

THE BEGINNINGS OF FREEMASONRY IN TRINIDAD

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INTRODUCTION

Many may well be astonished to hear that Trinidad was one of the very last islands in the West Indies to receive the Craft of Freemasonry. The islands of Antigua, St Kitts, Barbados, Martinique and Jamaica were ahead by almost half a century.

The obvious reason that jumps to mind is that Trinidad was a Spanish island, Roman Catholic in religion, and that accordingly the Spanish Inquisition barred the advent of Freemasonry to its shores. That reason would be quite wrong. The Inquisition never operated in Trinidad; Freemasonry came here in Spanish times and was not persecuted and last of all, it was brought by Roman Catholics.

What then was the reason? It was simply this. ... that the island of Trinidad was too poverty-stricken to support the Craft until the closing decades of the 18th century. Let us examine this in some more detail.

THE POVERTY OF TRINIDAD

Trinidad was discovered by Christopher Columbus in the year 1498, before many of the other West Indian islands were discovered. Unfortunately, it became the personal property of the King of Spain instead of State property. The King was not interested in developing any colonies as such. He was only concerned with acquiring gold. Trinidad had no gold and so was useless to him, as well as his successors.

Moreover, it was believed that there was a fabled golden city of El Dorado somewhere in South America. Trinidad was very conveniently situated as a jumping-off ground for expeditions into the wilds of South America. There were in Trinidad aboriginal Indians who could be captured and forced into slave labour for this purpose. So Trinidad was mercilessly raided for man-power and no attempt was made at first to develop its resources. Later feeble attempts met with disaster. In the year 1717, the very year that the first Grand Lodge in the world was formed in London, cacao was begun as a staple crop. Ten years later, the crop failed and a 60 year blight of poverty descended upon the island. In 1733, some 6 years after the crop failure, the revenue dropped to the appallingly low figure of \$1,217.00. By 1740, even the members of the Cabildo, the governing body in Trinidad, had hardly a presentable suit, among the whole lot of them, to wear to church.

The aboriginal Indian population dropped sharply in numbers, decimated by smallpox. By 1757, St Joseph, the capital had fallen into ruins. To use the words of Thomas Hobbes in his Leviathan (Part I, Chapter 47), in Trinidad there were "no arts; no letters; no society; and what is worse, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. "The entire population was 2,813 persons less than 2 per square mile!!

THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ISLANDS

In striking contrast to the neglect of Trinidad by the King of Spain, the British more so, and the French less so, had made

intensive efforts to develop their own West Indian islands. By the year 1700, the British had poured the staggering sum of 70 million pounds into their Caribbean possessions. almost four times as much as they had put into India and the East Indies. The returns on that investment were manifold. In 1700, the exports of Barbados, a mere 166 square miles in area, exceeded those of all the other colonies of England in the Western Hemisphere put together and this included the exports of the British Colonies in North America! The island itself was valued at a higher figure than the vast expanses of New England, New York and Pennsylvania lumped together.

The other British islands of Antigua, St Kitts, Montserrat and Jamaica were not far behind. Freemasonry found the ground there already well tilled: the economic and financial climate was favourable. So Lodges sprung up in Antigua in 1738, in Martinique in the same year, in St Kitts and Jamaica in 1739, and in Barbados in 1740.

In those years Trinidad was still an appalling wilderness, living at the edge of utter starvation. Freemasonry could not flower in such barren soil.

THE WAY UP

In the year 1777, a Frenchman from Grenada named Phillipe Rowne Rose de St Laurent visited Trinidad. The British were making it pretty hot for the French in the islands they had conquered from them and the French wanted to emigrate. In 1783, and again in 1786, St Laurent got a charter from the King of Spain giving very favourable conditions to French Roman Catholic immigrants to Trinidad. The French poured in, and in 1787, the exports from Trinidad leapt to over 300 thousand dollars. By 1789, the year of the French Revolution, the population had soared to 10,422 persons and four years later it was 16,000. In 1794, after a bare ten years, the export trade reached the respectable total of one million dollars. Trinidad had now attained the financial, economic and social position to support the Craft of Masonry.

FREEMASONRY ARRIVES

In the normal course of events, many more years might have elapsed before the Craft finally arrived. But its coming was given a sharp impetus by the scourge of war and revolution in the West Indies. For a long time the West Indies had been the theatre of war for the British, the French, the Spanish and the Dutch. Now the French Revolutionary Government in Paris began to send their administrators to the West Indies. The wealthy planters and the Royalists would have none of these revolutionary types. Internal troubles broke out in the French islands and the British, capitalising on the situation, swooped in. They were welcomed. Better to be under even the hated British than under Frenchmen who shouted about "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". Anyway, the British Isles provided a wonderful market for French sugar. All this infuriated the Revolutionary government in Paris. To send their fleet to their treacherous islands would invite defeat at the hands of the powerful British naval forces. They therefore unleashed their secret weapon - a mulatto born in Marseilles named Victor Hughes... one of the most terrible men the West Indies has ever seen. It was Hughes who sent Freemasonry pell-mell from St Lucia into Trinidad. Before considering how he did this, let us see what was the state of Freemasonry in St Lucia.

FREEMASONRY IN ST LUCIA

We have already seen that Freemasonry came to Martinique as early as 1738. By 1766 it was in Guadeloupe. St Lucia was comparatively backward in this respect among the French islands. It was occupied by the British from 1778 to 1782 and among the British regiments were many with Lodges in them. These must have stimulated interest in Freemasonry in that island. When it was handed back to France in 1783, many of the French soldiers, brought in from Martinique and Guadeloupe to man the militia, were already Masons, some possessing the high degree of Knight Rose Croix. Within the next five years, four Lodges were warranted by the Grand Orient of France in St Lucia... Le Choix Reuni in 1784, L'Harmonie Fraternelle in 1785, Les Freres Unis in 1788 and Le Heureuse Reunion in the same year.

LES FRERES UNIS

The third of these Lodges, Les Freres Unis, was none other than our present Lodge United Brothers, No. 251 S.C. now at Mount Moriah. Seven French Masons, three of them holding the degree of Rose Croix, sent a petition to the Grand Orient of France, dated the 27th June 1786. For some unknown reason, the warrant was not signed until the 7th February 1788, but it was made retroactive to the 27th June 1787. The Brethren in St Lucia did not waste this period of waiting. They built a Temple in the district of Micoud on the southern area of St Lucia. On the 30th May 1789 the Temple was consecrated, the Lodge erected and the officers installed. On the day of consecration the Lodge numbered 28 members, one of whom was a Scotsman. All the others were French, mostly from Martinique and Guadeloupe. Among the founders was a 40-year-old Master Mason born in 1752, in Martinique. He was appointed the 2nd Master of Ceremonies on Consecration night and was an officer in the French Militia. He was the Mason who six years later, in 1795, was to flee for his life to Trinidad. He was not the only one to flee; the big difference was that he took the Charter of Les Freres Unis with him to Trinidad. His name was Benoit Dert.

VICTOR HUGHUES

The man who was at the root of Benoit Dert's flight to Trinidad was the terrible Victor Hughues, of whom we have already heard. Space does not permit a proper consideration of this remarkable man. Suffice it to say that a Scotsman in Trinidad, writing 44 years later, in 1838, said of him: "This extraordinary man united the dauntless activity, the recklessness and restlessness of Napoleon, to the ferocity, vindictiveness and sanguinary disposition of Robespierre, Danton and Marat!!!" Everyone must know of Napoleon. All that needs to be added for those who do not know the history of the French Revolution was that Robespierre, Danton and Marat were the brilliant and blood thirsty leaders of that Revolution who made the guillotine into that infamous and notorious engine of death and destruction. Hughues ran rings around the British, the French planters and the French aristocracy in the French West Indies. With consummate and ferocious artistry, he encouraged the poor French whites, the free French coloureds and the slaves to band together and wipe out the Royalists and the planters. Death, destruction, pillage, looting and burning ravaged the French islands. The Temple of Les Freres Unis in Micoud was razed to the ground in 1795.

Brethren were guillotined. Benoit Dert snatched up the Charter of Les Freres Unis and fled to Trinidad where his brother Dominique Dert was already resident. Freemasonry had come to Trinidad, borne on the wings of death and terror.

THE RECONSTRUCTION

Benoit Dert was by no means the only Mason who had fled to Trinidad for his life, nor was St Lucia the only island which provided refugees for Trinidad. They came in from Martinique, Guadeloupe and above all from that ravaged "Pearl of the Caribbean", Haiti, then known as San Domingo. In 1795, Benoit Dert summoned some of these Brethren to meet at a building at the corner of Duncan and Upper Prince Street and there Les Freres Unis was reborn, but it was a sad rebirth. The Grand Orient of France had been smashed to bits in the French Revolution and its Grand Master, Duke Phillip of Orleans, guillotined. For two years, from 1795 to 1797, the Trinidad Brethren met in Duncan Street, awaiting the rebirth of the Grand Orient. Duncan Street soon acquired the name "Rue Trois Chandelles" from the three candles which burnt at the Lodge gates on meeting nights. Just as contact with the Grand Orient became feasible, an event occurred which rendered such a course highly dangerous. The British invaded and captured Trinidad in the year 1797.

THE SWING TO PENNSYLVANIA

Thomas Picton who was appointed the first Governor of Trinidad had no love for Frenchmen or Spaniards, at the best. Moreover, he had been appointed in a most remarkable Colony. It had never been owned by France but was totally and utterly French in everything but laws and government, which was Spanish. The Frenchmen warred among themselves. There were several quite distinct sectors among them... the Royalists and the planters who banded together, the revolutionary poor white French as well as free French Coloureds who fought the first group and the French slaves who stood poised to take either or both of them if the occasion permitted. Picton had few troops and these were falling like flies from malarial and other epidemics. He handled his problems by building a gallows at the foot of Charlotte Street, near Independence Square, and suspending all trouble-makers by the neck about a foot or so from the ground. When occasion demanded he cut off a few ears or noses. In no time at all, Picton put the fear of God in everyone... including the members of Les Freres Unis. Not much hope of rejoining the Grand Orient; Picton would consider that as traffic with France, the enemy, and do something drastic about it. Masons who had fled here from Haiti (San Domingo) had belonged to Lodges in that island under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. An American Grand Lodge was much safer than the Grand Orient of France. On the 13th March 1798, the Brethren of Les Freres Unis signed a Petition to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for acceptance under that Grand Lodge. The petition had nine signatories, one of whom, once more, was a Scotsman. Benoit Dert, now holding the Rose Croix Degree, signed as Worshipful Master. The petition was written by the Secretary, one Vincent Patrice, born in Martinique in 1759, then holding the degree of Maitre Ecossais... that is. . . the degree of Scotch Master. This same Patrice was to become perhaps the greatest Mason Trinidad has ever produced.

THE WORKINGS OF LES FRERES UNIS (1795-1798)

Certain documents, which have mercifully survived, give us some idea of the workings of Les Freres Unis from 1795 to 1798. Unfortunately these cannot be set out in extenso, but the following can be deduced therefrom:

(1) Both the Rite Francais of the Grand Orient consisting of seven degrees and the Adonhiramite Rite of twelve degrees were worked. In both, the highest degree was that of the Rose Croix. Accordingly, the workings of the Rose Croix Degree in Trinidad are as old as the Craft Degrees in this island.

(2) The Symbolic Voyages which are still worked today at Lodge United Brothers were worked in Trinidad from the start of the Craft

here. They were in the official ritual of the Grand Orient settled in 1786, and sent to St Lucia.

(3) Undoubtedly other French initiatory practices contained in the two Rites were worked. Most of these have disappeared from the workings of Lodge United Brothers, and particularly since the year 1848 when the British element became dominant in the Lodge.

UNDER PENNSYLVANIA (1798-1820)

On the 28th October 1798, Les Freres Unis was inaugurated under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, after a meeting of the 20th October when the acceptance by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was communicated. We have a very full account of the Consecration, as indeed we have of the Consecration of St Lucia in 1789.

Vincent Patrice acted as Secretary up to 1801 and became the Master in 1804 when the first Temple on Mount Moriah was consecrated and the first Royal Arch Chapter formed under the Craft Charter from Pennsylvania. By this year however, Les Freres Unis was no longer alone in Trinidad. It had been joined by another Lodge the first English-speaking Lodge in Trinidad most unbelievably, an Irish Lodge which came here from a French island, Martinique, of all places.

The name of the Lodge was Union and its number on the Register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland was No. 690. How did an Irish Lodge happen to be in a French island, and when and why did it come to Trinidad?

LODGE UNION, NO. 690 I.C.

Less than thirty-four years after this Lodge came to Trinidad, Lodge Union, No. 690 I.C., was dormant. It was erased in 1858, though it was effectively dormant by 1836. Even during this thirty-four year period, it went dormant more than once. In that short period it has provided, and still provides, headaches for Masonic historians all over the world. It was twice involved in incidents which had serious repercussions in the Grand Lodge of Ireland. Regrettably, its full story will have to wait for some other day, but it can be here said that it caused the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1823 to issue a thunderous edict to its Provincial Grand Lodge in Barbados against colour prejudice in Freemasonry.

That edict caused the death of that Provincial Grand Lodge. The number 690 I.C. was first issued to a military Lodge in the 51st Regiment, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, on the 4th September 1788. In 1796, eight years later, the number was most unaccountably transferred to a group of Irishmen in Martinique, although the 51st Regiment never even crossed the Atlantic, and continued, after 1796, to work Lodges under three jurisdictions. That is the first headache which has raised serious problems in the history of Irish Masonry.

Again, what were Irishmen doing in a French island? The answer is quite simple. In 1794 the British captured Martinique. In the wake of the conquest, Englishmen, Scotsmen and Irishmen poured into this rich island to exploit the Frenchmen for all they were worth, as they had done in St Lucia a decade before. Lodge 690 I.C. was formed from these adventurers, some of whom, honesty compels us to confess, were not very nice or very honest persons. Certainly they could not have been very popular with the French for when, by the Peace of Amiens in 1802, Martinique was returned to the French, they bolted for Trinidad at high speed.

The Charter was brought here by Bro. P. William Leonard who was the

W.M. in 1801 in Martinique. On the 12th November 1802, the first installation of officers in Trinidad was held, and the first return to the Grand Lodge of Ireland was made on the 1st December 1803.

And here comes the second headache. For some reason, the transfer to Trinidad was never notified to the Grand Lodge of Ireland until the 12th January 1811. Thus every book of authority on Masonry which mentions Lodge Union, puts it as coming to Trinidad in 1811. This is incorrect, as can be irrefutably demonstrated. Even the Register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland itself is incorrect.

MASONRY IN TRINIDAD UNTIL 1820

In order to keep this paper within reasonable limits, it is proposed to stop at the end of the first twenty-five years of Freemasonry in Trinidad... that is at the year 1820. Even for these twenty-five years, only the barest sketch can be given and regrettably, some exciting developments in the 1820's cannot be dealt with.

Almost from 1802, the Lodge of Frenchmen and the Lodge of Irishmen entered into a relationship of the utmost harmony, which was to last until the Irish Lodge went dormant for the last time. However, one gains the impression that Les Freres Unis was always the dominant one in the relationship, being almost like a father to Lodge Union. On Friday, the 20th September 1805, for example, the two Lodges held a joint meeting to try a former member of Les Freres Unis for perjury. His name was Charles Hugon and he had affiliated to Les Freres Unis in January 1800 from a Military Lodge named The Faithful Brethren. He had, however, ceased to be an active member in 1802.

The particulars of the charge were that Charles Hugon had betrayed the secrets of the Craft to a non- Mason named Montrichard in exchange for two dollars and six bottles of porter; and had compounded his felony by uttering injurious allegations against the Craft, adding the ultimate insult by declaring that curiosity alone prompted him to become a Mason. The decision was that he be henceforth denied admittance to any Lodge in Trinidad. The decision certainly did not harm his finances for, eighteen years later in 1823, the local newspapers indicate that he was a prosperous businessman, rigorously suing Masons who were indebted to him and levying on their properties. Les Freres Unis continued until 1813, working both its Lodge and its Royal Arch Chapter under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. In 1812, an event most disturbing to the Lodge had taken place. Britain and America had gone to war.

It has been stated that the war led to difficulty of communication with Pennsylvania and that this led Les Freres Unis to apply in 1813 to the Grand Lodge of Scotland for a Charter. In fact the reason was quite different. By 1813, the Frenchmen had painfully won the confidence of the English Governors as to their loyalty to Great Britain. The new Governor, Sir Ralph James Woodford, a young man of 29 appointed in 1813, took a very dim view of revolutionaries in general. .. even the South American ones against his old enemy Spain... and he was certainly going to take a very dim view of any Masonic Frenchmen in Trinidad who kept up contact with the enemy American "Colonials" who had the temerity to declare war against the British.

Thus the move towards Scotland was a wise one, not of choice, but dictated by the circumstances. The global picture shows that the Brethren of Les Freres Unis were quite happy to remain with Pennsylvania. They never notified Pennsylvania that they had got a Charter from Scotland although the archives of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania shows correspondence as late as 1814, when the war had ended. In fact, the Lodge remained on the Register of the U.S. Grand

Lodge until 1820... So THAT LES FRERES UNIS WAS UNDER Two GRAND LODGES BETWEEN 1813 and 1820!

What is more, Les Freres Unis never made any return of Members to the Grand Lodge of Scotland until the 6th June 1821... nearly eight years after the warranting by Scotland! This and other factors would seem to indicate that until about 1820, the Lodge had not quite made up its mind whether to desert Pennsylvania and move to Scotland, or to stick to Pennsylvania. In 1820, the die was irrevocably cast. Pennsylvania removed Les Freres Unis from its Register and the following year, the first return of members was made to Scotland. The first name on this return was that of Vincent Patrice, by this time the "Grand Old Man of Masonry in Trinidad" and the " Lord of the Higher Degrees".

THE HIGHER DEGREES (1813-1820)

The swing towards Scotland had an immediate and marked effect on the Higher Degrees. A petition was presented by a number of Brethren headed by Vincent Patrice to the Royal Grand Conclave of Scotland to form a Grand Assembly of Knight Templars in Trinidad. This was granted on the 12th January 1814, and was the first Scottish Encampment outside of Scotland in the whole world.

Since the Royal Arch Degree was worked as an intermediate degree on the way to Templary under the Royal Grand Conclave of Scotland, the first Royal Arch Chapter of 1804 was closed down and a new Royal Arch Chapter named the "Trinidad Holy Royal Arch Chapter" opened by virtue of the Templar warrant. This took place in 1814, and Vincent Patrice who had been the First Principal on the opening of the 1804 Pennsylvania Chapter, again went into the First Principal's Chair in 1814 at the start of the new Chapter.

Oddly enough, the Companions appeared to have continued to work the American Ritual from Pennsylvania, since the American order of the Principal Officers was retained as well as their names. .. which was quite different from the practice in Scotland.

When, in 1816, it was decided in Scotland to form a new and separate body to govern the Royal Arch Degree, the Trinidad Encampment of Knight Templars was among the bodies invited to attend the preliminary meetings and participate in the formation of the present governing body, the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland. Unfortunately no representatives were sent by the Assembly and Trinidad lost the honour of being a founder member of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland.

FIRST DORMANCY OF UNION LODGE, NO. 690 I.C.

In the year 1817, for no known reason, Lodge Union went into its first dormancy which lasted until June 1821. There was a terrible epidemic of yellow fever in 1817, causing the death of the Senior Warden of Union; however this epidemic did not halt activity in other Masonic Bodies. Seth Driggs of whom we shall hear more, gave no reason for the dormancy.

VINCENT PATRICE AND SETH DRIGGS (1817-1820)

The history of Freemasonry from 1817 to 1820, and indeed for quite a few years more, revolves around the personalities of Vincent Patrice and Seth Driggs. They were of different nationalities, of quite different backgrounds and even of quite different generations; the only thing they had in common is that they were both pharmacists. Yet they were inextricably intertwined in Masonry. Much of Drigg's

sensational advancement in the Higher Degrees was undoubtedly due to Patrice's liking for him.

Patrice was born in Martinique in 1759; Driggs was born in Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A., on the 14th December 1792. Patrice was initiated in the famous Lodge Parfaite Union of St Pierre, the second Lodge founded in the West Indies, as far back as December 1785, before Driggs was born. No one has discovered where Seth Driggs was initiated, though two of his brothers were initiated in the famous Connecticut Lodge of St John's, No. 2, in their home town of Middletown.

One of these brothers, Dr Joseph Driggs, came to Trinidad around 1808 and went through the offices and chair of Lodge Union 690 I.C. It was he who brought his younger brother Seth Driggs to Trinidad in 1812 to run a pharmacy he had opened on Frederick Street.

Seth suddenly appeared on the Masonic scene in Trinidad as Scribe E of the second Royal Arch Chapter in a newspaper notice of 1817. It is known that he had gone to New York in the interim and had been married there in 1818. Be that as it may, in March 1819, he wrote the first Masonic book ever printed and published in Trinidad, "The Freemason's Sure Guide and Pocket Companion" and dedicated it to Vincent Patrice. This book is the only source of much of the history of early Freemasonry in Trinidad, though there are some errors in it.

DEGREES IN TRINIDAD BEFORE 1820 A.D.

Though the start of Freemasonry in Trinidad was late, it was incredibly rich. Unlike most of the other West Indian islands, it was not derived from one single source. It poured into Trinidad in rapid succession from France, the United States, Ireland, Scotland and the French West Indies.

From the year 1795 France provided two distinct Rites, the Rite Francais of seven degrees and the Adonhiramite Rite of twelve degrees. As the first three degrees of these two Rites were identical the degrees of Apprentice, Campagnon and Maitre, which are of course, the E.A., F.C. and M.M. degrees, these two Rites provided seventeen quite distinct degrees. In 1798, Pennsylvania provided three more degrees which were first utilised by the founding of the first Royal Arch Chapter in Trinidad in 1804; the degrees of Mark Master, Past Master and the Royal Arch. In 1802, Ireland provided through Lodge Union, No. 690 I.C., the Irish version of the first three degrees. Les Freres Unis did not seem to be greatly affected in the matter of degrees, by its transfer to Scotland in 1813, as it continued to work in the French way and to work degrees quite unknown to the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

From the Royal Grand Conclave in Scotland came the degree of Knight Templar in 1814 and from that year, the Royal Arch degrees were worked in Trinidad, no longer under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania as from 1804, but by virtue of the Knight Templar Charter. Thus, less than twenty years after the commencement of Freemasonry in Trinidad, 21 degrees had been already worked here. Some two or three years later, and certainly not later than the year 1818, Seth Driggs (the American born in Middletown, Connecticut, but residing in Port of Spain) introduced some further degrees... in all, 7 in number. Some of these are no longer worked anywhere in the world and by 1850, historians were vainly searching in various parts of the world to discover even the subject matter in their rituals. Driggs formed a Cryptic Rite Body in Trinidad with himself as Past Thrice Illustrious Grand Master, and conferred the degrees of Most Excellent Master, Super-Excellent Master and Royal Master. As the

earliest Cryptic Rite Body in the world was founded in 1810 in New York, Trinidad was one of the earliest places in the world to have a Cryptic Rite Body, as such. There is every indication that Driggs got these degrees on a visit to New York and that he got them from the very founder of the first Cryptic Council in New York... Brother Thomas Lownds. There is direct evidence of contact between Lownds and Driggs as late as the year 1822. As an incident to the Cryptic Degrees, Driggs conferred the degree of the Knights of the Red Cross, and the degree of the Knights of Malta as an appendant degree to the degree of Knights Templar. Little is known today about two other degrees in the series which he introduced... the Knights of the Christian Mark and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. Driggs went on to mention in his book 12 other degrees in the series, but did not indicate whether these were ever conferred in Trinidad. These were set out in the 1819 book, "The Freemasons' Sure Guide", and include such unusual names as the Knights of Calatrava, the Knights of St Michael and the Knights of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.

VINCENT PATRICE AND THE 33RD DEGREE

Vincent Patrice kept up his contacts with the French West Indian Islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. In these French islands the higher degrees were widely worked. When the first Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree Rite was founded in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1801, a Council for the French West Indies was also founded with Count Auguste de Grasse-Tilly at the head, as Sovereign Grand Commander. De Grasse-Tilly, who was the son of the famous Admiral de Grasse, defeated by Admiral Rodney in the Battle of the Saints, founded the Supreme Council for France and another for Spain. The French Council was also connected with the French West Indian Islands. At some time before 1819, Vincent Patrice was made a Sovereign Grand Inspector General... that is a holder of the 33rd Degree. That fact is not only mentioned in Drigg's book of 1819, but is found later in the Minutes of Les Freres Unis in the Minute Book for the year 1822-1826. Patrice, sometime between the year 1819 and the year 1822 founded the Rose Croix Chapter "Les Freres Unis de la Trinite", working the 18th degree and the Sovereign Consistory of the Sublime Princes of the Royal Secret, "Les Freres Unis de la Trinite", working the 32nd degree. These were degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. The first amazing feature is that today, more than 150 years later, the highest degree in that Rite worked in Trinidad is the 30th; the second amazing feature is that Vincent Patrice was the first 33rd degree holder in Trinidad with a lead of nearly 110 years on the second, Frederick Owen Webb, who received the 33rd degree in 1927!

CONCLUSION

By the end of the first twenty-five years of Masonry in Trinidad, every degree that is worked today in Trinidad, except the Secret Master in the Cryptic Degrees and the Knight of the East and West in the Red Cross Council had already been worked. More, many degrees had by then been worked which are no longer worked in Trinidad today. Indeed some have been completely forgotten and their rituals are either totally unavailable at present, or irretrievably lost. In the last hundred and fifty years the Craft may have increased in numbers of Brethren, of Lodges and of Appendant Bodies, but in the extent of degrees worked and in their bewildering variety, we cannot hope to touch our predecessors of the first two decades of the last century. They were far ahead of us.