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Fraternal Revolutionaries: Masonic Founding Fathers and their Influence on the United States Constitution

Tigran Agadzhanyan

A Thesis in the Field of Government

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the extent of how influential Freemasonry was, as a social order, in the drafting of the documents pertaining to the Supreme Laws of the Land. Since Freemasonry was the first established fraternal order in Colonial America, I would like to see how, and if, Freemasonry influenced characteristics and actions of those involved in the drafting of the Albany Plan, the Articles of Confederation, and finally, the United States Constitution of 1787.

In preparation for this thesis, I will first introduce Freemasonry as a practice and as a set of moral and philosophical principles. My research included the analysis of British Masonic manuscripts from the High Middle Ages to the Renaissance period, and how these documents influenced British Parliamentary law. Moreover, I've laid a potential chronological timeline of how the Bill of Rights may have traveled through the means of British Freemasonry to Colonial Freemasonry. Where necessary, I have indicated whether these manuscripts were a primary source, or were gathered as information through the means of a secondary source.

Moreover, the main research method employed here is the chronological comparison of ancient Masonic charges, to the constitutions of British guilds, and to later the first formation of an official Constitution of the Freemasons. Since Colonial Americans and British citizens traveled back and forth during the development of colonial America, I hypothesize that Masonic principles were also brought over through Anderson's Masonic Constitution of 1723 by Benjamin Franklin.

I found, through my research, that the development of ancient Masonic constitutions did indeed influence British culture and law, which in turn influenced Colonial American law. In some documents, such as the Albany Plan, that were directly drafted by Freemasons, it is clear that Masonic influences do exist. For those documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, that were

drafted by several Founding Fathers, the evidence of Masonic principles becomes less clear, but still present.

I was able to conclude that the influence of Masonic principles, both through as a Fraternal organization and with its living constitution and edicts, did influence the development of colonial documents of the mid to late colonial period. Although a vast majority of those involved with drafting these documents were not Freemasons, colonial Freemasonry was no doubt heavily involved in influencing the cultural development of the era.

Vita

A graduate of the University of California, Berkeley's Political Science degree, under the College of Arts and Sciences, Tigran Agadzhanyan received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with an emphasis in political theory in May 2019. He also studied and analyzed how Freemasonry shaped the development of countries and governments of the 17th and 18th centuries. During this time, he also developed a passion and interest in the Fraternal Order.

As an individual who has held the study of the liberal arts and sciences to so high an eminence, Mr. Agadzhanyan set to journey through the mystic teachings of the Craft in order to better understand their influence in society. On November 16, 2016, he was initiated an Entered Apprentice Mason, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft in February 2017, and raised a Master Mason on April 11, 2017 in Oakland Durant Rockridge Lodge No. 188 in the city of Oakland, California. It was there, where he discovered the history of certain individuals, such as Henry Durant the founder of the University of California school system and George Pardee, a Governor of California, who held active memberships. With this inspiration Mr. Agadzhanyan made it his mission to record the influence of Freemasonry on the lives of trailblazing individuals, and how the principles inculcated in this ancient knowledge developed the characteristics of early colonial American culture.

Today, he serves humbly as the Senior Warden of Oakland Durant Rockridge Lodge No. 188 and will serve as the incoming Master starting December 2022 until December 2023. He holds active membership in other Masonic lodges, including Live Oak Lodge No. 61, and Mission Peak Lodge Under dispensation, which he is a founding and charter member of. Currently, he serves as the Assistant Grand Organist of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of California. Mr. Agadzhanyan also holds the degree of the Master of the Royal secret of the Ancient and Accepted

Scottish Rite, the 32nd degree of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. He continues to serve his Craft with great honor and respect to its ancient teachings of Fraternal Love, the search for Truth, and aiding humankind through Charity and Relief.

Dedication

What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.

- Albert Pike

Dedicated to my beloved mentor, Albert Keshishian (1927-2018), who was the most charitable, kind, and pure hearted individual and Freemason. Losing you has only gotten more difficult, but your legacy and character has inspired me to become who I am today. May your memory live forever.

I would also like to dedicate this to my dear Brethren of my respective Masonic Lodges, Concordant Bodies and to the Grand Lodge of California. Your unconditional friendship will always be cherished.

Acknowledgements

A very special thanks to Dr. Donald Ostrowski, Dr. Doug Bond, and Dr. Michael Miner for their support and guidance throughout.

Also to the most incredible support system, my wife Hripsime, who has encouraged me and supported me throughout the timeline of this document. Thank you, my dear, for supporting me in all my endeavors.

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I

Introduction

Little is known about what exactly the Freemasons and the Founding Fathers set forth as their political agenda. Previous scholars have attempted to dig up files and letters to better understand the connection between the founding of the United States and the Freemasons. Because of the oaths taken to protect the secrets of the order, much of these ideals have remained hidden to the outside world. Without concrete examples of the founding fathers, such as Washington and Franklin, tying their core beliefs to the order, little has been found. With a solid foundation in Masonic philosophy, I will aim to dig up documents and correspondences from the eighteenth century to discover hidden meanings and messages. In other words, I will attempt to tie these founding documents to Masonic principles.

Steven C. Bullock has one of the most phenomenal and accurate accounts of the spread of Freemasonry through England to the Western Hemisphere. In his book, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order*, Bullock digs into the archives of the Grand Lodges of New York, Philadelphia, and Massachusetts, and other concordant Masonic bodies, in order to tie the influences of Masonry during the Revolutionary War. Although Bullock's account is an exceptional one, there is little discovered on the exact ties between early Masonic principles and their influences in the founding of the United States. Bullock's work focuses on the transformation of American society and culture during the period of colonialism through the Jacksonian era. From thoroughly researching academic works and articles, I conclude that there has been no attempt to directly tie the creation of the Constitution itself to Masonic philosophy.

Freemasonry traces its origins to local fraternities of practicing stonemasons of the fourteenth century, which regulated qualifications of stonemasons and their work with clients. Similar to ranks in many vocations, Masons also had ranks: the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master. In the middle ages, Freemasonry went from an operative craft to a speculative craft, meaning that stonemasonry is not practiced, but its philosophy is observed, or speculated. The ranks turned into initiatic degrees with each degree offering teachings of the craft. The philosophy behind these degrees is often described as esoteric and aims to enlighten individuals through a teaching of progressive sciences similar to those found in European Enlightenment. The most important teachings follow the ancient principles of faith, hope, and charity: to have faith in what holds true, to have hope or confidence in our fellow beings, and most importantly, to be charitable to our community. Societies that branch out of Freemasonry, including the Carbonari, follow the same principles.[1]

Dr. Margaret Jacob of University of California, Los Angeles, provides a compelling argument in her work titled, "Freemasonry and Government: The Political Meaning of Civil Society in Eighteenth Century Europe." With an overwhelming amount of evidence preserved from the preserved records of Masonic Lodges throughout eighteenth century Europe. Although her work does not factor in the ties between the Craft and the founding of the United States government and its Constitution, it provides a tie between the establishment of Masonic lodges followed by the first-ever establishment of European representative government during the Enlightenment era.[2] Of this evidence, she provides examples of English and French Masonic

[1] R. John Rath, "The Carbonari: Their Origins, Initiation Rites, and Aims." *American Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (1964): 353–370.

[2] Margaret C. Jacob, "Freemasonry and Government: The Political Meaning of Civil Society in Eighteenth Century Europe," *Policy Studies Organization* (PSO), 29 Apr 2015, 2.

lodges and their roles in aiding in the success of the emergence of the new governments. Lodge records show that French Freemasons were highly active in civil life after the Revolution. This, as Jacob explains, is due to the Freemasons' goal of promoting civility, constitutionality, and just governance.[3] Prior to 1789, Freemasonry was the single institution of civil society. In conclusion, one of my goals would be to apply Dr. Jacob's framework connecting Freemasons and their push for representative government during European Enlightenment to the United States' adoption of Masonic philosophies and practices to establish a newfound country.

The laws and edicts of the Freemasons were so institutionalized, that US courts started to recognize them as "fixed principles, an unalterable constitutional framework."[4] Kevin Butterfield's research shows that the word *constitution* was introduced to the world through the exportation of Freemasonry from England via Anderson's Constitutions of the Freemasons. Moreover, Masonic laws have been used to decide cases and to embrace judicial review. Smith v. Smith is one example of a court using Masonic Jurisprudence in weighing a case, especially because of its detailed principles and required conformity of its voluntary members.

There lies a long and mysterious story both before and after the unification of the colonies and the founding of the United States of America. In other parts of the world, mainly Western Europe, Freemasonry was a driving factor in the destruction of governments that operation on traditional notions of inequality and privilege.[5] To be more specific, the Freemasons have long been

[3] Jacob, "Freemasonry and Government," 12.

[4] Kevin Butterfield, "The Right to Be a Freemason: Secret Societies and the Power of the Law in the Early Republic," *Commonplace*, 3 Feb. 2020.

[5] Margaret C. Jacob, "Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe." *Google Books* (Oxford University Press, 26 Dec. 1991).

responsible for severing the tie between the church and the state, and thus, subjecting the craft[6] to scrutiny by monarchs and churches. With an already established tie between new governments and Freemasons, I will advance that, as Colonial America was pushing for an end to colonial rule, several Founding Fathers, who were also Freemasons, used Masonic principles to shape and erect a new country.

My thesis will address the following questions: To what extent have Masonic principles influenced the Founding fathers and the documents pertaining to the Supreme Laws of the Land? Did the Founding Fathers, namely Benjamin Franklin, draw upon the notions held in the Masonic Constitution to craft a constitution of their own? Finally, how similar are the Masonic constitution and the United States Constitution, both in wording and philosophical meaning?

Although Bullock's account is an exceptional one, there is little discovered on the exact ties between early Masonic principles and their influences in the founding of the United States. In other words, my work will defend its originality by taking a first-time attempt to annotate these texts. The largest missing information comes from the lack of text-by-text comparisons of these important documents, which would be an ultimate form of testing of my thesis question. A text-by-text analysis will not only demonstrate the similarities between the Masonic Constitution and the United States Constitution, but also it will show a chronological progression between the several documents to be analyzed. In other words, the texts will be aligned in a manner where a clear lineage is formed.

[6] I describe the organization as a craft because the root principles of Freemasonry are based on the operative stone masons. Freemasonry is believed to have started as stone masons adopted the principles of the "craft" to create the rites and rituals of the Freemasons. This process is often described as the transition from operative to speculative stone masons.

I delicately revisit the original guiding principles that set the cornerstone of the United States of America to shine light on the forgotten progression of the founding documents of the nation and of the principles that were directly borrowed from Anderson's constitution. This thesis will not expose any sensitive information regarding the ritual of the Freemasons. To assist with understanding the social organization, the next section will break down the social organization of the Fraternity followed by an outline of the teachings brought up in the three degrees of Freemasonry. A glossary is included at the end to further assist the reader to understand the lexicon of Masonry commonly used in research and general discourse.

II.

Degrees of Freemasonry

Since its induction to the world in an institutional fashion, Freemasonry has not changed its fundamental teachings since 1717. The philosophical teachings bestowed upon a Freemason today are the same teachings that one would have received several centuries ago. To better understand how those teachings can influence the political actions of a person, namely the drafters of the Nation's documents, one must be able to comprehend the basic teachings and schools of thought of the Institution. These lessons, even the most fundamental and secretive in nature, are no hidden mystery as several exposés have revealed what goes on within a Masonic Lodge. In this section, the teachings of the three degrees intend to inform the reader, rather than serve as a divulgence of the teachings of Freemasonry.

Masonic Lodges confer three degrees known as the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason degrees. The Entered Apprentice serves as an initiatic degree and introduces the candidate to Masonic teachings. Afterward, a Mason is then passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, which adds a deeper understanding of the liberal arts and sciences. Lastly, the journey ends with the Master Mason degree, which confers upon the candidate all the teachings of Freemasonry through esoteric symbolism and storytelling.

Entered Apprentice Degree

In the Entered Apprentice Degree, the non-Mason, commonly referred to as a prospect, is introduced to the basic principles of Masonry and of a Lodge. More importantly, the candidate is taught a very essential and first lesson; that a belief in God is necessary.

It is important to note that Freemasonry is not a religion, and neither is it a substitute for any other religion. A fundamental belief that there is a higher being responsible for the creation of the universe and everything it contains is key to Masonic traditions and ritual. According to tradition, the belief in this higher entity is a foundational part of life as a belief in this entity allows the Freemason to walk through life, and Freemasonry, by the blessings and empowerment of God.

Life and its truths are also contemplated, as Masons are taught to be seekers of truth in the Entered Apprentice Degree. This quest for truth throughout the walks of life is to teach the entered apprentices that traits, such as honesty, integrity, and justness, are fundamental aspects to good order and lead to the shaping of the most important characteristic of an individual: sincerity. As one measures the content of another's characteristic, the Freemason is reminded that by those same standards, he will also be measured. Lastly, the Mason is taught that truth is limitless, and that it should be sought with this very sincerity.

As the degree progresses, the candidate is introduced to the foundational aspects of relationships, namely the brotherhood of the Fraternity, and the obligations one is required to take on within this fraternal brotherhood. These teachings start with some rather universal thoughts, such as the Mason recognizing his place in his home and in society and is responsible for the good care of those who depend on him. Honesty, integrity, and several other tenets of Freemasonry are to be exemplified in the personal lives of Masons to prove their fidelity to the craft and to the teachings. When the needs of a Mason's family are met, it is expected that he assists his fellow human beings, and his brothers. Obligations for assisting fellow Masons and society in general are limitless and ongoing throughout life. Recognizing that a Mason's obligations to his family come first, the obligation of aiding fellow mankind comes only after the obligations of family and must not cause hardship to one's personal health or life.

In the lecture of this degree, the new initiate is taught that Freemasonry as a brotherhood is not only for those within the confines of the Lodges, but for all men, who are created equally by the Supreme Architect. The degree refers to man in a universal sense, meaning that all fellow beings are created equally and exist to support each other. Although the institution only accepts men, the fundamental teachings of friendship are meant to be universal in its nature.

Lastly, the Apprentice is taught that one needs the proper tools, rather symbolic tools, to achieve these goals. During the degree, the candidate is presented with a set of working tools, and an explanation is given on their uses, both in Operative and in Speculative Masonry. As an ancient stone mason would use these tools to mold ashlars into their shape for the builder's use, the speculative Mason uses these tools to create a better man out of himself. By building a better person, one inevitably makes a small impact in the world, and thus, creates a greater sense of existence and life.

For the Entered Apprentice Degree, the fundamentals are the following: a strong and foundational belief in God, the everlasting search for truth, the importance of the Brotherhood, and the builder's tool so essential in the development of character.

Fellowcraft Degree

After the prospect is initiated into the Craft through the Entered Apprentice degree, the next goal for the Mason is to pass to the degree of Fellowcraft. The term "pass" refers to both a figurative and literal passage that takes place during the degree. Through the teachings provided by the seven liberal arts and sciences, which include geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, grammar, and logic, a Mason is informed that one must improve themselves through

the in-depth studies and understanding of these subjects. Learning and education allows the Mason to understand the difference between poor judgments and responsible decisions.

Humans have tended to, and continue to do so, create inaccurate and false analyses of issues presented to them without having a full grasp of the situation at hand. A fitting example of this would be to observe the manner in which both Freemasonry and Freemasons have been treated throughout history, especially by those who did not have a deep understanding of the foundation of Masonry. One such case are the popes who served from Clement XII (r. 1730–1740) to Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903).[7] These popes, without having a solid understanding of the practices of the Freemasons, accepted inaccurate knowledge about the Craft and chose to spread false rumors about Freemasonry. The popes were evidently not Freemasons and chose to study the fraternity based on their theological viewpoints rather than accepting it for a more general philosophical school of thought.

The Fellowcraft Degree, therefore, serves as the degree that teaches Freemasons that to accomplish building a better world amongst each other, it is necessary to seek and spread truths found in knowledge. In a similar fashion, the Freemason is reminded of never to forget the past, but to hold it with reverence as it will serve significantly in the present and in the future. This is a universal point, as everyone is reminded in their lives that one must understand the past to avoid repeating the errors of it in the future. Rather than constantly having to search for a new path in life, especially for one consistent with the times, Fellowcrafts are taught that a simple application

[7] Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Masonic Publishing, 1927), vol. 1, p. 123.

of the lessons learned from the past to the present avoid causing one from having to relearn from mistakes by taking the wrong paths in life.

Lastly, in this degree, the Fellowcraft learns the importance of responsibility to oneself and the world around him. Similarly, to the Entered Apprentice, the degree stresses the importance of the obligations pertaining to one's family and to mankind. The emphasis here is about both action and the responsibility that comes with those actions. Fellowcrafts are then inculcated the importance of their relationships with God and his fellow creatures. Accepting this degree of responsibility demonstrated the principles of the brotherhood and the individual's contribution in maintaining the good order and working toward a peaceful society. Hence, the acceptance of responsibility through willful obligations and the study of the liberal arts and sciences aids the Fellowcraft in making the world a better place by promising to aid his fellow beings to the best of his abilities and by using this ancient knowledge in bettering himself.

Master Mason Degree

In Craft Freemasonry, the Master Mason degree serves as the culminating degree. This degree is the symbolic ending of a Mason's journey and development in Freemasonry.[8] Freemasonry has several structures within it, that act as affiliated bodies, such as the Scottish Rite, but there is no higher and more important degree to a Mason than that of the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. Ultimately, this degree bestows upon the candidate wise and serious lessons of

[8] Freemasonry consists of several organizations and units, commonly referred to as Appendant and Concordant bodies. Some of these organizations include the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the York Rite, the Shriners, and so forth. The highest degree one can obtain in Craft Freemasonry is the third degree, however, there are several degrees a Mason can pursue in his journey. These degrees expand the gaps in the stories and dilemmas presented in the first three degrees.

Freemasonry. Of these several teachings and lessons, one is challenged to discover which of these lessons is most crucial to his development.

The Master Mason degree, similarly, to the previous two degrees, hold symbols and tools with esoteric connotations. Symbols, such as the square, compass, and the trowel are commonly recognized and well-known to Masons and non-Masons alike. From these symbols, the compass is perhaps the most important. Some of the lessons that stem from the extended compass are those of friendship, brotherly love, and of course, morality.[9] A compass, regardless of its size, always constructs a true circle, of which contains all earthly passions and desires within its confines. Hence, the Mason is taught that all personal motives should be limited, and morality should be boundless.

Another yet inseparable symbol of Freemasonry is the square, which is intertwined with the compass to form the distinct mark of the Freemasons. The square, along with the compass, is a symbol of both truth and morality. As the square is a tool used to create perfectly shaped and measured ashlars for buildings, it is intended to be a tool used to square one's actions toward all mankind. Freemasonry does not expect its members to be perfect in any sense, but rather, provides a standard and goal for which to ultimately strive.

Common to stone masons, the trowel is another widely recognized symbol. As Operative Masons use the trowel to spread the cement to unite the several ashlars into one common structure, Speculative Masons are taught to make use of it for a more noble reason: to spread brotherly love and affection to unify the individual to the brotherhood of man. This teaches the

[9] In contemporary culture, we often refer to the moral compass when faced with a difficult decision revolving around a moral action. This stems from the Masonic use of the compass as an example of circumscribing a moral boundary.

Mason to avoid individualistic tendencies and unite himself to a common mass, or rather, a goal of peaceful unity yet again.

Tools and symbols aside, the most remarkable section of this degree is the representation of the Legend of Hiram Abif. This legend tells the story of a man, whose life came to a tragic end when faced with a difficult challenge. When a group of workers of the Temple of Solomon and feared they would not receive the secrets of a Master Mason, they challenged Hiram Abif to release those secrets unlawfully. Hiram refused and lost his life, ever remembering his obligations of fidelity, honor, and secrecy. At the root of the story, it is a legend not so unique to Freemasonry, as the same messages are conveyed in the legend of Adonis in Greek mythology and Osiris in ancient Egypt.

Since its institution, Freemasonry has been observed to be a secret society, especially by monarchs and religious leaders. It is, simply put, a society with secrets, rather than a secret society. Freemasonry is best described as an initiatic society, similar to civic groups, such as the Lions or Rotary. Even the fraternities and sororities of college campuses maintain certain secrets through symbols and lessons with significant meanings to its membership. The symbols, signs, and lessons of Masonry are significant in depth and personal to each member, hence why it cannot be discussed much further than the basic outline provided here. By highlighting the most known and recognized philosophies of the Freemasons, the reader can understand the operation and teachings of the organization, and what the Founding Fathers of the colonial era could very well be influenced by.

III.

Organization, Structure, and Nomenclature

Before I dive into the inner workings of these documents and Freemasonry's place in them, I would like to first turn to the practice of Freemasonry as a craft. Freemasonry traces its origins to local fraternities of practicing stonemasons of the fourteenth century, which regulated qualifications of stonemasons and their work with clients. Similar to ranks in many vocations, Masons also had ranks: the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master. In the Middle Ages, Freemasonry went from an operative craft to a speculative craft, meaning that stonemasonry is not practiced, but its philosophy is observed, or speculated. The ranks turned into initiatic degrees with each degree offering teachings of the craft. The philosophy behind these degrees is often described as esoteric and aims to enlighten individuals through a teaching of progressive sciences similar to those found in European Enlightenment. The most important teachings follow the ancient principles of faith, hope, and charity: to have faith in what holds true, to have hope or confidence in our fellow beings, and most importantly, to be charitable to our community. Societies that branch out of Freemasonry, including the Carbonari, follow the same principles.

The local organizational unit of Freemasonry is the Lodge, which is usually supervised or governed at a regional level by a Grand Lodge or Grand Orient. Each of these Grand Lodges are based on a certain jurisdiction rather than as an international and borderless institution. Within local Lodges, a volume of Holy Scripture must be present in order to confer a degree or to conduct

regular business. Since Freemasonry has members of all sects, religions, and occupations, the holy writings can be from any established religions ranging from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and even the ancient holy scriptures of Tibetan monks. The discussion of religion and politics during Masonic dealings is banned due to its inherent nature of dividing man. During the ceremony of initiation, the candidate is expected to swear on a volume of appropriate sacred texts to fulfill certain obligations as a Mason. Some of the obligations include the sincere will to help all fellow creatures of mankind, the duty to support a fellow Mason in distress, and most importantly, not to reveal the secrets invested during the degrees to outsiders and members of lower degrees. To conclude, Freemasonry started out, and remains, an organization that aims for the betterment of good individuals and to endeavor charitable work both locally and internationally.

Freemasons are often reminded that they are supposed to "meet upon the level of equality, act by the plumb of uprightness, and part upon the square of virtue."[10] With a mission such as this, it is no wonder that a select group of founding fathers might allow themselves to heavily base their life's work and writings on the moral teachings of the craft of Freemasonry. To this date, the most accurate account of rules, laws, and regulations of the craft come through Anderson's Constitution. Written by Reverend James Anderson, who was a Scottish writer and Freemason, the purpose of this constitution was to unite the lodges of England under one United Grand Lodge of England. This was a successful attempt to write a collective history and description of practices of the craft and was titled *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons Containing the History, Charges,*

[10] A quote borrowed from the Grand Lodge of Ohio website. https://www.freemason.com/how-to-join/what-is-freemasonry/.

Regulations, &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful FRATERNITY.[11] The purpose of this book was then to admit members into the craft who were not yet referred to as "accepted" masons."[12] By accepting Masons into the Grand Lodge of England, the practice led to a fundamental change of an operative craft to a speculative school of reasoning and philosophy.

The written work was significant and, thus, was adopted by the Grand Lodge of England in order to clearly define its powers and relations between the Grand Lodge and local lodges and individual Freemasons. It served the Masonic views on governance so well that the Scottish and Irish Grand Lodges adopted it for use in their jurisdictions. Anderson's Constitution made its way to Colonial America in 1734 when Benjamin Franklin issued a reprint in Philadelphia to be used by American Masons. In this identical work, there exists a set of fundamental legislative powers and democratic principles that would soon come into play as the law of the land of the United States.

[11] James Anderson, Benjamin Franklin, and Paul Royster, "The Constitutions of the Free-Masons (1734). An Online Electronic Edition," DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln, accessed April 14, 2020, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/25/).

[12] Anderson, Franklin, and Royster, "The Constitutions of the Free-Masons," 7.

IV.

Notable Masonic Founding Fathers

It is important to discuss the activities of key Founding Fathers who were Freemasons and how their actions single-handedly influenced the founding documents of the Nation. Mere scribbles of Masonic names on these documents would be as meaningless as counting names of those who had red doors to their houses upon signing the Constitution without this evidence.

Benjamin Franklin

Of the several signers and drafters of the Constitution who were Freemasons, Benjamin Franklin stands out as the most unique. From the moment the idea of independence came to fruition, Franklin found himself present at all the draftings of the Articles of Confederation, the Continental Congress meetings, and finally, at the signing of the U.S. Constitution. There is no doubt that Franklin had a heavy influence with his presence.

During his early years, the young Benjamin Franklin became the printer, editor, and publisher of his own newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Moreover, his broad involvement with several facets of society brought forth several scientific inventions, and success with writing and as a political figure. His ability to print and publish as he wished allowed him to spread the importance of the move for independence, which earned him a spot as a delegate to the First

Continental Congress. Franklin's influences would only deepen as he was a key player and part of the 1787 Philadelphia Constitutional Convention. After three years of joining the Freemasons in 1731, Benjamin Franklin was appointed to serve as the Provincial Grand Master of the Modern Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in 1734. He was initiated into St. John Lodge at Tun Tavern in February 1731, which is the oldest Lodge to be found in Pennsylvania.[13] In addition to his already quickly growing resumé, Franklin published the first Masonic book in 1734. This book was Franklin's own rendition of the already published Anderson's Constitution of the Freemasons published in 1723 for the use of Masonic lodges and the United Grand Lodge of England founded in 1717. We will later discover that his own edition of the Masonic Constitutions would emphasize indirectly the teachings of the Enlightenment, which Masonry widely advocated. One such teaching was the push for the use of a nondenominational God rather than the Trinitarian God that the Ancient Masons and colonial-era Americans were used to seeing. His push for universalism is seen in the following letter that Franklin wrote to Henry Price, who was the first Provincial Grand Master in the western Hemisphere:

> "I beg leave…to inform you, that some false and rebel Brethren, who are foreigners, being about to set up a distinct Lodge in opposition to the old and true Brethren here, pretending to make Masons for a bowl of punch, and the Craft is like to come into disesteem among us unless the true Brethren are countenanced and distinguished by some such special authority as herein desired."[14]

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[13] *Gould's History of Freemasonry throughout the World*, 6 vols. http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/goulds_history_volume_4.htm, vol. 4, 362.

[14] Benjamin Franklin. "Letter to Henry Price: Nov. 28, 1734." Franklin Papers, vol. 1. The Packard Humanities Institute. Database online; accessed March 30, 2022.

Franklin was quite upset with the existence of the Ancient Grand Lodge in his own colony, which advocated for the use of Christian-based ideology rather than of a universalist-based ideology set to be more inclusive. After contributing greatly to the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and thereafter signing it, Franklin traveled to France as an American Ambassador to convince King Louis XVI to support the creation of a United States.[15] Franklin yet again utilized his ties to Freemasonry to leverage support for the cause. He endeavored to gain favor of the French by joining the Lodge of Nine Sisters and serving as its Master from 1779 to 1781.[16] During this time, Voltaire, a famous French aristocrat, and widely recognized symbol of the Enlightenment, was initiated under the direction of Franklin.[17] Perhaps Voltaire's beliefs in reason inspired him to join the Fraternity. Franklin's legacies also included the founding of the first subscription library, the first hospital in 1751, and the first American university – the University of Pennsylvania.[18] This university would serve as the first of its kind as its main goal was a curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences rather than training young men for Christian ministry.

George Washington

Of the Masonic Founding Fathers, George Washington is arguably the most recognized and well known. He is widely considered to be the founder and father of the Nation, on top of

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[15] US History.org. "The Electric Ben Franklin"; available from http://www.ushistory.org/Franklin/info; Internet; accessed March 30, 2022.

[16] "Franklin Opening the Lodge." *Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library Blog*, 3 Sept. 2009, https://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library_and_archives/2009/09/franklin-opening-the-lodge.html.

[17] R. Weisberger, *Benjamin Franklin: A Masonic Enlightener in Paris: Semantic Scholar*. 1 Jan. 1986, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Benjamin-Franklin%3A-A-Masonic-Enlightener-in-Paris-Weisberger/b86e5d046eefbd9783ed035066b2b93216458d44.

[18] "Penn's History," University of Pennsylvania, https://www.upenn.edu/about/history.

being a military General and devoted Freemason. Washington started his Masonic journey in Fredericksburg Lodge located in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He was initiated in November 1752, passed to Fellowcraft in March 1753, and raised to the degree of Master Mason in August of the same year.[19] Despite being a young man when he started this endeavor, Washington, similar to Franklin, already had an impressive list of experience. He served as a Major in the Virginia Militia and developed superior skills as a surveyor. After moving to Mount Vernon, Washington became the only Mason in US history to serve as both Master of his lodge in Alexandria, Virginia, and President of the United States simultaneously.[20]

Washington soon utilized his ties with Freemasonry in building his staff after he assumed command of the Continental Army. Since he had a high regard for Freemasonry and its members, Washington confided in those he found in Lodge rooms. A vast majority of his staff consisted of Masons, and he even went on to promote Masonry within the army and chartered military lodges. These lodges would serve as either temporary or permanent places where newly initiated Freemasons could meet and hold regular communications. These Lodges had temporary fixtures that would often travel alongside the groups of men as they moved around during war times and missions.

Traditions and teachings of Masonry also reflected strongly in Washington's speeches to fellow patriots and in his writings. In his farewell address, Washington spoke of his wishes for a "union and brotherly affection may be perpetual." He delineated unity as "the main pillar in the

[19] Gwmnma. "George Washington, the Mason." *GWMNMA*, https://gwmemorial.org/pages/george-washington-the-mason.

[20] Ibid.

edifice of your real independence."[21] Moreover, he promoted central practices within Freemasonry by encouraging fellow Americans to "observe good faith and justice toward all nations, and to cultivate peace and harmony with all," which should be "guided by a sense of justice and benevolence."[22] These examples are not mere coincidences, and it is no doubt that President Washington was making clear-cut references to the teachings presented in the three degrees of Freemasonry.

His effective military strategy, along with his Masonic ties, would cement his role in the development of the Nation. Washington presided over the Constitutional Convention in 1787, giving his full support for the cause and its efforts alongside Benjamin Franklin, who was the oldest member of the Convention at 81 years old.

This era of colonial Freemasonry in America also saw a great deal of public events and demonstrations of Masonic activities. One such ceremony was the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol building in Washington, DC. The local newspaper of Georgetown wrote on September 21, 1793, that Washington was heavily involved with the ceremony in a Masonic fashion, that is, with Masonic traditions and regalia. Masons primarily from Maryland and Virginia marched in a large crowd from the President's square to the location on the Capitol building plot. When these Masons had arrived, they formed a large circle around George Washington, who was ornamented with a Masonic apron made by the wife of General Lafayette (also a Freemason). The cornerstone of the Nation was laid whereupon the future Capitol building would be erected. After the cornerstone was laid, the tradition of the Masons is to cover cornerstones with corn, wine, and oil, which are

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[21] George Washington, Farewell Address, December 7, 1796, quoted in Thomas S. Roy, "George Washington the Mason," in *Dare We Be Masons and Other Addresses* (Portland, ME: Anthoensen Press, 1966), 107.

[22] Ibid.

the wages of a Fellowcraft Mason. Richard Brookheiser, who is an expert on George Washington, wrote that "in 1793, when Washington laid the cornerstone of the Capitol, Lodge 22 of Alexandria, Virginia, organized the parade, with Washington…wearing a Masonic apron knitted for him by Madame Lafayette, whose husband belonged to the lodge of Saint Jean de la Candeur."[23] This is further evidence that Washington did not simply join Freemasonry to take advantage of its influence, but rather, served the Fraternity as an active member and inculcated its teachings to the general public.

Paul Revere

Another Founding Father and enthusiast of Freemasonry was Paul Revere, who, during a speech in 1797, stated that the "greatest happiness" of his life was serving as Grand Master of Massachusetts.[24] Unlike Washington and Franklin, Paul Revere viewed Freemasonry through a different facet: he considered his involvement with the craft to be a means of making a name for himself in Boston society as an individual and businessman. Mark Tabbert states: "Revere saw Freemasonry as a step toward both self-improvement and social advancement."[25]

Freemasonry in the state of Massachusetts started just a year before Revere was born in 1734. Revere was initiated into St. Andrew's Lodge in 1760 when he was 25 years old. This lodge was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland and was an ancient Masonic lodge. St. Andrews

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[23] Richard Brookheiser, *Rediscovering George Washington Founding Father* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996), 149.

[24] Edith Steblecki, "Paul Revere and Freemasonry: A Lifelong Pursuit," *Paul Revere House*, 28 Apr. 2020, https://www.paulreverehouse.org/paul-revere-and-freemasonry-a-lifelong-pursuit/.

[25] Mark Tabbert, *American Freemasons* (Lexington, MA: National Heritage Museum, 2005), 37.

Lodge consisted of men who were craftsmen, which Revere certainly was and fit right in. During his lifetime, Paul Revere gained several skills including engraving, silverwork, bell casting, dental work, and rolling copper into sheets. He was as successful as a businessman as he was an artisanal craftsman, making him a well-rounded and well-respected individual.

In contrast to both Washington and Franklin who had a social circle that expanded well into both the political and military sects, Revere was not considered to be a person of high social standing initially. It is evident that Freemasonry provided an environment to Revere where he could participate in recreational, political, and social connections. What stood out to Revere most was that his admission into St. Andrews Lodge was based on his merit rather than his social status and education, according to Steblecki. This allowed him to gain respect and idealize the traditions of Masonry and grow fond of the belief that all men could create a better world together through their moral conducts.

During his tenure at St. Andrews Lodge, Paul Revere served his lodge with pride and commitment. Between the years 1762 and 1797, there were only four years where he did not serve in a Masonic office. The minutes of his lodge record that he religiously attended the communications of his lodge, only missing 16 of the 185 held between 1761 and 1771. In December 1770, he became the master of the lodge, and during this busy period, he purchased the famous Green Dragon Tavern to serve as a meeting place for the Masons of the Boston area.

This decade also saw the start of the American Revolution, and to Freemasons, St. Andrews Lodge is associated with the pre-revolutionary activities leading up to the Revolution. One event stands out significantly: the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773. The surviving meeting minutes of the lodge suggest heavy involvement by its members and other Masons in the Boston Tea Party. Minutes also account for those lodge members involved and even discussions leading

up to the event. An even more famous story is of his Midnight Ride that occurred April 1775, which he was tasked with alarming the American colonial militia of the approach of British forces before the battles of Lexington and Concord. Revere's legacy lives on as he was a member of the Committee of Correspondence and worked tirelessly to gain support for the federal constitution. Although Revere was not a part of the Constitutional Convention, his active role in late Colonial Freemasonry depicts how the growth and development of this fraternal society impacted the politics and culture of early Americans.

Other Key Figures

There yet remains several other key Founding Fathers who, with their connections and influences in the Fraternity, played a significant role in both shaping Colonial America and of the US Constitution. Founders, such as John Hancock, John Dickinson, Samuel Adams, and John Jay join the long list of Freemasons who partook, to some extent, in political offices, roles, and drafters of the documents that led to the creation of the United States of America.

According to the National Heritage Museum of Massachusetts, John Hancock was also a member of the St. Andrews Lodge located in Boston. Hancock served as the presiding officer of the Continental Congress, and it was during this time he signed the Declaration of Independence. During this period, Hancock heavily used his influence amongst radicals and moderates alike to gain traction and favor for an American revolution.

Other Founding Fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison are only rumored to have been Freemasons, as the records for several colonial lodges have been destroyed through natural and unnatural means. On February 11, 1795, James Madison received a letter from the Governor of Maryland, John Francis Mercer, which reads: "I have had no opportunity of

congratulating you before on your becoming a Free Mason – a very ancient and honorable fraternity."[26] There yet remains several documents such as this one waiting to be discovered and its truths revealed.

Although the year 1717 marked the foundation of modern Freemasonry, its roots and origins span several centuries prior to that. In this section, I will analyze some key British Masonic documents from the High Middles Ages, and how these documents may have, to an extent, influenced the Glorious Revolution of 1688. In short, a series of event between the years 1688 and 1689 led to the exile of King James the II. It is also widely considered to be the starting point of what Western Civilization sees as a Bill of Rights, namely the freedom of speech and assembly, and especially the role of Parliament. Since this original Constitution influenced the Constitution of the United States of America, it is important to attempt to trace the events, individuals, and principles at play from the Middle Ages in the United Kingdom to the finalized United States Constitution. Essentially, this section will attempt to depict the development of British Masonic principles and its influence in the culture of the United Kingdom, and how these principles migrated to Colonial America and influenced their founding principles.

[26] James Madison and John Francis Mercer, *John Francis Mercer to James Madison*. 1795. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/mjm013160/>.

V.

Masonry in the Dark Ages to the High Middle Ages

Before modern Freemasonry existed, or rather Speculative Freemasonry, communities of stone masons came together to form craft guilds. During the construction of a monument, especially one of significant size or design, it is often required to have an overseer of the work and designs, and workers who had specific tasks assigned to them. These tasks included cutting and shaping stones, laying the stone, and finally, carving intricate designs after the stones were set. An entered apprentice, having little to no experience, was tasked with uncovering stones from a quarry for the builders' use. Those with more experience were tasked with laying the ashlars and shaping the stone with intricate designs. Lastly, the master, or overseer of work, was charged with hiring these stone masons and ensuring a fair pay, an education, housing, the right to assembly, and other paid holidays.

Therefore, the difficult nature of building intricate monuments of the Middle Ages saw the development of a local governance to carefully coordinate and train the craftsmen involved with erecting these monuments. The Dark Ages saw a community of stone masons come together to form guilds, while the High Middle Ages saw the development and formation of craft guilds with charters, constitutions, and more importantly, a government structure that guaranteed certain basic freedoms.[27] Early constitutions of these craft guilds dealt with the ethics of the guilds and their respective crafts, the relations between the overseers of the work and apprentices, required duties,

[27] J. H. A. Bone, "Old English Guilds and Trade Unions," *Atlantic Monthly (1857-1932)*, vol. 39, no. 000233, 03 (1877): 278. *ProQuest*, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/magazines/old-english-guilds-trade-unions/docview/203569904/se-2.

wages, moral behavior of the stone masons to God and the King. Masters of the stone guilds required the apprentices to take an oath of allegiance, secrecy, and brotherhood. Here is an example of one such oath from the Guild of St. Katherine at Stamford:

> "I shall be a true man to God almighty, to our Lady Saint Mary and to St. Katherine, in whose honor and worship this guild is founded; and shall be obedient to the alderman of the guild and to his successors, and come to him and to his Brethren when I have warnings and not absent myself without reasonable cause. I shall be ready to pay at scot and bear lot and all my duties truly to pay and do; the ordinances, constitutions, and rules, with the counsel of the same guild, keep, obey, and perform, and to my power maintain, to my life's end, so help me God and Holy Dame and by this book…"[28]

Craft Guilds and Social Guilds were both English in origin and played a deep and lasting role in the development of Anglo-Saxon culture and laws. Early Masonic Lodges that were a part of the guild system had three distinct constitutional powers: they had the right to exercise judicial powers separate from the state, guilds were set up to serve as an independent, local government, and lastly, had the right to exercise the right of voluntary association, the right of assembly, and speech.[29] In the oldest surviving British Masonic document, known as the Regius Poem, fifteen charges laid out the duties, freedoms, and obligations of 14th-century Freemasons. Moreover, this poem depicts how King Athelstan was the founder of Anglo-Saxon Masonry and the link between

[28] Ibid., 282.

[29] George Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (London: Methuen, 1908), 6-7.

ancient operative Masons and modern Speculative Masons. The Regius Poem was the first Masonic document to record this history and the ties between Athelstan and the original charges.

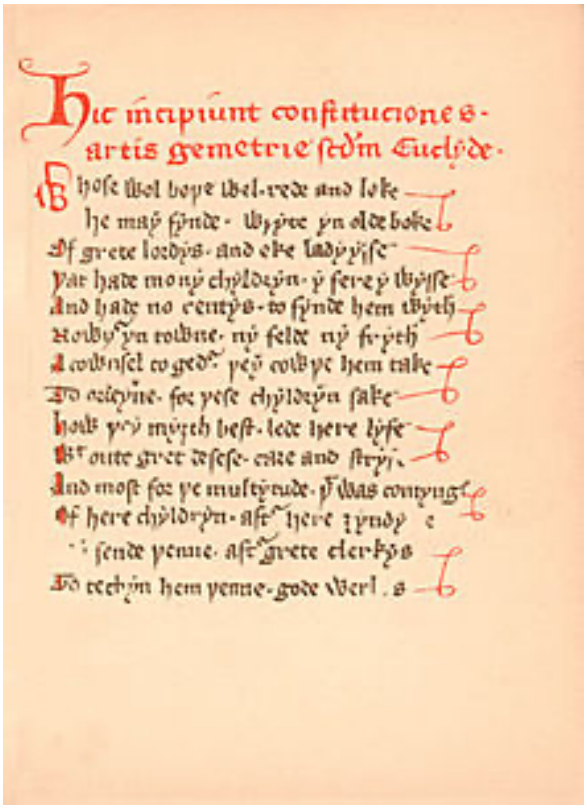
The Regius Poem

During the time between the High Middle Ages and the Late Middle Ages (11th–15th Century), several Masonic documents were written and published. Some, such as the Regius Poem, served as a code of regulations. Others, served as a story of Masonry and to preserve the beliefs and the creation of ancient Freemasonry, such as the Matthew Cooke Manuscript. The Regius Poem is significant to the foundation of modern Freemasonry for two reasons. It is the oldest existing document to record the ancient charges, or duties, of Freemasons, and secondly, it records the influence of Masonic guilds in King Athelstan's reign over Great Britain.[30] This work is widely considered to be written around 1390 AD by a priest or a monk, who had access to earlier Masonic works. Written in the language of Chaucer, this document sets forth fifteen articles and fifteen points in a poetic format. For example, here is the poem that documents the arrival and flourishing of Freemasonry during Athelstan's rule.[31]

> "This craft came into England, as I you say,
> In time of good King Athelstane's day;
> He made then both hall and even bower,
> And high temples of great honour,
> To disport him in both day and night,
> And to worship his God with all his might.

[30] Frederick Maurice Hunter, et al., *A Study and an Interpretation of the Regius Manuscript, the Earliest Masonic Doucment. The Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Masonry and Masonic History as an Ever-Widening Road to Freedom*. Research Lodge of Oregon, No. 198, A. F. & A. M., 1952 p. 81.

[31] King Solomon, *The Regius Poem or Halliwell Manuscript: Foundations of Freemasonry Series* (N.p., Lamp of Trismegistus, 2020), 10.


Hic incipiunt constituciones artis gemetrie secm Euclyde.

Whose wol boye wel rede and loke
he may fynde. Wyse yn olde boke
Of grete lordys and eke ladyysse
yat hade mony chyldryn. ygeregy wysse
And hade no rentys to fynde hem wyth
Nouby3 yn toune. ny felde ny fryth
A counsel cogede. pey coube hem take
To ordeyne. for yese chyldryn sake
how they myght best lede here lyfe
Wt oute grete desese. care and stryf.
And most for ye multytude. ys was comyng
Of here chyldryn. aft here tyndy e
sende yenne. aft grete clerkys
To techyn hem yenne. gode Werk. s

This good lord loved this craft full well,
And purposed to strengthen it every part,
For divers faults that in the craft he found;
He sent about into the land
After all the masons of the craft,
To come to him full even straight,
For to amend these defaults all
By good counsel, if it might fall."

Figure 1. A scan of the original Regius Poem Manuscript held by the British Museum.

The manuscript highlights the moral duties expected to be carried out by a Mason, and the conduct of behavior and manners in the workplace and abroad. Fifteen articles explain in verse how to conduct oneself while at work and the fifteen points highlight the importance of moral duties both in work and life. Article two guarantees the right to attend assembly, which typically revolved around voting an immoral member out, or to vote on a new piece of legislation. Another significant article, number six, guarantees fair and progressive wages; meaning a Mason's wages would increase as his experience increased. To summarize, the manuscript also contained in it the responsibility of a master to carry out all the work that he undertakes, the right to assembly, and the right to appear before an assembly if one was charged with being a malicious workman.

With the invention of old Masonic guild Constitutions, such as the Regius Poem and its attempt to preserve and compile much older Masonic manuscripts, a set of moral standards streamlined its way into early Anglo-Saxon civil life and society. Although stone masons have

existed for millennia, it appears that these Masons entered lodges and guilds first during the reign of King Athelstan. Another important note here is that these English guilds, on occasion, accepted civilians who were not stone masons, but rather, sought interest in fraternal companionship. The Regius Poem credits King Athelstan as the founder of Masonry in Great Britain on a national scale.[32] During the York Assembly of 926, King Athelstan declared that the old Masonic constitutions be used for governance in all Masonic guilds across Britain.[33] From then, these assemblies had the right to self-governance, under the protection of the crown, and its members were freemen despite Athelstan's days of serfdom and feudalism.

Lastly, during his reign, many public stone structures, including Churches, were erected. Having analyzed these operative guilds, and their respective constitutions and moral codes, I suspect that through the influence of public monuments and social life, these moral codes led to the influence of social reformations, namely the discovery of the right to self and liberty. The Regius Poem, along with the several other Masonic manuscripts of this era, led to the shift between operative and speculative Masonry, and became the source of future Masonic Constitutions, namely James Anderson's and Benjamin Franklin's Constitutions of the Freemasons.

The Renaissance and the English Civil War

As previously mentioned, the craftsmen who entered these guilds had the right to voluntary association, fair wages, speech, assembly, and most importantly, the right to self-determination.

[32]32. Hunter, et al., *A Study and an Interpretation of the Regius Manuscript,* 81.

[33] Ibid., 82

King Athelstan's generosity to the guilds did not carry through quite well into the seventeenth century. The English Civil War struggled with a clash between two distinct set of principles: the struggle between religious dominance of the Church and the newly found beliefs of the natural rights of Man (Hobbes, 1651). After King Athelstan's push for Masonic guilds during his reign, it can be safely assumed that similar guilds were formed for several other artisanal crafts and arts. A wide array of artisanal guilds only meant that a larger portion of society felt the importance of a local guild constitution guaranteeing the right to an education, fair wages, and so forth. In other words, the people of Great Britain had, for the first time, the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labor and a set of protected moral rights.

Tensions only grew stronger when King Charles I pushed for a system of absolute monarchy by diminishing all forms of representative government while imposing heavy taxation on civilians.[34] As the influence of both European Renaissance and English Enlightenment grew, so did the influence of these very guilds in English society.

[34] Jane H. Ohlmeyer, "English Civil Wars," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 Sep. 2022, https://www.britannica.com/event/English-Civil-Wars. Accessed 1 October 2022.

VI.

Anderson's Constitution of 1723

The journey of the US Constitution started with Anderson's Constitution that made its way over the Atlantic Ocean in the 1730s. It contained several amendments, or commonly known as the Freemason's charges. The first of these charges reads as follows:

> "A Mason is oblig'd by his Tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertine. But though in ancient Times Masons were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be good Men and true, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd; whereby Masonry becomes the Center of Union, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remain'd at a perpetual Distance."[35]

The final version of this charge finds itself in the US Constitution as follows: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…." The first amendment, carried in the Freemason's heart as sacred law, was ratified in the 1789 Constitution as the first and most important.

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[35]James Andersen, *The 1723 Constitutions* https://www.1723constitutions.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/1723-Constitutions-Complete.pdf. 48.

Article XXXIX recognized that every annual Grand Lodge has an inherent power and authority to make new laws and regulations, or to alter the existing ones, provided that they are proposed and voted on at the *Annual Grand Feast* and that "the Approbation and Consent of the Majority of all the Brethren present being absolutely necessary to make the same binding and obligatory."[36] Anderson's Constitution provided principles of representative government and majority rule, which are signified in Article X.

> "The Majority of every particular Lodge, when congregated, shall have the Privilege of giving Instructions to their Master and Wardens, before the assembling of the Grand Chapter, or Lodge at the three Quarterly Communications hereafter mention'd, and of the Annual Grand Lodge too ; because their Master and Wardens are their Representatives, and are supposed to speak their Mind."[37]

Yet another democratic principle that Anderson derived was the election of officers and its protection from negative influences from the Grand Lodge. Article XXIX signifies that the Grand Master cannot force himself to stay in his elected office, but rather, it is up to the Master and Wardens of all Lodges across a jurisdiction to elect the next serving Grand Master.[38] Moreover, the Grand Master has a term of office for one year, at which, has to give up his office under Section 3 of Article XXII. The article states that, "But whether there shall be a Feast for all the Brethren, or not, yet the Grand Lodge must meet in some convenient Place annually on St. John's Day; or if it be Sunday, then on the next Day, in order to chuse every Year a new Grand Master, Deputy, and Wardens."[39] The principle of checks and balances first appears in Article XIX as follows:

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[36] Ibid., 74.

[37] Ibid., 62.

[38] Ibid., 71.

[39] Ibid., 68.

> "If the GRAND-MASTER should abuse his Power, and render himself unworthy of the Obedience and Subjection of the Lodges, he shall be treated in a way and manner to be agreed upon in a new Regulation ; because hitherto the ancient Fraternity have had no occasion for it, their former GRAND-MASTERS having all behaved themselves worthy of that honourable Office."[40]

Basic freedoms, namely freedom of speech and freedom to equally participate in Masonic discussion are all guaranteed in this Constitution. Under Article XXXVII, any Mason is allowed to speak directly to and participate in any discussion with the Grand Master and within all Masonic bodies as long as it is a motion to make good of the Fraternity.[41] Other freedoms included the right to an education protected under Article XXXVIII, meaning that all brethren of the craft were entitled to a lecture that explained the teachings and workings of the craft. Lastly, Anderson's Constitution provided that the Grand Lodge serve as a supreme court of appeals and arbitration so that all inquiries can be settled honestly and harmoniously. As observed, Anderson's Constitution of Freemasons laid down the principles of democratic government that included popular sovereignty through majority rule, limited government, the right to self-govern, a federal system comprised of local lodges and a Grand Lodge, and the creation of a supreme court for judicial review by a Grand Lodge.

[40] Ibid., 67.

[41] Ibid., 73-43

VII.

Albany Plan

Benjamin Franklin served as the Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Philadelphia when he published his version of Anderson's Constitution.[42] There is no doubt that Franklin had well immersed himself into Masonic teachings, especially since he was a key leader of Colonial era Freemasonry. During that time, Franklin's involvement with politics had been mainly through his ownership and editorship of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, where he published his series "Poor Richard's Almanacs." It is widely accepted that these publications molded and formed what we would see as American character during the Revolutionary War. These publishing would continue over 25 years, but there was a particular publishing that really caught the eye of Colonials. On May 9, 1754, Franklin published a cartoon titled "Join, or Die," in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which served as a cry for unification in order to fight as one faction against the French, Spanish, Indians, and the British.[43]

Following that publishing was the proposal for unification, which was formally known as The Albany Plan of Union of 1754. Shortly after, on July 10, Franklin proposed a plan for the union of the colonies of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina for the purpose of

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[42] "From Benjamin Franklin to the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 28 November 1734," *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0116. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, pp. 373–375.]

[43] Benjamin Franklin. "Join or Die." Illustration. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division http://loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/ (accessed April 14, 2020).

"Mutual Defense and Security, and for Extending the British Settlements in North America." The plan has astonishing resemblances to Franklin's edition of Anderson's Constitution and to the organization of American Provincial Grand Lodges of the era. Franklin referred to the council that would represent the several colonies as the "Grand Council," while the council that represents all Masonic Lodges of a jurisdiction is referred to as a Grand Lodge. The similarities of the functions of these councils will be analyzed in a further section, showing that the two systems of government may have a strong link in structure.

In this proposed plan, Franklin's key motive is to unify the colonies for a common goal. The purpose of Anderson's Constitution was to unify the several lodges of England under a United Grand Lodge of England. First, there is a clear mention of where the meetings will be held and how the President General can call for an assembly whenever required. Moreover, in the Albany Plan, Franklin writes in detail his plans for the election of the President General.

> "There shall be a New Election of Members for the Grand Council every three years; And on the Death or Resignation of any Member his Place shall be Supplyed by a New Choice at the next Sitting of the Assembly of the Colony he represented."

The proposed Albany plan seemingly copies Anderson's Constitution word for word. Throughout articles XX to XXXIX the same rules and principles are displayed as in the Albany plan. For the election of new members, the Albany plan proposed a new election every three years, while Anderson's Constitution states that a new election of a Grand Master and the Grand Wardens take place every year under Article XXXII. Although the number of years served was different, the concept stays the same: no representative or leader should serve under absolute terms and should be democratically elected.

Article XXVIII states that all lodges must have proportionate representation when it comes to votes in Grand Lodge. Similarly, Franklin required that delegates from each colony were to be

regulated so that representation was proportionate to the colony's population. Both under Article XXII and Section Four of the Albany Plan, the Grand Lodge and the Grand Council shall meet once a year, or as often as it requires, to either vote new laws into place or to amend existing ones. Under that same article, the Grand Lodge, similar to the Grand Council, has the power to choose the Grand Master, or the Speaker, when required.

Moreover, the Albany Plan includes a clause stating that the President General be required to execute his duties with the advice of the Grand Council. A Grand Master is similarly, under Article XIX, a new President General must be elected to take the place of the current one. In the case that a President General or a Grand Master dies in office, the procedure is identical: the Speaker of the Grand Council shall be vested with all the powers and authority of the President General the same way that the Grand Lodge must replace the Grand Master with the sitting Deputy Grand Master under article XXI. One general function of Grand Lodges is to impose general duties through a membership fee, or tax, which operates the same way in Franklin's plan. The Grand Council had the power to raise taxes in order to pay for soldiers' salaries, to build forts, and to fund vessels in order to guard the coast.

VIII.

Articles of Confederation

Unfortunately, Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan was never adopted. He explains in his autobiography that the assembly believed there was too much prerogative and that England believed the plan to be too democratic.[44] However, Franklin had the opportunity to draft the first version of the Articles of Confederation on July 21, 1775.[45] Not only does this version directly reflect the Albany Plan, but it also reflects the rules, laws, and regulations of Franklin's version of Anderson's Constitution of 1723. In this first version, the themes of each article fit perfectly with Franklin's previous themes of unification under one Grand Council, or under one Grand Lodge. For instance, Article II requires that the new unification never be broken by any act under an entered League of Friendship, which is also the second charge in Benjamin Franklin's Masonic Constitution (text analysis will display this during the textual comparison section). Franklin's goal was consistent: to unify all local lodges and to unify all of the colonies under one main goal: to protect and promote the general welfare of all colonies regardless of religion, sovereignty, trade, "or any other pretense whatever."[46] Throughout Anderson's Constitution, it is said that all duties of man should be conducted and that all should be treated fairly regardless of religion or political

[44] Benjamin Franklin and Leonard S. Davidow, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Reading, PA: Spencer Press, 1936), 169.

[45] Benjamin Franklin. Plan for a Confederation, July 21, 1775. Printed document annotated by Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson Papers, Manuscript Division. Library of Congress (46.01.02) [Digital ID# us0046a_2]

[46] Ibid., 1.

views. In other words, there exists a strong tie between Masonic views of religion and the founding documents of the United States of America.

The first version of the Articles of Confederation was never ratified, but it served as a model to the second version that would arise during the Second Continental Congress. Before I turn to the second drafting of the Articles of Confederation, I would like to take a moment to explore an important document that was written a day prior to the second draft of the Articles of Confederation. On Tuesday, June 11, 1776, there was a resolution to draft the Declaration of Independence for the purpose of declaring the need to unify the colonies and to declare independence from English monarchical rule.[47] A committee was appointed in order to draft the document. It consisted of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Franklin, Livingston, and Sherman were all three formally recognized as Freemasons. For Jefferson, there have been rumors, but no official document exists claiming that he had been initiated as such. John Adams is the only member of the Committee of Five to have claimed that he is not a Freemason.[48]

Following this venture, a resolution was made on Wednesday June 12, 1776, in order to form a committee consisting of one delegate from each colony in order to draft a finalized version of the Articles of Confederation.[49] Of these twelve delegates that were chosen, nine of the Founding Fathers were Freemasons. The group consisted of: John Dickinson[50], who was the chair

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[47] *Journals of the American Congress from 1774-1788*: In Four Volumes. Washington DC, 1823. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044106526510. P. 378

[48] Scottish Rite, NMJ. "The Freemasons of the Independence." Accessed April 15, 2022. https://scottishritenmj.org/blog/freemasons-of-the-independence.

[49] *Journals of the American Congress from 1774-1788: In Four Volumes.* Washington DC: 1823. P. 380

[50] "Union Lodge No. 7, A.F. & A. M." *Delaware Public Archives - State of Delaware*, 17 Feb. 2022, https://archives.delaware.gov/delaware-historical-markers/union-lodge-no-7-a-f-a-m/.

speaker of the committee, Josiah Bartlett, Samuel Adams, Roger Sherman, Thomas McKean, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Joseph Hewes, Robert Livingston, and Stephan Hopkins.[51] Although Franklin was not on this committee, John Dickinson, as I suspect, was the leader and key character in the second drafting of Franklin's original work. John Dickinson, along with Franklin, was an influential Pennsylvania Freemason.[52] The new version reflected Franklin's older version, so for the purpose of reducing repetition, I will refer to the similarities to the first published Articles of Confederation in order to contend that the second version was directly linked to Anderson's Constitution.

In Article IV, which states that:

> "The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different states in this union, the free inhabitants of each of these states, paupers, vagabonds and fugitives from justice excepted, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several states…."[53]

The idea is familiar to all Freemasons: that no matter where in the United States, or in any lodge recognized formally by the United Grand Lodge of England, a Freemason is welcome equally with all granted privileges. Moreover, freedom of speech cannot be limited even within the doors of Congress, which previously shown, has direct links to the Freemason's Constitution vis-à-vis Benjamin Franklin.

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[51] Denslow, William R. *10,000 Famous Freemasons*. Macoy Publishing , 1957.

[52] Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library. "How Many Presidents Were Freemasons?" Accessed April15, 2022. https://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library_and_archives/2010/11/how-many-presidents-were-freemasons.html.

[53] Editors, History com. "Articles of Confederation." HISTORY. Accessed April 15, 2020. https://www.history.com/topics/early-us/articles-of-confederation.

IX.

The United States Constitution

As history explains, the Articles of Confederation faced many issues, especially because the federal government could not enforce laws pertaining to foreign policy.[54] To remedy the need for a new system of governance, the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was held in order to draft a new frame of government. A Bill of Rights was introduced by James Madison, who was believed to be a Freemason. Records do not exist, especially since his lodge, Hiram Lodge No. 59, was destroyed.[55] For the new Constitution of the United States, it only would make sense to adopt a document where several, if not all, of the colonies had previously practiced and advocated for. Therefore, the new Constitution included fundamental concepts, such as popular sovereignty, limited government with the right to local self-governance, separation of powers through a checks and balance system, judicial review through a supreme court, and individual rights protected by a Bill of Rights. The ten amendments ratified had been principles long advocated by Freemasons, especially as written in Anderson's Constitution. They included religious toleration and acceptance, freedom of speech, fair and speedy trial, no excessive punishment, and the reservation of powers not delegated in the Constitution.

My earlier comparison of Anderson's Plan, the Articles of Confederation, and the US Constitution show that there are striking resemblances to Anderson's Constitution. Of the fifty-five delegates that were present at the Constitutional Congress, thirty-three were Freemasons:

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[54] "Milestones: 1784–1800 - Office of the Historian."

[55] "Brother James Madison?"

Abraham Baldwin, Gunning Bedford, John Blair, William Blount, David Brearley, Jacob Broom, Daniel Carroll, William Davie, Jonathan Dayton, John Dickinson, Oliver Ellsworth, Benjamin Franklin, Eldridge Gerry, Nicholas Gilman, Alexander Hamilton, William Houston, William Samuel Johnson, Rufus King, John Langdon, John Lansing Jr., James McClung, James McHenry, James Madison, Alexander Martin, Robert Morris, William Patterson, William Pierce, Charles Pinckney, Edmund Randolph, George Read, Roger Sherman, George Washington, and George Wythe.[56]

At the convention, Benjamin Franklin had prepared a speech to present to all the present delegates but could not do so because of his health. Therefore, James Wilson, a fellow Freemason, and a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, read his speech to the Convention on September 17, 1787. A piece of that speech is as followed:

> "For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does; and I think it will astonish our enemies, who are waiting with confidence to hear that our councils are confounded like those of the Builders of Babel; and that our States are on the point of separation, only to meet hereafter for the purpose of cutting one another's throats. Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good. I have never whispered a syllable of them abroad. Within these walls they were born, and here they shall die."[57]

[56] This list was determined by comparing a list of known Freemasons of the era and by a list of who was found present at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. List of known Freemasons come from several sources, including State archives, and historians who traveled to local lodges to discover the minutes and proceedings that record these men being initiated into the Fraternity.

[57] "Avalon Project - Madison Debates - September 17, 1787."

In this section of Franklin's speech, there are several references to Masonic teachings and principles. First, the mention of the assembly of men with their differing ideology to one body is a strong Masonic reference. Under Anderson's Constitution, all Masons who met under a Lodge had the right to their own prejudices, passions, errors of opinion, and local interests, which were all protected and preserved under the Grand Lodge. In other words, Franklin is hinting that the assembly of Congress is similar to an assembly of Freemasons: despite a difference in views and opinions, the assembly is harmoniously working toward one collective goal of unity. (These principles, and their development in British history was previously discussed in the section on craft guilds and their constitutions.) He questions that there is no such thing as a perfect creation, only the approach to near perfection. In Masonic teachings, a Freemason, just as a stonemason would, bases his goals of self-improvement and betterment on an ashlar, or a rough stone. The rough ashlar represents the dark and unenlightened individual, while the perfect ashlar represents one who has achieved the knowledge of light and truth. Moreover, it is accepted that one cannot achieve perfection, but can only strive for it. Franklin strongly hints here that the Constitution cannot reach perfection but has strived to come near to it. The continuation of that same sentence proves what I am intending to argue.

In Anderson's Constitution, it was recorded that Freemasonry originated at the Tower of Babel and that Nimrod served as the first Grand Master of the masons of Babel.[58] The symbolic journey of a Freemason starts at the Tower of Babel, where the Masonic ritual explains that "language was confounded and Masonry lost," and finishes at the Temple of Solomon, where "language was restored and Masonry found."[59] Therefore, the Tower of Babel is regarded as the

[58] Anderson, "Constitution of the Freemasons," 20.

[59] Co-Freemasonry, "Masonic History | The Tower of Babel"

place of intellectual darkness. Franklin makes this reference to the Tower or Babel, because he believes that the states are stuck in “darkness,” because the states are on the verge of separating from each other due to continuous disagreements. His rendition of the Masonic Constitution of the US Freemasons also makes clear references to the Tower of Babel and Solomon’s Temple. Lastly, Franklin’s mention of secrecy with the statement, “With these walls they were born, and here they will die,” is reminiscent of a Masonic oath Freemason takes to protect the secrets of the Order similarly how guildsmen and operative Masons swore oaths to never openly repeat the secrets of the craft guilds to non-members.

This seems to tie the entire picture together: Benjamin Franklin and several other Founding Fathers, favored a type of governance that had widely been practiced successfully by the guilds of Britain, and supported their own philosophical beliefs. Thus, the Constitution of Freemasonry was used to provide the need for that sort of government.

X.

Masonic Legacies beyond the Constitution

Another form of influence on the part of Freemasonry to America's newfound government comes through a famous painting by Samuel Jennings. Titled, "The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks," shows striking similarities to Masonic symbolism.[60]



The two greatest symbols here come from the representation of the Seven masonic liberal arts and sciences and the Weeping Virgin kneeling at the broken column. The seven Liberal Arts and Sciences are as follows: Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music. As seen in the 1792 painting of Jennings, all the objects represent one of the liberal arts and sciences. The telescope for Astronomy, the harp for music, the globe for geometry, the books and bust for logic, grammar, and rhetoric, and the sheet of paper with calculations for arithmetic.[61] These symbols

[60] "Samuel Jennings | Study for Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks | American | The Met."

[61] "The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences."

not only represent the value of education, but call on the important connection between perfecting the mind and spirit. In the third degree of Freemasonry, the lessons of the statue of the weeping virgin teach us that people should live just and upright lives.[62] The books in front of her signify that virtue lies on perpetual record. While in the original statue the books are open to signify that the Temple of Solomon is unfinished, the books in this painting are closed, signifying that the emancipation of the slaves is the only unfinished task left to create a just and upright United States of America.

Franklin, yet again, had a strong influence on this painting. Jennings was instructed carefully to paint this picture on instructions provided by Benjamin Franklin for the Library Company of Philadelphia.[63] The teachings of Freemasonry hold a large number of symbols that have hidden and virtuous meanings to them, and this painting demonstrates the intricacy of the meaning and display of these symbols. Benjamin Franklin was known to be a diehard abolitionist. Throughout his political activities, he promoted the abolition of slavery and the emancipation to follow.[64] On February 12, 1790 and on February 15, 1790, Franklin submitted a petition to "promote justice toward this distressed Race" to the House and the Senate, respectively. Since there were several pro-slavery Congressmen, the petition was immediately rejected.

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[62] "Jeremy Cross - Father Time and the Weeping Virgin Statue."

[63] "Benjamin Franklin Papers - From Samuel Jennings (Unpublished) - 45:U190." Accessed April 17, 2020. https://franklinpapers.org/framedNames.jsp?ssn=001-45-1511.

[64] U.S. Senate. 3/4/1789-. *Letter from Benjamin Franklin Transmitting a Letter from James Pemberton and a Petition from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery to Vice President John Adams*. File Unit: Petitions and Memorials and Resolutions of State Legislatures Submitted to the 1st Congress, 1789 - 1791, 1790.

To conclude, there is substantial evidence here tying the original constitution of the Freemasons to the Albany Plan, first and second versions of the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the US Constitution. My aim was to present Anderson's Constitution of 1723 and compare critical American documents chronologically in order to tie the Masonic principles to the Constitution of 1789. Moreover, it is, to an extent, demonstrated that several of the key characters that participated in the drafting and publishing of these documents were Freemasons and contributed their philosophical understandings of the Fraternity to their drafts. The finalized version of democracy coincides with the key concepts and definitions that unify Freemasons.

XI.

Conclusion

The primary goals of the Founding Fathers were to unify the colonies not through mere political reforms, but through a method of governance that would lead to fair and equitable, popular suffrage. Despite the conspiracy theories set forth and the anti-Masonic sentiment that exists, Freemasonry, as a practice, was set forth as a way of life founded on the faith in human capacity to cultivate intelligence and the cooperative experience of it. Moreover, the fraternity is responsible for setting up an administration that allows every participant to have the freedom to express an opinion and practice their personal beliefs. It was only natural for the Masonic Founding Fathers to instill a mode of governance that had worked before in the United States and England; a government led by the Constitution of the Freemasons.

My work here has carefully highlighted the similarities in the previously mentioned text to track where the principles of the 1789 Constitution came from. Many volumes of work exist on the idea of the Founding Fathers as Freemasons, but little to none exists on the actual practice and involvement of Freemasonry in the founding of the United States. My future work toward this subject will involve a denser and more immersed version of this essay annotating every key text and comparing these documents in more depth.

Glossary[65]

A. L. (Anno Lucis). In the Year of Light. This is the date used by Masonic lodges to mark the years, and is determined by adding 4,000 to the current year (Example: 1988 is A. L. 5988).

Abif, Hiram. Architect of and one of the three Grand Masters at the first temple in Jerusalem, according to the Old Testament. He is held in high esteem by Freemasons for his legendary life and death.

Acacia. A plant commonly found in the Middle East since Biblical times. Masonically, it is emblematic of the immortality of the soul and innocence. It is also the name of a college fraternity with Masonic ties.

Adjournment. An action which cannot take place in a Masonic lodge. According to the Old Charges of Freemasonry, Masons are charged to remain at labor until the Worshipful Master has determined all work is complete. A lodge must be properly closed by the Worshipful Master.

Age, Lawful. The age at which a man may be legally admitted into a Masonic lodge. In most jurisdictions, it is twenty-one.

Alarm. Masonically, the verb "to alarm" means to give notice to the lodge someone wishes to enter. As a noun, "alarm" refers to the signal by an officer, usually the Tyler outside of the lodge, who wishes to communicate with the lodge.

Ancient Craft Masonry. A term often used to describe the three symbolic degrees of Freemasonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason.

Ancient Masons. Those Masons and Lodges who, in 1751, broke from the Grand Lodge of England over a disagreement with the original body on Masonic ritual and customs. The separate Grand Lodges existed until 1813, when they were again united.

Apprentice, Entered. The first degree of Ancient Craft Masonry. Also, one who has received this degree.

Apron. The lambskin, or white leather apron, is the most important symbol of Freemasonry, and the badge of a Mason. It is worn by all Masons when in lodge, and during public processions and events, such as the laying of a cornerstone. Its full significance is explained in Masonic ritual.

Ballot. Membership in a Masonic lodge is granted only by unanimous consent by a secret ballot. However, some jurisdictions allow for some (1-3) negative votes. Voting is a duty of a Mason, and no member may abstain from balloting without the unanimous consent of the lodge.

Blue. The color is universally ascribed to Ancient Craft Masonry, hence, the term "Blue Lodge."

Cable Tow. A rope or cord used in Masonic ritual to symbolically control an unobligated candidate in a degree. Also symbolic of the covenant by which all Masons are united.

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[65] Adopted and summarized from Albert G. Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.

Candidate. An applicant for admission into a Masonic lodge. Appropriately used only until the completion of the Entered Apprentice degree. Informally used to refer to any individual receiving any Masonic degree.

Certificate. A card, parchment, or scroll issued by a Grand Lodge or subordinate lodge to indicate the bearer is in good standing. A certificate alone is not justification for admission into a Masonic lodge. Commonly referred to as a "dues card" in American lodges.

Communication. The proper term for a meeting of a Masonic lodge.

Compass. A symbol of Freemasonry. Used by architects and Operative Masons to draw true arcs and circles. Its symbolic nature is explained in Masonic ritual. In most jurisdictions, the plural, compasses, is used.

Deacon. Each lodge has two; the Senior and Junior. The Junior attends to the wishes and directions of the Senior Warden, and attends to alarms at the outer door of the lodge. The Senior serves the Worshipful Master, introduces all visitors to the lodge, and is the principal conductor of candidates during degree work.

Degree. A step or segment of Masonic ritual. There are three degrees in Ancient Craft Masonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason.

Deputation. The authority granted by a Grand Master for a brother to act as a Provincial Grand Master.

Deputy Grand Master. In most jurisdictions, the principal assistant to the Grand Master, the second-ranking officer in the grand jurisdiction.

Demit. To resign from a lodge. In most jurisdictions, a demit is only granted to members in good standing, and then only for the purpose of transferring membership to another lodge.

Dispensation. A permission or waiver granted by the Grand Master to a brother, group of brethren, or an entire lodge to act in a manner not specifically authorized by Masonic law. Most common dispensations are granted to appoint a Grand Master's representative at an official Masonic function, to establish a new lodge between Grand Lodge Communications, and for a lodge to meet in a place other than specified on its charter.

East. Place of honor in a Masonic lodge. It is the location of the Worshipful Master's station.

Eastern Star, Order of. The American Rite of Adoption, open to Master Masons, their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.

Examination of Visitors. All visitors to a Masonic lodge must present a current certificate from a lodge or Grand Lodge recognized by the jurisdiction being visited. Additionally, the visitor must be examined by a committee of members to ensure the visitor is, indeed, a Mason. The examination may be waived if a member of the lodge can verify, or vouch, that he has personally attended a communication with the visitor.

Fellow Craft. The second degree of Ancient Craft Masonry, or one who has received this degree. Also, Fellowcraft.

Free and Accepted. Historically, a Free and Accepted Mason is one who is free-born (that is, not in captivity or bound, or when speaking of Operative Masons is free of the guild) and accepted by the membership as a Speculative Mason.

Gavel. A tool of a Mason, and a symbol of one of the degrees. Used by the Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens in their government of the lodge. The Master's gavel is sometimes called a “Hiram.”

Grand East. The station of the Grand Master or Provincial Grand Master. Also, the term is sometimes used to describe the location of the Grand Lodge headquarters. For example, Boston is the Grand East of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

Grand Lodge. The administrative and dogmatic authority for Freemasonry in each jurisdiction. In the United States, Grand Lodges cover the same jurisdiction as state boundaries. The presiding officer, the Grand Master, is the senior-ranking Freemason within the jurisdiction. All allied Masonic organizations within the Grand Lodge's jurisdiction are generally subject to the Grand Master's rulings.

Hiram, King of Tyre. Contemporary of Solomon, King of Israel, and said to have been present at the building of Solomon’s Temple. Masonic tradition recognizes him as one of the three Grand Masters present at the construction and subordinate only to Solomon himself.

Installation. The act of placing an officer of the lodge into his respective place, or station. Once installed, an officer cannot resign. Installation is required to obtain the rights and benefits of the office. A term of office is from installation to installation, and not election to election.

Jewel, Official. The official jewels worn by officers of a Masonic lodge are: Worshipful Master - square, Senior Warden - level, Junior Warden - plumb, Senior Deacon - square and compass with sun in center, Junior Deacon square and compass with moon in center, Secretary- crossed pens or quills, Treasurer crossed keys, Stewards cornucopia, Tyler - crossed swords. The jewels of a subordinate lodge are silver. The jewels of a Grand Lodge are gold.

Lodge Room. By tradition, a room situated due east and west, with a length at least one-third longer than its width, and with high ceilings. A lodge room is never on the ground floor of a building.

Master. Head of a lodge. The presiding officer of a subordinate lodge.

Master Mason. The third degree of Ancient Craft Masonry. Also, the title of one who has received this degree. The highest degree of any kind in Freemasonry.

Most Worshipful. The title is given to a Grand Lodge and its presiding officer, the Grand Master, and all past Grand Masters.

Obligation. The promise made by a Mason as part of his receiving each of the three degrees. The single act which makes one a Mason.

Operative Mason. One who works at the trade of masonry. Commonly used during the early development of Freemasonry to identify one who was a worker and not merely an accepted or Speculative Mason.

Past Grand Master. One who has served as a Grand Master of a Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. Commonly abbreviated P. G. M.

Past Master. One who has served and completed a term as a Worshipful Master of a subordinate lodge. Also, the title of a degree in the York Rite.

Provincial Grand Lodge. A lodge working under the legal authority of a deputation from the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England.

Regular. A lodge working under the legal authority of a charter or dispensation from a grand lodge.

Right Worshipful. The title given to the grand officers below the Grand Master. Also, the title ascribed to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and its Grand Master.

Saint John the Baptist. A patron saint of Freemasonry. His festival day is June 24th. The significance of his selection as a patron saint is explained in Masonic ritual.

Saint John the Evangelist. A patron saint of Freemasonry. His festival day is December 27th. The significance of his selection as a patron saint is explained in Masonic ritual.

Secretary. An officer of a Masonic lodge. He is responsible for taking the minutes of all meetings, processing all communications to and from the lodge, issuing receipts for monies received, and providing the Treasurer with a list of bills to be paid.

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