

The Cradle Of The American Revolution

by
The Alexandria Scottish Rite

PREFACE:

This research report is unique, in that the presentation is in dramatic form, rather than the usual reading of a paper. The facts are as we know them today. However, the Scottish Rite has taken a little "creative freedom" in its manner of presenting those facts. It is the hope that this will be both informative and interesting to the members of the A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949.

Cast: Cradle of the American Revolution

Worshipful Master	—	Harry Fadley	Visitor #2:	—	James (Pete) Melvin
Secretary:	—	William Gibbs	Visitor #3:	—	Victor Sinclair
Paul Revere:	—	James Petty	Tyler:	—	Ray Burnell
Visitor #1:	—	John McIntyre	Stage:	—	Drew Apperson

INTRODUCTION:

Narrator: LIBERTY! A PEARL OF GREAT PRICE! Every one wants it! Only a few have it! Those who have it are apt to lose it! The price of liberty is high! Not in monetary figures, but in human lives! Thousands upon thousands of human lives!

Today we are witnessing the difficult struggle for liberty all over the world; the middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and even in the heart of Russia itself. We have also witnessed in China how quickly the spark of liberty can be crushed out by the tanks and iron fist of Tyranny.

Two hundred and twenty years ago the scene was the same in the American Colonies. Fortunately, that spark of liberty became ignited and is still burning today as a Beacon of Hope for the rest of the world.

The question is frequently asked in Masonic circles: What part did Freemasons play in the American Revolution, particularly in the famous "Boston Tea Party"? Since historians

have come up with only guess work, I figure the best way to find an answer to this question is to be there and see what goes on at the time! Let's go back in time to the "Cradle of The American Revolution" where it all began. The Cradle of The American Revolution was a title given by historians to the Green Dragon Tavern, a large brick building standing on Union Street in Boston, Mass. It was built in the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century. The seeds of Freemasonry in Mass. were planted and nourished in the Green Dragon Tavern. It was the meeting place for St. Andrews Lodge. In 1764 St. Andrews Lodge purchased the Green Dragon Tavern and changed its name to "Freemasons Hall, by which it was known at the time of the Boston Tea Party. Over the front door there was a large Square and Compass and a copper Dragon turned green by the weather. It was a community center. Downstairs was the Tavern with its long table. Upstairs was the St. Andrews Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Mass.

Around the Green Dragon's long table, according to tradition, many detailed plans of the American Revolution were

made, including those of the famous "Boston Tea Party". At the time, it was said that more revolutionary eggs were hatched in that Dragon's Den than any other place in the Colonies.

In the autumn of 1773, seven bluff-bowed vessels bent their way across the stormy North Atlantic Ocean toward the American coast line. Stowed away in their holds were cargoes of tea (600,000 pounds in all) consigned by the famous East India Company of London to small groups of merchants in the ports of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and in Charleston. The tea had been rotting in their warehouses. It was cheap tea and the Company had need to get rid of it. The British Parliament gave the East India Company a monopoly on tea; the Colonies were not to buy any other tea. Parliament enforced the Townshend duty tax of three pence per pound, just to prove that they had the power to tax. This raised the "dander" of the Colonists! Taxation without representation, along with a tea monopoly, is TYRANNY!

Three ships loaded with tea had arrived in Boston; the Dartmouth, the Beaver and the Eleanor. They were docked at Griffins Wharf. The date is Dec. 16, 1773. Let us go back to Freemason's Hall on that date. Climb aboard our good ship "Freemasonry". I'll plug in the time-tape for Boston, Dec. 16, 1773; press transport and — YOU ARE THERE!

Scene I: (Lights dimmed)

(St. Andrews Lodge Room. Secretary walks in and approaches the Altar and lights the candles. He then walks to his desk.) (Lights slowly come up as the Worshipful Master enters)

W.M.: Good evening Bro. Secretary. Are we going to have a busy evening tonight?

Sec.: I think the Brethren will be busier on the outside than on the inside tonight, Worshipful.

W.M.: Perhaps so.

(Three visitors from the future enter the Lodge room. They look all around the Lodge with great interest.)

Visitor #1: Here we are, in the Cradle of The American Revolution! You can't help but feel humble and then proud when you think that many of our great Revolutionary Patriots sat in these very seats; John Hancock, Joseph Warren, Paul Revere. John Hancock would later be the first to sign the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Dr. Joseph Warren, a 33 year old physician, is the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mass. that meets in this very Lodge room. Paul Revere is the Grand Senior Deacon. Both Revere and Warren are Past Masters of St. Andrews Lodge, this Lodge.

Didn't climbing that flight of stairs remind you of our old Henry Knox Field Lodge in Alexandria?

(Worshipful Master gives one rap of the gavel. Visitors take their seats)

W.M.: Brethren, due to the small attendance tonight, I will dispense with the formal ritual of opening the Lodge. Before I declare the Lodge opened, I have a few remarks to make. On my way to Lodge I stopped at the Old State House. A huge crowd is gathering and the tension is really high! The Sons of Liberty are out in full force nailing up posters. I brought one with me. Allow me to read it to you.

"Friends! Brethren! Countrymen! That worst of plagues, the detested tea shipped for this port by the East India Company, is now in the harbour; the hour of destruction, or manly opposition

to the machinations of tyranny, stares you in the face. Every friend to his country, to himself and to posterity, is called upon to meet at Faneuil Hall at nine o'clock this day, at which time the bells will ring to make united and successful resistance to this last, and worst and most destructive measure of administration!"

— Boston, Dec, 16, 1773

W.M.: The latest development I can give you is that the Governor stubbornly refuses the people's request to permit the peaceful return of the ships to England with their cargoes of tea. All negotiations by the Committee of Correspondence have failed. Time is running out! The Tea Act states that if the tea is not sold by December 17th, and that is tomorrow, it can be seized by the Custom House and sold for non-payment of duties. If any action is to be taken it must be taken soon! Our fate and the fate of our country is in our hands!

I now declare the Lodge of St. Andrews open! (1 rap) I believe we have some visiting Brethren from the Southern State of Virginia. Welcome my Brethren! Bro. Secretary, would you introduce our visiting Brethren from Virginia.

(Secretary and visiting Brethren approach West of the Altar)

Bro. Sec.: Wor. Master, it is an honor to introduce our Masonic Brothers from Virginia. On my far left, ---; next, ---, etc.

One interesting thing I noticed about our visiting Brethren, and I wish some of our members would take note, is they not only keep their dues card current but they pay in advance! In fact, these three Brothers are paid up clear into the 20th Century!

W.M.: Welcome my Brethren! Better to be plush in Tobacco than to be drowning in cheap India Tea! When you return to Virginia, pay my respect to Bro. George Washington. Please have a seat with the Brethren.

Bro. Sec. you will read the minutes of the 30 Nov. meeting for information.

Bro. Sec.: "At a St. Andrews Lodge held at Masons Hall, 30 Nov. 1773, being St. Andrews Day. There being only seven members present it was motioned and seconded that this Lodge be adjourned to Thursday Evening next, on account of the few members present. (Consignees of Tea took up the Brethren's time.)"

W.M.: It looks like the Consignees of Tea are still taking up the Brethren's time. Bro. Sec., are you ready with the minutes?

Bro. Sec.: Ready Worshipful.

"At a Lodge of St. Andrews held at Mason's Hall, Dec. 16, 1773; by adjournment.

Only five members present. Lodge closed (on account of the few members present) until tomorrow evening."

(Sec. hands the minutes to the Worshipful Master. On his way back to his desk, he suddenly turns and says: "Wait! I forgot something! He then proceeds to scribble a series of large capital T'ees across the bottom of the minutes.)

W.M.: (Looks at the minutes) H'mm! Well done, Bro. Secretary! I approve the minutes, as amended. (1 rap) Brethren, I now declare St. Andrews Lodge closed! (1 rap)

(At the closing of the meeting, the Tyler comes rushing in)

Tyler: Worshipful Master, outside the street is crowded with people rushing to Griffins Wharf!

W.M.: Something must be afoot! Let us be off to Griffins Wharf! (All rush out)

Visitor #1: Let me speak to the Secretary, then let us join them.

(Goes to the Secretaries desk, then joins the other visitors and exits for Griffins Wharf.)

(Lights dimmed)

Scene II Griffins Wharf

(Lights dimmed — Blue spot light on three ships (models) placed at the foot of the East.)

(Visitors approach West of the Altar)

Visitor #1: This looks like a good place to watch the action.

Visitor #2: Look! There are the three Tea ships, the Dartmouth, the Eleanor and the Beaver!

Visitor #3: There must be a thousand people here watching in absolute silence.

Visitor #1: Here come the Mohawks! It looks to me about a hundred to a hundred and fifty men disguised as Mohawk Indians; their faces blackened with soot and hatchets in hand. They are dividing into parties of three each and boarding each of the ships. Some are going below into the hold, others are remaining on deck. The chests of tea are being hoisted to the deck, there broken open and the tea tossed overboard into the harbor.

It was late last night (Dec. 16th) when they started the unloading. It is now almost dawn of the 17th and the three ships are relieved of their cargoes of tea. The harbor looks like a giant "teapot"! Three hundred and forty two chests of

tea, valued at eighteen thousand pounds, now floats in Boston Harbor!

Visitor #2: Except for the huffing and puffing of the Mohawks, there wasn't a sound made throughout the entire operation. The Tea Party was carried out as dignified AND PRECISE AS THE Masonic laying of a Cornerstone.

Visitor #3: And right under the nose of the British Fleet, anchored less than a quarter mile away!

Visitor #1: There they go, in marching order, to the music of a fife, (background fife music) with their tommy hawks at their shoulders, a proud and determined group of men, the UNSUNG HEROES of that first act in the great drama for American Independence!

Visitor #1: (looks at his watch) It is too bad, but our time-tape is running out. We must leave soon.

Visitor #2: But we have not accomplished our objective! We have yet to find out what part Freemasons played in this Tea Party?

Visitor #3: Let us return to Freemason's Hall. Perhaps there we may find some answers.

(Visitors leave — Spot light off — house lights off — ships removed)

Scene III Freemason's Hall

(Lights on — Secretary sits at his desk writing a letter) (Paul Revere enters and approaches the Secretaries desk)

Paul Revere: Sir, my horse is saddled, my bag is packed, I have my Revolutionary Visa Card and I'm ready to ride!

Sec.: Good! Bro. Revere, you have been selected by the Committee of

Correspondence to deliver this letter of last night's proceedings to the Sons of Liberty in New York and Philadelphia. I need not point out to you the importance of this communication! Be careful and God speed! (Secretary embraces Paul Revere)

(On his way out Paul Revere is met by the three visitors in front of the J.W. station)

Visitor #2: Look, isn't that Paul Revere?

Visitor #3: It sure looks like him!

Visitor #1: Bro. Revere, we are Freemasons from a future time zone. We have come back to Boston to find some answers to a few questions that our historians have never answered, particularly as to what part Freemasons played in the planning and execution of last night's event? Perhaps you would be kind enough to enlighten us?

Paul Revere: Gentlemen, as you can see, I'm in a great hurry! I had no sleep last night and I have a long journey to make on horse back. The Committee of Correspondence wants this letter to be delivered to the Sons of Liberty in New York and Philadelphia. Since you are Freemasons, you can read it if you wish.

Visitor #1: (Reads letter)

"We are in perfect jubilee! Not a Tory in the whole community can find the least fault with our proceedings of last night when the Tea was thrown overboard into Boston Harbor. The spirit of the people through out the country is to be described by no means in my power. Their conduct last night surprised the Admiral and English Gentlemen, who observed that these were not a mob of disorderly rabble (as they have been reported), but men of sense, coolness and intrepidity!"

Paul Revere: (takes the letter) Gentlemen, now I must be off! In answer to your question, you never will find out the names of the planners and the participants in last night's "Tea Party". As you well know, Freemasons know the art of keeping secrets better than any one else! Goodbye, and may you always cherish LIBERTY and FREEDOM!

(Paul Revere departs with the sound of horse hoofs) (Visitors wave goodbye)

Visitor #1: There goes a great Patriot and Masonic Brother. Just think, soon he will make another famous ride when he alarms the Minutemen that the British are coming!

(Looks at his watch) Quick! Our time is up! (Visitors Walk to West of the Altar)

Visitor #1: Scotty, beam us forward, quick!

(Lights out)

Scene IV (Back in Lodge room)

(Lights come up slowly; visitors stand West of the Altar)

Visitor #1: Venerable Master, may I approach the East? Brethren, your hearts should overflow with gratitude, especially after having made a visit to that famous Green Dragon Tavern (Freemasons Hall), the Cradle of the American Revolution, where so many of the Revolutionary Eggs were hatched!

I know there are some doubting Thomases here, like _____ who won't believe we made that journey to Boston to witness the famous "Boston Tea Party." I can read their thoughts. Well, just to prove them wrong, I discreetly took a picture of the Dec. 16th minutes of the St. Andrews Lodge with my xerox camera. Here is a copy of those minutes! Remember at the last minute the

Secretary added something to the minutes? Note his scribbling at the bottom which the Worshipful Master thought very appropriate for the occasion. Is it merely a coincidence that it appears to resemble a series of capital "T's!"

I will pass this around for your closer examination. Venerable Master, I bring to you and all the Brethren, a message from the Sons of Liberty and the members of St. Andrews Lodge of Boston: "HOLD HIGH THE TORCH OF LIBERTY!"

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References

1. Grand Lodge of Mass.
2. Paul Revere and The World He Lived In by Esther Forbes; published by Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston Mass. 1942.
3. Southern California Research Lodge, "The Mysteries of The Green Dragon Tavern and the Boston Tea Party by Edward M. Gair.
4. Masonic Service Association Short Talk Bulletin, April 1949.