

Pulling Down Idols

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September 24, 1983

Note: James R. Case spoke "off-the-cuff" as the Lecturer for 1983. The following is based on papers received by the Secretary and from notes made during his presentation.

In a paper I wrote entitled "Masonic Membership of the Governors of the Thirteen Original States" I said, "Editors of Masonic papers and magazines who use the scissors with little discretion are still printing the misinformation that three-fourths of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence were Freemasons, although that imaginative statement has long since been proven a great exaggeration."

It has been proven that insofar as we can determine, nine of the Signers of the Declaration were Freemasons. Masonic orators in the warmth, or heat, of magniloquent utterance have made many other claims that now are taken at face value, although with no basis in fact. It is not my ambition to deflate the orators, debunk the heroes, or dispute the count, but rather to let the facts speak for themselves, as I make a presentation of the circumstances.

Let's look at this account which was given a full page spread in a prominent Masonic publication (and undoubtedly picked up by other Masonic periodicals). In bold headline type it asks: DID YOU KNOW THAT?

Pulling Down Idols - James R. Case

The first statement: "The Revolutionary War was a distinctly Masonic enterprise" does a distinct disservice to Freemasonry. Masonry had nothing to do with the war. Certainly Freemasons fought in it, but on both sides. Not all Freemasons supported the Patriots; many were Tories. But the author of this article gives Masonry "credit" for promoting and executing the Revolution. It should be made absolutely clear that Freemasonry has never had anything to do with promoting war anywhere at any time.

The next statement is correct: "The first assembly of the Continental Congress was presided over by a Master Mason, Peyton Randolph of Virginia." Every statement is incorrect in the next one: "The Boston Tea Party was organized in St. Andrews Lodge at an adjourned meeting, and that every member that threw the tea into the harbor was a member of that Lodge." The Lodge was small, and although there was no meeting that night, we don't know where the members were. And to this day no one has ever learned who the "Mohawk Indians" were who threw the tea into the harbor.

"Paul Revere, who made his immortal ride, was Junior Warden of that Lodge," is correct. But how "immortal" is a ride of about four miles before being captured? The next statement should make the whole article suspect even to those who know nothing about the Craft: "The man who set the lantern in the Old South Church, the beacon of the Revolution, was a member of that Lodge." The "beacon-lighter" was a Mason - BUT the "Old SOUTH Church"? It was NORTH. How can you trust a writer who doesn't know in which direction he's heading?

So as not to give this article credence it doesn't deserve, I'll not quote the statements in full, but will give you my impressions of them. Thirteen, not "all but five," members of the Constitutional Convention were Masons. Richard Henry Lee is not known to be a Mason.

Pulling Down Idols - James R. Case

The committee to write the Declaration of Independence consisted of two known Freemasons, Benjamin Franklin and Robert R. Livingston, not "Lee and all five members of that committee."

George Washington was not "elected Grand Master of Virginia." Washington did take the oath of office as President of the United States upon the Bible brought from St. Johns Lodge of New York, a correct statement! And the oath was administered by the Grand Master of New York.

"The Governors of every one of the original thirteen states at the time Washington was inaugurated" were NOT Masons, as the article claims. In fact, during the whole period from Lexington until the inauguration, out of thirty different individuals who served as governors, about ten were Freemasons. Even so, if we were able to claim the same percentage in high places today, our leadership would be in no worse hands.

"The Constitution of the United States was writted [sic] by Masons" may or may not be true. Such secrecy prevailed during that Convention we don't really know who did what. Washington didn't ask Lafayette and von Steuben be made Masons; they were Freemasons before they came to the United States. And it could well be that, as close as they were, Washington and Lafayette didn't know the other was a Mason. In all there correspondence, not a word about the Craft is mentioned.

Thirty-three of the general officers in the Continental Army have been identified as Freemasons. This is a long way from "all." In fact, Nathanael Greene, one of Washington's most trusted generals, was not a Mason, at least we have no evidence that he was.

Pulling Down Idols - James R. Case

There may be more truth than falsehood in this statement: "Free speech, free religion, and free schools were the gifts of Masonry to America and these were opposed by all anti-Masonic institutions." The article concludes by stating in bold letters: "We as Masons need to put the Masonic spirit of 1776 into 1976 and future years if we are to have a future America."

Over the years there have been many claims concerning aprons supposedly owned, or worn, by George Washington. Most of these claims are outright frauds; a couple are dubious at best. We have proof of only one "Washington apron." It was an apron made by Roman Catholic nuns at Nantes and sent to Washington by the firm of Watson and Cassoul. The receipt of this apron was acknowledged by the General on August 10, 1782. This is the only written account by Washington about an apron he owned. It was the only one listed in his inventory released after his death.

As for Washington's attendance at Masonic Lodges, it appears he attended no tiled lodge after leaving Fredericksburg. He did march in processions. He did participate in public ceremonies. His own words in answer to a "Reverend Snyder" who evidently questioned Washington's patriotism because he was accused of supporting "the Illuminati," proves this. He wanted to "correct an error that you have run into, of my presiding over English lodges in this country. The fact is I presided over none, nor have I been in one more than once or twice within the last thirty years. I believe, notwithstanding, that none of the lodges in this country are contaminated with the principles of the society of the Illuminati." [See *G. Washington: Master Mason* for further information on this subject.]

I hope I have made a case for further and better research. We need to research the development of jewels, aprons, collars, and so on, as you heard today. In fact, much, much more research needs to be done in many areas.