

"I SAW A FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND"

HISTORICAL ADDRESS

By

W.'BRO. GEORGE L. BUCK

GRAND HISTORIAN

of the

M.'W.'. Grand Lodge, F. & A. M. of Washington

As in other climes where different religious faiths prevail, the maimed approach the sepulchers of the sanctified dead in the hope that the Divine spirit may relieve their sufferings; so we turn to the past in no less reverent and hopeful mood, to derive from the intellectual and spiritual nobility of earlier days the inspiration to guide the present and design the future.

Matthew Arnold in "The Future" paints our background. "Who can see the green earth any more As she was by the sources of Time? Who imagines her fields as they lay In the sunshine, unworn by the plow? Who thinks as they thought, The tribes who then roamed on her breast. Her vigorous, primitive sons?"

If we could have visited the thirteen Colonies in the early 1700's, we would have seen surprising differences-how young our forefathers were, for instance; a man of forty was "old." And where among these young men, where were the great consolidating institutions of today, the home, the church, the school, the state? Except for the home, there was little trace of the great unifying influences in our present social order.

Schools? Almost none existed. There were tutors for the sons of the well-to-do, but there was little education for others. A long, long way from the free public education of today.

There were none of the professional and business associations of the present, no chambers of commerce.

The state? People saw little of it. The only time the majority realized it even existed was in extreme crisis, when, for example, a military expedition like Braddock's passed their way.

The church? Many families could not even read the Bible, and never went to church. The European Christian tradition was all but gone, under the exigencies of frontier life; it had been left at home. Among those who adhered to churches there was little respect for faiths that differed, and most of the Colonies differed. Virginia, for example, was settled by members of the Church of England, their Church at home flushed with victory over other faiths. These churchmen made Virginia's laws, with taxation of all for their State Church; and the parishes rich in tobacco were the ones sought by the clergy. When Washington was born, heresy was punishable, at the common law, by burning. One who denied the tenets of the Church of England could hold no office, could be no guardian, not even of his own children, who were taken away and put into "orthodox" hands. From mother England Quakers fled from persecution. But a ship captain who brought one to Virginia went to prison. So did the Quaker, who was liable to

execution. Only in the Providence Plantations of Roger Williams and in Catholic Maryland was there religious freedom. It was a far cry to the Statute of Religious Freedom in Virginia in 1789, one of the three lines on the tomb of its author, Thomas Jefferson, and to the Bill of Rights of the Constitution in 1791. Under such conditions of intolerance there could be no possible unity among thirteen Colonies arising from a common religious impulse.

Yet Thomas Paine, in "Common Sense", written in 1776 to keep up the spirit of an army that had known little but defeat, referred in striking manner to a new government that might come after the victory he forecast. Wrote he, "We have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now!"

What ground had he for such prophetic optimism? What forces were to unify these scattered Colonies? If neither education, nor business, nor the state, nor the church provided the foundations of unity, where could men like Paine look for the seeds of nationality?

We can discern at least one unseen influence that went to the making of the nation. No man can tell accurately the manner in which it was transmitted to the Colonies; its traces are meagre; there is no formal record book before 1750. Men who study this influence sometimes differ in what they find. Even the light of the present day does not reveal much that is new, and in such an inquiry, finality can have no place. Yet, looking back today, we can see a footprint in the sand. Let us study it a while.

Melvin Johnson is authority for the statement that Freemasonry has exercised a greater influence upon the establishment and development of American civilization and the fundamentals of our Government than any other single institution. This has never been realized since the days of the first constitutional conventions, in which the landmarks of Masonry with its freedoms and its equality of men, became the landmarks of our liberty. The

Masonic label was submerged, as the ideals of Masonry became the ideals undergirding the supreme law of the land. ,

Whence came Freemasonry to America, and how? The tale is familiar. Masonry came overseas from the British Isles. The Scottish Grand Lodge, first formed in 1736, proceeded to charter new lodges in Boston and Virginia. Prior to this time there was no thought that its unchartered lodges were in the least irregular; but thereafter, naturally, a charter or warrant from this Grand Lodge was necessary to establish the legality of a new lodge. A similar course was followed earlier in Ireland, with its Grand Lodge in 1727, which chartered in New York. But the greatest influence came from the Grand Lodge of London of 1717. This Grand Lodge published in 1723 the great "Freemason's Book", Anderson's "Constitutions", the "book of the law." Prepared by order of the Grand Master, it was official; and being read to new members at every initiation, it soon became venerable as a landmark. This was the book that bound all lodges to the Grand Lodge.

Membership became fashionable; to the lodges flocked noblemen, ambassadors, merchants of wealth, high officers of the British Army and Navy. In all parts of the world Englishmen vied in erecting lodges, military and civilian. England's soldiers were on every continent; her fleets in

the, seven seas. Her Masonry extended from Gibraltar to Bengal, from Russia to Geneva.

And so to the Colonies came this legal and fashionable Masonry, from Scotland, Ireland and especially England. Not with the Pilgrims or Puritans or Cavaliers, but with every favorable wind that filled the sails of army transport or naval ship-of-the-line; every lapping wave that lifted a merchantman onward, carried Masonry to our shores. It kept pace with the tides of immigration. The Colonies wanted the same customs and institutions as the old country. Colonists visiting "home" often joined there so popular and enticing a society. Civil officers of the Crown arriving in America were found to be Masons.

In the "pre-historic" period from the arrival in 1705 of the first Mason, Gov. Andrew Belcher of Massachusetts, to 1730, doubtless Masons gathered and initiated members, acting by "prescriptive right", under the "ancient privilege", according to "immemorial usage." Their informality was the natural result of the itinerant character of operative Masons, -men who chanced to be present. As at home, lodges met in taverns, for early Masonry was more social, with less work, than ours. How like old London to read of Lodges meeting in the Grey Hound Tavern, the George, the Green Dragon, the King's Arms, the Tun Tavern. Thus Masons preserved their home recollections and renewed their fraternal pleasures.

How did Colonial Masonry spread? Well, how does a cell divide? Whenever Masons from various lodges found themselves in a new locality, they simply assembled. If there was a fair chance of continuance, a lodge was formed. No one thought of this natural propagation as irregular. A charter, a mere parchment of authority, on which we gaze with reverence, then did not mean much.

There were also radical differences between the degree system then and now. Lodges seem to have worked but two degrees. Probably our First and Second were condensed into their First, and our Third into their Second. All business was done on the First, and few Masons advanced beyond it. Only in 1749 was an initiate "passed" as a Fellowcraft.

As deputations for Provincial Grand Lodges arrived from home, these primitive lodges took out warrants, which regularized them. The work of the informal lodges was done; they had planted the seed. In 1721 the Grand Lodge of London adopted the regulation forbidding the formation of a lodge without a warrant from the Grand Master. But news took a long time to travel, and it was 1738 before the regulation was firmly established everywhere. Now it was Masonry, regular and duly constituted, which grew into a mighty influence for good in the New World.

First it was Daniel Coxe, "made" in London, now in the Colonies as justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, with his deputation as Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1730, for a two year period. He left no records at all. Then Henry Price in Boston, P. G. M. of New England in 1733, and later Thomas Oxnard, in whose jurisdiction was all North America. Forty-two lodges were warranted by Price and his successors, 1734 to 1772, from Canada and Nova Scotia to the West Indies. There was nothing of our present doctrine of exclusive territorial jurisdiction; that came only after the Revolution.

Read in Hervey Allen's "Bedford Village" of the coming of a quiet man to organize a Blue Lodge

in Western Pennsylvania. Into the chaos and hostility of the frontier, with him, came a sense of order, of the superiority of the mental and moral in man over the physical—that pressing and dangerous physical world amid which the pioneer spent all his days. Masonry was the church spire of his spiritual building. Only the good men joined, not many, but the best—men who had a stake in the town, who were peaceful and decent citizens, who encouraged each other to do the right thing, and acted together to check the rough and irresponsible element. Solid, thinking men found their hard-won property safer, and the community tended to prosper. All but the wild and the wastrels, and Masonry was never for them. Small wonder the Mason who came to build and install the new lodge deserved the name of "Worshipful." And it is amazing that in such a wide territory as the Colonies, with communications so rare, with access to so few printed authorities, American Masonry should have kept the Ancient Landmarks as faithfully as it did.

The documents of the time are scanty, but the men who joined the ranks of Masonry were leaders; and it may be possible to trace the Masonic influence by a study of their careers. Of them let us choose two. A greater contrast in inheritance, abilities and deeds could not be found. George Washington was from the South, Benjamin Franklin the North. One was a country boy, the other always of the city. One a man of battles, the other of diplomacy and peace. The greatest achievements of these two were separated by thousands of miles of ocean. One was supreme in the Colonies; he never left America except for a short, boyhood trip to the Barbadoes. The other helped guide our destiny on two continents and in three nations, and was the greatest diplomat of his age. Yet they were one in spirit, worked for the same great cause, and had taken the same obligations before the altar of Masonry.

Washington's Masonic history, as we know, is brief. On 4 November 1752 he was made an Entered Apprentice in Fredericksburg Lodge in His Majesty's most loyal Colony of Virginia, and raised the following August. This probably was an informal lodge, for the first record of a charter is 21 July 1758, from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Here he held active membership until death. Like many Virginians, he held dual membership; he was also a member of Alexandria Lodge No. 22, of which he was designated the first Master. He served his term and was reelected, 1788-9: For twenty-five years his Masonic life is all but lost. We know he visited some lodges of the line during the Revolution. He was held in such great esteem that in 1780 came a movement to create him Grand Master for the United States, but this was never pushed to completion. In 1788, when he was inaugurated our first President in New **York**, the Grand Master of the State, Chancellor Livingston, administered the oath on a Masonic Bible taken from St. John's Lodge. As President, besides being Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 for two terms, he laid the cornerstone of the new capitol in Washington with Masonic ceremonies. When he came to the end, it was with Masonic ceremonies, following the Episcopal service, that his ashes were committed. The last words spoken over his bier were by the brethren of his Lodge, "So mote it be. Amen."

Brief, for a record? Yes, indeed. But let us not overlook the collateral evidence of Masonic influence. We need no more than mention the constant use of Masonic expressions in Washington's letters and speeches. The more important fact is the long list of great Masonic names in all the Colonies who were his associates, the members of the Committees of Safety and of Correspondence, the majority of the Major-Generals and of the Signers of the Declaration, individuals like Paul Revere; well, let us stop the inexhaustible list. Where all other means of

testing failed, it was in Masonic lodges men found acquaintance that ripened into friendship and trust, and finally into selected leadership, throughout the length of the land!

Franklin's Masonic career was much more in the public eye. Initiated in 1731 in St. John's Lodge, Philadelphia, which was unchartered at the time, he soon became Provincial Grand Master in 1784; and then turned to the publishing of the first Masonic book in America, a reprint of Anderson's "Constitutions" of 1723. That from its wide sale must have been a lucrative undertaking. Again in 1749 he was Provincial Grand Master, and as such visited the Grand Lodge of England' in 1760. Later in France he became Master in 1782 of the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, honorary member in 1785 of the Lodge of Good Friends at Rouen, and Master of the Royal Lodge of the Commanders of the Temple for the Orient of Carcassonne.

Strangely enough, a Masonic Lodge in Paris, which Washington never even visited, did most for him and for the cause he espoused. This Lodge was not even constituted until 1776, when our Revolution was already a year old. But the ten men who founded it were unconsciously preparing the way for the work in France of Washington's greatest associate.

Can we picture Franklin in Paris? They exclaim over him that he is white! People thought everyone in the Colonies was an Indian. And they call him the "Bostonian", for the ships from Boston were known in every port. He dresses so plainly in his Quaker garb, acts so simply, looks so clean contrast to the nobles that surround the King, with their laces and ruffles, their powder and perfumery. This last might puzzle us of the present day for a time, until we remember that, after all, Franklin's period was before the days of open plumbing. France of the 1700's belonged still to the soapless centuries. And to his great delight, this Past Provincial Grand Master finds the King and most of the Ministers are Masons; with them he is doubly accredited, and so he works among them from the top downward.

Then to the countryside among the people, where this printer, who always kept his feet on the ground, finds himself at home with the small town editors. They too are Masons, taking their cue from the Crown. Here, Franklin works from the bottom upward, and for the first time in history

America begins to get a good press.

But the Masonic Lodge he joined in Paris; that was magnificent) Never was a Lodge whose membership was so limited. The by-laws said every candidate had to be "endowed with some talent in art or science, and give public and satisfactory proof of such talent." Its very name was suggestive, "Lodge of the Nine Sisters"-and who were they but the Muses? Here belonged all the savants of the Ancien Regime, the greatest artists and scientists and statesmen. When Virginia desired a statue of Washington done from life, they searched the world over for the greatest living sculptor and found him among the members of this Lodge, Jean Antoine Houdon. There entered this Lodge as a candidate, leaning on the arm of Franklin, the father of the French Revolution himself, the great philosopher Voltaire! And there came a distinguished Masonic visitor to its doors, a member of St. Bernard Lodge No. 122, Kilwinning, Kirkcudbright, Scotland, one John Paul Jones! Out of these associations came Franklin's triumph. These were the men Franklin wanted to meet. They acclaimed him and sought to help his cause. To influence French opinion in favor of America they drew cartoons for his press articles, coined

him slogans and epigrams, and quoted them abroad. A great historian, Prof. Bernard Fay, states that next to the native ingenuity of the man, it was to masonry Franklin owed his ultimate success-French recognition of the United States, and an alliance. One hundred- and sixty odd, years ago he went abroad to sell bonds to finance the fighting chance which was then the only asset of our government. He sold \$11,710,000 in France and Holland-the one and only salesman in our First Bond Drive: He it was who sent gold overseas to pay Washington's soldiers, troops to fight under Lafayette, and that French fleet under DeGrasse that came sailing up over the Virginia horizon at Yorktown to cut off the escape of Cornwallis. The French did not win Washington's Revolution. They ended ill

But after the war there befell, under the Articles of Confederation, what Prof. Charming calls, "Four Years of Confusion." Thirteen sovereign states then existed, with no overall power to insure such things as payment of taxes, levy of recruits for the army, or regulation of foreign commerce. A unanimous vote was required, and imagine thirteen states seeing eye to eye It almost never happened. Each levied tariffs against the rest. The large states with ports of entry penalized shippers from the small states. Connecticut, for instance, was at the mercy of Massachusetts and New York, whose ports it used, and in its own language was "between the hawk and the buzzard." New Jersey felt it was "a cask tapped at both ends." In these days when we mail a letter or ship goods from Washington to Florida without let or hindrance, it is difficult to imagine how hostile two States could become. When John Adams appeared in London in 1785 as the accredited minister from the United States at the Court of St. James, the British Foreign Minister at first refused to treat with him, demanding the presence of not one but thirteen ambassadors, one for each of these sovereign States! Thomas Paine wrote, ."The continental belt was too loosely buckled." Said Pelatiah Webster, "Thirteen staves and ne'er a hoop will not make a barrel."

What could be done? What part could men like Washington and Franklin play? And would there be a chance for the tenets of Masonry to be of help? Perhaps even in the Constitutional Convention of May-September 1787, we may be able to say, with Robinson Crusoe, "I saw a footprint in the sand." We may not see the presence of Masonry face to face, but internal evidence will reveal its force at work for union.

May we quote from Washington's Diary, Sunday, 13 May 1787? He is almost at Philadelphia-"At Gray's Ferry the city light horse met me, escorted me in by the Artillery's officers, who stood arranged and saluted as I passed. Waited on the President, Dr. Franklin, as soon as I got to town. On my arrival the bells were chimed." Three significant sentences! Washington was the idol of his soldiers, for his long record of honor and generosity in dealing with the military. Of course the bells rang-a nation trusted him! And the first official act of Washington, a Mason, was to call on Dr. Franklin, an active and experienced Mason, and the two most influential men in the country sat down to chart their course.

There gathered in Convention a brilliant company. Two major plans for a new government were presented, one from Virginia for the large states, and one from New Jersey for the small. On every question their ideas clashed, and only compromise could allow progress to be made. This field of adjustment and accommodation was peculiarly that of Franklin. Every day during that hot and muggy summer they struggled, and adjourned for tea or dinner in small groups, where no

doubt compromises were suggested for formal adoption next day. Washington presided, and spoke but once; but we may be sure that his carefulness of judgment and rigid determination for success were prominent in these outside meetings. Letters from delegates tell how they looked to him for advice. Wrote Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania, "Washington would pretty soon leave us if we did not do this." Prof. Farrand tells us that, "Washington's influence, however it may have been exerted, was important and perhaps decisive in determining results within the federal convention itself."

No single question troubled them more than the Executive. The office of President seems so natural to us now, it is hard to realize their fears of a strong position. But they had, just fought a war to get rid of a king, and they did not propose a successor. On the other hand, the Confederation had shown the miseries flowing from the want of a central power. What to grant and what to withhold disturbed them from the start until the very end. This Presidential office was a new and all important feature; the delegates felt they had to go to the people for his election. And if they did, how keep the large and populous States from having the advantage? So difficult was the question that on 10 July 1787 Washington wrote to Hamilton, "When I refer to the state of the councils which prevailed at the period when you left this city, and add that they are now, if possible, in a worse train than ever, you will find but little ground on which the hope of a great establishment can be formed. In a word, I almost despair of seeing a favorable issue to the proceedings of our convention and do therefore repent my agency in the business."

And now may we turn from recorded history to see how, in all probability, this great question was settled? Of course it's an hypothesis only, or a guess; shrewd, let us hope, - or a dream, if you like. But let us try Washington's Diary gives us some clues. On Friday, 1 June, he wrote, "Attending in Convention and nothing being suffered to transpire, no minutes of the proceedings has been, or will be inserted in this diary." Generally speaking, no records were kept. They were burned by order of the Convention. The Diary never mentions Washington's personal feelings or beliefs, nor do his letters. We have to imagine those. During the Convention the majority of entries in his Diary read briefly indeed. Here is one that occurs several times. "In Convention. Dined at the President's, (Doctr. Franklin's) and drank Tea there." In such outside meetings, among a selected few, undoubtedly compromises were made and agreements reached.

And so, tonight, let us join a company who have been invited to dine at Dr. Franklin's home. We walk slowly in the warm summer evening to Franklin Court, down near the Delaware River. Only three or four blocks away we pass the Masonic Lodge. Indeed, of the fifty-five delegates, somewhere between twenty and thirty-two we know are Masons. Delegates from at least nine of the states, of the twelve represented, are Masons; and among them five who are, or have been, Grand Masters, and two who are destined to hold that office. From these Dr. Franklin has chosen his guests.

His house is large, formed of three dwellings joined together, and we pass into the delightful garden where Dr. Franklin awaits us, amply supported by cooling drinks. It is an interesting company we find - few men, but influential; some are from the large states, some the small. Tonight Dr. Franklin hopes to solve this question of the powers of the President.

We meet Dr. David Brearly, 46, Chief Justice of New Jersey, and its first Grand Master; from

Delaware Mr. Gunning Bedford, Jr., a Colonel in the army, and now a lawyer, later to be Delaware's first Grand Master. From, Connecticut, last of the small states at his dinner, Dr. Franklin has invited Roger Sherman, 66. He is tall and awkward as a Connecticut Yankee; first a shoemaker, a writer of almanacs, a student self-taught, he has made himself a lawyer, Mayor of New Haven, Treasurer of Yale College. They say of him, "He is as hard to take in as an eel." His Lodge is said to be Hiram Lodge No. 1, chartered 1750, where due guard and sign are given with but one hand. From New York has come Mr. Hamilton, one of the smallest men physically, but intellectually one of the greatest, of the entire Convention. He is somewhat arrogant and overbearing in his manner, to be sure, but this we pass over, to admire his ability and originality.

With General Washington and our host we join the others at the welcome call to dinner. In France, Dr. Franklin has learned the art of dining. His table has a courtly elegance, with its great ham, his favorite meat pie, and a planked shad, fresh from the Delaware. From Germantown, where farms are kept so beautifully they look like other men's gardens, he has had sent in the freshest of vegetables. Always there are four kinds of fruit at his dinners, with French wines, and another, his favorite, from Spain. Always, too, three European waters good for the gout or the stone, from which he has been suffering. And as we eat, we listen to Dr. Franklin's stories of Europe, told as only the greatest raconteur of the age can tell them.

After dinner we follow our host-he stops to show us the first electric bell, which, upon his departure for England his faithful wife disconnected because "It sounded so ghostly"-to enter the most remarkable room in the New World. It holds, for the States, an almost fantastic number of books. This is his library, which he built just to spend the remainder of his days in comfort. As he shows us one or two books, we note his odd-looking glasses; they are the first bifocals, and someone mentions they seem designed to let him see clearly both current events and the far-away land of the future! And there is his jeweled portrait of Louis XVI of France, a Mason. We ask how many diamonds surround it; there are four hundred and eighty-three. He starts, for our comfort, the first electric fan; and shows how he can reach any book from a chair, using his long, mechanical arm. On a table are all his Masonic souvenirs from France; he saved none from England, but all the notices, invitations, decorations, etc., from France are here for us to see.

When our tour of inspection of the room is over, Dr. Franklin casually mentions the doings of the Convention and the matter of the new Presidency. Suppose an Executive were created with strong powers, but for only a four year term, and always subject to impeachment? Would that not give the needed strength to the Presidency, but with suitable checks? Next, why not an Electoral College, which would probably fail to agree, and so throw the election into a House where each state had but one vote? Would that not be fair to both large and small states?

His words start a hum of quiet and approving whispers; the negotiation is well on its way. But everyone waits for General Washington to speak. Who knows what is passing through his mind? Is it- not possible he recalls words he uses habitually in his letters, "that cement which unites us?" Among men who are delegates and Masons he urges, on fraternal as well as on political grounds, the cement of agreement to prevent dissolution and anarchy. Perhaps here first he uses the very words: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair; the event is in the hand of God." With his approval, there is a universal sigh of relief. Both sides are much pleased; the evening ends on a high tone. As we go to our lodgings, large and small state

delegates are resolved to win the approval of the others.

Did it all happen exactly like this? Of course not, in detail. But we may be very sure this was the general manner of the framing of the Constitution, and that Masonic influence was a potent factor.

Years afterward, Mr. Longfellow, though not a Mason, writing in 1850 "The Building of the Ship", used our language.

"We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel."

When the work of the Convention was over, the long struggle for adoption began. The delegates might be reasonably satisfied, but they had to convince their state conventions. The two greatest influences in finally securing the adoption were those of Washington and Franklin. One was with the gentry and the military; the other among the business men and lawyers. The common belief that Washington would be our first President was of paramount importance. Because the people trusted this man and Mason, they would try the new plan of government! To this must be added that in the citizens of the States, there was an ethical and spiritual foundation, to which Masonry had certainly contributed; there was intelligence and conscience and loyalty to sustain the new order and give it a chance.

"I saw a footprint in the *sand*." It has been dimmed by the tides of time, and yet its direction pointed unmistakably. from the Masonic ideals of the Old World toward the great Democracy of the New. The ideals of Masonry were embedded in the Constitution. This precious influence that had come to the Colonies had done its work well. For the first, time, a Democracy on a grand scale was given to the world. It produced among the crowned heads of Europe a shock, which Shelley has described in his great poem of revolutionary hope, "Prometheus Unbound."

"Hark! the rushing snow! The sun-awakened avalanchel whose mass, Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth Is loosened, and the nations echo round, Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now."

May we turn for our conclusion to Mr. Longfellow again? When he was, bringing the glitter of modern languages to the curriculum of Harvard, he translated the Scandinavian poetry. As the preface to his volume he wrote a short poem containing this stanza:

"I have but marked the place, But half the secret told That, following this slight trace, Others may find the gold."