

Masonry in the Early American Military
How the fraternity helped win the Revolutionary war and build the American nationⁱ

2010 Henry Wilson Coil Lecture

Steven C. Bullock
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

I am honored to serve as the year's Henry Wilson Coil lecturer. Coil was a significant figure in my education in Masonry. When I was first beginning to research the subject, I often referred to his Masonry Through Six Centuries, photocopying a substantial section of it and placed it in a folder for ready reference. The sections served as a sort of Masonic "Wikipedia" when I was trying to get my bearings.

Coil was compelling in part because he was such a stylish writer. Here's his description of James Anderson's history of Masonry in the Constitutions of the Free-Masons: "He conferred Grand Masterships with even more liberal hand; he created the ancient office of Provincial Grand Master, filling that, too, with prominent figures; and he expanded the history of Masonry until he seemed almost to be indulging in ridicule. But he was in earnest, and he was taken quite seriously by many, perhaps, a majority of the Craft."

Coil's skepticism about earlier histories of Freemasonry reveals his allegiance to what he called the "school of realism." Coil can himself be seen as a later figure in the great age of Masonic antiquarianism that began with Robert Freke Gould and others in the late 1800s. This group developed a new sort of Masonic history, one that sought to move beyond the mythmaking of many previous historians. Instead, Gould and his compatriots sought to rely upon careful examination of sources. Although Gould's writing was often tedious and even confusing (one reason I found Coil so helpful), he and his colleagues made an enormous advance in understanding Freemasonry's past.

The attention of Gould and other such historians, even Coil himself, was almost entirely upon reconstructing the internal history of the fraternity. If Anderson appointed grand masters and provincial grand masters, the realistic school sought evidence to determine when the post of grand master and provincial grand master developed. Like other historians of Masonry, I owe a tremendous debt to these Gould and his successors--and particularly to the wonderful work of a variety of Coil and other early- to mid-twentieth century American antiquarians. But I also see myself as part of a new school. Like a number of other scholars, I seek to connect the realistic vision of Masonry with larger issues of interest to scholars. The goal is not so much to fill in the institutional development of the fraternity as in trying to make part of our broader understanding of the past. I am pleased to be successor in this lectureship to Margaret Jacob, one of the great pioneers in this new enterprise; and on the podium with Jessica Harland-Jacobs, whose important book that extends our understanding of post-1750 British Masonry far beyond the work of Gould and his successors.

My talk today on the experiences of American soldiers during the Revolution is an example of that process. Gould had been a British army officer before becoming a barrister and was initiated in Royal Navy Lodge, was among the very first to take an interest in the history of military lodges; but, as with most of his work, he paid little attention to bring this knowledge together with a broader understanding of British history. Despite the rise of the realistic school, myths continued to flourish. It was possible in recent memory to find people who argue that all the Continental Army generals were not Masons (just as all the signers of the Declaration and Constitution were). In my talk today, I have sought to provide a balance between these popular enthusiasms and professional indifference, attempting to provide a more measured view of the fraternity while also showing why it was important to people who have no investment in it.

Masonry and the Revolutionary Army

On June 24, 1779, more than one hundred Masonic brothers, all Continental army officers, marched from West Point. General Samuel Holden Parsons, General John Paterson, and General John Nixon joined in the procession, along with the then-obscure Captain Daniel Shays. Behind a band, "the Sword of Justice," the Bible, and the Square and Compass, the brothers proceeded to the Robinson House. There they were met by "a number of gentlemen" and brother George Washington. After a sermon, a Masonic address, and dinner, the brothers toasted "the Arts and Sciences" as well as the trio of martyred Masons "Warren, Montgomery, and Wooster." Members of the American Union Lodge, the group sponsoring the celebration, sang "The Virtuous Science." After the entertainment, Washington, "amidst a crowd of brethren," the lodge officers, and the band playing "God Save America," returned to his barge on the Hudson. "His departure was announced," the secretary recorded, "by three cheers from the shore, answered by three from the barge, the music beating the 'Grenadier's March.'"

The celebration, with its rich images of honor and brotherhood among the very highest levels of the army, attracted a great deal of attention. Colonel Rufus Putnam, stationed nearby, became a Mason in American Union Lodge at its very next meeting; Captain Henry Sewall, an Entered Apprentice for about two years, took the final two degrees the following month. General Paterson applied for his own military lodge only three months after the ceremony. Nine of the thirteen present at the new group's first meeting had attended the June celebration. Not surprisingly, they called it Washington Lodge.

The fraternity's appeal to army officers went far beyond West Point. Masonry was common in the Continental Army. Washington Lodge listed 250 members by the end of the war, and hundreds more met in other military lodges. Besides the two Massachusetts lodges, eight

military groups met in Continental army camps; still other officers joined lodges near their posts. This extensive involvement can be seen most clearly at the highest levels of the army: at least 42 percent of the generals commissioned by the Continental Congress were or would become Freemasons.

Such a proportion is extraordinary, perhaps the highest concentration of Freemasonry in any large organization. Masonry seems never have included more than 10% of the adult male population at any time in American history; my own calculations suggest that even at its pre-1830 height, early nineteenth-century Masonry included only 5% of adult white males (with African American Masonry clearly including fewer adult black men). Why this close connection between the fraternity and the officer corps? For these officers, Masonry's values of honor and love held particular attraction. By balancing exclusivity and inclusiveness, the fraternity spoke directly to the peculiar needs of men who sought both to uphold an often precarious social position and to build ties with a diverse group of fellow officers separated by local origin, religious affiliation, and military rank. The impact of military Masonry, however, went beyond the officers' individual situations. Fraternal ties among the officers helped create and sustain the sense of common purpose necessary for the survival of the Continental army--and thus the winning of the war. I want to conclude by discussing how this connection between Masonry and the Revolutionary military helped to build the connection between the fraternity and the new nation.

Establishing Authority

"Honor," argued American Union brother Rufus Putnam, formed "the first Principle of a Soldier," a dictum to which his fellow lodge member Samuel Holden Parsons clearly subscribed.

His August 1777 marching orders used the word three times. Even to his wife, Parsons excused his failure to visit by arguing that, despite his superior's permission, he could not have left his troops "without staining my honor." "Although I am willing to devote my life to the service of my country," he wrote to a congressman upon hearing that a junior brigadier general had been promoted ahead of him, "I shall never be persuaded 'tis my duty to continue that service under such circumstances as will reflect personal dishonour upon me." "If I submitted to take any command in the army under these circumstances," he argued, "[I] must join my fellow citizens in despising myself." Parsons had heard incorrectly, but his indignation hardly matched his seniority. His seeming rival's original appointment had followed his by only five weeks.³³

Such disputes about precedence plagued the Continental army. American officers like Parsons often seemed obsessed with their honor. The cases of Parsons, Putnam, and their brother officers reveal the roots of their anxieties--as well as Masonry's ability to legitimate authority and honor in a context where such public recognition seemed the soldier's first principle.

According to eighteenth-century theory, military rank should reflect social standing. The patriot David Ramsay, in his 1785 History of the Revolution of South Carolina, even complained of the quality of the British officers occupying Charleston. "In former wars," he argued, "dignity, honour, and generosity, were invariably annexed to the military character." But, though the older officers "were for the most part gentlemen," new positions were often filled "by a new set greatly inferior in fortune, education, and good breeding." John Adams singled out Parsons among others in similarly calling for higher qualifications for American officers. "A General Officer," he wrote to Nathanael Greene in 1776, "ought to be a Gentlemen of Letters and General Knowledge, a Man of Address and Knowledge of the World. He should carry with him Authority, and Command." Higher-ranking officers often came from established families.

Parsons was a Harvard graduate, a prominent lawyer, and a Connecticut assemblyman.

As Adams also suggested, however, men such as Parsons were exceptional. The wealthiest and most influential Americans seldom joined the Continental army. Many remained loyal to the crown. Others headed local militias, served in the government, or simply tended their estates. Even in the highest ranks, many Revolutionary officers came from outside the genteel elite that had previously held the highest political offices. Colonel Benjamin Tupper, the original senior warden of Washington Lodge, possessed only a short public school education and a knowledge of tanning when he completed his indenture at age sixteen. He served as a farmhand until he entered the army during the Seven Years' War, rising only to the rank of sergeant. Rufus Putnam similarly came from a home where, he recalled, "I was made a ridecule of, and otherwise abused for my attention to books" by a "very illiterate" stepfather. Enlisting in the Seven Years' War for three years, he served as an ensign, the lowest commissioned rank. Although he held no further public office during the intervening period, he entered the Continental army as a lieutenant colonel and became a brigadier general.

High military rank brought anxiety not only because it raised expectations about social position but because military effectiveness seemed to depend upon personal honor. In theory at least, military command seemed inextricably linked to social authority based on reputation and high status. As Adams had written, an officer "should carry with him Authority, and Command." Although later a general, judge, and Masonic grand master of Ohio, Putnam never lost the sense of dependence upon those above him. He recorded his experiences for his "decendents," he suggested, so that they would know "in what estimation I was held by my superiour officers."

For men uncertain of their honor and fearful of their reputation among their superiors, peers, and subordinates, Freemasonry helped provide the endorsement they craved. The order

had, until recently, been highly selective and open only to the highest levels of society.

Masonry had enormous cachet in these years. It had emerged as a fraternity open to men of all occupations fewer than sixty years before. During the 1710s and 1720s, the new organization had become popular among members of the Royal Society, the London-based organization that helped encourage the rise of modern science, and among aristocrats and other social leaders of the London metropolis. Such speculative Masonry (so-called in distinction to the operative Masonry of actual designers and builders) had spread quickly from its origins in London to the continent and across the Atlantic. By the 1730s the new fraternity had established itself among a number of the leading citizens in seaboard cities. The American order grew rapidly after mid-century, making the fraternity more broadly available. But Masonry retained its high standing, a position visible in public processions rich with symbols of high status. Such position was particularly compelling in the Revolution when membership could identify officers with military heroes such as Joseph Warren, the first hero of the Revolution, David Wooster, and Richard Montgomery as well as the universally admired Washington.

Masonry also provided a means of creating as well as displaying standing and honor. It offered training in the polite manners that marked gentlemen. American Union Lodge's bylaws provided for Masonic instruction and a system of fines to punish unfraternal--and ungentle--conduct. Such rules helped keep Masonry's reputation honorable so that it and its members would not "be Liable to the aspersions or Censure of the World." According to a Masonic petition from New Jersey officers, the fraternity developed "that order and decency which are the ornaments of sober and rational men."

Establishing Fraternity

Masonry also helped mitigate the dangers of a world defined by authority and command. Hierarchy seems partially at odds with the other side of Masonry's appeal, its promotion of love and social harmony. Yet the officers also needed fraternity, perhaps even more because of their prickly concern with their standing. Just as much as its promotion of honor, Masonic ideals of harmony and brotherhood fitted closely the officers' peculiar circumstances.

Masonry built fraternity among men uprooted from their households and neighborhoods, forbidden from "fraternization" with enlisted men, and often separated by jealousy and fears of dishonor from their peers and superiors. "I have no way to tell you where I am," Samuel Holden Parsons wrote to his wife in 1777, "but by describing the place which has no name." "You ask me where I can be found?" he noted the following year from West Point. "This is a puzzling question." "News," he complained, "arrives here by accident only." Freemasonry helped build new ties among similarly misplaced men, creating structures and attitudes "whereby," the members of a Pennsylvania lodge later stated, "we were Enabled to Converse with More Ease."

This enabling function can be seen in another Pennsylvania lodge, No. 19 of the Pennsylvania Artillery, which first met in central Pennsylvania and upstate New York during the 1779 Sullivan expedition. On the edge of the frontier far from their homes (and the trappings of polite culture), the Masons initiated "brothers," sang songs, and read Masonic pamphlets, including the sermon delivered by William Smith the previous December to a group of Philadelphia Masons that included General Washington. In the address given at the city's elegant Christ Church, Smith had spoken of the fraternity's ability to provide "that Strength which . . . is . . . a Band of Union among Brethren, and a Source of Comfort in our own Hearts." Providing a physical expression of this unity and comfort, the traveling lodge reinterred two brother officers

who had been part of an advance party killed by Indians. Accompanied by General John Sullivan and brother General William Maxwell, the lodge presided over the necessary ceremonies for comrades who had previously had only boards marking their resting place.

Parson's lodge, American Union, began in more settled surroundings, but it met similar needs. Its first bylaws, prepared during the siege of Boston in February 1776, provided for meeting three times each month, but the lodge soon convened more often. In the three months after February 1779, it met eighteen times, providing relief from the extended periods of inactivity that marked wartime duty. On May 7, 1779, just before much of the Connecticut Line moved to New York, the brothers gave the Fellow Craft degree at 3:00 p.m., the Master's degree at 5:00, the Fellow Craft again at 7:00, and formed as a Master's lodge at 8:00.

These meetings brought together men from a variety of localities. Although officially attached to the Connecticut Line, at least four among the sixteen men who organized American Union lived outside Connecticut. Maryland resident Colonel Otho Holland Williams belonged to a Virginia brigade. Two others lived in Massachusetts; another served in the Delaware line. Even the twelve Connecticut brothers hailed from at least eight different towns.

Military rank further complicated geographical diversity. Continental officers never developed the close ties with their troops that sustained militia units or the provincial armies of the Seven Years' War, partly by conscious design. From the start of his tenure as commander of the Continental army, George Washington stressed "Discipline and Subordination" as the key to a successful fighting force. The informal interaction between officers and common soldiers that had sustained earlier American forces (and would later revealingly be called "fraternization") seemed to Washington an affront to basic military principles. He sought all possible means to reinforce the distinction between officers and men. Even at a time of financial stress in

September 1775, when he feared "Winter, fast approaching upon a naked Army," the general established "Proportions of Rations" that gave colonels six times the provisions allotted to common soldiers. Washington also endorsed higher pay for the lowest-level commissioned officers (whose rations were twice that of their underlings), warning that the present level of compensation was "one great Source of that Familiarity between the Officers and Men, which is so incompatible with Subordination and Discipline." Local ties, another foundation of colonial military life, seemed similarly suspect. Even a year before the Declaration of Independence, Washington's July 4, 1775, general orders "hoped that all Distinctions of Colonies will be laid aside." Indeed, Washington hoped to dissolve "all particular Attachments."

The structure of the Continental army also helped weaken these attachments. Revolutionary soldiers tended to be drawn from a number of localities, restricting the easy transfer of local authority into the military hierarchy--and the continuing bonds that nurtured a common purpose. The permanence of the Continental army further heightened the distinction between officers and common soldiers. Unlike the annually recreated provincial troops, the Revolutionary army drew men away from their localities for years. Not surprisingly, common soldiers increasingly came from the lower orders of society, expanding the distance between men now defined as "common" in two senses and superiors with a burning desire to be considered gentlemen. Reflecting their growing distance from these men, officers like Parsons demanded promotion, not on the basis of local standing or geographical balance, but on their date of commission.

Besides the fundamental barrier between officers and enlisted men, a less formal division existed between higher and lower grades of officers. Baron von Steuben, a Masonic brother, was considered unusual because he entertained company-grade officers at dinner. Masonic lodges

also helped bridge this divide. At least one Pennsylvania lodge included noncommissioned officers, but American Union, like most military lodges, consisted exclusively of commissioned officers, with the higher ranks proportionately overrepresented. Although more lieutenants joined American Union Lodge than all field officers combined, nearly one-third of American Union members ranked as field officers (above the company-grade ranks of captains and lieutenants), in great disproportion to the number of lower-ranking officers in the forces (regiments typically had twenty-four captains and lieutenants but only two colonels and a major). For these junior officers, such connections with their superiors must have been valuable.

Fraternal ties, however, did not entirely obliterate distinctions of rank, as the special treatment of General Washington at the 1779 celebration makes clear. Higher-ranking officers usually held higher Masonic offices as well. General Paterson served as the charter master of Washington Lodge. Colonels Benjamin Tupper and John Greaton were the next two officers. But the Masonic hierarchy did not blindly follow military rank. Colonel Parsons served only as treasurer at the creation of American Union, and, when the lodge replaced him as master in June 1779, they chose a captain.

Rank also affected patterns of affiliation. Some officers on the higher social rungs had already joined the fraternity. Parsons had received his degrees in the 1760s. Brigadier Generals George Weedon and Hugh Mercer, like Washington, had been members of the Fredericksburg, Virginia, lodge. Even during the Revolution, higher-ranking officers often became Masons in local nonmilitary lodges, largely because they tended to stay in closer contact with nearby communities. Captain Daniel Shays, Colonel John Greaton, and Captain William Sewall all joined the fraternity in Albany during the early years of the war. Philadelphia's earliest Ancient

lodge, No. 2, became a center for Continental and state officers. At the meeting of December 8, 1778, for example, the members voted to initiate two captains and three majors Evan Edwards and Jonathan Gostelowe. The lodge also chose Colonel Thomas Proctor as master, Colonel Isaac Melchior as senior warden, Captain Gibbs Jones as junior warden, and initiated (besides those balloted for) Major Archibald Dick. Finally, they received petitions from three majors--with the last recommended by a colonel.

Stationary lodges, however, could not fulfill officers' needs for continuing sociability. Military life simply required too much movement. American Union Lodge met in Connecticut and New Jersey as well as New York and Massachusetts. Colonel Otho Holland Williams, the Maryland resident who joined American Union Lodge in Massachusetts, later served as the original senior warden of another military lodge whose warrant would be captured by the British in Camden, South Carolina. To meet the difficulties created by this travel, American grand lodges created ten different military lodges, the first soldiers' lodges created by American bodies (except for a group organized briefly by the Massachusetts Moderns during the Seven Years' War). Seven of these Revolutionary groups held warrants from Pennsylvania: three among their state's troops and one each in the North Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey lines. New York and the two Massachusetts grand lodges organized the remaining three.

These military groups helped build ties among the officer corps when organized religion often proved unhelpful. Christian worship had nurtured both local identity and previous American military activities, but circumstances prevented it from taking a similar role in the Revolution, at least for officers. The army chaplaincy remained chronically understaffed and focused its attentions on the needs of the common soldiers rather than the officers. Furthermore, the diversity of religious denominations among both the officers and the chaplains exacerbated

rather than healed divisions. Both the orthodox Congregationalist stalwart Timothy Dwight and the Universalist pioneer John Murray held chaplain's appointments under officers who were Masonic brothers.

Masonic fraternity even cut across the most basic wartime division--that between friend and foe. According to its Massachusetts charter, American Union Lodge's meetings in New York required the sanction of the area's grand lodge. Yet loyalists, hardly inclined to support the cause of the American Union Lodge, dominated the New York grand lodge's top offices. The grand master by then lived upstate, stirring up Indians to raid patriot settlements and attack soldiers. His deputy grand master in New York City, however, confirmed American Union's warrant despite refusing to refer to the lodge as "American Union," calling it instead "Military Union Lodge." Although they were on different sides, the New York official could not prohibit Masonic activity, for fraternal ties bound together even enemies--a point also noted by Parsons. When he discovered shortly after the June procession that his men had captured a trunk containing a British regimental lodge's charter, he insisted upon returning the material. Even during war, he wrote the lodge, "as Masons we are disarmed of that resentment which stimulates to undistinguished desolation; and however our political sentiments may impel us in the public dispute, we are still Brethren, and (our professional duty apart) ought to promote the happiness . . . of each other."

In theory at least, gentlemanly ties continued even without Masonic affiliation. A captured officer could move about freely after giving his word--his "parole"--not to harm his captors. But, as Parsons suggested, these ideals were often ignored during the heat of battle. American officers, furthermore, often could not claim the social rank necessary for such consideration. Masonry provided an additional bond, a credential of status, that might encourage

better treatment. Washington Lodge member William Sewall joined the fraternity because, he thought, "I should fare better in case I should be made a prisoner." Indeed, both Boston and Philadelphia brothers used their "influence" to aid jailed British brothers. Lieutenant Colonel William Stacy, captured in 1778, was tied to a stake by Tories and Indians before his Masonic distress signal released him from torture and death.

Officers felt psychologically threatened even in less physically precarious situations. Status insecurities, localism, and jealousies all worked to pull apart rather than unite Continental officers, especially within a larger society that was suspicious of military aspirations and, at least from the military perspective, seemed determined to demand sacrifices they would not take on themselves. Officers joined the fraternity primarily to satisfy these deeply felt personal needs, but Masonry's impact went beyond the level of the individual. By building organizations that stressed familial affection within a profoundly disorienting situation, Masonry provided a counterweight to the fragmentation that threatened the officer corps, helping create the sense of common purpose necessary for the survival of the army--and thus the success of the Revolution itself. Among the rank and file, such a disintegration actually took place during the later years of the war. Precisely the opposite, however, occurred among the officers. Rather than rebelling for release, their so-called Newburgh conspiracy (the 1783 attempt to coerce Congress into a financial settlement) threatened, not the dissolution of the army, but its peacetime continuation.

Masonry alone did not create this new corporate identity, but its lodges helped build and sustain the connections necessary for its formation. By forging associations of unity and honor, the fraternity helped overcome the centrifugal tendencies of a Continental system that destroyed local bonds without providing anything concrete in their place. Masonry created these connections, furthermore, not by reinforcing previous associations based on locality, religion, or

ethnicity, but by transcending them. Lodges offered moral instruction without sectarian divisions, a symbolic language of social distinction that did not depend upon local associations, and (not least of all) a means of creating and justifying a space for the relaxed sociability of eating, drinking, and singing. Through membership in a fraternity that ignored (or rejected) traditional boundaries and divisions, officers built a larger republican identity that rejected the colonists' pervasive localism and contractualism without accepting the class-structured professionalism of the British military. With its ideals of love among men divided by irrelevant distinctions and of honor attained solely by merit, Masonry could even be seen as an embodiment of the enlightened republican principles for which the officers were fighting.

Conclusion

Masonry then fit well the demands of the new nation--and the experiences of the officers suggest many of these themes. But did the military lodges of the Revolution themselves make a significant difference in that later history? Clearly they helped spread Masonry. Officers who were gathered together in the army dispersed afterwards into a wide variety of areas. Parsons and especially Putnam were central figures in the settling of the Ohio territory. And American Union Lodge re-formed after the war in its first town. But the role of officers and Masonry was not essential for this development. Other Ohio towns developed their strong fraternal lives without the influence of men who had been involved in military lodges.

The Masonic officers of the Revolution, however, did play a significant role in reshaping Masonry's reputation--or at least in allowing it to avoid some significant dangers. The perils facing the fraternity during these years should not be underestimated. The Revolution disrupted lodges and made continuing official activities even more difficult than before. And even Masonry's loyalty to the Revolutionary cause was problematic. Despite the substantial numbers

of members within the American patriot leadership, brothers were hardly united in that position. The fraternity contained significant numbers of Loyalists. The Grand Lodge of New York had its foundations among Boston Masons who left with the British when they ended their occupation in 1776. And General Benedict Arnold, the traitor who became the second most widely known member of the Continental Army, belonged to the fraternity.

The problem was not just Masonry's divided loyalties, but also its ambiguous relationship to independence. A number of patriot Masons held their fraternal allegiance to Britain was irrelevant to their political stance. Paul Revere broke with his Boston lodge on this question when they held that there was no reason to break away from British Masonic loyalty, especially because their group had been chartered not from England but from Scotland (some claimed that they would be willing to break away when America revolted against Scotland). Alexandria Lodge, later headed by George Washington himself, made a similar argument.

The issue, I should hasten to note, was not the possibility of persecution, but of seeming irrelevance--an institution that could not command the widespread enthusiasm or loyalty necessary to perpetuate a voluntary institution. Continental Army officers played a significant role in creating that change. The widespread involvement of these leaders helped to provide Masonry with an unambiguous sense of loyalty to the new order. Perhaps just as more important, officers and military lodges helped both to encourage Washington to become more active in Masonry and to spread knowledge about his membership. Washington had been a Mason for years by the time the Revolution began. He had been initiated in 1752, but there is no compelling evidence of his involvement in fraternal activities after 1755. Washington's attendance at the two American Union St. John's Day celebration in 1779, after attending a Philadelphia celebration in December 1778, marked his most public Masonic activities up to that

point. The officer's legendary allegiance to their leader had already led to perhaps the first Masonic toast to Washington earlier that year.

Military brothers also spearheaded the first plan for a general grand master over all of America, a plan first proposed at the December 1779 St. John's Day. Masons within the Continental Army held their own meeting several months later to encourage consideration of the idea. The remaining Pennsylvania Grand Lodge made explicit what the Army brothers must have already discussed among themselves--that the only person who could fit the description was Washington. The strong support of the officers for such an appointment could not win over America's diverse lodges and grand lodges, but they helped spread the idea, widely believed over the next generation, that Washington was already the general grand master over the entire new nation. The result was a fraternity that soon became stranger than ever before.

This growing vigor was rooted in themes visible in the military Masonry of the Revolution. The fraternity that emerged afterwards continued to be able to balance the honor of connection with the nation's leading figures with a sense of fraternal camaraderie among equals. As the noncommissioned officers of a Pennsylvania military lodge wrote in terms that expressed their own aspirations as well as the ideals of both the Revolution and their fraternity, Masonry was "a most Ancient Society where no exception is made of any Man provided he is found worthy of Obtaining it."

ⁱ This lecture draws upon my Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996), which provides citations for much of the material discussed here. Please do not quote or cite this piece without permission from the author.