

The Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution Fort Lauderdale Chapter Newsletter

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January Meeting Report

by Oscar Kraehenbuehl

The annual report and Year 2000 dues have been submitted to the state in timely manner which will entitle us to \$3 refund for each member from the state Treasurer. The Chapter currently has 47 members, the same as at this time last year although not exactly the same people. Special thanks and appreciation are warranted for the contributors this year to the Chapter Trust Fund. Seventeen members contributed a total of \$511. The fund was established in 1991 with \$2500 and the balance now is almost \$7300.

Contributions of all sizes were received and all are welcomed and appreciated. Since Jack Holcomb isn't able to attend our meetings and receive thanks, his generous \$245 contribution is noted here. THANK YOU COMPATRIOTS !! Those members who contributed this year are:

Stuart Browne	Edward Frisinger
Daniel James	James Ralston
George Dennis	Paul Garland
Mike Evans	Oscar Kraehenbuehl
Allen Moore	Wellington Roemer
Jack Holcomb	Arthur Stone
Henry Francher	Richard Jones
Joseph Motes	Thomas Strok
Edward Sullivan	

Joseph Rumbaugh Oration Contest

By Harry Koepke

One of the program highlights of the year is the Joseph Rumbaugh Oration Contest. Forty high schools in Broward County are invited to participate and this year we have 6 students from three high schools.

We have 3 students from McArthur High, 2 students from Chaminade Madonna and again our last year's winner from Stranahan High. Each entry has to give a 5 to 6 minute speech without notes on a subject related to the American Revolution. It's a wonderful experience to talk without notes.

We will need three members to judge, one to keep score and one to prompt our students. Please plan to attend as we would like a large audience to show support to these students.

**NEXT MEETING - MARCH 9TH
TOWER CLUB !!!**

**\$16.00 INCL. TAX AND TIP
11:30 SOCIAL 12:00 LUNCH
28TH FLOOR NATIONS BANK
1 FINANCIAL TOWER
SE 3RD AVE & BROWARD BLVD
FORT LAUDERDALE
FOR RESERVATIONS CALL:
JOSEPH MOTES 954-441-8735**

Members living in North Broward need to dial the area code plus the phone number.

Freemasonry and the American Revolution

Thomas Jefferson was not a Freemason nor was he part of any Illuminati Conspiracy

One of the core delusions of American Freemasons is that Freemasonry played a pivotal role in the American Revolution. Masonic efforts to promote this notion have successfully created a mythology that has seeped into mainstream historical texts. Gordon S. Wood reiterates the essential features of American Freemasonry's revolutionary mythology in a 'Pulitzer Prize' winning book, "The Radicalism of the American Revolution". Mr. Wood sets the stage for his story by discussing the cosmopolitan nature of the American Revolution.

The truth was, said Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*, that Americans were the most cosmopolitan people in the world. They surmounted all local prejudices. They regarded everyone from different nations as their countryman and ignored neighborhoods, towns, and countries as "distinctions too limited for continental minds."... America, by uniting the different kindred of the earth, had a duty to eradicate national prejudices and to make all humanity members of one extensive family.[1] Mr. Wood then goes on to assert 'the importance of Masonry for the American Revolution':

The institution that best embodied these ideals of sociability and cosmopolitanism was Freemasonry. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of Masonry for the American Revolution. It not only created national icons that are still with us; it brought people together in new ways and helped fulfill the republican dream of reorganizing social relationships. For thousands of Americans, it was a major means by which they participated directly in the Enlightenment.

Freemasonry took on its modern role in Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first Grand Lodge was formed in London in 1717. By mid-century, English Masonry was strong enough to provide inspiration and example to a worldwide movement. Although Masonry first appeared in the North American colonies in the 1730s, it grew slowly until mid-century, when membership suddenly picked up.

By the eve of the Revolution there were dozens of lodges up and down the continent. Many of the revolutionary leaders, including Washington, Franklin, Samuel Adams, Otis, Richard Henry Lee, Madison, and Hamilton, were members of the fraternity. The Revolution disrupted the organization but revitalized the movement; in the following decades Masonry exploded in numbers, fed by hosts of new recruits from deeper levels of the society. There were twenty-one lodges in Massachusetts by 1779; in the next twenty years fifty new ones were created, reaching out to embrace even small isolated communities on the frontiers of the state. Everywhere the same expansion took place. Masonry transformed the social landscape of the early Republic.[2]

While Mr. Wood's story is does a great job promoting Freemasonry, it plays fast and loose with the truth. Mr. Wood doesn't get his basic facts straight when he lists Richard Henry Lee, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton as Masons. In the book "Freemasonry in American History" the Masonic Scholar Allen E. Roberts specifically states that Hamilton and Lee were not Masons and that there is 'no proof' Madison was a Mason. Mr. Roberts mentions Samuel Adams in his book but does not cite him as a Mason. This omission suggests there is no evidence to support claims for Samuel Adams' membership in the Masonic fraternity. The errors made by Mr. Wood suggest he has fallen under the influence of Masonic mythologists and, like many Masons, grossly exaggerated 'the importance of Masonry for the American Revolution' by misleading people about the Masonic affiliations of some important American Revolutionaries.[3]

While some Freemasons joined the Revolutionary cause, the vast majorities of American Revolutionaries were not members of the Masonic fraternity. Important Revolutionary leaders like Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, John Adams, and Patrick Henry were not Freemasons. Of the fifty-six signers Declaration of Independence only eight or nine can be shown to have been Freemasons.[4]

thanks to this great man. It is unclear whether the third man was also a Mason.[5]

Benjamin Franklin was a Freemason whose unique socializing skills included attending gatherings of the English Hell Fire Club, a secret society focused on sex, pornography and politics.[6] When a relation asked about becoming a Mason, Franklin replied with his characteristic humor and candor, "one fool in any family is enough." General Lafayette, another Mason, does not appear to have joined (been recruited into?) a French Masonic lodge until the Revolutionary war was virtually over. After the war Masons lavished General Lafayette with higher Masonic degrees. General Lafayette once remarked with irony, as he was pulled around New York, "To-morrow, I am to visit the schools; I am to dine with the Mayor; and in the evening, I suppose, I am to be made VERY WISE by the Masons." [7] Another notable revolutionary Freemason was the traitor Benedict Arnold.[8]

[Discuss the collapse of Masonic lodges during the war]

Mr. Wood continues his discussion of Freemasonry by presenting his vision of an 'enlightened cosmopolitan dream'.

Freemasonry was a surrogate religion for an Enlightenment suspicious of traditional Christianity. It offered ritual, mystery, and congregativeness without the enthusiasm and sectarian bigotry of organized religion.

But Masonry was not only an enlightened institution; it was a republican one as well. It repudiated the monarchical hierarchy of family and favoritism and created a new hierarchical order that rested on “real Worth and personal Merit” and “brotherly affection and sincerity. “Masonry was an organization designed to maintain the familiarity of personal relationships in a society that was coming apart. It created an “artificial consanguinity,” declared De Witt Clinton, that operated “with as much force and effect, as the natural relationship of blood.” It was intended to bring people together who did not know each other as well as they had in the past. The Masonic lodges, declared Charles Brockwell in 1750, were a means by which men who differed in everyday affairs, even in occupation, social rank, and religion, could “all meet amicably, and converse sociably together.” There in the lodges “we all discover no estrangement of behavior, nor alienation of affection. “Masonry was looking for the lowest common denominator of unity and harmony in a society increasingly diverse and fragmented. It became “the Center of Union and the means of conciliating friendship among men that might otherwise have remained at perpetual distance.” That strangers, removed from their families and neighbors, could come together in such brotherly love seemed a vindication of the enlightened hope that the force of love might indeed be made to flow outward from the self. A Mason found himself “belonging, not to one particular place only, but to places without number, and in almost every quarter of the globe; to whom, by a kind of universal language, he can make himself known—and from whom we can, if in distress, be sure to receive relief and protection.” This was the enlightened cosmopolitan dream.[9]

After stripping away the spin, one finds, Mr. Wood has identified some key features of post-Revolutionary War Freemasonry. In particular:

Freemasonry worked to create ‘a new hierarchical order’
 Freemasonry afforded members an extended support network
 Freemasonry was a ‘surrogate religion’
 Freemasonry promoted itself as ‘enlightened’, while characterizing Christian belief as ‘sectarian bigotry’ These features provide a basis for an alternative interpretation of Freemasonry’s role in American society.

The American Revolution had a profound impact on the America’s Masonic lodges. It should come as no surprise that many American Masons were swept up in the spirit of non-Masonic giants like Thomas Jefferson. However, Freemasons were inherently ideologically opposed to the egalitarian beliefs of America’s revolutionaries. After the war was over many Masons, who had benefited from strong ties to the English Monarchy’s hierarchical and class oriented structure, worked to create ‘a new hierarchical order’ which could preserve and promote exclusive membership privileges in a country without a ruling monarch.

While American Freemasonry evolved to survive and thrive, its roots in exclusionary ruling class unionism made it a home for those working against the real principals of the American Revolution. American Freemasonry’s dishonest ‘revolutionary’ mythology is just a smokescreen used to obscure to the membership’s self-serving objectives and to pander to the brotherhood’s delusions of greatness.

While Mr. Wood describes Freemasonry as a ‘surrogate religion’, an acknowledged Mason once described the organization as an all-encompassing ‘Universal Religion’.[10] The Masons regularly raise charges of bigotry and hate mongering for any person or organization that might question the beliefs and mythology of their ‘surrogate religion’. To characterize organized religion as ‘sectarian bigotry’ is hypocrisy when discussing American Masonic lodges that have served as a bulwark of institutionalized sexism and racial segregation with their separate Prince Hall Lodges for African Americans.[11] It also works to position organized Christian religion as an ethical inferior to Freemasonry. Positioning Freemasonry as ethically superior to organized Christian religion and any other religious system of belief is consistent with the objective of Masons to position themselves at the top of a social hierarchy. It has nothing to do with the vision of religious freedom espoused by revolutionaries, like Thomas Jefferson. It also fails to acknowledge the important role of Religion in the American Revolution.

February Meeting Report

By Gib Buckbee

Our speaker for the Feb. meeting was Connie Muller who is an Assistant Scout Master in one of the Ft. Lauderdale Boy Scout Troops. This was Boy Scout month and her subject was the history of scouting. It was started in England by Baden Powell in the early part of the twentieth century. It was brought to this country in 1910 by a newspaper publisher from Chicago name William D. Boyce. She told about the scouting activities in South Florida and her appreciation for the SAR involvement with the Eagle awards program. About 90% of all of the SAR members present were former Boy Scouts. Our hats off to the fine job she is doing.

Our March meeting will consist of the JOE Rumbaugh Oration contest. Harry Koepke will be in charge. This is always well received by the schools and we should have a good attendance to show our support.

2000 CHAPTER OFFICERS

PRESIDENT - MICHAEL EVANS

1693 NW 97 TER
CORAL SPRINGS FL 33071-5908
954-341-9285

VICE-PRESIDENT - HARRY KOEPKE

738 NE 36 STREET
FORT LAUDERDALE FL 3334-2860
954-563-3345

SECRETARY - GIB BUCKBEE

3007 SE 15 STREET
FORT LAUDERDALE FL 33308-7309
954-564-1951

TRASURER - RICHARD JONES

11180 NW 10 PLACE
CORAL SPRINGS FL 33071
954-755-1712

REGISTRAR/GENEALOGIST - GEORGE DENNIS

2771 SE 15 STREET
POMPANO BEACH FL 33062--7506
954-942-3081

CHANCELLOR - EDWARD SULLIVAN, ESQ

2837 NE 27 STREET
FORT LAUDERDALE FL 33306-1912
954-564-1014

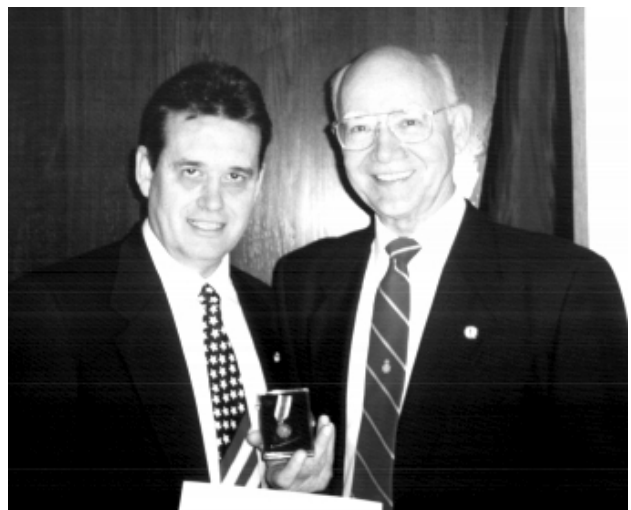
SARGENT-AT-ARMS - OPEN



Compatriot Richard Jones receives the Meritorius Service Medal from Compatriot Oscar Krahenbuehl.



Joseph Motes receives a Certificate of Appreciation for service as Chapter President for 1998-1999 from President Mike Evans.



Joseph Motes receives the War Service Medal Award for services in Vietnam from Oscar Krahenbuehl.