

Freemasons and the founding of america history essay



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For as long as America has been a country, students have learned about the founding of our great nation. By the time most students graduate high school, they can name the major events of the Revolution. They learn about George Washington, the Revolutionary War, and the Constitution. What they don't know is that deeply rooted in the founding of America are the beliefs and practices of a secret society, the Freemasons.

What are Freemasons? Most historians believe that this secret society had its origins in Great Britain during the Middle Ages (Wasserman 14). Freemasons are a major secret society assumed to have originated in the stonemason guilds as groups of stonemasons who traveled around Europe building cathedrals and other buildings (14). They are not a religious group, but a person must believe in a higher power to gain membership (Freemasons). In the beginnings of Freemasonry, the society agreed to let all laws, religions, and morality have precedence over their oaths (Wasserman 17). The Freemasons' purpose is to find the eternal truth about life and to discover the truth about God and the immortality of the soul (Hieronimus 26). Founded to further the enlightenment ideals, like freedom and equality, it reflects the very principles our Founding Fathers, many of them Freemasons, used as a model of for our country. Today, the society mostly does charity work and philanthropy, but they will always have many secrets that only those members of the highest rank are allowed to know.

There are three main degrees, or ranks, in Freemasonry. When a Mason is initiated into the society, they begin as an Entered Apprentice, the first degree (Kohut). The initiation ceremony consists of the new member being resurrected from a symbolic death. As an Entered Apprentice, a Mason

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learns the code of honor and all of the practices of Freemasonry (Wasserman 19). The second degree is the Fellow Craft; in this degree, the member learns some of the better hidden secrets of the many symbols in the society. The third degree is the Master Mason. The member has a grasp on the ideas of immortality of the soul and the morality of the body (Freemasons). It is when a member reaches this degree; they are able to participate in most of Masonic life. The real secrets are revealed to those of the third degree and higher. From the Master Mason, a member can continue to move up the ranks, hopefully to arrive at the Thirty-Third Degree, or the Keeper of the Royal Secret (Freemasons). As a member advances in the degrees, they gain more power. Many of our Founding Fathers reached the highest echelons of Freemasonry and therefore were able to exert a high amount of power on their society and our country.

American Freemasonry officially began when, in 1730, the London Grand Lodge charted the building of lodges in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, (Wasserman 26). St. John's Lodge was the first Masonic lodge in America and probably the whole New World (27). By 1765, lodges had been established in all of the British colonies (27). This began the long term relationship between the Masons and the government and society of America. Freemasonry was founded to further enlightenment ideals, and the American Revolution began to achieve these very ideals of freedom and equality. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/ac/Square_compasses.svg/220px-Square_compasses.svg.png

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The most common symbols seen in American Freemasonry are the compass and the square with a G in the middle. The G represents God and Geometry. Freemasons believe that God, the Grand Architect of the Universe as they call him, is important. They saw geometry as a divine practice (Wasserman 16). The square represents the moral ideals that all Freemasons must regard highly, and serves as a reminder that all Masons must limit their desires to appease the moral standards. The earliest known reference to this symbol is in a drawing of the Green Dragon Tavern which Freemasons owned. In 1796, Paul Revere, a Mason, made a brass piece with the square and compass on it (17). The symbols show up in many cities today letting Freemasons know that there is a place where they can meet with like-minded people.

Our first president, George Washington, was a dedicated freemason. He was initiated 1752 at the Lodge in Fredericksburg, Virginia (Hieronimus 41). On August 4th, 1753, Washington was raised to a Master Mason, the highest degree in Freemasonry (41). Because of a painting of George Washington wearing a Freemason Apron with the symbols of the Holy Royal Arch degree on it given to him by Marquis de Lafayette, Washington is suspected to have also reached that degree (43). During the Revolutionary War, he participated in rituals in temporary military lodges set up to accommodate the many Freemason officers and soldiers in the Continental Army, and in these lodges, he initiated many of his fellow officers into the society (44). His engagement in Freemasonry during the war affected many of his military decisions. Some historians believe that because thirty-three of the seventy-four officers in the Continental army were Freemasons, their involvement as Masons helped bind them together as brothers and assist in winning the war

(45). All the Masonic officers and soldiers had to adhere to the Masonic code as well as the code for the army, and because of this, Washington had better control over the army (45). Freemasonry allowed the soldiers and officers to focus on the common aspects they share rather than their differences in rank and religion, strengthening their common bond (Decoding). Many Masonic scholars, although there is no concrete evidence, believe that George Washington served as a Grand Master for a lodge, as shown by a eulogy for Washington given by Thomas Bigelow at a Grand Lodge of Massachusetts meeting, "The information Received from our Brethren who had the happiness to be members of the Lodge over which he presided for many years, and of which he died the Master..." (Hieronimus 44). Washington was so deeply involved in this secret society that his very morals reflected their core beliefs. In a speech to the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts he stated that, "My attachment to the Society of which we are all members will dispose me always to contribute my best endeavors to promote the honor and prosperity of the Craft" (Hieronimus 44). George Washington, Founding Father and our first president, used his Masonic beliefs to help shape America as we know today. <http://www.reversespins.com/gwpic.jpg>

Interested in Masonry at an early age, it is no surprise that Benjamin Franklin was a Freemason also. During the colonial times, membership into Freemasonry was limited to higher class men; Franklin's initiation was delayed until he reached a higher social class. When he came back to America from his first trip to London, Franklin formed his own secret society called the Leather Apron Club, influenced greatly by Freemasonry (Hieronimus 55). The name suggests a reference to the Masonic leather

aprons worn in ceremony. This society evolved into the Junto Club in 1731 and then the present day American Philosophical Society. Benjamin Franklin finally achieved his goal of becoming a Mason in 1730 in Philadelphia. During his life, he served as the Grand Master of the Pennsylvania Lodges and as a Provincial Grand Master (56). Franklin was the secretary of the St. John's Lodge from 1735 to 1738 (Benjamin). According to Masonic tradition, Franklin laid the cornerstone of the Independence Hall in 1734 (Hieronimus 56). Over the course of five years, he never missed a Grand Lodge meeting and he only missed five provincial lodge meetings (56). When he travelled to France in 1776 to negotiate a treaty, Franklin affiliated with a French Lodge called the Nine Sisters (58). While in France, he assisted in the initiation of Voltaire. He used these connections to facilitate the relationship between America and France (58). As a printer, he was able to print many Masonic documents and constitutions. Franklin published the Anderson's Constitution, a Masonic book, which was the first Masonic book to be printed in America (Benjamin). <http://108.49.226.102/images/site-artwork/benjamin-franklin-freemason.jpg>

Marquis de Lafayette, a general in the Continental Army was also a Freemason. When he came to America to fight, he brought a few French officers with him to assist in the cause (The Marquis). Because he believed in the cause so much, he volunteered to work without pay. Because he was working for free and was a powerful general, Congress granted him the rank of Master General on July 31, 1777, not long after he arrived here (The Marquis). While in America, Lafayette met George Washington and they became fast friends. Lafayette's connections with France, along with

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Franklin's Masonic ties, were instrumental in securing an alliance with the French.

There were many other Freemasons involved in the founding of America. Paul Revere and Baron von Steuben were both members of the Society. Thirty-three of the officers in the Continental Army, nine signers of the Declaration of Independence, and thirteen signers of the Constitution were all confirmed to be Freemasons, and many others are suspected to be members (Hieronimus 46). Because this many of the men involved in the start of America were Freemasons, it is no surprise that the Masonic ideals were incorporated in America.

The St Andrews Lodge in Boston Massachusetts bought the Green Dragon Tavern in 1764 as a place to hold their meetings (Wasserman 30). They had already been meeting in the lodge since 1752. Downstairs was the tavern, and upstairs were the St Andrews Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts (Gair). After they purchased it, they rented out the space to several groups, one of which was the Sons of Liberty (Wasserman 30). Many historians have called the tavern the " headquarters of the American Revolution" (Gair). Joseph Warren, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, was the one who sent Paul Revere, the Senior Grand Deacon of the same lodge, to Lexington on his famous ride (Gair). They were both former members of the St Andrews Lodge. John Hancock was also a member of the St Andrew Lodge. A drawing of the Tavern has been found, most likely drawn by a Freemason because of the compass and the square in the upper left hand corner, which states underneath the picture, " Where we met to plan the consignment of a few shiploads of teas. December 6, 1773"

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(Decoding). In the minutes of the Lodge meeting, it was written that they had helped plan the Boston Tea Party, and the lodge didn't meet the night of the Tea Party (Decoding). Many of the crucial events before and during the American Revolution were planned here, and without the tavern, things may never have happened the way they did. <http://www.honorofkings.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Green-Dragon-Tavern-Boston-Tea-Party.jpg>

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, it said, " We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable" (Decoding). Franklin suggested the phrase " self-evident" in place of sacred because he believed any government influenced by Masonic ideals would be based on reason and not religion. Although Thomas Jefferson was never proven to be a Mason, many of the others who formed the document had been and therefore Masonic values were inputted in the Declaration of Independence. The Freemasons' ideals influenced one of the most important documents in all America. Nine of the fifty-six signers were involved: William Ellery, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Joseph Hewes, William Hooper, Robert Treat Paine, Richard Stockton, and William Whipple (Hieronimus 46). Ten other signers were suspected of being members.

In the original plans, Washington wanted the capitol city to be a perfect ten mile square. To Masons, the square represents equality, honesty, and fairness; ideals the founding fathers hoped their new country would reflect (Wasserman 46). It also reflects the hope that the new nation would be built on the principles of reason and geometry, not religion (Decoding). The final plan had a grid of streets designed by Thomas Jefferson with other streets radiating from buildings and monuments such as the Capitol (Decoding). If <https://assignbuster.com/freemasons-and-the-founding-of-america-history-essay/>

someone takes a map of Washington DC and traces over the streets, they will find many symbols relevant to satanic culture and Freemasons (Decoding). Some historians and many people online say this is the result of the Freemasons swaying our government with their satanic ways, but any city with a series of angled streets layered over a grid, is bound to have some compasses and squares, pentagrams, and other symbols hidden amongst the streets (Decoding). [http://www. delusionresistance. org/images/washdc. jpg](http://www.delusionresistance.org/images/washdc.jpg)

Freemasons presided over many of the cornerstone laying ceremonies in Washington D. C. On April 15, 1791, the Alexandria Lodge laid the cornerstone of the capitol city (Wasserman 46). Because the Freemasons were asked to perform these ceremonies, it shows that the leaders of our country valued the Freemasons and their ideals highly. George Washington was in charge of the ceremony for the Capitol Building on September 18, 1793 (Wasserman 35). Such a ceremony would consist of a procession of Masons dressed in ceremonial aprons and white gloves. In the ceremony, Washington laid corn, oil, and wine on the cornerstone before it was laid in the ground. The corn represents prosperity, the oil represents peace, and the wine represents happiness. Masons also laid the cornerstone for the White House and the Washington Monument (Wasserman 35).

The original committee to make a national seal included Benjamin Franklin, a known Mason, Thomas Jefferson, a suspected member, John Adams, and the artist, Pierre Du Simitiere (Hieronimus 82). Many people believe that, because of Franklin's role in the original committee, our nation's Great Seal is full of Freemason imagery. Actually, the original designers turned to <https://assignbuster.com/freemasons-and-the-founding-of-america-history-essay/>

religion or mythology for their inspiration (83). None of the original committee's ideas were even used in the final design (82). While the unfinished pyramid and the All Seeing Eye are Masonic symbols, they were also common in other groups as well and are not exclusively Masonic (83). The final design does include Masonic symbols, but is not as influenced by Masonry as some common conspiracy theories claim. The evidence debunks many of the popular conspiracies about Freemasonry and American government.

America's beginnings are intertwined deeply with Freemasonry. Although movies like National Treasure and books like Dan Brown's Lost Symbol and The Da Vinci Code provide a glimpse into the world of Masonry, the stories are mostly fictional. However, these fictional pieces have shown the world that there is a secret founding of America and they should learn about it. From the Declaration of Independence to the building of Washington DC, the Freemasons have influenced America's founding.

Significance

The Freemasons helped shape America at the beginning, and without it we wouldn't be the country we are today. The Founding Fathers based their opinion of what a country should be on enlightenment and Masonic ideals. The basic rights and freedoms we enjoy today are the result of the Freemasonic influence on early America. The bond that the Masonic soldiers in the Continental Army shared aided them in working together for the cause of independence. The Declaration of Independence was written based on Masonic ideals.

What If #1

What would have happened if the Freemasons had never bought the Green Dragon Tavern?

If the St Andrews Lodge, a Freemason lodge in Boston, hadn't bought the Green Dragon Tavern, there may never have been a Revolutionary War. The St Andrews Lodge rented out the tavern for groups to use. One of these groups was the Sons of Liberty.

If they had never bought the tavern, the Sons of Liberty would have had nowhere to meet. They, along with the members of the St Andrews Lodge, planned the Boston Tea Party at the tavern. The Boston Tea Party was a key event that helped rally the opposition to the British government. If the Boston Tea Party never occurred,

The

What If #2

What if the foreign officers who fought in the Revolutionary War weren't Freemasons?

Many of the officers in the American Revolution were Freemasons. Two very significant foreign officers, Baron von Steuben and Marquis de Lafayette were Freemasons. If they weren't Freemasons, they may never have come to America, or if they had, they wouldn't have bonded as well with George Washington. Without the help from their fellow brothers, the foreign officers might have found the cause of American independence less appealing and not come to fight. Without these foreign officers or foreign alliances, the

Colonies would not have won the Revolution and we would still be British colonies.

Summary

I chose this topic because, not long ago, I read the Dan Brown book, *The Lost Symbol*, and the subject really interested me. I wanted to find out for myself how much of the events in the book are actually backed by factual information. The idea of conspiracy theories has always interested me, although I don't believe in the majority of them. I chose this topic in order to learn about the secret of America's past. I knew researching this topic might be difficult, because few have written about my topic beyond just conspiracy theorists, but I chose to undertake the challenge because I really wanted to learn more about how the Freemasons influenced American history. I wanted to know what was behind the shroud of secrecy commonly associated with the Freemason name, and I wanted to know what was behind all of the talk about satanic worshipers and conspiracy theories.

My view about the founding of America has changed a lot. I never realized that our country's history has so much secrecy behind it. I also learned that the Freemasons aren't really a secret society; they are just a society that has some secret rituals. Through my research, I gained insight into one of the realms of history not known by many. Masons were behind many of the events in the Revolution.

Book Review

Founding Fathers, Secret Societies was a good book that explained a lot about Freemasons in early America. Only a section of the book was about

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Freemasons, but it had very specific information and was quite useful. I wouldn't recommend that other students doing this topic read the whole book, but the sections that are relevant to Freemasonry are definitely a good tool for the research. It gave a lot of background information on the Freemasons, but it also went into other secret societies as well. I learned a lot about the effect Freemasonry had on George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. Although the book addressed other things not about my topic, the information it did give was very useful. The book also talked about the Rosicrucian Order and the Illuminati.