's wife, Elizabeth, had two sisters whose families had migrated via this route. Part of the belief that the Jackson's and other settlers in the Waxhaws had come from the North is that after the war, the counties in that area were named Lancaster, York and Chester; after counties in Pennsylvania. The Jacksons ultimately settled in North Carolina, a short ways outside of the Waxhaws along Twelve Mile Creek, a tributary of the Catawba River.

During the winter of 1767, Andrew Jackson Senior injured himself and died from pneumonia, on February 27th. Elizabeth, having two young

children, did not wish to be alone in the wilderness about to give birth to her third child. She packed up what few belongings they could carry in their wagon and traveled to one of her sister's homes. Her destination was twelve miles away, the home of her sister, Jane Hutchinson Crawford. It is at this point that a second controversy arises. Before reaching the Crawford's, Elizabeth became ill and was forced to stop at the cabin of her other sister, Peggy Hutchinson McKemey. So, where was Andrew Jackson born?

Both North Carolina and South Carolina can claim to be the State of Jackson's birth. In 1737, the Crown's Authorities were determining the boundary between the two colonies. The boundary was to be the thirty-fifth parallel in the region of the Waxhaws. To get to the thirty-fifth parallel, the boundary had to run northwest from the coast at the Little River Inlet. Unfortunately, the surveyor miscalculated and set the corner marker eleven miles south of the thirty-fifth parallel, at 34°-49'. From that point, the boundary was supposed to be a straight westerly course.

In 1764 commissioners representing the two colonies came to the Waxhaws to complete setting the boundary. When the surveyors reached the Charlestown-Salisbury post road they discovered the error and ceased. The matter was referred to London. During the period of dispute, the homes of James Crawford and George McKemey were in the eleven-mile strip. Crawford's home was on the West side of the post road and McKemey's on the East side. While both believed that they were in South Carolina, for the time being the eleven-mile strip remained in dispute – And that is where Andrew Jackson was born. Three weeks after Andrew's

birth the Jackson's took up residence with the Crawfords. It was there that Andrew Jackson was raised over the next ten to twelve years.

In 1771 the King settled the border issue. A compromise was ordered and the 1764 line was legalized but not extended. The eleven-mile strip east of the road was ceded to North Carolina and an eleven-mile strip north of the thirty-fifth parallel was ceded to South Carolina. In adulthood, Andrew Jackson himself maintained that he was born in South Carolina.

By 1780, the war was raging throughout the colonies, including the western reaches of the Carolinas. Tarleton, a British Lieutenant Colonel, and his Dragoons raided the peaceful Waxhaw settlement where they massacred inhabitants and ravaged homes. Thereafter, Andrew and his brother, Robert, would accompany bands of patriots to attack and harass the British and Tories. It was after one such engagement that the British were informed of the whereabouts of Andrew and Robert. Upon capture, the British officer ordered Andrew to clean his boots, to which came the reply, "Sir, I am a prisoner of war and claim to be treated as such" This is when Jackson received the scar resulting from being struck by the officer's sword. Robert likewise refused the same order given Andrew and the brothers were thrown in prison.

While in prison, an outbreak of smallpox occurred and Andrew and Robert contracted the dreaded disease. Because of that and due to their relatively young ages, Mrs. Jackson was able to secure their release. Robert did not recover from the illness and died shortly after returning to the Waxhaws. Elizabeth Jackson would herself succumb to the disease while tending to prisoners on prison ships in Charleston harbor.

Following the war, Andrew spent time as an apprentice saddle maker and teaching school. He came to study law in Salisbury, North Carolina, under Spence McCay, a lawyer there. McCay

would augment his income by taking in students and teaching law. The practice of law in the frontier was quite different than in the cities of Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Early on, it was more about rendering decisions upholding the spirit of the law rather than the letter.

I believe that it was in Salisbury that Jackson was likely exposed to Masonry. McCay had another student besides Jackson. John McNairy was born in 1762 and just completing his studies. It was there they became friends. Jackson finished his studies and was admitted to the bar in 1787, at the age of twenty. In 1788 John McNairy was appointed judge of the Superior Court for the Western District of North Carolina. In 1784, North Carolina ceded the region between the Allegheny's and the Mississippi to the Federal Government. This constituted what would become Tennessee. McNairy offered the position of solicitor to Jackson making the young lawyer one of the first public prosecutors on the frontier.

John McNairy had a younger brother also named Andrew, who was closer to Jackson's age. Jackson and McNairy, together with a party of lawyers made their way to Jonesboro. Jonesboro is in what is now Washington County and is the oldest town in Tennessee. The Eastern boundary of Washington County forms the state boundary with North Carolina. Jackson was chosen for his leadership to guide the way from there to Nashville. The region was a wilderness known as the "Territory South of the Ohio." It was also called "The Southwest Territories." It was the hunting grounds of Indian tribes such as the Cherokee, Creek, and Iroquois.

The Grand Lodge of North Carolina was formed in 1787. It held jurisdiction over much of the area all the way to Nashville.

St. Tammany Lodge was organized in 1789 in the new settlement of Nashville. This indicates that Freemasonry came very early to the frontier. At the time the entire county had fewer than 500 males of taxable age. Its name was changed to

Harmony Lodge No.1. No record can be found until 1805 when a list of the officers and members appears in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and Tennessee.

The list of officers and members includes Andrew Jackson. The list reveals the names of members who remained closely connected to Jackson for many years. These were men who not only aided Jackson in becoming wealthy and prominent, but also contributed immensely to the creation of the State of Tennessee.

The Worshipful Master was Howell Tatum. Brother Tatum was Judge of the Superior Court of Law and Equity. Tatum served with John McNairy in Tennessee in 1798. They are accredited with saving the State House of North Carolina from being burned during the Land Fraud scandal. Their law offices were next to the Masonic Lodge where they overheard a conversation of a plan being hatched to burn the capitol. They sent word to the Governor, Samuel Ashe and subsequently, the Secretary of State, James Glasgow, himself a Mason, was indicted and found guilty of the land fraud cases. Glasgow had to pay a large fine even though he always maintained his innocence. It has since been substantially proven that he was innocent of all but one charge. The final evidence was found in 1995 among the archived records from that era. Tatum would later become a Major in the Tennessee Militia. It was Tatum who carried the information to General Jackson that the British were advancing on the City of New Orleans.

Seth Lewis was Senior Warden. Brother Lewis remained a close friend throughout Jackson's years as President. It was Lewis whom Jackson often corresponded, who looked after Rachel and the boys during his absences. Lewis was elected a representative to the first House of Representatives of Tennessee.

William P. Anderson was Senior Deacon. Brother Anderson constructed a racecourse for horses. Andrew would remain involved in that

endeavor for many years. Later, Anderson would become an officer in the U.S. Army.

Brother John Overton and Brother Elisha Rice were lawyers in Nashville. Rice sold the land to Overton that would become Memphis. Overton and Jackson shared a cabin on the Donelson's property. It was during this time that Jackson fell in love with Colonel John Donelson's daughter Rachel, who happened to be estranged from Captain Robards. Colonel Donelson, a surveyor, had come to Nashville eight years prior to Jackson. Donelson had served in the Continental Army and had also been a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry.

Brother Samuel and Brother Levin Donelson – Sons of Colonel Donelson and Rachel's brothers.

Brother Andrew McNairy; Brother of John McNairy previously alluded to.

Such was Andrew Jackson's connection to early Masonry in Tennessee.

Andrew Jackson was recorded on March 24, 1800 as a visitor in Tennessee Lodge No.2, located in Knoxville. In September 1801 he is recorded as sitting as Senior Warden in Greeneville Lodge No.3. It is not believed that he was a member there.

When and in what Lodge Jackson was raised a Master Mason is not actually known. Records of that era were either not kept or were lost or destroyed. It is highly likely that St. Tammany Lodge (Harmony Lodge No.1) is where he received his degrees, owing to his close association with members of that Lodge. Harmony Lodge lost its Charter in 1808. From that time until 1822 there is no documentation of Andrew Jackson's Masonic activities. During that period a Master Mason could remain in good standing by paying dues to his Grand Lodge.

The Grand Lodge of Tennessee was organized December 27, 1813 at Knoxville with Brother Thomas Claiborne, attorney at law and member of the General Assembly from Davidson County being chosen as Grand Master. Claiborne had served as a Major in the Militia under General Jackson during the Creek War. Later, he was one of Jackson's close advisors during the General's first Presidential campaign. It could well have been Claiborne who encouraged Jackson to become Grand Master of Tennessee.

Another Grand Master of Tennessee, Wilkins Tannehill, served for many years in the Grand Lodge as Grand Secretary, Grand Treasurer and Grand Master. Tannehill was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1887 and at an early age moved to Nashville. He became the editor of The Whig newspaper in addition to several Masonic publications. Being editor of the Whig, he was not a supporter of Jackson.

When the Grand Lodge of Tennessee met in Grand Annual Communication in October 1822, Tannehill was then Grand Master. Among those admitted as a Past Masters was Andrew Jackson, and John Overton. Andrew Jackson was unanimously elected and installed as Grand Master, thus interrupting a string of years in which Tannehill had served as Grand Master. Jackson would again be elected to serve a second term as Grand Master in 1823.

One interesting note is whom Jackson appointed as Grand Chaplain. The Reverend Hardy M. Cryer was a Methodist minister in Nashville. Brother Cryer, like General Jackson, enjoyed thoroughbred horses and horse racing. He was partner with Jackson in a horse. When confronted by the Methodist Conference for owning and running racehorses, Brother Cryer replied that

the General owned the front half and that his half just followed. There appears to be no record of disciplinary action on the church's part.

As Grand Master, Jackson is credited with many advances in Tennessee Masonry. Rules governing debate and decorum were initiated. A uniform ritual was instituted for all Subordinate Lodges, which included an opening and closing prayer. One controversial change that was adopted by the Grand Lodge concerned a declaration necessary to be made by a petitioner previous to initiation. Hereafter, each petitioner was required to declare upon his honor his belief in God. This is reported to have caused concern among some Grand Lodges at the time.

In May 1825 there occurred what was probably the greatest Masonic event to ever take place in Tennessee. General, the Marquis de LaFayette, a Mason, French patriot, American Revolutionary hero and friend of George Washington, visited the Jacksons and the City of Nashville. On May 4th at a special session of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, Brother Lafayette was presented by Brothers Andrew Jackson and George Campbell and properly introduced by General Jackson. He received Grand Honors and was seated in the East, to the right of the Grand Master. The Grand Master there informed him that he had been unanimously elected an Honorary Member of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee. Brother Lafayette responded most graciously.

This concludes Andrew Jackson's known active participation in Tennessee Masonry. It would be an all-day endeavor to even touch on all of Jacksons Masonic connections. I hope to be able to continue this project and possibly at a future Lodge meeting present the rest of the story.

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