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I, Michael A Davis, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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Jacksonian Volcano: Anti-Secretism and Secretism in 19th Century American Culture

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Abstract

This work argues that the anti-Masonic movement of the 1820s was the first Northern political movement, a direct ancestor of the anti-slavery movement that would come to dominate Northern politics some thirty years later. Though anti-Masons billed themselves as a national movement, their anti-elite rhetoric, clandestine defense of African-Americans, and embrace of democratic-republican equality drove Southerners to see them as a movement of dangerous fanatics as threatening as the nascent anti-slavery cause. Anti-Masonry was closely affiliated with anti-Catholicism, nativism, and anti-Mormonism, and shared with them a tendency towards xenophobia and anti-secularism. But, I argue, the anti-Masonic movement was at its core driven by democratic unease at the power of unanswerable elites rather than fear of a powerless Other, ultimately putting them closer to the anti-slavery side of the evangelical cultural production of the 19th century.

Additionally, this dissertation argues that the anti-Masonic case against Masonry, one grounded in the unknown dangers of secret elites gathering together for their mutual benefit, was not fundamentally misplaced. Masonry in the Jacksonian period had indeed become a heavily ritualized alternative to religion, an exclusive white male body that provided economic security for its members at the cost of insecurity for those ‘outside the tent’ And just as anti-Masonry was fundamentally Northern, Masonry became a fundamentally Southern organization by the outbreak of the Civil War, the kind of middle-class white male solidarity that it endorsed paving the way for pro-slavery Masonic invasions of Cuba, heavy Masonic membership in the states of the old Confederacy, and ultimately the 'triumph' of postwar Masonry came as a result of the larger evangelical Northern cause being abandoned by the voting public in the postwar period.
Anti-Masonry began as a fringe movement among New England Protestants in the 1790s and slipped into obscurity in the 1890s as a fringe movement among Midwestern Protestants. But even here, in the period of anti-Masonry most dismissed by historians, the present work argues there is a root of legitimate cultural criticism in anti-Masonry. The anti-Illuminism of Jedidiah Morse and Timothy Dwight was a plausible response to the internationalist threat of the revolutionary French republic in the late 1790s, albeit one that would ultimately fail thanks to structural problems with mobilizing an electorate against Jeffersonian democracy. At the same time, Jonathan Blanchard’s postbellum anti-Masonry failed because the ‘culture war’ of the antebellum period had largely been brought to an end by the Civil War itself. Though Blanchard pointed to connections between Masonry and the Klan, as well as accurately made connections between Masonic culture and Southern culture, the postbellum Northern public was ready to embrace the kind of white unity rhetoric embedded in Masonry. But even with Blanchard’s defeat and the decline of anti-Masonry into irrelevance, the story was not over. The first ‘third party’ in American history, the anti-Masonic legacy of Northern populist mobilization in the name of Christianity remains with us today in the American public sphere.
Table of Contents

Abstract . . a

Introduction . . . 1

Chapter 1: “Insidious Encroachments of Innovation”: Jedidiah Morse, John Robison, and the Birth of American Anti-Secretism . . 26

Chapter 2: “This Awful Act of Violence”: The Murder of William Morgan and Jacksonian Anti-Masonry . . 46

Chapter 3: “Freemasonry is the Source of These Crimes and Dangers”: A Political History of Jacksonian Anti-Masonry . . 70

Chapter 4: “The Pure Lava of Anti-Masonry”: The First Congregationalist Church of Thetford, Vermont and the Anti-Masonic Struggle, 1829-1833 . . 95

Chapter 5: “The Splendor of the Black Lodges”: Anti-Masonry and Prince Hall Freemasonry . . 122

Chapter 6: “And Every Lodge a Hotbed of Secession…”: The Connections Between Masonry and Southern Identity in the Culture of 19th Century America . . 146

Chapter 7: “…And Made Tyranny and Usurpation the Enemies of the Human Race”: Filibustering and Freemasonry in the Antebellum United States . . 177


Conclusion . . 224

Bibliographic Essay . . 232

Bibliography . . 240
**Introduction**

This work began as a political history of the Anti-Masonic Party, driven by a desire to explore the untold history of America's first third party. But over the years it has developed into a work that is cultural as much as political, an exploration of the anti-Masonic movement as much as the political party that bore the same name. As most of the writing about the anti-Masonic movement has been by political historians of the Jacksonian period, investigating the birth of contemporary democracy, this is understandable. But even on the political side of things, there is much to uncover. The political side of anti-Masonry was ultimately a primarily sectional movement without the ability to break into the political mainstream of 19th century America, but this is not grounds to dismiss it as a subject for worthy historical analysis. But most histories of the anti-Masonic movement have done just that – they tell the story of the failed political party, not the anti-elite political movement that was one of the most important political moments in the antebellum North. It is an old cliché that every new historian of the antebellum United States uses their work to find the causes of the Civil War – I will try and avoid that temptation here. While I will delve into the entanglement between Masonic constructions of history and Southern constructions of history in the 19th century, this is not a work about the Civil War. This is a work about an antebellum culture war, one that in many ways became the first conflict between a North hearkening forward to the politics of a democratic republic that dominated American political life in the 19th century and a South still embedded in an idealized vision of 18th century political culture. The first moment in that antebellum culture war between the evangelical North and the Masonic South came with none other than the anti-Masonic movement of the 19th century.

As a society, we tend to diminish third parties and the social movements that drive them, sometimes in our popular understanding of how politics and culture is ‘supposed’ to work, other
times even inside the historical academy. This is something that has deep roots in American discourse. We can see it today in how the media writes about people like James MacMillian and other third party leaders, as well as historically in the public discourse about people like Ross Perot and Ralph Nader. This marginalization of those on the margins goes all the way back to the way historians have written about the very first third party in American history – the American Anti-Masonic Party. Though largely dismissed by the historical record, the anti-Masons of 19th century America played a crucial role in shaping the cultural narrative of the United States of the period.

Most histories of anti-Masonry begin with the foundation of the contemporary Masonic movement in post-Restoration London, or more commonly with the murder of William Morgan in 1826. As a way of showcasing the untapped depths of the history of American anti-secretism, let us instead begin with its end. On September 13, 1882, a national convention of evangelical Christian pastors met in Batavia, New York to erect a monument to William Morgan, a failed brewer dead fifty-six years who had never been known for his church attendance in life. Jonathan Blanchard, president of Wheaton College, led the crowd in singing hymns that declared “And let our monument proclaim That Morgan is a martyr's name' Till heart and home from sea to sea, Shout, from the dark lodge bondage free.” The delegates of the National Christian Association who spoke at the monument’s dedication sound like the evangelical warriors they were, calling their followers out for one last great crusade of morality. “…We pray that, the colored being freed from slavery, the whites may be emancipated from the evils of secret societies.” But despite the hopes of Jonathan Blanchard, his son and successor Charles Blanchard, and the other old evangelicals in their circle, the National Christian Association was the last great political and cultural moment of anti-Masonry in the United States. After Jonathan Blanchard’s Presidential bid in 1884 ended with his endorsement of Samuel Pomeroy, there would never again be an anti-
Masonic candidate for the Presidency of the United States. The newspapers of the 1880s were unkind to the National Christian Association and its anti-secretist political movement, deriding their cause and personally attacking Blanchard, despite the “grey hairs” that shielded him from censure. Though anti-Masonry stood at the head of nearly a century of American political and cultural reform by the 1880s, the cause slipped almost completely out of the popular memory upon Blanchard’s death in 1892.\(^1\)

If anti-Masonry had been largely forgotten by the general public, historians have rarely been much kinder. Only Charles McCarthy in 1902, William Preston Vaughn in 1983, and Paul Goodman in 1988 have written full-length histories of the anti-Masonic movement and its associated political party, this despite the anti-Masonic movement inventing the national nominating convention, mobilizing the newly-empowered voting public through appeals to popular sentiment and mass campaigning, and acting as the driving agent that pulled the evangelical culture of the Second Great Awakening into the political and cultural world of the Jacksonian period. Anti-Masonry gave birth to the Second Party System by providing a populist, Northern alternative to the Democracy; anti-Masonry helped destroy the Second Party System by preparing Northern voters for the sectional politics of morality that popularized the Republican Party. Populism is a much-overused term in contemporary historiography, so I want to make it clear what I mean above when I talk about the anti-Masonic movement as populist. I use the Albertazzi and O'Donnell definition of populism as a movement that “pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who were together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice.” This is of course an ideological construction that's quite easy to abuse – Albertazzi and McDonnell's historical project was to condemn the rise of the populist New Right

\(^1\)The Daily News (Batavia), September 14, 1882 http://www.buffalonian.com/hnews/1882morgansmonument.html, Batavia Times, December 5, 1918, 14
in post-millennial Europe as a threat to their vision of Western European democracy. They were by no means the first academics to find a relationship between populism and the politics of the right-wing. (And indeed, as will be discussed below, hostility towards Masonry has traditionally been a significant task of the European-influenced right, whether conservative Catholic regimes in 19th century South America or far-right regimes in Europe in the 1930s.)

The traditional academic hostility to populist movements has very deep roots in American historiography as well, dating back in some ways to the historians of the late 19th century but particularly to the consensus New Deal historians of the mid-20th century. This hostility was particularly noticeable against anti-Masons, who were not just neglected by the New Deal-era historians but turned into bogeymen. They became the ur-text of unprincipled right-wing radicalism, the intellectual ancestors of the McCarthyites who those historians were so busy criticizing in their professional lives. This offers the most logical explanation for Arthur Schlesinger’s great (in its strengths and in its flaws) Age of Jackson, where every anti-Masonic politician profiled is some flavor of “unprincipled careerist.” Richard Hofstadter, whose great professional project was negatively engaging with minority political movements, was even more damaging. (And yes, I am being deliberately provocative here!) For Hofstadter, whose paranoid style became a watchword for a generation of historians, Anti-Masons were part and parcel of the nativist and anti-Catholic tradition in the 19th century and progenitors of paranoid groups like the White Citizens Councils and Black Muslims of the mid-20th century in which he wrote. Wedged within an “apocalyptic and absolutist framework,” Hofstadter’s anti-Masons were better-suited as conspiracy theorists, men driven to “hysteria over conspiracies” by their poverty and feelings.

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of dispossession rather than players in the development of Jacksonian politics and the 19th century reform movement.3

Hofstadter and Schlesinger were among the most influential historians of the 20th century, Hofstadter among the new American studies movement that was just reaching universities as he began writing, Schlesinger among that tradition of political historians continued today by Princeton’s Sean Wilentz. Though they acknowledged that anti-Masonry was a response to economic and cultural dislocation in their texts, there is no acknowledgement in the works of either (or of their disciples), that there was something to that response. David Brion Davis treats anti-Masonic literature as simply an outgrowth of another kind of bigotry in his 1961 analysis of anti-Catholic and anti-Mormon literature in 19th century America. Even Paul Goodman in his relatively recent, particularly sympathetic Towards a Christian Republic treats anti-Masonry with the language of pathology, writing of the anti-Masonic “frenzy” with the same sort of phrasing often used by Masonic historians. And it is the Masonic narrative about anti-Masonry that dominated historical discourse about anti-Masonry for a generation in the 20th century, the picture of anti-Masonic politicians, leaders, and agitators as erratic cranks, untrustworthy demagogues, and otherwise. The “Anti-Masonic school of demagoguery” appears in Robert Gunderson's history of American political discourse, while Reinhard's Luthin's analysis of the “demagogue, the professional 'man of the people',” might have been lifted directly from a 19th century Masonic text. Anti-Masonry has been redeemed in the historical memory by people like Ron Formisano and his pupil Kathleen Kutolowski, who have argued against the “psychologizing of populist movements” and instead defended anti-Masons in particular as

people who actively embraced the market revolution. (One would hardly have expected the
rising middle class of the next generation to do otherwise, anyway). But Formisano and
Kutolowski’s work, though now an important part of the new political history, has failed to make
the kind of mass penetration that the historiography of the New Deal era did.4

The fringe activists who keep the ‘flame’ of anti-Masonry alive today might suggest that
this is clearly the sign of some deep conspiracy, but as with Masonry itself, the problem was not
the academy but the people who made it up. For the New Deal historians who dominated
historical writing in the mid-20th century, and whose works remain the ‘canon’ which revisionists
are perpetually contending against, minority political movements were a threat because of what
they represented. Famously conflating the Democratic Party of the days of Andrew Jackson with
the Democratic Party of Franklin Roosevelt that had dominated their own lives, the New Deal
historians of the 1940s and the 1950s treated fringe political movements of the 1830s with the
same anti-populist tinge which marked their views of the fringe movements of the 1930s. Their
contemporary, European historian Peter Gay was right – for all the genius of Age of Reform and
its related works, Hofstadter had gone beyond the bounds of research and entered the project
with a priori concerns in mind. Like most works of history, Hofstadter's work is as much a
commentary on the post-WWII era in which it was written as it was on its own subject, drawn
from an intellectual world still riven by fears of right-wing politics some decades later. And it is
ture; anti-Masonry certainly did fit the traditional profile of a party drawn from a largely
homogenous population convinced of a threat posed to their way of life by a secretive group. The

4Paul Goodman, Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836,
(UK, Oxford, 1988), 8, 18. Robert Morris, William Morgan, or Political Anti-Masonry, Its Rise, Growth, and
Decadence,(New York, Robert Macoy, 1883), 176. As will be discussed later, the ‘frenzy’ of anti-Masonry was very
much at issue. David Brion Davis, “Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-
differences between anti-Masonry and other 'anti' populist ideologies will be discussed below in more detail. 5

Note that even 20th century Marxist historians had trouble taking anti-Masonry seriously – for all the revolutionary (albeit hotly contested) insights of David Roedigger’s *Wages of Whiteness*, Roedigger falls back on the kind of stock Hofstadterian talk about the “paranoid style” of American politics better-suited for staider historians of American public life. As for the late 20th and early 21st century revisionist political and cultural historians who have treated the anti-Masonic movement with a little more rhetorical justice than their predecessors, only a few have addressed anti-Masonry because of how few of their colleagues have done the same. Anti-Masons lack the kind of ‘constituency’ in the academy that has seen revisions in Democratic history carried out by Sean Wilentz, and for that matter Whig history by Michael Holt. Even historians of evangelical religion write about how 'alien' anti-Masonry is for contemporary scholarship. Most of the major denominations that once excluded Masons have now embraced them as members, with only a few relatively isolated denominations, those particularly associated with contemporary social conservatism, still embracing religious anti-Masonry. No one has much invested in writing histories of anti-Masonry these days, with Jacksonian historiography focused on revising the racial and gendered legacy of Andrew Jackson (as in the works of Saxton and Rogen) without much emphasis being paid to the story of Jackson's enemies. (And they were his enemies, as will be discussed below, representatives of an idealized democratic order that was at once far more inclusive and at the same time far more exclusive than Jackson's white male Herrenvolk democracy) Historians like Saxton lament the “psychologizing” of oppositional parties like the anti-Masons, but the focus on their work lies in

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different directions (in Saxton’s case, exploring the white supremacist rhetoric that lay behind the creation of the Jacksonian state)\(^6\)

Historians like the late Alexander Saxton, whose great work was focused on undermining the traditional historical interpretation of the so-called 'Jacksonian' era, have been the primary defenders of the anti-Masonic tradition in the contemporary academy. Saxton's discussion of the “dimly lighted” recesses of anti-Masonry, written as a lament of the lacunae in the historiography, helps illuminate some of the problems anti-Masonry has faced in the academy, being not a story that 19\(^{th}\) century historiography grapples with easily. More generally, historians have been much more willing to embrace the anti-Jacksonians as viable cultural and political actors. The age of uncritical praise for the Jacksonian period has passed in American historical writing, with even Robert Remini's relatively balanced (compared to the work of his predecessors thirty years earlier) Jackson biographies coming in for some stiff criticism in the contemporary academy. In an age when the academy is no longer dominated by white men, the establishment of a white male democracy is no longer the completely attractive prospect that it once was. This is another area where Saxton's work serves as a valuable corrective to the now-traditional Roediggerian interpretation of 19\(^{th}\) century racial and class politics, arguing that the traditional “Jacksonian” image was not as mass-driven as it has often been portrayed. The Jacksonian age served interests, and some of the most vehement outside that tent were anti-Masons.\(^7\)


By the same token, no one has much invested these days in writing histories of Freemasonry. A few scholars associated with the academy like Mark Carnes, Thomas Halleran, and Stephen Bullock nibble around the edges, but the historiographic interest in secret societies is not yet there. Meanwhile, traditionally Masonic historians generally write amateur works intended for Masonic audiences. Even Masonic historians have little invested in writing the kind of histories that might controversially examine their order. Internally produced histories rarely perform a deep examination of the organization that sponsored them in the first place. This is further evidence that no secret Masonic conspiracy lay behind the absence of anti-Masonry from the historical literature of the mid-20th century was that Masonry itself was relatively untouched by historians. Until Stephen Bullock’s 1998 *Revolutionary Brotherhood* (a book quite sympathetic to anti-Masonry compared to many of its predecessors), few historians were doing the kind of cultural and organizational histories that led to histories of American Masonry. To this day, histories of American secretism (such as Masonry) and others are what they have almost always been; internal works produced for internal consumption by members of those same secret orders. This is despite the key role that Masonry played as a maker of both white and black manhood in the 19th and early 20th centuries, its role as an early agent of unification among Continental Army veterans, its role as one of the progenitors of American intellectual history, and other cultural moments now lost by a history that has preferred to let the secret stay secret. No secret conspiracy was needed to keep Masonic history out of the texts – with organizational history still a minor part of the academy and with Masonic archives themselves not particularly widely available, historians are lucky to have the works of Bullock and others that we do have.

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The terminology of anti-Masonry and Freemasonry, political parties and movements, of this period remains relatively obscure even for specialists in the politics of the 19th century. Beginning in those days, Illuminism was the 19th century term for the kind of anti-evangelical atheistic political culture associated with the Illuminati – the fear in those days was of subversion and corruption by secret cabals rather than outright control. This descended from the anti-Illuminist movement of the late 1790s, a cultural reaction against internationalism that would be deliberately used as a foundational moment by 19th century anti-Masons. Meanwhile, the Anti-Masonic political party, which began in early 1827 in upstate New York and finally merged with the Whigs on the regional level by 1840, was a different (albeit closely-related) phenomenon than the anti-Masonic movement that was a significant part of the American evangelical landscape from the late 1790s through the end of the Gilded Age. Anti-secretism, the cultural and political ideology that found all secret societies incompatible with republicanism and Christianity, was a major underpinning of both movement and party. The anti-secretism of the anti-Masons was not just a rhetorical strategy – men like Jonathan Blanchard saw attempts at reviving anti-Masonry in the postbellum period fail because they would not cooperate even with fellow evangelicals who used secret societies for republican ends. Jonathan Blanchard's National Christian Association was the last organized body affiliated with American anti-Masonry of any cultural or political significance, albeit even that had largely faded by the 20th century. If I sometimes seem to conflate anti-secretism and anti-Masonry in this text, I'm performing the same kind of verbal judo as many 19th century anti-Masons. While they generally opposed all secret societies, they saw Masonry at the root and inspiration for all of them, and thus the largest threat. (And indeed, as will be discussed in more detail later, many of those organizations did consciously ape Masonic ritual and display, either to help bring in new members or in the case of of recent exceptions, particularly in the field of European Freemasonry that is largely outside the scope of present work.)
the Knights of Columbus, as direct competition to keep good Catholic men from joining that putatively deist organization)

As for Masonry, I have primarily relied on Stephen Bullock's excellent *Revolutionary Brotherhood* for my understanding of the changing nature of Masonic identity in the 19th century. Blue Lodge Masonry was the first step in Masonry, a widely-spread, poorly-organized group of lodges often not actually affiliated with each other. Scottish Rite Freemasonry, now the largest Masonic denomination in the United States, did not triumph over the York (or American) Rite until Albert Pike in the postbellum period. Having been spread widely by Santo Domingo exiles and founded in Charleston in 1801, Scottish Rite Masonry in the US retained a strong Southern influence. Associated with Continental, particularly French, Masonry, Scottish Rite Freemasonry's many rites and levels acted like any other marketing tool, luring in prospective members and allowing them to triumph over the relatively less exciting American Rite. If I have omitted other Masonic or Masonic-inspired movements such as Cerneau Masonry, it has been a matter of what supports my overall argument – this work does not purport to be a general history of the many Masonries of the 18th and 19th century. While such a work would be valuable for the literature, it is not this one. There is not space or focus in the current work to discuss the sub-branches, splinter groups, and minor factions of American Freemasonry. However, it is important to discuss one particular branch of 'outlaw' Masonry – America's historical black Masonic population. Prince Hall Masonry, affiliated with British Freemasonry directly rather than the American independent lodges of the early 19th century, was its own organization, separate both from York Rite and the two Scottish Rite (Northern and Southern) Masonries in the United States.9

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Getting the terminology right is important because many of these terms are not widely understood even by specialists, and at the time were often widely used and misused by those inside and outside of Masonry. The primary innovation introduced into Jacksonian Masonry involved the addition of and expansion of new ranks like the Royal Arch Mason, the Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and particular branches like Thomas Webb's beloved Knights Templar. These new ranks, as discussed elsewhere, helped offer ever-more emotional rewards for members while at the same time bringing in more money for the lodges – they played to the growing interest in Romanticism and militant Christianity in Jacksonian America, letting lodge members call back to a lost age of Christian manhood and personal valor. The new titles were particularly offensive to anti-Masons, both for its seemingly noble status and its association with particular oaths. I will expand on this in more detail below, but the fight over Masonic title and ritual is often written off as just anti-Masonic demonization of their enemies, but there was a legitimate clash here between notions of civic respectability and honor, between a society where 18th century titles were a mark of grandeur and legitimacy and one where they were an embarrassing leftover of a substantially less democratic age. Both sides could use American theories of government and culture to their advantage.¹⁰

Finally, 'seceding Masons' were among the most contentious of topics relating to the 19th century anti-Masonic movement. Seceding Masons were those who abandoned lodge membership to take up the anti-Masonic cause, and indeed doing so was an excellent gateway for membership into the latter. Conventions of seceding Masons in upstate New York in late 1826

had been among the foundational organizations of the early anti-Masonic movement; while nearly every large anti-Masonic convention had its report from seceding Masons. Seceding Masons provided the secret insights into exciting Masonic lore and rituals that served such a valuable purpose for anti-Masons, giving insight into the "pretensions" of Masonry and the "degradation" of its advocates. For anti-Masonic newspapers like the Christian Cynosure or Henry Dana Ward's Anti-Masonic Review, renunciations of anti-Masonry served the same sort of social purgative function that renunciations of drink did for their sister organizations. Anti-Masonic newspapers of the day are full of such renunciations, as when Kneeland Townsend Jr of Lewiston, NY declared that he had been brought “from darkness to light” and renounced any connection to “the solemn mockery” of the “Institution of Freemasonry.”

Masons, for their part, condemned seceding, or renunciating, Masons as perjurers, liars, and criminals. “Their very disclosures acknowledge the violation of the most solemn oaths, and their utter disregard of the highest obligations,” wrote one Masonic newspaper in words that were echoed for decades after by Masons. Masons were so conscious of the 'trope' of seceding Masons that they even parodied the 'art form' of the renunciation, as when the Albany Masonic Journal printed a selection from the Camden Journal when the latter newspaper issued an “anti-Masonick renunciation” that abandoned the political movement. And perhaps a case can be made that there are truth to Masonic condemnations of their erstwhile lodge brothers – someone like Kneeland Townsend, a New England-born transplant to upstate New York, had far more to gain from publicly abandoning Masonry than he did clinging to it. While Masonic lodges, even the ones occupied by William Morgan's most likely killers, would eventually rally even in upstate New York, it was not obvious that this had to be the case in 1828. It certainly is a remarkable coincidence that so many Masons recognized the 'solemn mockery' of their organization at the

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same time that their neighbors were turning against it. (And indeed, seceding Masons rarely wrote about Masonry as anything more threatening than a false religion rather than an innately Satanic one, at least in the 19th century – after all, what would that have meant admitting about themselves?)

But at the same time, the speed of the anti-Masonic reaction, and the extant changes in Jacksonian Masonry, suggests that there was a legitimate space for men to sincerely renounce Masonry. The rituals that were so ridiculed by anti-Masons genuinely were a new phenomenon, many of them having been introduced during the sacralization of Masonry by Thomas Webb and his followers after American independence. Coming simultaneously with a period of significant religious revival in the United States, one which was sharply focused against the success of Masonry in the North, perhaps men like Townsend (who like many had joined a lodge at a young age thanks to promises of advancement then largely ignored it) had justifiable reasons to see Masonry as an “angel of light, that deceived even the elect.” This is worth discussing because the “reformed sinner” was and is a stock character in Protestant conversion narratives, one that it was easy for former Masons to assume as they took their places in the new anti-Masonic movement. This provided an angle of social and cultural attack for Masons, but at the same time the social and cultural changes in Jacksonian Masonry and overall mass culture suggests that these seceding Masons had a sincere grounding for their actions.

Argument

The current work will try to amend the historical lacunae that is anti-Masonry in the record, and by extension engage with revising the historical understanding of Masonry. This will

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of necessity be a broad analysis, one that substantially broadens the existing historiography on anti-secretism to grapple with the long century between the end of the early republic and the height of the Gilded Age. Anti-Masonry emerges from the record as a sectional party and movement, the first of its kind in the Jacksonian United States. Anti-Masonry was a rebellion against the elite transnational society and secret power that Freemasonry represented, a middle-class uprising that was driven by sectarian politics but nonetheless deeply democratic in character. At the same time it was also fundamentally republican, driven by a desire to restore virtue to a fallen society. The movement was embedded in worlds of both democracy and republicanism, part of both but belonging in whole to neither. Anti-Masonry was a movement of the evangelical North, a direct ancestor of the anti-slavery movement that would ultimately prepare Northern voters for the Republican Party and the success of sectional politics in the prewar United States.

Similarly, Masonry was far more than just another secret society. If Anti-Masonry was the Northern future of the 19th century United States, with its popular mobilization, appeals to popular opinion, and politicization of morality, Masonry was the Southern past – an internationalist, republican organization that championed the values of a previous generation. With its close association with the South and heavy ritualization, Masonry was a genuine threat to the evangelical culture of the North, just as its transnational reach did indeed entangle Americans in the militant spread of American culture and power. Though anti-Masons only openly embraced sectional politics as the Civil War approached, Masons and their supporters were quick to recognize the cultural threat that anti-Masonry represented. Anti-Masonry was as big a cultural threat for some Southerners as abolitionism, particularly since it seemed to draw from the same cultural roots. In terms of high politics, the clash between Masonry and anti-Masonry marked the demise of early republican politics in the antebellum United States and the
birth of a culture war between (to over-generalize) Northern anti-Masons and Southern Masons that would eventually culminate in the Civil War. Only in the postbellum period, when transsectional organizations that promoted white unity became a necessary part of society, did Masonry finally win the cultural conflict with Anti-Masonry.

That conflict began much earlier than the scholarship traditionally suggests. Though American anti-Masonry is traditionally rooted in the Jacksonian period, the cultural struggle at its core had much deeper roots. While Masons often called back to the heritage of the Salem Witch Trials and the Inquisition when discussing the cultural roots of their enemies, anti-Masons grounded themselves in their collective version of the history of the 1790s. In their self-constructed histories, 19th century anti-Masons called back to Scottish intellectual John Robison and his American champion Jedidiah Morse as the progenitors of American anti-Masonry. Robison and Morse were the intellectual fathers of the English-speaking Illuminati panic, the fear that Enlightenment radicals had infiltrated European nations and the United States in order to bring about an atheist revolution along French lines. Robison and Morse specifically charged that Freemasonry had been infiltrated by the Illuminati to act as a stalking-horse, though they defended the virtue of British and American Masonry respectively. Post-Morgan Masonic historians embraced the anti-Masonic vision of their own history, and the literature today generally treats anti-Illuminism as a progenitor of the anti-Masonic movement in the United States. But there were some significant differences between the anti-Illuminism of the 1790s and the anti-Masonry of a later generation. A political phenomenon of the early republic largely restricted to New England Congregationalists and their pastors, anti-Illuminism lacked the bases of popular and cultural support that anti-Masonry would eventually evolve. The American Freemasonry of the 1790s additionally lacked the heavily ritualistic elements it would evolve in the Jacksonian period and was in those days much more closely affiliated with 'Americanism'
than its later version would be. There was no base of evangelical voters for Morse and his allies like Timothy Dwight to rally (though they did cause problems for Masonic lodges in small town Massachusetts for years afterwards) but there was a strong association between Masonry and memories of the revolution that could still be addressed. Thanks to its lack of deep penetration, Anti-Illuminism can best be understood as the evanescent theological panic that Masons charged that anti-Masonry was, a product of orthodox terrors stirred by the French Revolution and its seeming allies among Jeffersonian Democrats. By the same token, anti-Illuminism gave anti-Masons the kind of historical cachet they hoped to take away from Freemasonry, letting them argue that they too had a claim to American cultural authenticity. When anti-secretism lacked a popular base of support outside the confines of religion, it was confined to minority religious sentiment.14

When that base of popular support was present, however, things were very different. Nearly thirty years after the end of the anti-Illuminist panic, American anti-secretism was revived by the murder of William Morgan. While the murder of William Morgan did not create American anti-secretism, it did galvanize the newly-empowered, newly-evangelized Northern voting public into supporting both the anti-Masonic movement and the Anti-Masonic Party. The circumstances of Morgan's life and death were something taken very seriously by both Masons and anti-Masons, with the former transforming Morgan into a vile, drunken ogre and the latter making an American martyr out of him. Much ink was spilled on both sides of the Morgan debate, and his murder remains a key story in the Masonic and anti-Masonic historical narratives of the present day. The evidence shows that Morgan almost certainly was murdered by Batavia Masons after his September 1826 kidnapping, his body most likely disposed of in the Niagara River just as in

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the Giddens account. In addition to being a widely-disliked drunk heavily in debt to his former lodge brothers, Morgan's threat to publish the secrets of Masonry in alliance with fellow town pariah David Miller made him a threat to the economic, cultural, political, and emotional power of the wealthiest and best-connected men in his community. His fate presaged that of Elijah Lovejoy and Cassius Clay, other unpopular would-be authors of the early 19th century who were attacked by overwrought neighbors. Moreover, sufficient evidence exists that there was a deliberate coverup after Morgan's murder, as well as successful attempts to influence the various jury trials after his death, to show that anti-Masons had ample reason to use Morgan's murder as a cautionary tale for themselves and their community. While Morgan's death was made possible by the particular circumstances of upstate New York's isolation, his own social status, and the particular power of his enemies, anti-Masons had ample reason to believe in the secret power of Masonry in the years after Morgan's death. The particularly vigorous reaction to Morgan's murder shows that the reaction against Masonry was political and cultural, not religious, a popular upswelling of anti-elitism rather than a theological revolution.15

Further evidence of the political and cultural flavor of anti-Masonry can be found in the history of the First Congregationalist Church of Thetford, Vermont. Located in the heart of Vermont revival country, presided over by one of the most influential Vermont Congregationalists, Thetford's Congregationalist congregation was torn apart by the Masonic controversy of the Jacksonian period. However, despite the fact that the great battle in Thetford was largely confined to the Congregationalist congregation and was carried out through the mechanics of church discipline, the anti-Masonic controversy there was only parenthetically about Christianity. Before the fight began, Masons were able to convince most of their neighbors

that their Masonry was compatible with Christianity until the moment came that it seemed to be incompatible with Americanism. A multi-sided war among the church members saw first anti-Masonry banned from the Church, then neutrality, before finally an interstate church trial held in Thetford overruled pastor Elisha Babcock and held that Thetford's Congregationalists deserved the right to criticize Masonry within the boundaries of the church and that the Congregationalists were ultimately in the right to order Masonic church members to divest themselves of their church ties if they hoped to remain part of the church community. Significantly, the turning point in the Thetford case had nothing to do with theological clashes between Masonry and evangelical Christianity – the movement among evangelical Congregationalists to keep Freemasons from joining the church was heavily in the minority among Thetford Congregationalists at the beginning of the crisis. The tipping point came when Thetford's Masons encouraged Babcock to block any discussion of Masonic membership in the confines of church discipline – in the aftermath of this moment, the battle in Thetford became a battle over the nature of liberty and speech in the community. It stopped being a battle over the church and became a battle over the town's soul.16

It was that struggle over souls that separated anti-Masonry from the politics of the early republic, that conflict over morality that made anti-Masonry so very alarming to the politicians of the previous generation. Mobilizing an empowered electorate newly-suffragized by the expanding franchise of the Jacksonian period, the Anti-Masonic Party echoed the cultural concerns of the anti-Masonic movement by combining the political and the social. From the perspective of anti-Masons, Masonry was a social and cultural evil best fought through the ballot box, something new in the political history of the Jacksonian United States. They used democratic means to carry out republican ideals, helping lay the groundwork for the

development of 19th century political culture. Anti-Masonry was a broader movement than just an anti-secretist reaction, embracing education, union, anti-nullification, and the other political and cultural values associated with the 19th century Northern evangelical movement of which anti-Masonry was the first flowering. Where there were anti-Masons in the South, as in western Maryland, south-central Alabama, or Wake County, North Carolina, they were responding to internal pressures – a Maryland railroad economy divorced from the Eastern Shore planters, Alabama Methodists watching their economy dry up now that Masonic-allied politicians had moved the capital to Selma, or Yankee coal miners in western North Carolina suspicious of the power of eastern planters. It is true, as Masonic-sympathizing historians have charged, that most of the national leaders of the Anti-Masonic Party were the politicians of a previous generation who had adapted themselves to the new political realities rather than coming up directly through the ranks of anti-masonry. This was not unusual for a new political party in the 19th century, however. The second-tier leaders of political Anti-Masonry, men like Thaddeus Stevens and William Seward, did come up through the ranks of anti-Masonry and were strong advocates of anti-Masonic culture well into the era of the republican party. The Anti-Masonic political party was eventually co-opted by the Second Party System, providing the democratic alternative to the Democracy that helped Northern Whigs cement their control over much of New England for nearly two decades. But the anti-Masonic movement, with its sectional northern appeal, evangelical fervor, and anti-elite populist politics, eventually helped destroy the Second Party System by preparing Northern voters for a reaction against the sectional politics of the South.¹⁷

A previously unexplored area that helps show the relationship between anti-Masonry and the politics of the North is its relationship with Prince Hall Masonry in particular and African-

American secretism in general. This is not something the literature has grappled with before because there was very little meaningful relationship between anti-Masons and Prince Hall Masons despite the fact that in some respects they were at least on the surface deeply in cultural conflict. Prince Hall Masonry was a threat to the white consensus culture of the 1830s even more than the internationalist Enlightenment politics of their white co-fraternalists, calling back to Egypt and Ethiopia to reinforce a legacy of African civilization to match anything in Europe while at the same time providing cultural and social support for free black communities in the Upper South through clandestine lodge organizations. Though Prince Hall Masonry was officially neutral on slavery, Prince Hall lodges were routinely used as organizing places for the Underground Railroad. Even white internationalist lodges not directly affiliated with the Prince Hall organization were a threat against slavery; Masons like Hugh Forbes became John Brown's military trainer and ally, while exiled French Masons provided intellectual and perhaps physical support for at least one antebellum slave revolt. What limited anti-Masonic support existed in the Deep South was often driven by perceptions of a hostility between international Masonry and plantation slavery. Fear of black secretism was a serious threat in much of the Upper South, with Maryland making membership in a secret lodge grounds for enslaving and selling south a free black. Starved for votes politically and with virtually no cultural penetration into the Southern states, the anti-Masonic movement might easily have exploited fears about black secretism for gain. But prewar anti-Masons virtually never made an issue of the African-American lodges, only occasionally mentioning, then hastily silencing, any discussion of black secretism in the United States. This is because black Masons and anti-Masons were ultimately on the same side of the culture wars of the antebellum United States – both were middle-class movements hostile to the elite power of slavery, ones that would eventually find themselves briefly unified within the confines of the Republican Party. Only when the war was over and the threat of slavery ended did Northern anti-Masons make any meaningful criticism of African-American Masons.
Even then, Masonic identity remained so crucial to African-Americans that black anti-Masons conceded Masonic civilization even as they attacked its sinful nature.¹⁸

Not only were anti-Masons unable to accept Southern-driven narratives of race in their public discourse, so too were they hostile to Southern-driven narratives of empire, particularly when the latter wore a Masonic face. And it often did just that. Sometimes this came through offshoot organizations, as when George Bickley's Knights of the Golden Circle took the money of credulous Southerners with an interest in expansion along the border. But other times the 'problem' of filibustering was a Masonic one, driven by Masonic visions of American civilization. And anti-Masons did criticize another Masonic vision of civilization before the war, specifically Freemasonry's relationship with antebellum filibustering. Anti-Masons charged that Masonic visions of an internationalist, Southern-allied civilization explained the Texas Revolution, Joel Poinsett's failed mission to Mexico and subsequent civil war, and particularly American Masonic support for the Lopez-era filibustering of Cuba in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The international dimension of anti-Masonry had traditionally been neglected by historians. Recent historiography by Antonio de la Vega has shown, however, that anti-Masonic charges about the Masonic presence in the filibustering movement were well-taken. Cuban Freemasons openly recruited in Southern lodges for potential allies, with American Masons rallying their 'troops' to support their Cuban lodge brothers even when their political sympathies did not lie with the would-be filibusters. Masonic support for the filibustering movement and American cultural imperialism in Central America helped convince many Northern anti-Masons

of the dangerous nature of American Masonry. After all, they said, if Masons could start a civil war in Mexico, could they start one in the United States?\textsuperscript{19}

The Masonic legacy of the Civil War remains contested to this day. Anti-Masons charge, as they have since the 1860s, that Masonry lay behind Southern secession. Cabals like the Knights of the Golden Circle and later organizations like the Klan, they claim, had Masonic roots and lay at the core of secession and the Confederate States of America. For their part, the Masonic narrative of the Civil War is the white triumphalist one – a sectional conflict between brothers where Masonic ties acted as a means of social and cultural unity. Masonic historians still praise Andrew Johnson's role as a peacemaker, and speak admiringly of the Confederate Masons who relocated to Latin America. The truth is that there was no secret Masonic cabal behind secession – but there was a significant cultural and social relationship between Masonry and Southerness that lasted even after the Civil War. American white Masonry (as opposed to Prince Hall Masonry or transnational revolutionary Masonry) was antiquarian, republican, romantic, and white; all values closely associated with the leadership class of the American South. Masons were vastly overrepresented in the white Southern population compared with their Northern lodge brothers. There was very little lasting anti-Masonic presence in the Jacksonian South, certainly far less than existed in the North, and Southern lodges rebounded much faster than their Northern counterparts. The battle between Masons and anti-Masons, then, became something of a culture war – a sectional party rebounding against the slave power, albeit in a time and place when neither side used that kind of language to describe the other. That culture war would go

further as Northern evangelical reformers pitted themselves against entrenched republican Southern power, all the way until the outbreak of the Civil War.20

Anti-Masonry took a backseat to abolitionist politics in the immediate run-up to the Civil War, though fears of the Knights of the Golden Circle and its alleged Masonic control (in actuality, more like Masonic inspiration) were a key part of Northern cultural fears before and during the conflict itself. Anti-Masonry enjoyed one last flowering in the postbellum period, in which Wheaton College President Jonathan Blanchard and his allies in the National Christian Association attempted to revive both the cultural and political sides of the anti-Masonic movement. The revival of the 1880s saw the old banners dusted off, with classic works of apologia reprinted by Blanchard's publisher Ezra Cook, as well as Thurlow Weed's new autobiography, while Masons themselves published another round of (now rather-irritated) works of defense in response. Blanchard's followers charged that Freemasonry was either directly or indirectly behind the Klu Klux Klan in the South, the Grange in the West, and the Fenians in the North. Despite accurately portraying the alliance between many Southern Masons and contemporary klaverns, as well as calling attention to the former Confederate general Albert Pike who had become head of Southern Rite Scottish Freemasonry (the dominant Masonic movement of the postwar period), Blanchard's attempted revival was almost completely unsuccessful. Only a handful of voters supported Blanchard's Presidential ambitions and his cultural crusade, and the anti-secretist movement eventually merged with the Prohibition Party that it had sought to avoid because of the latter's involvement with secretism. Blanchard's anti-Masonry was closely affiliated with the radical politics of the early 1870s, closely tied to prohibition and women's suffrage even before the move, but was a weak cousin to both. Blanchardite anti-Masonry failed

because the anti-elite politics of the 1830s were no longer viable in the political realities of the Gilded Age – religion had become theological rather than revolutionary, focused inward rather than on outward reform. Additionally, the Masonry of Albert Pike was difficult to demonize because of Pike's conscious efforts to build an attractive, apolitical organization with reach both to Northern and Southern white men looking for the kind of unity and answers called for by the intellectual landscape of postwar America. The failure of Blanchard's version of anti-Masonry helped pave the way for the movement's eventual subsuming by fringe evangelical culture.21

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Chapter One:
“Insidious Encroachments of Innovation”:
Jedidiah Morse, John Robison, and the Birth of American Anti-Secretism

In 2012, Sri Lankan-American author Nishan A. Kumaraperu asked his readers “What if everything you have been taught to trust and believe is a lie? What if there is a secret government within our own that has been in place for centuries? What if that organization is using its money, power, and the fervent worship of their god to bring about the end of times?” These questions draw on deep cultural roots. Kumaraperu's book, *The Illuminati: 2012* is one of the most recent works embedded in the intellectual tradition of anti-secretism, a cultural and political reaction against what Paul Johnson called “active invocation of secrecy as a source of a group's identity, the promotion of the reputation of special access to restricted knowledge, and the successful performance or staging of such access.” Anti-secretism is deeply rooted in the Western intellectual tradition, and arguably can be traced back to medieval anti-Semitism and early modern Protestant fears of the “Whore of Babylon” in Rome. The Illuminati were the first “other” of the Enlightenment age, in the minds of believers a secret cabal of atheists plotting to destroy government and religion in the name of their ideals. While a real cultural divide exists in the record between 18th and 19th century anti-secretism, it is true that the progenitor movement of contemporary American anti-secretism was the anti-“Illuminist” movement of 1790s Massachusetts. Today the Illuminati permeate popular culture, appearing in places as diverse as Thomas Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey*, Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code* franchise, and even more jejune places: archvillains for a season of the late 1990s show Disney’s *Gargoyles*, the Illuminati had gone from a serious threat to American independence in the 1790s to literal Saturday morning cartoon villains two centuries later. They are now parody, a cliché, a joke authors make about conspiracy theories rather than a socially relevant conspiracy themselves. But this threat
of anti-republican, internationalist, ultimately anti-American subversion was a very serious matter in early republican New England.\textsuperscript{22}

As discussed above, the anti-Masonic movement of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century had strong cultural ties to historical traditions of anti-secretism. Both Masons and anti-Masons made the connection between anti-Masonic heritage and the anti-Illuminist movement. The American anti-Masonic movement of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century had a strong relationship with traditional Anglosphere anti-secretism – there were the fears of secret subversion and secret power, the anti-internationalist arguments that easily veered into anti-Semitism, and other retrograde moments of the period which have been widely promoted by anti-anti-Masonic historians. But the anti-Masonic movement of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was also removed from traditional Anglosphere anti-secretism, grounded less in religious and cultural paranoia and more in the tradition of the rising democracy of the Jacksonian North. Evidence of this can be found by looking at the first significant anti-secretist movement in American history, the anti-Illuminist push of the mid-Federal period, a movement from which the anti-Masons of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century claimed direct descent.\textsuperscript{23}

Jedidiah Morse, the most famous exponent of what was known as “anti-Illuminism” was well-placed to be the champion of American orthodoxy against the threat of European radical fraternalism. Morse was a man “prominently identified with almost every great movement of the [early republican] period,” a vigorous defender of New England church orthodoxy against the rising religious liberalism of the turn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Something of a familiar type to modern readers, he was the sort of cleric who would write angry letters to the newspapers when he


\textsuperscript{23}Proceedings, 100. Anti-Masonic Review, March 1828, 83.
discovered a popular children’s book had been re-written to remove all references to Hell and damnation. His conflicts with Unitarians in Massachusetts and his bitter suit against pioneering female historian Hannah Adams in 1805 have left Morse with something of a sour reputation among historians of New England intellectual culture. But Morse was more than just a reflexive champion of orthodoxy against the new age; he was the “Father of American Geography,” a defender of Native Americans against white encroachment, one of the leading intellectuals and clergymen of his day. Morse, one of the leading American theologians of the 1790s, was one of the first Americans to connect the fraternal Enlightenment politics of Masonry with the politics of the French Revolution, whose revolutionary movement was then sweeping Europe and threatening even American civil discourse. (And Morse and his allies were right in a way. The French Revolution would lead to a significant crackdown on civil liberties in the early republic) Morse connected Freemasonry with the Bavarian Illuminati and the French Revolution, making him the first real ‘anti-Masonic’ voice in American politics. “For if this should pass upon the publick unnoticed, from altering children’s books, more important one’s might be undertaken, until, grown bold in the business, even the sacred truths of the HOLY BIBLE may be in danger.” Colonial and Revolutionary anti-Masons had criticized Masonry for its ritual and the supposed social habits of its members, social criticisms of the kind that were not uncommon in 18th century America.24

The attacks on secret societies by Morse and his allies Timothy Dwight were something new: these were political attacks on secret societies along American lines, criticizing Masonry for its alleged ties to secrecy, anti-Americanism, revolution, atheism, and other horrors to Morse’s New England congregants. Morse was a spokesman for an anxious New England that

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felt under siege by Jeffersonianism, Masonry, and the threat of revolution, much as his successors in the Morgan Anti-Masonic movement would be a generation later. Morse’s ‘jeremiads’ have recently been re-examined by revisionist historians like Rachel Snell, who placed Morse in the context of New England clergy’s adaptations to the republican society of the 1790s. This was an age when Timothy Dwight, Morse's colleague and fellow anti-secretist, could rhetorically demand of his parishioners “Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire and the dragoons of Murat, or our daughters, the concubines of the Illuminati?” Despite the anti-Jeffersonian and anti-revolutionary fears of Federal New England, Morse, Dwight, and their allies were unable to make much penetration into the collective consciousness of the day. Indeed, if anything the success of the counter-anti-Illuminist reaction shows the power and cultural cachet of Masonry and other secret societies for many Americans in the post-Revolutionary period. But their words lingered, and would be remembered again by their descendants thirty years later.  

Morse was the American popularizer of Scottish intellectual John Robison, colleague of James Watt and progenitor of English-language anti-Illuminism. Morse had encountered Robison through writings with his friend John Erskine, the Scottish cleric who was a correspondent of many leading Congregationalists of the late 18th century, Erskine and Robison being colleagues back in Scotland. John Robison had been a liberal as a young man. But like many British liberals of the late 18th century, the violence of the French Revolution and accompanying atrocities alienated Robison. The fall of the “crowns, so splendid on the sovereign heads, Soon bloody under the proletarian feet,” was enough to drive many European intellectuals towards conservatism. In his 1798 _Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All The Governments of Europe_,

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Carried On in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies, Collected from Good Authorities, the Scottish philosopher charged that Continental, British, and even American society had been infiltrated by an “ASSOCIATION…FORMED for the express purpose of ROOTING OUT ALL THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS, AND OVERTURNING ALL THE EXISTING GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE. [capitals in original-MD].” With the kind of parsimony stereotypical of an 18th century Scottish intellectual, Robison added “It has accordingly happened, that the homely Free Masonry imported from England has been totally changed in every country of Europe, either by the imposing ascendancy of French brethren, who are to be found everywhere, ready to instruct the world; or by the importation of the doctrines, and ceremonies, and ornaments of the Parisian Lodges. Even England, the birth-place of Masonry, has experienced the French innovations; and all the repeated injunctions, admonitions, and reproofs of the old Lodges, cannot prevent those in different parts of the kingdom from admitting the French novelties, full of tinsel and glitter, and high-sounding titles.” This French infiltration of continental (and then British) Masonry had been secretly organized by none other than “…the Order of ILLUMINATI, founded in 1775, by Dr. Adam Weishaupt, professor of Canon law in the university of Ingolstadt, and abolished in 1786 by the Elector of Bavaria, but revived immediately after, under another name, and in a different form, all over Germany. It was again detected, and seemingly broken up; but it had by this time taken so deep root that it still subsists without being detected, and has spread into all the countries of Europe.” Even historians skeptical of claims about secret societies have praised Robison's work. In the foundational work against the ‘paranoid style’, Richard Hofstadter described Robison’s work as “A conscientious account, laboriously pieced together out of the German sources, of the origins and the development of Weishaupt’s movement. For the most part, Robison seems to have made his work as factual as he could…” Robison and Barruel were the only historians who wrote about the Illuminati in the same era in which the Order actually existed and were the only ones
with access to primary sources, accounts of lodge members, and other documents that (thanks to
the society’s secrecy, short life, and the storm of opposition it aroused) are otherwise unavailable
to modern historians. 26

Robison's narrative was a very attractive one for a certain kind of Anglosphere audience.
In an age when even American revolutionaries sneered at the label “democrat”, and in which
even the American government sought to quash popular dissent, the popular revolutions in
France seemed inexplicable to a society deeply uncomfortable with notions of mass politics.
Barruel and Robison provided answers to their readers that were immediately understandable,
spreading a ‘blood libel’ against the Enlightenment that would endure for a generation and not
incidentally helping create the modern conspiracy theory, one related to older witch hunts and
pogroms but decidedly different from it. In distant Charlestown, Jedidiah Morse was one of the
many Americans who read Robison’s book almost immediately upon its publication. He took to
the pulpit immediately, charging in his May 8 sermon that “There are too many evidences that
this Order has had its branches established, in some form or other, and its emissaries secretly at
work in this country, for several years past. From their private papers which have been
discovered, and are now published, it appears, that as early as 1786, they had several societies in
America, And it is well known that some men, high in office, have expressed sentiments
accordant to the principles and views of this society.” Federalists like Morse had believed for
years in the threat posed by the spreading French Revolution, and that Democratic-Republicans
like Thomas Jefferson (and the Democratic-Republican clubs which many blamed for the
Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 and other moments that ‘pitted the people against the government)
were either directly or indirectly in the pay of the French government and its true masters.

26John Robison, Proofs of a Conspiracy... (New York, Kessinger, 2003), 1-3. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke,
Robison’s words (and it is particularly Robison who is quoted by Morse and his colleagues like Seth Payton, who seem to find a Scottish intellectual much more respectable than a French cleric) gave them an international, intellectual cachet to their fears. Barruel the Jesuit was a little too much the Catholic conservative for the evangelical anti-Masons, and Robison’s narrative was one very familiar to Morse's contemporaries: it was a conversion narrative.  

They had spent their post-Revolutionary lives making orthodox Christianity in New England compatible with republicanism, making the virtues of Christianity the republican virtues of the public sphere prized by their contemporaries. Having brought religion into the public sphere, they were faced with a rapidly changing sphere in which a rising tide of democratic rationalism seemed an attack not only on their politics but on their very faith. There had been uprisings in the United States, riots against the Jay Treaty, the Whiskey Rebellion, and other violent popular movements affiliated with the kind of democratic societies that people like Morse and Dwight associated with secretism and 'Illuminism'. No wonder they were so ready to believe the worst of the Illuminati, and with them (to a certain extent) the Masons. This was a war for American culture, society, and all they held dear. “In the societies of Illuminati doctrines were taught, which strike at the root of human happiness and virtue; and every such doctrine was either expressly or implicitly involved in their system.” The chief problem they would encounter was that it is very difficult to whip up a popular movement against populism. Morse's crusade was a failure.  


Morse would end his career as a champion of American geography rather than a crusader against anti-American secret societies. (Like many evangelical Christians of the 19th century, Morse would continue his culture war against Jeffersonian Democrats in the context of defending Native Americans, personally crossing swords with Jefferson in print during the latter's retirement from the Presidency.) Traditional works on the history of the period have depicted Morse and his allies like Dwight as would-be aristocrats fearful of popular will, reactionaries eager to only allow government-permitted speech in the public square. Alan Snyder and Paul Goodman have recently worked to revise this traditional understanding, arguing that Dwight and Morse were acting out of a reasonable fear for the Christian republic both men had helped create in the 1790s. With the nation’s newspapers full of the XYZ Affair in which French officials had personally and professionally insulted the United States government (Morse spoke during the height of the crisis, and his Fast Day 1798 sermon was one of many anti-French sermons delivered that day), with American ships being attacked at sea by French privateers, with French nationals in the pay of the revolutionary government caught hiring American mercenaries and accused of funding very real uprisings against the new American government, it was easy enough to believe in an international atheist conspiracy directed from an Illuminati temple in Paris or Ingolstadt. With George Washington ready to take up arms again on behalf of the United States against France and with war threatening to break out daily, the thought of an enemy within was all too credible to a population that had already endured one deeply ideological war at home. Alderson lays out how Federalists like George Washington felt that Edmond Genet and his

Controversy and the Transformation of Federalist Print Culture”
supporters were personally responsible for such ‘separations between the people and their government’ as the Whiskey Rebellion.29

Morse's charges, which he elaborated on in further addresses through 1798 and 1799, were embraced by many of his New England contemporaries. The idea that the French Revolution could spread, that Frenchmen had infiltrated Masonic lodges, Irish aid societies, and the democratic clubs in the name of spreading French revolutionary values, was a potent charge in the period among New England Federalists, particularly in the aftermath of the Whiskey Rebellion and the expulsion of Edmond Genet. A correspondent to the Connecticut Courant, among the newspapers to most heavily champion Morse's anti-Illuminist crusade, wrote that Jefferson "is the real Jacobin, the very child of modern illumination, the foe of man, and the enemy of his country." Revisionist historians have shown that Federalists were not conniving against civil liberties or politically ambitious in their charges against Democrats; they genuinely believed that Jefferson and his party were a continuing threat to national civil liberties. As sober a figure as a young John Quincy Adams could write of the democratic societies associated with Illuminism by Morse that “...they are so perfectly affiliated to the Parisian Jacobins, that their origins from a common parent cannot be mistaken.” His father would write to Jefferson a decade later that “You certainly never felt the terrorism excited by Genet, in 1793...when ten thousand people in the streets of Philadelphia, day after day threatened to drag Washington out of his

house, and effect a revolution...nothing but (a miracle)...could have saved the United States from a fatal revolution of government." 30

The above quotes are sometimes used against the Adams as proof of a would-be dictatorial intent from the Federalists, just as Morse and Dwight's condemnation of the Illuminati has been used against them by similar historians. But they had reasonable grounds to be afraid. There had been an Order of the Illuminati, they had sought to infiltrate society through the use of Masonic lodges, and they had gained powerful converts through secretism and carefully restraining their full rationalist agenda for the consumption only of higher members. There had been French revolutionary infiltration of secret societies in Ireland and Britain, leading to outright rebellion in 1798. As discussed above, Edmond Genet's attempted subversion of what would become the American political relationship between the public and the government left lasting scars on the American relationship with European ideals. So there were reasons to believe that an internationalist secret society might have been infiltrated by an internationalist enemy in the context of the 1790s, that Freemasonry might be infiltrated by a group of men working for France who sought to “propagate infidelity, immorality, and impurity of manners,” after all, from the perspective of New England Federalists, it had happened before. 31

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Morse, Dwight, and their allies were able to establish a substantial audience for themselves among New England Congregationalists, but their efforts to connect Illuminati subversion to democratic societies and Masonic lodges (for all that Morse was perpetually careful not to condemn American Masonry as a whole - Morse said “knowledgeable Masons” knew these men to be “imposters”) failed to arouse national audiences, this despite such familiar charges as "I have, my brethren, an official, authenticated list of the names, ages, places of nativity, professions, &c. of the officers and members of a Society of Illuminati (or as they are now more generally and properly styled Illuminees) consisting of one hundred members, instituted in Virginia, by the Grand Orient of FRANCE." There was a significant counter-reaction to Morse's work both from Masons and scholars familiar with continental Europe, who pointed out that there was no lasting evidence of Illuminati-style lodges still active by the 1790s. National leaders like Thomas Jefferson disclaimed any familiarity with Adam Weishaupt and condemned the charges made by Robison. Federalists like George Washington (in one of Washington's more infamous letters) agreed that while “That Individuals of them may have done it, or that the founder, or instrument employed to found, the Democratic Societies in the United States, may have had these objects; and actually had a separation of the People from their Government in view, is too evident to be questioned” but was convinced that Masonic lodges lacked any such infiltration. In the 1790s there was no mass Federalist electorate in New England to be turned out in the polls against Jeffersonian Democrats, even with fears of French subversion in place.32

So the anti-Illuminati movement of the 1790s rested on evanescent ground – when the cultural moment of fears of anti-French subversion passed, there was no foreign enemy for them

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to react against, no domestic enemy to point to, and no motivated electorate to go to the polls to defend what seemed to be an attack on their liberties. Jedidiah Morse himself made it clear he was no enemy of American Masons, and delivered benedictions at several Masonic lodges for the remainder of his career. Indeed, he addressed at least one lodge during the very height of the anti-Illuminist crisis. Morse and his fellow Federalists encouraged the removal of emotion and mass sentiment from the public square; they argued for the dangers of mass participation in politics. (Indeed, Larry Tise has charged that Morse and his contemporaries helped spark the conservative counter-reaction that provided the ideological framework for pro-slavery ideology in the mid-19th century.) They were also only by one remove anti-Masonic, at most. “On my mind no impression, disadvantageous to the ancient Free Masonry, was made by the book,” said Dwight of Robison’s work, while Morse notably does not mention Masonry at all in his initial speeches against the Illuminati. After all, Masons were sometimes the staunchest Federalists in the early republic. (After all, Washington was a member while Jefferson was not). At least one Masonic leader was suspended from his post in Maryland for too vigorously supporting the anti-French movement for war in the 1790s, Grand Master Belton being among the most outspoken Federalists of one of the most outspokenly Federalist lodges in the nation. But their words were an inspiration to Jacksonian anti-Masons, even though the anti-Masonic movement championed the mobilization of popular will, the politics of mass participation, and was closely affiliated with the anti-slavery movement of the later 19th century. Despite the lack of success of late 18th century anti-Illuminism, however, Jacksonian anti-Masons repeatedly called back to their predecessors of an earlier generation. 33

Seth Payson’s 1802 book on the dangers of Masonry had fallen almost completely on deaf ears. In 1828, a convention of seceding Masons in Le Roy, New York resolved that “…we discover in the ceremonies and obligations of the higher degrees of Masonry principles which deluged France in blood, and which led directly to the subversion of all religion and government.” A six-man committee at the 1830 national Anti-Masonic convention investigated the “nature and spirit of Anti-Masonry from the disclosures of Professor Robison and Abbe Barruel to the present,” focusing in particular on the efforts by Josiah Bartlett to “impeach and spurn” Morse and his colleagues. They went on to argue that the “same attempts to muzzle the press there,” had been made after the death of Morgan as had been made in the 1790s. They found connections between themselves and the divines of the 1790s through being victims of the same “thoroughly organized system of slander and calumny.” Moses Thacher, the chairman of the committee, had given the opening benediction at the convention, and was one of its leading divines. A seceding Mason, and chair of that committee as well, he is remembered even today as one of the most influential religious figures of his region of 19th century Massachusetts. His colleagues are less well-remembered, with even the convention clerk apologizing for omitting many of their remarks from the historical record. But the history they had helped uncover, the relationship between Jacksonian anti-Masonry and illuminism, remained vital. For Henry Dana Ward, one of the leading national journalists of anti-Masonry, the failure of “Robison, Barreul, and Payson” was proof of the urgent necessity of ‘politicizing’ the movement. The “Ballot Box” was the only way to avoid letting their words “moulder in dust.” The memories of the failed crusade against Illuminism provided political inspiration for what had once been a culture war – anti-Masons like Ward were not eager to repeat the failed strategies of a previous generation. With some anti-Masons uneasy about shifting to politics, memories of Morse, Dwight, and their fellows helped calm the nerves. Additionally, the legacy of the 1790s offered other lessons for anti-Masons like Ward, who argued that the international crisis of the 1830s was akin to the
international crisis of the 1790s that had spawned the first Illuminist movement. Elsewhere, newspapers in upstate New York and across the nation brought Morse's writings on the Illuminati back into print during the anti-Masonic crisis of the Jacksonian era.34

In 1830, the Massachusetts State Anti-Masonic Convention called back to Morse's crusade against Illuminism, charging that “modern events” were proof of Illuminist infiltration in the United States. (They would have been referring to international events like the “Masonic” civil war in Mexico allegedly created by Joel Poinsett, the subject of a later chapter.) “Would such a field as America, then, be overlooked by the Illuminees?” asked Ethan Smith, chairman of the Massachusetts committee. The New England Almanac of 1832 grounded much of its discussion on the international dangers of Masonry on the legacy of Illuminism. Calling back to the heritage of Illuminism allowed nativist anti-Masons to particularly localize the internationalist spirit of Freemasonry – not just generally foreign but specifically French, associated with revolution and decadent culture even in Jacksonian America. The heavily ritualized, ostentatiously secretist Masonry of the Jacksonian era was much more threatening to the imagination of the American public, and the newly empowered electorate of the period would be in a much stronger position to actively engage with it. Elsewhere, the cultural stamp of Robison's book, with its invocations of “Mohammedism” in its discussion of Masonic rituals, further amplified the fears of American Protestants. In the late 19th century, Jonathan Blanchard's Christian Cynosure advertised books like Lovington's Key to Masonry that breathlessly promised to show readers how “speculative Freemasonry” was “Identical to Illuminism.” Robison and Morse were a vital part of anti-Masonic rhetoric in the United States until the Gilded Age, proof

positive of the historical antiquity of anti-Masonry and the foreign, “atheistic” threat of Masonry.

All eras of 19th century anti-Masonry shared a contempt for Voltaire, an inheritance seemingly gained from their anti-Illuminist forebears. “But I will hope better of my countrymen, and I think that our clergy have encouragement even from the native character of Britons...It is of his own countrymen that Voltaire speaks when he says they resemble 'a mixed breed of the monkey and the tiger.” John Robison had written about the relationship between French and British Masonry, helping illuminate some of the cultural clashes at the core of early anti-secretist politics. “The French philosopher, VOLTAIRE, about the middle of the last century, formed a plot to destroy the Christian religion,” an Masonic convention breathlessly informed its members in 1830, a theme carried forward again and again by the movement. Masons were “fit instruments of the anti-Christian sentiments of Voltaire”, who had with the help of Frederick the Great of Prussia set out to spread “Jacobinism” through the Western world. The “Illuminatio plot organized by Voltaire” was a recurring theme for contemporary anti-Masons, all the way from Morse's early writings through the era of Jonathan Blanchard. Voltaire was French and an atheist, just the sort of scholar to become a bogeyman for 19th century American evangelical Protestants.36

However, there was one significant difference between the anti-Illuminism of the Jacksonian period, which often called back to the anti-Illuminism of Morse and “the day of darkest [Masonic] crime” and the anti-Illuminism of Blanchard's era – the Blanchardite era was

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far less engaged with Morse, Dwight, and the other American apostles of anti-Illuminism, though, for reasons which play further into that notion of the 'historical antiquity of anti-Masonry.' Recent works in cultural history such as Scott Trafton's writing on the history of American Egyptology and Maurie McInnis' piece on the classical heritage of antebellum Charleston have helped illuminate the strong role of historical and classical scholarship in the construction of American identity and white identity in the 19th century. “Who would dare to brand memory a lie?” Andrew Burstein asked rhetorically when speaking of cultural attitudes about history in the 1820s, an age of deep, fundamental anxieties about the nature of American destiny and the future of its civilization. As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on antiquarianism, Masonic 'pretensions' of history were among their chief draws for Americans in the 19th century. Moreover, in addition to their relationship with the imagined history of the classical world, Masons clung to the memory of George Washington and the nationalist Masons of the American Revolution. By giving themselves a historical cachet among the Americans of the early republic, anti-Masons were rebutting charges by Masons about the “newness” of the party and the “phrenzy” of the movement. By the 1870s, with fifty years of anti-Masonic rhetoric in the United States, an organization like Blanchard's National Christian Association (particularly with the great age of many of its members) needed no callbacks to an American past to emphasize the origins of their party.37

Anti-Masons in the United States were not the only people interested in stories about the Illuminati and their Masonic allies. Indeed, even Masons did not defend the Illuminati and by all

accounts accepted the 19th century narrative about the “war on the Bible” waged by 18th century Illuminati. The “scandalous vogue for German tales of the Illuminati” saw the Illuminati pop up both in the pulpier works of the day like Carl Grosse’s *The Horrid Mysteries* as well as parodies of Gothic fiction like Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*. Percy Shelley’s fascination with the works of Barruel helped embed concerns about the Illuminati in the poetry and writings of his contemporaries, particularly his wife’s famous book about an atheist abomination born in Weishaupt’s Ingolstadt: *Frankenstein*. (Mary Shelley’s family friend Charles Brockden Brown was at times more sympathetic to secretism in his own writing, as was Brown’s successor George Lippard. Secretism was a subject that fascinated many writers of the 19th century, with secret societies appearing either as heroes or villains even in the work of the same author.) Today the Illuminati are generally separated from Masonry in our historical imagination. With no defenders in popular culture, not even among Masons, the Illuminati became safe targets for scandal and scorn without the risk of any personal or professional trouble for Gothic, science fiction, or cartoon writers. (Mitchell goes on to make the fascinating statement that “true Freemasonry was never connected with Illuminism, but that system called Scotch Rite... was.”) They became a blank slate onto which writers could cast the anxieties of a particular era: atheist demons in the 19th century, New World Orders and Tri-Lateral Commission members in the 20th during the rise of fears of the “New Illuminati” without any need to be troubled by something as bothersome as what the historical Illuminati had actually said and what had been the real fate of their organization. By the modern era, years of use had made the Illuminati an instantly-understandable trope for consumers of popular culture for all ages. Often cast as ancient as Freemasonry once had been, with roots presented as going back as far as the Knights Templar and beyond by writers like the creators of the recent *National Treasure*, the Illuminati are broad
enough to cover both the “ancient secret society” and the “modern conspirators” tropes of our contemporary fears.\textsuperscript{38}

However, it is important not to overstate the anti-Masonic reliance on the anti-Illuminist narrative. The story of Robison's work and Morse's sermons appears in the anti-Masonic literature as one of the many stock stories told by anti-Masons to illustrate the character of their opponents; these are primarily sermon anecdotes rather than political theater. The Thacher committee at the national convention in Philadelphia was a product of the 11\textsuperscript{th} Resolution there offered, behind the committees that analyzed David Bernard's Masonic exposes, that discussed Morgan's murder, the committees made up of seceding Masons (of which Moses Thacher was also a member), and the rules committees of the convention itself. At the Massachusetts state convention that produced the “inquiry into how far Free Masonry and French Illuminism are connected,” the convention was equally interested in undermining Masonic notions of classical history, and as usual more focused on the murder of Morgan. There were no political accusations made about Most of the mentions of the Illuminati in the texts of later works like Blanchard's are actually advertisements for books on the subject rather than articles themselves; stories of Illuminism might have whipped up the faithful but they weren't something on which people put much reliance on politically. (The Cynosure of September 1898 made the startling claim that the Illuminati were “instruments of the Jesuits”, the kind of argument made to score social and cultural points rather than political ones. The Illuminati were here an instrument of anti-Catholicism, not fears of internationalist Enlightenment politics. By 1900, the Cynosure was charging that the Jesuits had been behind the Illuminati from the 1540s on.) Anti-Illuminism was a creature of the theological side of anti-Masonry, something for church sermons and political

conventions rather than a national selling point for the movement or the party. It was a story anti-
Masons told; but it was by no means their most important story.\(^\text{39}\)

Anti-Illuminism was an important cultural construction of 19\(^\text{th}\) century anti-Masonry, reinforcing the alien nature of secret societies while at the same time emphasizing the American heritage of the anti-Masonic movement. The connection to the French Revolution allowed anti-Masons to claim that “Whoever adopts the religious, or rather irreligious, spirit and principles of Masonry, Odd-Fellowship, and other similar associations must discard Christianity and the Bible.” The reaction against the Enlightenment that it illuminates does help show the anti-liberal position of many 19\(^\text{th}\) century American anti-Masons. However, given the strong association between the legacy of the French Revolution on one hand and the strong existing evidence of a Masonic connection between the two, historians should also take the anti-Illuminist reaction seriously. 'Ages of anxiety' have reasons for their fears, whether political instability in a new nation or economic and cultural dislocation in a developing one. The anti-Illuminists of the early republic had grounds to fear the consequences of cultural subversion in the context of the 1790s, just as their descendants saw the stories told by their predecessors as proof of the ongoing threat of a powerful, dangerous secret organization. Referred to at conventions and by speakers, a subject of wide discussion and avid reading in the popular press, Anti-Illuminism was important, but not the most important cultural construction of 19\(^\text{th}\) center anti-Masonry. The most important cultural construction of 19\(^\text{th}\) century anti-Masonry was, however, its origin story – the infamous 1826 murder of William Morgan that is the traditional beginning narrative of anti-Masonic history in the United States.\(^\text{40}\)


\(^{40}\)David MacDill, “Their Profaneness,” in *Secret Societies: A Discussion of Their Character and Claims* (Chicago, Ezra Cook, 1867), 41.
They found the body on October 7, 1827, in so “putrid a state” that it was indescribable in the contemporary press, washed up on the shores of Lake Ontario near the mouth of Oak Orchard Creek. Even today the area is comparatively undeveloped, occupied by a state park and boating sloop, and was even more remote in the 1820s, Orleans County having been largely bypassed by the Erie Canal boom that had swept through points west and south in upstate New York. Farmers Potter and Hoxie, the discoverers of the corpse, quickly reported their discovery to the authorities. The corpse was “the body of a man, some forty-five or fifty years of age; about five feet eight inches in height,” dressed in a frock coat, pants, and homespun flannel shirt, with religious tracts and tobacco in the pockets. The coroner’s jury concluded the man had died by drowning, and the John Doe was buried in a cheap coffin near the town of Carleton. Close by the shore of the Great Lakes, not far from the mouth of the Niagara River, it was a routine moment in the life of a rural community in upstate New York in the 1820s. But the corpse’s story would soon become nothing like routine as leading editors, political leaders, and ministers converged on Carleton to exhume the corpse, pour over its story, and summon grieving widows from nearby Batavia and across the Canadian border to identify the dead man. For this was no ordinary time in the life of upstate New York – this was the age of Morgan. 41

The alleged murder of William Morgan, on or about September 12, 1826, remains one of the most famous unsolved crimes in American history. The circumstances of Morgan’s life, his death, and his interactions with the Masonic lodges of Batavia, Warsaw, and Le Roy, New York

in the 1820s were a subject of vigorous national debate within months of his purported
kidnapping from the doorstep of the Ontario County Jail in the early morning hours of
September 12, 1826, and have remained important to historians of politics, crime, and American
culture to this day, as well as to Masonic and anti-Masonic hobbyists still carrying on now
nearly-two hundred year old battles about Masonic culpability. This national attention has kept
alive the historical memory what would otherwise have been an obscure frontier murder of the
19th century; even other “Masonic outrages” of the period like the death and ‘transfiguration’ of
Joseph Burnham in Vermont some years later have generally been neglected by historians. For
Masons and sympathetic historians, William Morgan was a traitor not just to Masonry, but to the
ideals of genteel bourgeois respectability they represented: he was “very intemperate and
frequently neglected his family,” a man of “dissolute habits” who was “extremely violent when
drunk,” an abuser of his wife and children, one whose disappearance was “beyond
controversy…of his own free will.” For Anti-Masons and the few historians sympathetic to their
agenda, Morgan was every inch a respectable American patriot: a veteran of the Battle of New
Orleans and militia captain, a man of “industry” with a trade, a Christian and hero of his country
“cruelly betrayed” by his “supposed friends”. Like his fate, Morgan’s body was never
conclusively identified. The October corpse was identified first as Morgan by his widow
Lucinda, reburied in Batavia with the “pomp and circumstance” as befit a martyred hero. Shortly
afterwards, the body was re-identified (by another grieving widow) as Timothy Monroe, a
Canadian lost on the lake some months previously, and this time reburied in Canada. The
contested story of the Morgan/Monroe body became yet another bone of contention in the story
of Morgan’s murder, with both sides producing competing forensics, hydrological, and
‘unimpeachable’ eyewitness testimony to prove that the corpse was one man or the other. With
competing stories of equal weight, historians cannot know for sure the true identity of the
October 1827 body. But they can, however, identify the fate of William Morgan, locating his
corpse in historical memory if not in physical actuality.\textsuperscript{42}

Looking at the circumstances of Morgan’s disappearance, the arson, intimidation, and kidnapping directed at his business partner David Miller, the local, statewide, and national outcry that resulted from his absence, the hasty ideological and rhetorical defenses erected by Masons after Morgan’s disappearance, the logical inference is a simple one. William Morgan was murdered by his fellow Masons sometime after they took him from the Ontario County jail, voluntarily or otherwise, in order to prevent the publication of his book \textit{Light on Masonry}. None of the Masonic stories that emerged in subsequent years; that Morgan became a pirate in the Ottoman Empire, that he fled to the British-owned Cayman Islands and eventually brought his family there, that he changed his identity and lived among the Native Americans of upstate New York, have any appreciable factual justification. Morgan was a lone man, an outsider with no appreciable friends or allies, one who had aroused the anger of some of the most powerful men in his community, many of whom would continue to condemn him years and even decades after his death. By threatening to expose the ‘secrets of Masonry’, particularly the ‘higher degrees’ like Royal Arch Masonry, an 18\textsuperscript{th} century innovation popularized by a new wave of mysticism in Jacksonian Freemasonry, Morgan had so endangered the pride, cultural standing, and economic status of his fellow Masons that they saw no alternative but to take his life. The alternative cases have been made either by Masonic historians with an interest in protecting the historical reputation of their order, or by later historians who have lost sight of the cultural roots and social purpose of Masonry in frontier communities like Batavia and Le Roy.\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{43} Jewel H. Conover, \textit{Nineteenth-Century Houses in Western New York} (Albany, Upstate, 1966), 140-141, Allison D.
Historians friendly to Masons, or Masons themselves, have generally downplayed the importance of the murder of Morgan in the formation of the anti-Masonic movement, instead calling attention to the ‘demagogues’ who supposedly manipulated New York public opinion in order to promote their own political agenda in the region. A number of influential politicians cut out of power by the Regency did indeed take advantage of anti-Masonry to seek office. Nevertheless, it is also true that the reaction to Morgan’s murder was meaningful. Morgan almost certainly was kidnapped and murdered by Batavia and Le Roy Masons. Even if not, local citizens of upstate New York had solid reasons to believe that he had met such a fate. Morgan had been violently condemned in the press and by his fellow Masons. Those sympathetic to Masons had directed attacks against his family and supporters. There had been an attempted arson in the heart of downtown Batavia carried out in the hours before Morgan’s final and fatal arrest (at the hands of a Masonic sheriff who had frequently winked at the order’s abuses in the past), and the cover-up used to deflect attention from the trials of his kidnappers and his allies had become famous across the nation by the time it had finished. (There were at least two dozen trials spun off from Morgan’s disappearance; Masons were generally not excluded from the relevant jury pools, and only three of the trials were actually successful in reaching a verdict) If Anti-Masons were hyperbolic in their rapid condemnation of Masonry, it was an age of hyperbolic rhetoric. They accused Masons of dominating the courts and politics of the region, and they were (as will be discussed below), correct. This is not to say that anti-Masons did not perhaps overemphasize Morgan's murder in their collective intellectual heritage – that state after state held their political conventions on the anniversary of September 11 (a potent date, as has

Bentley 7-8 Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Antimasonic Anxieties” American Quarterly, 34, No. 5 (Winter, 1982), 543
been noted by many post-millennial cranks in the modern era) certainly suggests a certain degree of fetishization of the Morgan killing. That it was “Morgan Anti-Masonry” in the writings of Jonathan Blanchard (and not “Stevens Anti-Masonry” or “Wirt Anti-Masonry) some decades later is certainly suggestive. Perhaps Thurlow Weed did not say there was a “good-enough Morgan” in the body of Timothy Munroe, but it was certainly the kind of thing a cynical anti-Masons might have said. However, the fetishization of a murder does not mean it did not take place, nor does it mean all reactions to it were mistaken. Similarly, the murder of William Morgan did not invent American anti-Masonry, but it did provide the impetus for its Jacksonian formation: New York Masons did present themselves as a reasonable threat to human life and the political values of the Jacksonian period, and anti-Masons were reasonable in their response within the limits of Jacksonian political rhetoric.44

However, it was not obvious, back in the fall of 1826, that Morgan would have to die at all, much less that the story of his murder would become so infamous. For all that some Masons thought of Morgan, in the weeks and months before the publication of his book, as “guilty of outrage upon the laws of Masonry”, and thus that it was “just for him to lose his life,” others were baffled by their brothers’ outrage at Morgan’s planned work. Not long before his disappearance, Henry Brown of Batavia, one of Morgan’s erstwhile lodge brothers, published a letter that condemned the “indiscreet and unnecessary” reaction to Morgan’s plans, telling his brothers that “The lion might as well be alarmed because an army of kites or crows, had threatened to invade his proud domains.” This is one of the real ‘mysteries’ surrounding the murder of William Morgan. Anti-Masonic exposes had been in print almost since the early 18th century formation of the Enlightenment version of Freemasonry. Anti-Masonic exposes like Jachin and Boaz were readily available in print before 1826, while Anti-Masonry had enjoyed a

brief flowering in the United States twenty years earlier during the vigorous anti-French reaction of the late 1790s. None of these, despite occasional lurid accusations made by anti-Masons later in the 19th century, prompted a murderous response from contemporary Masons. What it was about Morgan, his book, and the Masons of upstate New York and beyond that prompted the vigorous and ultimately bloody reprisals that culminated in the rebirth of American anti-secretism and the formation of the American Anti-Masonic Party is a question worth grappling with below.45

Between both Masonic demonization and anti-Masonic valorization, some things can be said with reasonable certainty about the life of William Morgan, who until the months before his death left very little of himself in the world. He was a stonemason and bricklayer from Culpepper County, Virginia, an operative Mason among speculative Masons. Born in 1774, Morgan was in his forties when he married the much younger Lucinda Pendleton in Richmond in 1819. (Lucinda Morgan, recently rediscovered by historians of religion, who became the ‘martyred widow’ of Anti-Masonry, would later become a Mormon and marry that group’s founder Joseph Smith, and in later life a correspondent of Jonathan Blanchard. Soon a father, Morgan immigrated to Upper Canada (a much easier task in those days) and became a brewer in York, later Toronto. The fire that destroyed Morgan’s brewery and forced the family back to the United States in 1821 left few clues behind. Times were hard for the Morgans in upstate New York, and he frequently was dependent on Masonic charity. Morgan’s poverty and his drinking made him a poor fit for Le Roy and Batavia’s Masons (Western Star No. 33 and Wells Lodge No. 282 respectively); it was an age when Masons were expected to support their brethren and monitor their welfare, and Morgan was by all accounts incorrigible, a ‘rolling stone that gathered no moss’ and a ‘shiftless itinerant’ in an order friendly to neither. Morgan had become a Royal

45 Brown, 20-25, Bullock, 279, Morris, 5-12
Arch Mason in May of 1825 in Le Roy, but his peers by all accounts grew tired of him. When a Royal Arch chapter was organized in Batavia in 1825, Morgan was deliberately blackballed by his putative lodge brothers: this was a higher degree than they had had in Batavia before, and men like Morgan were not allowed. Royal Arch Masonry was an elite tier, a long, involved ceremony reserved for particularly devoted members, a symbol of the new sacralism of Masonry in Jacksonian America. In Masonic sources, Morgan’s decision to turn on his Masonic brethren at this juncture is often written of as a betrayal, but by excluding him from their ranks they had already done the same.  

Disgruntled, Morgan entered into a partnership with David C. Miller, publisher of the struggling Batavia Republican Advocate. Miller has traditionally been largely omitted from the histories of Morgan’s murder, as his story is inconvenient for both sides. As a living witness to Masonic-directed mob violence against anti-Masons in the city, Miller’s story did not serve the needs of Masonic historians. As a failed businessman and alcoholic who saw no more personal success after Morgan’s death than before, he was a much less useful hero and martyr than the dead Morgan for anti-Masonic writers and political leaders elsewhere. Miller had taken the first Masonic degree some years earlier, but had failed to win traction with his fellow Masons. He was excluded from the local lodge, his newspaper was unable to make connections in the community, and his business was falling apart. Miller, too, had ample reason to resent the power of the Masons of Batavia and Le Roy, and perhaps a better claim to having been excluded from power and business thanks to Masons than Morgan. They made an agreement together to publish Masonic secrets, not just the first three degrees then commonly available, but additionally the secrets of Royal Arch Masonry and beyond that would have been so damaging to the reputations of the leading men of Batavia had the truth been known. (This kind of knowledge would

46 Morris, 277, Tillotson, 81-85, Huntington, 24-26, John C. Palmer, Morgan Affair and Anti-Masonry, (Kessinger Reprint, New York, 1992), 14-16, Bullock, 239-241, Kutolowski, 147
typically have been beyond the purview of a Royal Arch Mason like Morgan. He had evidently come to know those things by close study those widely-promoted lectures and writings based on the works of Preston and Webb, valuable knowledge for a widely-traveled man with a pecuniary interest in making friends wherever he went). That these stories would come at the hands of their enemy, a former lodge brother who owed them money in a deeply parlous time, was an even greater humiliation. The Erie Canal had bypassed Batavia and the city was sinking into decline; those debts must have weighed heavily on the minds of Morgan’s eventual killers as they fumed over his plans. The eventual attack on Morgan came from several directions. On the 9th of August, 1826, a local newspaper printed a strongly-worded Masonic “NOTICE AND WARNING” about Morgan. “Brethren and companions are particularly requested to observe, mark, and govern themselves accordingly,” a notice interpreted as an incitement to violence by anti-Masons in subsequent decades. Whether or not this was true, (certainly it can be read as a fraternal organization trying to keep out a former member who had now become an enemy) the news that Morgan and Miller were collaborating on a book together spread like wildfire through the Masons of New York state and beyond. Even DeWitt Clinton took an interest in the case, writing to Batavia’s Masons in a letter that strongly suggests a Masonic reaction should be made to Morgan’s threatened publication.47

Morgan’s debts proved the first means of attack against Morgan personally. The law in New York allowed for the arrest of debtors for amounts as small as “six cents”, and Morgan’s manifold debts were far greater than that nominal amount. As many of Morgan’s debts were owed to his fellow Masons, this gave them a powerful weapon to use against Morgan. He was repeatedly arrested through the summer of 1826, with only Miller’s bond keeping Morgan out of

debtors’ prison, each time he was held refusing to trade silence for an end to his poverty. (This also helps reinforce the notion that Miller did need Morgan to successfully publish the work, at least at that stage; he could easily have let Morgan be carried away to jail without risking his own parlous financial state on defending the man and published a crafted denunciation drawing on the then-extant Masonic expose volumes) Debtors prisons were just at the beginning of their decline in the United States in the 1820s, and were still very much in vogue through most of the nation. Reformers of the same generation as those inspired by Morgan’s murder would make sure that states no longer imprisoned those like him. But as the weeks went on and Morgan remained obdurate, Masons in the community and abroad grew more and more agitated. Canadian Mason Daniel Johns infiltrated the Morgan and Miller circle and ‘aided all he could’ as their confederate before stealing the manuscript pages dealing with the Royal Arch from under Daniel Miller’s nose. Simultaneously, searches of the Morgan residence by the sheriff’s deputies (William R. Thompson, Genesee County sheriff and Mason, would like his counterpart Eli Bruce over in Niagara County give tacit cooperation to his lodge brothers in their efforts to bring Morgan down) on still more debt charges saw the seizure of several more volumes of manuscript on the 19th of August. (What would eventually see publication as Illustrations of Masonry were what Miller was able to personally preserve after Morgan’s kidnapping , largely the first degrees up through Master Masonry) This did not end the threat to the Masons of Batavia, however, who had been repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to bring Morgan to heel. As one Mason wrote, “I never saw men so excited in my life…Committees were appointed to do this and that, and everything went forward in a kind of frenzy.”

Ignorant though he may have been, Morgan's threat to reveal the secrets of Masonry was

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among the sharpest blow he could have aimed at the heart of economic power and bourgeois
clannishness in Genesee County. And there was power in Genesee County, the sort of tightly
controlled economic power that came to a place bypassed by the prosperity of its neighbors.
Batavia would become a relative backwater in upstate New York even as neighboring
communities exploded in size and economic strength: the road from Batavia to Buffalo,
famously rough and tumble with corduroy and mud, was dubbed “the worst road in the world”
by contemporaries. As for the rest of Genesee County, the Canal only brought prosperity to those
directly along its banks: those who lived in the southern part of the county were just as poor in
the 1830s as they had been a decade earlier. Contrary to the typical image of economically elite
Masons, in the Morgan era Masonic membership was no certain protection against poverty.
While membership costs and other financial necessities meant that the poorest of the poor were
generally not Masons, Masons in Le Roy and Batavia came from all walks of life, though their
leadership was primarily of the professional classes that allowed (in a largely barter economy)
for sufficient time and money to devote to a lodge. The richest man in Le Roy, Thomas Tufts,
was a Mason, but only a third of his lodge brothers were nearly as wealthy, while in Batavia
William Seaver, the master of the lodge that ensnared Morgan, had been jailed himself for debt
only two years earlier. While Masons were prominent among the town’s wealthiest middle class,
they by no means dominated it, and indeed (despite exploitative charges made by Anti-Masons)
the wealthiest economic leaders of the area, particularly the agents of the all-powerful Holland
Land Company, consciously avoided the fraternal orders. What the Masonic membership did
provide its members in abundance was access to political power: a third of the Masons of
Genesee County had commissions in the state militia, while Masons made up half the county’s
officeholders and a substantial majority of urban political leaders. The lodges allowed for
fraternal bonds among bourgeois elites that made it natural for Masons to be selected as
candidates by party machinery, giving Masons a nonpartisan domination of local officeholders
that was nonetheless intensely political. These networks, economic and political, mattered, and outlasted Masonry. With the decline of Freemasonry in upstate New York after Morgan’s death, Christian labor unions and the Odd Fellows moved in to take the place of the previously dominant secret society.49

So Morgan threatened not just the economic leaders of his community, but specifically the political ones: particularly the Masons like Eli Bruce and Henry Hopkins who would become so crucial in covering up the aftereffects of his disappearance. “Doubtful” brothers who had “climbed over the wall” were already a problem for Jacksonian-era Masons; the lack of a central governing body or rituals for American Masons in the period, and the easy availability of exposes, made it easy enough to impersonate a lodge brother and gain access to the benefits of Masonic membership. If Morgan’s threatened book, containing updated rituals more recently than the now decades-old *Jachin and Boaz* was published, it would offer false Masons access to the levers of power and influence that the lodges preferred to keep to themselves. But the threat posed by Morgan’s reveal, particularly those of the secrets of the Royal Arch Degree largely invented by American Masons after independence, was not merely an economic and political one: the rituals and practices of Royal Arch Masonry were no longer gateways to an Enlightenment world of elite power and male fraternal bonding, they were gateways to a world of mystic knowledge and hidden understanding that spoke to the very soul-self of the members of the lodge. It was an age of fraternal teaching and “grand lecturing”, an age of secrets which were not for the consumption of outsiders. Ritual had become all, and Masonry had consciously become a “private place.” This was a threat far greater than economically insecure elites in Genesee County, and helps explain some of the national support for Morgan’s alleged killers.

from their fellow Masons, as well as some of the backlash against it.\(^{50}\)

Traditional histories of the conflict between Masonry and evangelism have looked at this cultural clash as simply a competition over bodies and ritual, but this was a genuine conflict over sacralizations: most 19\(^{th}\) century American Masons were not deists and they did employ significant Christian symbolism in much of their theology, with even the most arcane rituals like the Knights Templar ‘wielding their swords for the Christian religion.’ But with its legalisms, its sacred rituals, and its ‘ardent votaries’, Masonry fulfilled not only the cultural but intellectual needs traditionally associated with Christianity, with the exception that, unlike a Christian church, their rituals were secretive and exclusive. This served the social need of reinforcing self-distinctiveness for members, giving them something to separate themselves from their neighbors. The problem was, it also meant that Masonic ritual could seem baffling to outsiders, particularly the higher levels like Royal Arch Masonry and Webb’s favorite Knights Templar ritual: anti-Masons noted with alarm Masonic rituals like drinking wine from a skull, being paraded around on a tow-line, deeply embarrassing Masons for whom these had once been sacred arts: no wonder they were so quick to call Morgan both a perjurer and a liar. Morgan’s threatened publication didn’t merely threaten Masons with exposure of their institution or infiltration of their business club: it threatened to embarrass them personally. The Knights Templar degree was enthusiastically practiced in Morgan’s New York and his own Batavia and Le Roy lodges both made use of it: had Morgan’s work been published, he would have exposed men like sheriff Eli Bruce (one of his accused kidnappers) and Dr. Samuel S. Butler (jury foreman of one of the several kidnapping trials) to personal shame and embarrassment. Morgan's partnership with Miller pitted him against some of the most powerful men in the community, threatening their

\(^{50}\)Bullock, 244-245, 257-260
pocketbooks, their lay religion, and their dignity. It would have dire consequences for them all.51

On September 10, 1826, there was an attempt to burn down Miller's printing office. An attempt to force the door two days earlier, organized by local Mason James Ganson, had been repelled by armed resistance from inside. On the night of the tenth, “having found an ally in fire, which fears neither powder nor ball,” an attempt was made (making use of the turpentine which was then a common building ingredient, especially in growing towns like Batavia) to destroy office and documents both. This was a serious threat in a town like this, one that could potentially have killed a dozen people had it not been exposed. Robert Morris found this very funny, joking about the 'amusing affair' that had supposedly been invented by Miller and his confederates to attract sympathy, even claiming local Masons had sought the attempted arsonist afterwards. This is one of Morris' weaker moments. By March of 1827, Batavia Masons were already under siege, with accusations of murder flying freely in the community and with trials ongoing. They had every reason to present themselves as an innocent party to the community at large. There were no more attempted arsons.52

On the morning of the fire at Miller's office, Nicholas G. Chesebro, master of the lodge in Canandaigua, had Morgan arrested on a charge of petty larceny. Though the constable who arrested Morgan was not a Mason, he was accompanied by five of the Masons of Canandaigua for the arrest itself. Morgan was accused of stealing a shirt and cravat from one of the many innkeepers he had boarded with over the last several months (Kingsley would later swear he had had no intention of swearing out a warrant for Morgan until prompted by the lodge.). This is one of those frustrating moments for contemporary historians; though the fifty miles stage ride through upstate New York from Batavia to Canandaigua took all day on the 10th and was the

51Bullock, 275-277; Greene, 17-20 Proceedings, 64, Greene, 103-105
52Anti-Masonic Review, February 1828, 56 Bernard, 124; Review, February 1828, 57; Morris, 113-115, Bernard, xxx-xxi, 368
first step to Morgan’s death, neither Masonic nor anti-Masonic historians speak in much detail of the conversations within. We know Morgan's partner, David Miller, attempted to 'bail him out' from the arrest: having paid the bail on Morgan's civil debts in Genesee County, he faced a serious financial problem if Morgan was jailed elsewhere. Only Robert Morris, the great Masonic writer of the late 19th century, delves significantly into the infamous carriage ride, telling a story of a cheerful country jaunt as Morgan was 'rescued' from his partner Miller. Morris was the arch-apologist for 19th century Masonry, a Kentuckian whose information all came from defendants in the Morgan case who told their stories sometimes decades later. With his account coming just a few pages after a gloating physical account of Morgan that describes his “full feminine breasts” and “greying hair about the ears”, it's not difficult to tell which side of the story Morris is on. But perhaps there is some truth to this account. One can hear echoes of Michael Schwerner's desperate attempts to reassure his captors in the Morgan who laughed and joked with the men who would eventually murder him. With no unbiased sources, and nearly two centuries between us, historians cannot say for sure.53

Morgan's imprisonment in Canandaigua was short-lived. He appeared before the magistrate after dark, Kingsley and his fellow Mason Loton Lawson testified on his behalf, and was released. But it wasn't that easy. Chesebro, standing by, immediately applied to the magistrate for another civil arrest. Morgan owed yet another debt he couldn't pay; this time two dollars to Aaron Ackley, an innkeeper in Canandaigua. Having separated himself from Miller and his allies, Morgan had no defense and was reimprisoned in the Canandaigua jail in the morning of September 11, 1826. Lucinda Morgan, more resourceful than most accounts of the day give her credit for, tried to meet him in jail. She had consulted with the Batavia sheriff,

gotten his speculation that perhaps the civil prosecution against Morgan might end if she handed over the papers he had written, and traveled to the city to free her husband. He was already gone by the time she arrived, taken away by person or persons unknown. Here the historical accounts of the Morgan affair, already riven by political and personal strife, become even more murky as issues of outright criminality into it.\textsuperscript{54}

The evidence strongly suggests that William Morgan died in mid-September of 1826 while in the custody of his erstwhile lodge brothers in Fort Niagara. How that death came to be is, however, a rather more difficult subject. The trial judge of the initial four accused of his kidnapping certainly thought they'd had something to do with Morgan's death. Though Enos Throop would eventually become a bitter political enemy of the Anti-Masonic Party, then Judge Throop enthusiastically backed the anti-Masonic movement of upstate New York. “You have been convicted of a daring, wicked, and presumptuous crime...you have robbed the state of a citizen; a citizen of his liberty; a wife of her husband; and a family of helpless children of the endearments and protective care of a loving parent.” Kidnapping was not then a felony in New York (or indeed anywhere else in the United States), and in fact (as was noted at the time) it was a greater offense to help a slave escape in parts of the South than kidnap a white man in the North. Loton Lawson, otherwise a minor figure in local Masonry, earned Throop's greatest wrath for having actually paid Morgan's bail and helped hustle him into the carriage outside the county jail. Nicholas Chesebro, master of the Canandaigua lodge and an elected official in Ontario County, earned a year in jail to Lawson's two, while Edward Sawyer and John Sheldon received one month and three months each in the county jail. Eli Bruce, the county sheriff, would eventually join them in jail for his role in preparing Morgan's cell in Fort Niagara and speeding his way out of prison, as well as strong allegations that Bruce later packed the juries of the

\textsuperscript{54}Miller, 31, Crafts, 202 Greene, 85-87
previous defendants. Despite multiple trials carried out by some of the leading attorneys of the state, including John Spencer, who had begun as the defender of the first accused, only a handful of people received light sentences for the crime. Given the evidence of jury tampering, the light sentences, and the repeatedly blocked investigations, it was reasonable for contemporary anti-Masons to see something deeply amiss with the Masonic narrative of Morgan’s vanishing.55

Anti-Masons have an account plausible to them, as recounted in the pages of Thurlow Weed's autobiography. Morgan was taken from the jail by Masons who paid his debt and briefly imprisoned him in Fort Niagara, an abandoned 1812-era military installation in the Genesee County area. The plan was to pay Morgan off and send him out of the country (with his family to follow), the better to both discredit and silence him and keep his damaging material out of the press. But the plan failed; Canadian Masons would not cooperate into letting Morgan onto their turf. A gathering at the lodge in nearby Lewiston in the aftermath saw a group of men with deep personal grudges against Morgan but no mitigating knowledge of the man gather together to hear a priest call for the enemies of Masonry to find “graves six feet deep”. And so instead they murdered Morgan, wrapping a rope around his body and hurling him into the Niagara River. This account seems to offer the most plausible story of Morgan's murder – not the product of a sinister conspiracy or an artifice of his escape to Canada, but a product of the natural clash of frustrations and fears along the 19th century frontier. Morgan would not be the only figure of his era to meet his end in such a way, his death seeming to presage that of other social pariahs like Elijah Lovejoy. Robert Morris certainly didn't think this was how Morgan met his fate, however, telling a story about Whitney threatening Weed that he would “wring your d----d nose off” if he kept accusing him of involvement in the murder. Morris' primary criticism of Weed's text, that he gets the date of Whitney's death wrong, does not actually appear in the pages of Weed's decades-later

retrospective. Weed's story has the added benefit of being free of the 19th century histrionics of Edward Giddens' account of Morgan's last days. Giddens, the keeper of the fort of Niagara, was an astronomer and writer, publisher of years worth of "Anti-Masonic Almanacs" in the years after Morgan's death. (Giddens' occasional coded reference to his anti-Masonic activities in his scientific texts of the period must have been clear to contemporary readers: “From 1815 to 1827, I resided in the immediate adjacency of Lake Ontario. His account of Morgan's death seems written particularly for the eyes of his evangelical anti-Masonic subscribers: his Morgan is a pathetic captive in the fort, a martyr who dies full of manly resistance, albeit begging for a Bible in the beginning. It doesn't read like the Batavia Morgan, like the man who likely invented his own military service or who may well have had a serious problem with the bottle, but it must have greatly satisfied Giddens' readers. Even so, all that Masonic apologists could say of Giddens was that he was an atheist who was a confessed kidnapper, and thus his word was unreliable. Giddens was absent from the fort during Morgan's actual murder.\footnote{Weed, 10-13, Proceedings, 7-8 Morris, 162, 200-201, Edward Giddins, \textit{An Inquiry Into the Causes of the Rise and Fall of the Lakes}, (Lockport, Coutier, 1838), 3 Edward Giddins, \textit{An Account of the Savage Treatment of Captain William Morgan, in Fort Niagara: Who was Subsequently Murdered by the Masons, and Sunk in Lake Ontario, for Publishing the Secrets of Masonry}, (Lockport, Anti-Masonic Bookstore, 1830), 1-24, Morris, 200-201}

Giddens' story, taken together with the accounts of others, reinforces my belief that Morgan's murder was almost certainly improvised. Abandoning Morgan to fix the nearby lighthouse reflects very poorly on Giddens, but if the actual killing was not planned until after Giddens' departure (thanks to the failure of Canada's Masons to support the efforts of their peers), it makes far more sense. The Morgan of Batavia might well have taken a $500 bribe (and safe passage for himself and his family) to leave the area, particularly after his falling-out with Miller over payment for the book. But with safe passage into Canada failed, with bad feelings against Morgan growing among Lewiston and Batavia Masons, it was so much easier to simply end the problem by throwing him into the Niagara River. Swept downstream and into the falls,
Morgan's remains were never seen again. Between the falls downriver and the weight allegedly placed on his body, it's not hard to figure out why his remains were never found. People go missing today on the Niagara River, as recently as the 1990s in some cases. Given the relatively lower population along the Niagara River in the 1820s, Morgan's body could easily have disappeared into the river below.\footnote{Michael Neill, “Tennessee Outdoorsman Jessie Sharp Challenged Niagara's Mighty Falls in a Tiny Canoe—and Lost People,” \textit{People Magazine}, June 25, 1990 http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20118065,00.html}

But such a story served the agenda of no one. Anti-Masons gained little from a Morgan who was as eager for money as he was for exposure of Masonic secrets, one who may have died over a falling-out with his putative captors rather than being martyred by them for his Christian faith. Morgan became the “martyred patriot, dragged from his home by Masonic ruffians,” the “unyielding Morgan” a “martyr to the immodest queen: MASONRY” Morgan's death made him, to anti-Masons, a far greater hero than he had ever been to anyone in his life. Even today, Morgan's story remains widely told by the now fringe anti-Masonic movement in the United States, a story of Christian martyrdom as attractive as any tale of Satanism in rock music or appearances of the Virgin Mary in morning toast. As for Masons, the story of Morgan's death, and the accompanying coverup by county officials like Eli Bruce, was hardly the tale of “bonds of brotherhood” and “loving hearts and liberal minds” that Masons preferred to tell about themselves in the 19th century. It is almost certainly true that the Masonic conspiracy in western New York stopped on the frontier; local Masons reacted against an enemy while their more distant lodge brothers reacted against what they perceived as a witch-hunt against their co-fraternalists. Despite rumors floating around DeWitt Clinton and others in the New York state government, it seems very unlikely that the conspiracy went beyond the circle around those who
were finally convicted of Morgan's kidnapping.58

But having invested in the innocence of their fellow Masons, post-Morgan Masons involved in the debate over his murder could hardly name names. Certainly the story of Masons in Batavia jailing, kidnapping, then 'disappearing' Morgan is a grim one even without the verified discovery of a body, reading like the fate of civil rights workers in the South in the 1960s or that of any other individual facing mortal threat from enemies that had the law on their side. Indeed, Eli Bruce, the sheriff accused of assisting in Morgan's legal kidnapping and of stacking the various kidnapping juries afterwards, became something of a martyr for 19th century Masons. As an alternative to this story, 19th century Masons concocted a series of elaborate stories about Morgan's disappearance: that he had fled to Cuba, to Turkey, become a pirate or an Indian, tales that removed moral responsibility from Masons for his fate and highlighted the character flaws that Masonic historians so readily attributed to the man.59

Stories about Morgan's international defection were already circulating on a national basis by April of 1828, when the Niles National Register suggested that Morgan might have "turned Turk, and was lately at Smyrna. The Smyrna story became a favorite of Masonic historians for the remainder of the 19th century, who told self-congratulatory stories of Morgan "living under the name Mustapha," becoming "a Mohammedan," and generally abandoning all pretense of the Christian civilization which Americans of the time believed. With its association with the "rapes of Georgian and Circassian maids to supply the Turkish harems," and recent cultural memories of the war with the Barbary pirates, few nations were viewed as more barbaric and treacherous by 19th century Americans. To say Morgan had 'turned Turk' was to say he, and

58James Parton, The Life of Horace Greeley, (Boston, Houghton, 1889), 101; Anti-Masonic Review, May 1828, 142
Register, April 25, 1829, 143.

59Robert Morris, The Masonic Martyr, (Kentucky, New Library, 1861), 15
by extension all anti-Masons, had abandoned Western civilization entirely. The Smyrna story appears to be among the favorite charges made by Masons about Morgan's fate. Others associated Morgan with a more domestic fate, suggesting that he had become a hermit in Canada, a “celebrated Indian chief” in Arizona, or even (and perhaps most dramatically) become the pirate “Guillem Gilmore” and been hung by the Spanish in 1838. Hopes for a tropical fate for Morgan continued into the 20th century. In the 1950s, Morgan Smead, master of the Grand Lodge of Michigan, corresponded with an “I. Dwight Hunter” who claimed to be the husband of Morgan's great-granddaughter, charging that Morgan had “left Batavia and crossed into Canada,” only to be shipwrecked in the Cayman islands in the 1820s. Morgan supposedly lived out his days in exile in the Caribbean, eventually召唤ing his new Cayman family to join him at the place of his eventual death in Honduras. All these stories painted Morgan as a failure at civilized life, a man who had abandoned what it was to be a good American of the 19th century and embraced piracy, alcohol, Indians, and other social mores seen as deeply alien to contemporary Americans. By contrast, this made Masonry (Morgan's opposite) a keystone of contemporary civilization. But not all Masonic historians were so eager to tell themselves exciting stories about Morgan's fate.60

Lucinda Morgan, as far as can be determined, believed her husband’s body had been found along the shores of Lake Ontario for the rest of her life. She certainly lived as though her husband was dead, staying in Batavia as the “Niobe of Anti-Masonry” for several years, living on donations from anti-Masons, before marrying George Harris, her landlord, in 1830. Her subsequent life was as much a subject for biographers as her husband’s was not; she became a wife of Joseph Smith and a convert to Mormonism (a faith with close regional and cultural ties to the anti-Masonic movement), survived the pogrom at Nauvoo, converted to Catholicism, became

60 National Freemason, September 14, 1867, 173; Huntington, 166, Bryant, 62. Morris, Morgan, 66 Niles Daily Register, April 26, 1828, Morris, Morgan, 65-66 “Investigating”, Smith in Bryant, 21
a lay nun and nurse during the Civil War, and ended her life in the intellectual circle of the arch-
anti-Mason of the 1870s, Jonathan Blanchard. For the purposes of this work, what matters is that
Lucinda stayed in Batavia and remarried. She didn’t go west, she never slipped away to the
Cayman Islands – she acted at all times as a woman who genuinely believed her husband to be
dead, and in particular that it was his body that had been found along the Ontario.61

Robert Morris, of all people, did his best to defuse (or at least be seen to be defusing) the
dramatic rumors over Morgan's fate. It is entirely true, as Morris points out, that Morgan was in
his late fifties, in poor health, probably an alcoholic, and otherwise unsuited for extended travel.
We can accept these characterizations of Morgan without assuming as Morris did that he was “a
drunken habit, a filthy tongue, a pimply face, [with] an insatiable greed for money.” Given
Morgan's age, his health, his lack of connections elsewhere in the world, it is impossible to
imagine the melodramatic life and death in exile that so many Masonic historians enjoyed
debating in the 19th and 20th centuries. Morris' use of Morgan's story is careful, he uses the tales
of Morgan's elaborate exile as a way of further associating Morgan with lies. He tells the stories
quoted above (and many others) alongside accounts of Morgan's “rottenwood of history,” a liar
and traitor whose name was rightfully “besmeared” from the record of the Batavia lodge. With
his laments about gathering material for his book for forty years and his complaints about having
to “enter into arguments with those who ridicule Masonry,” [emphasis in the original], not to
mention his complaints about the attacks on Masonry by Blanchard and others, it's not difficult to
read Morris' understanding of history. Dramatic stories about Morgan's escape from the Masons
and a barbaric fate abroad hadn't silenced critics of Masonry; all they had done was keep the

61 Morris, Morgan, 277, Michael Keene, “Lucinda Morgan Harris, Mormonism and the plural wives of Joseph
and-the-plural-wives-of-joseph-smith; Samuel Greene to Jonathan Blanchard, June 3, 1872, Wheaton Special
Collections, Jonathan Blanchard Papers
evocative story of treason and disappearance alive for another generation.62

As much as accusations about conspiracy and trial helped fan the flames of the anti-Masonic movement in the Jacksonian period and afterwards, the story of William Morgan's disappearance was ultimately about the life and death of the man himself. Though Chesebro, Bruce, and others became alternatively martyrs or villains in the tales told by those particularly invested in the controversy, the 'story' was always far more about Morgan's fate than who it was precisely who took his life. Some of this can be dismissed as an effect of libel suits, as when Edward Giddens carefully screened out the names of those he accused in the first edition of his Anti-Masonic Almanac, the one published while the trial was still ongoing. But the emphasis on the martyr not the martyred suggests that the contemporary reaction was larger than looking for justice for one particular murder, that the story of the reaction to Morgan's murder was more about what it seemed to represent for American society than justice for one particular killing.63

Masons frequently castigated anti-Masons for seizing on one particular murder when there were so many on the American frontier, and it is true that equally grim murders took place across the nation in the 1820s. Masons called attention to false reports of Masonic murders spread by anti-Masons, and it is certainly true that, as with any mass movement driven by popular sentiment, lies soon competed with the truth in the story of Masonry and murder in 19th century America. But Morgan's murder, particularly the story of his murder and the subsequent coverup, remained paramount in the minds of anti-Masons, just as by defensive reflex it did in the minds of Masons. For Anti-Masons, Morgan was a paragon of Christian virtue: a “martyred patriot”, an ally of Jackson, a man of ‘industry’ whose desire to expose the secrets of Masonry had ended with his “bones bleaching beneath the cataract [of Niagara].” A party of patriotic

62 Morris, Morgan, 4-5, 68.

63 Giddens, Savage Treatment, 4, 1832 ed
American Christians, many of whom believed Jacksonian America to be (or in the process of becoming) a 'Christian Republic,' Anti-Masons made their martyred hero into a paragon of anti-Masonic virtues. These were potent attacks in an era of mixed patriotism and Christianity in America, the confluence of America's 50th Jubilee in 1826 and the ongoing Great Awakening having created a population that was often both self-consciously American and self-consciously Christian. By contrast, Masons were never able to go off the defensive when it came to Morgan and his book. For Masons after his death (presumably, despite the reputation of the lodge at Batavia, he was not such an ogre among his fellows before his expulsion), he was the perverse mirror-image of 19th century bourgeois respectability: a drunk and abuser of his partner whose marriage had begun with “[the abduction of] this motherless girl at the age of fifteen”, perhaps a pirate or criminal, “intemperate to a very immoderate degree,” and “possessed of but few moral principles or attributes perhaps of honor and integrity.” Masons and Anti-Masons could not even agree on what their subject of their fascination looked like; in that age before daguerreotypes, Masons turned to rough and ready images like the Noel Holmes penned cover art for the 1883 Morris book *William Morgan, or Political Antimasonry* which show the rough-hewn, working-class Morgan that Masons were so eager to see, while Anti-Masons (like Jonathan Blanchard) could look at professorial, intellectual images of Morgan like the Franklin-esque depiction of the man done by Cooley for Bernard (Blanchard used it as the mold for the Morgan statue in Batavia in 1882) that showed him as just the sort of enlightened intellectual he almost certainly was not in life.\(^6^4\).

Painted as a heroic Christian martyr by anti-Masons and as a drunken coward by Masons, Morgan's story became one of the deep cultural narratives of 19th century America, the nameless Masonic elite that killed him far more useful to anti-Masonic narratives than the small-town

businessmen who panicked against threats of personal embarrassment. The story itself, analyzed by a historian, certainly is a grim one: in an era of powerful local elites far away from a neutral state power, Morgan offended some of the most powerful people in his community and ultimately paid a steep price for it. Anti-Masons did have much to fear about the power of Masonry in their local communities. By looking at the stories told by Morgan's friends, historians can get a better understanding of the ideal of Christian manhood for evangelicals like the anti-Masons in the 19th century; by looking at those told by his enemies, we can see the worst enemies of 19th century American civilization when Morgan is painted with their very brush. Morgan's martyrdom, or villainy, became an exciting story told both by Masons and anti-Masons in the 19th and 20th centuries. Only the older generation was still concerned by its implications. By the late 19th century, only older Masons like Robert Morris and older anti-Masons like Jonathan Blanchard were still actively grappling with Morgan's murder as a problem to be either shared with the world or solved through rhetoric. Important as Morgan's murder had been to the political history of the 1820s, within a few decades, it was just another footnote to history, relevant beyond its potential as a story only to those old enough to remember it.
Chapter Three

“Freemasonry is the Source of These Crimes and Dangers”: A Political History of Jacksonian Anti-Masonry

Traditional histories of the anti-Masonic movement focus exclusively on the history of the Anti-Masonic Party. (The capitalization is important) While this work is focused on the history of the movement, I would be remiss not to discuss the history of the party as well. There were 22 Anti-Masonic Representatives in Congress in the 23rd, the group elected in association with the first Anti-Masonic Presidential candidate – William Wirt of Maryland. (Presidential and Congressional elections were not yet held on the same day in 1832, and would not be for some years to come), a group that would eventually dwindle until the election of the last Anti-Masonic Congressman in 1838. (Phineas Tracy, the first Anti-Masonic Congressman, had been elected in 1826 from upstate New York). This did not end the career of those officials, many of whom opted to join the thriving new Whig Party in the late 1830s, but by the end of the decade Anti-Masonry as a political force was largely spent. Anti-Masons would appear again and again as the leading radical edge of first the Whigs and then the Republicans (the death of Thaddeus Stevens in 1865 standing in as a plausible endcap to that story), but the idea of elected anti-Masonic officials was largely dead in the water within a decade and a half of the death of William Morgan. This is often told in the historiography as a story of the inevitable fate of third parties: anti-Masons chose to affiliate themselves with Whigs and so were swallowed up by the major party they had become part of. And that certainly did happen: state parties like the weak Ohio Anti-Masonic movement quickly assimilated themselves into the region’s successful National Republican movement, while elsewhere in Pennsylvania radicals like Thaddeus Stevens
accurately predicted the loss of anti-Masonic principles in the event of a merger with the Nationals that ultimately became the Whigs.  

Radical anti-Masons like Jonathan Blanchard would later declare that “Morgan Anti-Masonry” had failed because of its political compromises, and would personally pledge to avoid entanglement with national politics in order to continue their revived agenda. The other cause I want to engage with, however, is that of victory. I argue that anti-Masonry gradually shut down in the late 1830s because anti-Masons had largely achieved their goals, or at least the mainstream goals of a majority of their members: Masonic lodges across the country had shut down, with even some state grand lodges beginning to fail, and there had been no further atrocities to rival the murder of Morgan. This is the same phenomenon that saw groups like the First and Second Klans shut down after the Civil and First World Wars, or (to use a less inflammatory example), many of the suffrage organizations in the United States after the passage of the 19th Amendment. With the culture war won, there was no need to stay in harness. While radicals like Thaddeus Stevens might protest that “the spirit of antimasonry will never be appeased until freemasonry has ceased to exist”, the mainstream of the party had accomplished its goal of limiting the secret power of Masonry. Anti-Masonry became part of the Whig coalition because it had accomplished all it could as an independent party. Anti-Masons had said for years that their enemy was Masonry, not individual Masons, and sure enough by the late 1830s with Masonic lodges closing and the Jacksonian coalition growing ever-more-shaky, merging with the new Whig coalition seemed like sound political advice. (And indeed maybe it was: the only Whig Presidential victories (in 1840 and 1848) were driven by economic problems, unpopular Democratic candidates, and war hero Whigs. A weaker Whig Party, with no Anti-Masonic fusion, might have

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failed entirely and left the government entirely in the hands of Jacksonian Democrats for a generation.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite traditional portrayals by historians, anti-Masons had political aspirations beyond crackdowns on Masonry, albeit those were traditionally obscured at the national level by an Anti-Masonic Party that sought to paper over internal divisions and present itself as a national movement. Masonic historians have charged that anti-Masons believed in nothing, that they were the product of a “fever…a phrenzy…stimulated by selfish purposes.” The platformless nomination of national candidates like Wirt and Ellmaker does not help the historian looking for more specific policy choices preferred by anti-Masons. Certainly the coalition that could include Calhoun, Adams, McLean, and Wirt must have been broad indeed. And it is true that the party sought to avoid splitting in order to maintain unity in the fight against Masonry. The political dimensions of the fight against Masonry is the work of another section, what I want to do here is grapple with how anti-Masons dealt with the particular political issues of the 1830s. Like most New Englanders, Anti-Masons were universally opposed to the “madness of nullification”, with Calhoun’s relationship with South Carolina Nullifiers enough to end his hopes of being nominated for the Presidency as an anti-Mason. Anti-Masons saw nullification as the same kind of threat to American republican democracy as Masonry, recognizing it as a tool for elites to get around the consensus of the national society in which they lived. “…while we are firmly opposed to the manner in which General Jackson has administered the general government…[we approve of] his firmness in resisting the nullification of the South,” said a Massachusetts Anti-Masonic Convention in 1834, words echoed again and again by their fellow Anti-Masons across the

\textsuperscript{66}Thaddeus Stevens in \textit{...debates of the Convention of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to propose amendments to the constitution, commenced ... at Harrisburg, on the second day of May, 1837}, (Harrisburg, Parker, 1838), 272, \textit{Proceedings}, 215.
North. (The Republican Anti-Masons had refused to join the Whig coalition, charging that they were too sympathetic to the nullificationists.) 67

But perhaps it is not too surprising that such a Northern-aligned party would come out in favor of vigorously opposing Nullification. The Anti-Masons elsewhere were closely allied with the general National Republican/Whig economic agenda, supporting the internal improvements and American system style strong national government favored by the anti-Jacksonians. Indeed, at least one respectable historian of anti-Masonry has suggested that there were no serious economic differences between the anti-Masons and their erstwhile anti-Jacksonian allies, the National Republicans. And I think that’s true. As McCarthy explained, the differences between anti-Masons and National Republicans were primarily social rather than political. But it’s looking at those social differences and how the social became the political for the first time in American history that we can get a better idea of what Anti-Masonry really was about. 68

William Wirt's Presidential nomination was not an obvious choice before the 1831 Baltimore convention. Wirt was not a national leader of contemporary politics by any means – he was a leader of far less caliber than Andrew Jackson or Henry Clay when the Anti-Masons nominated him in 1832. Wirt was after all a National Republican who resented Andrew Jackson’s assertion of executive authority at the expense of traditional American political norms, one who had advocated the election of Henry Clay in previous years. Though obscure today, perhaps most famous for being the victim of one of the most high-profile grave-robbing cases of the 20th century, Wirt was one of the most famous men in America in 1832. The Virginia-born, Maryland-residing Wirt was, at least on the surface, an odd nominee for a party that was dominated by New Yorkers and New Englanders. Though he had held no elective office since a stint in the Virginia

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67 American Masonic Record, January 1, 1831, 385. Frederic Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, (NY, Bancroft, 1928), 109-113. Antimasonic Republican Convention, for Massachusetts...1834, (Boston, Kimball, 1834), 34. Weed, 422-423
House of Delegates in the early Madison administration, Wirt’s Virginia political and personal connections had helped make him the longest-serving Attorney General of the United States and one of the most influential lawyers in the United States in his lifetime.69

And indeed, Wirt was a former Mason, albeit having kept his membership confined to a few short meetings and having left the order some years earlier upon the death of his wife. Wirt’s membership in Masonry had been Washingtonian in a very real sense, an embrace of an 18th century vision of good fellowship (Wirt was so famously friendly that he has been the subject of several historical works on the social life of his contemporaries) that had little to do with the ritualized Masonry of the 1820s. When Wirt said, “[Contemporary Masonry] was not, and could not be, Masonry as understood by Washington,” he wasn’t using political cant (as a historian himself, Wirt was aware Washington really had been a Mason) but accurately describing the changes in American Masonic culture between Washington’s era and his own. Wirt’s nomination is sometimes written as proof of the lack of anti-Masonic principles, that they were willing to nominate a former Mason despite their anti-Masonic politics. Additionally, at least one Masonic historian has castigated the anti-Masons for running a ticket at all: “instead of wasting their votes upon Wirt, who stood no chance of being elected, [they] indirectly promote the Democratic cause.” The latter is of course a frequent charge leveled against ‘third parties’ like Anti-Masonry; one might as well ask why the National Republicans nominated the enthusiastic Mason Henry Clay (who refused to take any meaningful steps to combine with the opposition) instead of someone more appealing to anti-Masonic voters like the piously Methodist John McLean or even Wirt himself. As for whether or not Wirt could win, 1832 was only eight years after the deadlock of 1824 and only thirty years after 1800: party politics was still new enough that even third-party

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candidates and their supporters could reasonably hope for victory in, if not that election, than at least later ones. Wirt was probably the Anti-Mason with the most national name recognition not associated with an unpopular Presidency (Adams), Federalism (Webster), or the regional politics of New England and New York state. Wirt’s nomination was that of a party that expected to be a national threat in later years.70

But, of course, that didn’t happen. One reason for this was the deep sectional roots of anti-Masonry. Evidence of the alliance between anti-Masons and abolitionism, both political and social, can be found in the number of times the enemies of anti-Masons accused them of being soft on the race question. An 1838 Pennsylvania pamphlet declared that anti-Masons “would reduce a Masonic parent below the level of a Negro,” and that Thaddeus Stevens “would give to the rude embraces of the negroes, the delicate and fragile forms of our fair sisters and daughters.” In Ohio, Governor Robert Lucas declared that he could not support the Northwestern Whig ticket of William Henry Harrison and Francis Granger in 1836 because Harrison was an “imbecilic old man” and because of Granger’s “anti-masonic and abolition principles.” And this was not a charge anti-Masons, as far as I can tell, ever took steps to deny. After all, they almost certainly would have been false denials. Leading abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison did vote anti-Masonic and leading anti-Masons, as has been mentioned before, did become leading Republicans. This leads back to what Treyfousse called the ‘egalitarianism’ of people like Thaddeus Stevens: anti-Masonry was a movement directly concerned with secret aristocracy: this made them natural enemies of American slavery.71


71Thaddeus Stevens, Political Anti-Masonry, Abolition, and Amalgamation. (Philadelphia, sn, 1838), Niles Weekly Register, October 15, 1836. McCarthy, 544
The success of anti-Masonry in Rhode Island in the 1830s, which saw an anti-Masonic/Democratic coalition (something of a rarity) take over the state legislature after passing a law that struck down 'extra-judicial oaths' is a particularly interesting moment in the political history of anti-Masonry. This was pre-Dorr Rhode Island in an era where government was tightly in the hands of a cabal of an isolated few landowners – the population had ample reason to be deeply suspicious of the rich and powerful, just as politicians had ample reason to endorse that party of reform rather than the one that asked so many awkward questions about the state constitution and voting rights. In Massachusetts a similar bill made it onto the floor of the state legislature in 1834, but was quashed by pressure from Masons in the legislature. As discussed above, the anti-Masonic state legislature in Vermont was far more focused on other things than the accomplishment of what was putatively the political goal of anti-Masonry. This has been used as evidence that some political anti-Masons were using the part for their own advantage. Some anti-Masons who lamented the politicized corruption of anti-Masonry certainly thought so, and the evidence does seem to bear them out. But on the other hand, given the ultimately evanescent nature of the Anti-Masonic Party (as opposed to the movement) perhaps this is not so strange. But anti-oath laws required heavy anti-Masonic majorities, not something particularly common even in friendly state legislatures, and generally faced stiff resistance (as discussed above in the Massachusetts example). There were other, more productive ways for anti-Masonic legislators to spend their time that equally engaged with the anti-elite, anti-Southern evangelical project of Masonry.72

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So what had led William Wirt here? He was an old-fashioned man, a throwback in many ways to the politics of the early republic, but nonetheless had solidly placed himself in the same tent as the anti-Masons even before his nomination. He had joined the ‘culture war’ over the Cherokee in Georgia on the side of Native Americans and had, at the urging of his allies in the US Senate, represented them all the way to the Supreme Court. This was a cause closely associated with anti-Jacksonianism, and one with strong ties to anti-Masons. Similarly, Wirt’s conversion to evangelical Christianity upon the death of his wife Elizabeth helped put him further in the same cultural space as the anti-Masons despite his Southern roots and Democratic ties. Even so, there was some resentment at Wirt’s nomination, one delegate writing “Have you not placed us in the most awkward predicament that ever men were placed? The Anti-masonic party is supporting an avowed Mason for the Presidency!”

As the above shows, the anti-Masonic movement had some significant issues with cultural tolerance in the context of the 19th century. They were early 19th century American evangelicals; their cultural boundaries were not like 21st century Americans. The Sun Anti-Masonic Almanac, one of the most widely read such publications in the Jacksonian United States, sneered that Masonry had been “introduced into America by a Jew from France in 1768,” making charges that were both false and among the first uses of anti-Semitism on the national stage in the Jacksonian United States. Anti-Semitism was a theme some anti-Masons returned to again and again: “…it was introduced among us by Jews, and first sheltered in this free country by Jews; fit instruments of the anti-Christian sentiments of Voltaire.” The egalitarianism of Masonry was a constant theme brought against them by anti-Masons. “a mixture of Paganism

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and Mohammedism…many professed Christians, many Baptists, Jews, and even Gentiles are found in its community.” The Christian republic to which many anti-Masons aspired was not one that included Jews and “Mohammedans”, both religions being deeply associated with foreignness in a country still primarily settled by white English-speaking Protestants. McCarthy, and others, have argued that the anti-Christian critique (specifically that anti-Masons were seeking a merger of church and state) was perhaps the most lastingly successful criticism of American anti-Masonry. And it is certainly true that a strong undercurrent of evangelicalism did underlie much of 19th century anti-Masonry, but it should not be taken from there to assume that political anti-Masonry was necessarily a Christian or nativist movement. It is difficult to imagine Thaddeus Stevens or William Seward, much less a Garrison, as champions of such a party.\footnote{Sun Anti-Masonic Almanac, 1831, 3. Anti-Masonic Review, June 1828, 182-183. Pennsylvania Telegraph, September 21, 1831, n.p. McCarthy, 541. Albany Argus, June 10, 1831, n.p.}

But the problem was there, even at the level of national politics. The Philadelphia convention condemned the embrace of “Jew and Christian, Mahomedan and infidel,” and sneered at Moses Michael Hayes, ever-listing him as “a Jew” in their histories. Catholics, another ‘foreign’ faith, particularly in the context of the 1830s, fared no better, with the “Jesuits” appearing either as a current ally of the Masons or as a predecessor in their schemes depending on the writer in question. Anti-Masons adapted their anti-Catholicism for the context of postwar America, with Blanchard and his allies reveling in moments of cultural conflict between their two great enemies, Catholicism and Masonry. The Christian republic of the anti-Masons was a broad one that reached across class, racial, and even gender lines, but it had its limits. However, anti-Masons raised no objection to inviting Charles Carroll to bless their 1831 national convention despite Carroll's Catholicism. (Carroll, a wise old politician, took this as an occasion to be absent from his home, just as he did when Democrats sought a similar concession from him for their convention later in the year) Carroll's blessing would have added another connection to
the founding of the United States for the Anti-Masonic party, a cause which they were anxious to promote given the frequent connections Masons made between patriotism, particularly late 18th century patriotism, and Masonry. (Democrats also attempted to secure Carroll's blessing for their convention – Carroll's cachet as the last surviving Founder giving him much coveted weight in the last years of his long life) Anti-Masonic objections to Catholicism seem to have revolved around the typical 19th century conflation of Catholicism with foreignness.\textsuperscript{75}

A closer examination of the two great national anti-Masonic conventions, the first in Philadelphia in 1830 and the second in Baltimore in 1831, seems prudent here. There were sixty-seven delegates to the 1830 national anti-Masonic convention in Philadelphia. There was Martin Flint, the first Mason in Vermont to renounce Masonry after Morgan, accompanied by Calvin Blodgett the horse farmer and Lebbeus Edgerton, the Plattsburgh veteran who became lieutenant governor of that state. From the much-larger Massachusetts delegation, Dr. Abner Phelps of Belchertown had championed the new railways in the region and even after Morgan's murder had corresponded with DeWitt Clinton about the construction of a Boston to Albany railway to match the new Erie Canal. His colleague Henry Gassett would go on to be one of the last active anti-Masons of the 1850s, while horticulturalist Benjamin V. French would be a champion of the new American breeds of apple for the rest of his life. A young Thurlow Weed was one of the representatives from the surprisingly small New York delegation, while Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and surprisingly Alabama made up the other large delegations. They were a diverse group of doctors and lawyers, farmers and editors, with about all they had in common being section. Only Alabama and Ohio sent delegations from west of the Alleghenies. The first, as will be discussed below, was associated with a local outbreak of disadvantaged Methodists. The bulk of Ohio's anti-Masons were associated with Ravenna in Portage County, led by Yale man and

leading attorney Jonathan Sloane. Frederick Wadsworth, his neighbor, was a War of 1812 veteran and silk merchant, while Cyrus Prentiss was another New England refugee. In short, the small anti-Masonic contingent from Ohio seems to have been strongly associated with the New England settlement in Portage County. (By contrast, Lucius Bierce, the leading Ohio Mason of the period, was a transplant from Alabama!) But Ohio's brief flirtation with anti-Masonry did not last long, and eventually the anti-Masonic party there folded into the National Republicans.76

In Baltimore the next year, anti-Masonic ranks had swelled substantially. There were 110 delegates to the 1831 convention, representing states like Maine, Maryland, and Delaware while losing the Alabama delegation of the year before. Some names familiar to historians of political history like Gettysburg's Thaddeus Stevens and Auburn's William Seward were at this convention, Stevens in particular part of a Pennsylvania delegation far larger than its relative the year before. (And no wonder, since Pennsylvania's Joseph Ritner had nearly become governor of the state, and with Anti-Masons in the state legislature would take advantage of a division among Democrats to become the most populous anti-Masonic chief executive) Jonathan Sloane was back from Ohio, his Congressional bid the year before having failed after rumors had emerged of his attacks on the Presbyterian Church that was putatively a major base of his support. He was joined now by men from elsewhere in the Reserve, Ashtabula, Champaign, and Athens, with distant Columbus the furthest south of any Ohioan delegate. And this was a much less Southern convention (despite its Maryland location) than the previous one had been – only Joshua Gibbins and John Shriver came from slave states, Delaware and Maryland respectively. Shriver, like Phelps the year before, was a steamboat pioneer, and one of the leading men in western

Maryland – a far cry from the planters of the Eastern Shore. Only in those parts of the South most distantly connected to slavery could even a flicker of anti-Masonry survive.77

Elsewhere, there was little continuity between the delegations in Philadelphia in 1830 and Baltimore in 1831. While a few hardy stalwarts like Benjamin French of Massachusetts and the above-discussed Jonathan Sloane made another appearance, the vast majority of the delegates to the 1830 convention did not return to the 1831 one. But national political conventions were *sui generis* in the early 1830s; the anti-Masons using theirs for nomination purposes because they lacked the traditional Congressional caucus and had no state legislature. It was not yet obvious that these would become an essential ingredient of the American political process. Indeed, the conventions themselves were not treated as anything unusual in the press. The respective Democratic and National Republican conventions of that year also did not meaningfully engage with the anti-Masonic movement, spending their time denouncing Nullifiers and each other. (It is a sign of the flexible political terms of the era that the Democratic National Convention could be published as the Republican National Convention) Four years later, with anti-Masonry surviving as an organized body only in Pennsylvania and Vermont, the 1836 Anti-Masonic convention attracted even less attention. Remembered primarily by Masonic historians as a sign of the final weakness of the anti-Masonic Party, the convention (largely a creation of Thaddeus Stevens, who had bitterly resisted the idea of merging with the Whigs rather than compromise over anti-Masonry) eventually did give a separate nomination to William Henry Harrison.78


Before we discuss why the 1836 convention was so much smaller than the 1832 one, and speculate on why it was the Whigs held the 'whip hand' during the merger with the Anti-Masonic Party, it is worth noting that at least one Mason was very much interested in the outcome of the 1836 convention. Though the Blair family would later become Republicans (and then among the most vicious of pro-Southern Democrats after the Civil War), few could question the Jacksonian credentials of Francis Preston Blair, certainly not in 1836. He demanded to know how Harrison could have accepted the nomination of “Anti-Masons and Abolitionists,” targeting Thaddeus Stevens in particular as an enemy. Stevens had helped drive the legislative coalition that eventually saw the merger between anti-Masons and Whigs in Pennsylvania, but opposed compromise at the national level. (And indeed, the history of the mid-19th century does show that men like Blair were right to recognize men like Stevens as their cultural antagonists.) As is discussed elsewhere, political accusations of alliances between abolitionists and anti-Masons were quite common in the 19th century. Sometimes abolitionists lamented the entanglement between anti-Masonry and politics; other times anti-Masonic elected officials like Pennsylvania's Joseph Ritner did seem to be taking action against slavery. Blair in particular was fond of painting the crisis of Northern democracy as being a tension between “the bigotry of anti-Masonry and the fanaticism of abolitionism.” The early 1830s were just at the beginning of the anti-abolitionist reaction from Southerners, and already the anti-Masons were included as a serious part of that cultural threat. (And fairly, too, given both the leadership of the anti-Masonic movement and the base of New England radicalism from which it drew much of its support).79

Despite their de facto sectional status and staunch support from abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, it is important to note that Anti-Masons did not actually present themselves as a

sectional party until the 1870s when distinctions between North and South had just been made a major issue in American politics. The 1830 Philadelphia Anti-Masonic convention hoped to set up a “national correspondence of anti-masons” and embraced their movement as one of “national character” rather than “wild and ridiculous fanaticism.” The 1831 convention that nominated William Wirt said the eventual nominee should “discharge [his duty] with parental and equal regard to every section and each member of the national family.” Indeed, the Anti-Masonic convention in Baltimore saw substantially more talk of “national” than its Democratic counterpart; nearly ten times as many mentions of 'national' parties and 'national' movements appear in the anti-Masonic text than the Democratic one. Given that the Baltimore convention was far less a national one than either the Philadelphia one or its Democratic successor, perhaps anti-Masons had ample reason to emphasis talk of nationalism when in fact their party did not have a significant national profile.80

Anti-Masonic political campaigns were a hybrid of the republican campaigns of the previous generation and a forecast of the populist democratic campaigns of later in the 19th century. It is no accident that the last Anti-Masonic convention in the United States endorsed the Harrison of hard cider and bally-hoo. These were ultimately a different sort of project than the grossly satirical anti-Masonic pamphlets of the 18th century (which were at times far too explicit for the evangelicals of a later generation to reprint, unlike the work of Robison and Barruel). Not every 18th century anti-Masonic pamphlet was quite so explicit, but most were satires rather than calls for political action. They were equally different from the sober (at least in terms of alcohol consumption) social pamphlets passed around churches like the First Congregationalist in Thetford, VT. They were consciously democratic in a way that belies the reputation of their advocates, the “towering oak [of] democratic anti-masonry” pitted against the “aristocratic

fraternity” being a favored image from their literature. Anti-Masonic candidate presented themselves as outsiders, champions of the “spirit and perseverance of the people” against the aristocracy of Masonry. Anti-Masons charged that Masons had “united against [us] with canine ferocity in…Masonic combination.” This is arguably not as suggestive as it appears: after all, one Democratic politician in Pennsylvania jibed that “The old party names are laid aside, and you find all the newspapers now headed “Democratic Reporters,” “Democratic State Journals,” “Democratic Gazettes, and bless the mark, “Democratic Anti-Masonic” papers.” The end of the Era of Good Feelings saw the rise of American democracy in which all the major parties eagerly sought out the votes of the newly empowered electorate and in which the use of democratic rhetoric was common among almost all factions: it was, after all, the Whigs who painted the “people’s man” Andrew Jackson as a would-be monarchist.81

Anti-Masons failed to achieve as wide an appeal as those parties did at their peak, true, but the problem was that Anti-Masonry was ultimately a sectional movement, a creature of the rising elites of the small and mid-sized towns of New England and upstate New York. (This is contrary to the depictions of a previous generation like David Brion Davis, who saw “no uniform division” among the Anti-Masons and their counterparts despite the tremendous sectional and urban gulf between the factions!) Outside their section, political anti-Masonry’s appeal was much more evanescent, but on its home turf few other parties could more accurately claim to be the people’s champions. “We do not intend to present [restrictions on Masonry] as a party measure, but the anti-Masonic Party as fundamentally the democratic party of this country, with its high moral purpose and fearless determination to make principle political,” said the

republican Anti-Masons of Massachusetts about themselves, and the evidence seems to hold up to their self-image. Anti-Masons lacked the Fuhrerprinzip of the Jacksonian Democrats, a movement that coalesced largely around Old Hickory personally in the mid-1820s from a legacy inherited by the Jeffersonians, and were not a response to national political trends (i.e., a reflection of Jacksonianism as often was National Republicanism/Whiggery.) Rather, the Anti-Masonic political party coalesced from the kinds of local protest rallies and mass meetings that would be the shape of political things to come for a generation. (As this work will show, I don’t have much sympathy for the traditionally Wilentzian portrayal of the rise of American democracy in this period as being a creature of the Jackson campaigns.)

So these mass meetings transformed themselves into political rallies; what began as a cultural reaction against a cultural organization transformed itself into one of the first great political uprisings in American history. The mechanics of this transformation have at times been debated by historians. On the macro level, the problem was the party system. New York in the 1820s was dominated by the Regency, a single-party ‘Democratic’ state tightly in the hands of the Clinton administration and the upcoming young Martin Van Buren. The Regency was not willing to cooperate with anti-Masonry, and even if it had been the much-hated DeWitt Clinton, dubbed “the Honorable and Most Excellent Companion…General Grand High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of the United States of America, and Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York, etc, etc” by anti-Masons who saw him as the arch-priest of New York Masonry and the probable author of Morgan’s fate. This is probably not a fair description of Clinton, who at worst acted to restrain the scandal in Batavia rather than expose the guilty. With Federalism in New York state long since dead (Clinton having flirted with it during the campaign of 1812,

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albeit as a candidate of a Federalist-dissident Democratic ticket), anti-Masons needed to create their own political party if they wanted to see the social change they wanted brought into the world. This was that merger of the political and social, of the ‘principle made political’.  

The first mass meetings after Morgan’s death were held in February of 1827, well after the murder but at the height of the furor over the trial cover-ups. Conscious efforts were initially made to avoid politicizing the coverup and murder, but with the crisis appearing to be particularly political options were scarce. Even early on in anti-Masonic history, the battle lines are sharply drawn. When the town meetings in Batavia and elsewhere voted to withhold fellowship first from Masons who did not denounce the Morgan murder, then all Masons, Francis Granger, already a leading anti-Mason intervened and asked the state legislature to look into the case. The Masonic response (and by extension the Jacksonian one) was immediate “Men are seeking to convert this subject into a political affair, and for the purpose of excluding Masons from public office.” Already, Masons and Jacksonians were reacting to the nascent movement as a political threat to their power.  

American anti-Masonry was a complicated movement that embraced both the most egalitarian, democratic principles of 19th century America and its most nativist predilections. More so than any other party of the day, it was a ‘people power’ movement, inspired not by an inherited Jeffersonian legacy, “white horse” general like Andrew Jackson, or in a transatlantic liberal reaction like the Whigs. They were “in at the death” of early republican politics, providing a mass appeal to the sentiment of the voters that was previously unprecedented in American history and that helped destroy what was a de facto consensus political system in the United States in the years previous. Their appeal was peculiarly sectional, motivating the white 

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electedorae in communities in New England and upstate New York that lacked a coherent second party alternative and/or whose religious convictions necessitated a crusade to reform the government. They were a Northern party that backed a Northern vision of American society with social and cultural egalitarianism, education, and a growing tradition of anti-slavery politics that would ultimately become a bedrock movement of Northern evangelicalism. Traditional histories of the politics of anti-Masonry note that they were the first ‘third party’ in American history, but I want to go further than that. They were also the first democratic party and the first sectional party in American history, laying the groundwork for the eventual demise of the Second Party System (and subsequent Civil War) even at its very birth. Anti-Masonry did not lead to the Civil War, but the party’s existence does help show how fractured the contemporary American political system was. Northern resistance to elite power goes back a long way, as does a Southern eager embrace of that same issue. Their cause may have lost. Their methods are our own.

As one would expect from such an outsider movement, the new party’s most vigorous spokesmen were relative outsiders to the American political consensus of the day. Adams and Wirt’s careers as national politicians were already largely over by the 1820s, while the initial core of the Anti-Masonic Party in New York state was made up of men like Solomon Southwick and Francis Granger who had been shut out of the Regency system in previous years. Masons often used this fact to charge that anti-Masons were office-seekers exploiting a credulous public, but after all one would expect political outsiders to be those who bought into the politics of an outsider political movement. The new generation of the party was made up of relatively young men (Thaddeus Stevens was in his early 40s and Seward nearly a decade younger) who would carry the fight into their antiquity in the 1860s.

For a better look at the social politics of anti-Masonry, it’s worth taking a look at some of the political leaders who flirted with social anti-Masonry before coming out against the party
itself. Few could question the Regency credentials of Seventh Circuit judge Enos T. Throop (and what a delightfully old New York name!) in the late 1820s. A close personal friend of Martin Van Buren, another leading politician of the upstate, Judge Throop would go on to serve as Governor New York in the 1830s and as chief American diplomat in the Two Sicilies a decade later. Presiding judge at the initial Morgan kidnapping trials, Throop sympathized strongly with the prosecution’s case, something which New Deal historians would twit him about over a century later. His “blessed spirit” comments became popular quotes by anti-Masons, who drew on Throop’s praise for the anti-Masonic social movement to endorse the spread of their ideology out of the area. Some of Throop’s support for the social movement can be attributed to the popularity of the anti-Morgan crusade among the ambitious politician’s constituents, but there’s no reason to believe Throop did not share the beliefs of his congregants. But Throop was only a few years later to become a bitter enemy of anti-Masonry, the man who had “rejoice[d] to witness” anti-Masonry ended his career calling Anti-Masonry a distraction from the real political problems of the day. Similarly, Levi Lincoln, another spokesman for political orthodoxy, (albeit from the other orthodox faction) joined Throop in condemning anti-Masonry as a political force even though anti-Masons made up much of the Whig coalition Lincoln was attempting to build in Massachusetts. Anti-Masonry was a threat to the orthodox politicians of both parties. (Lincoln also had a vigorous exchange of letters with his fellow second-generation Founder, John Quincy Adams, who was much more sympathetic to Anti-Masonry.)

“This state of things ‘as they are,’ or possibly will be, no one could have anticipated a few years since,” wrote the *Weekly Register* and indeed the Register was correct. By politicizing Masonry, by making it (as a general, albeit not universal rule) that the “Jacksonians attend the

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lodge as a party, and the *anti-Jacksonians* withdraw, or keep aloof, as a party, masonry must lose that strong link that has kept its members close together.” By making the social political, anti-Masonry had permanently undermined the social base of 19th century Masonry. It would not be until the 1840s and 1850s when American political matrixes began to shift that Masonry began to recover, and I think it’s no accident that Masonic growth didn’t really take off again until the height of the Third Party system during the post-Civil War period. But this change in the nature of politics went far beyond its effect on the secret order: political Anti-Masonry had stepped out of the political confines of Jacksonian politics by directly addressing a social evil through political action. This was a reform far greater than fights over the American System and internal improvements, this was a change that struck at the heart of the American political system. (And no wonder anti-Masonry was so unsuccessful in the South, with Southern hostility against any social reform that did not directly reinforce the power of white plantation owners). This is why sympathetic sources like the Register saw Anti-Masonry as a profound sea change, and why unsympathetic sources saw it as a ‘seduction of the yeomanry’ and why politicians like Throop could say that Anti-Masonry was “overflowing its boundaries…misdirected in its efforts…carrying into public affairs matters properly belonging to social discipline.” This was the birth of what Neem called “the grassroots public sphere.”

Anti-Masonry embraced Northern political causes, with education being among the most prominent, particularly at the level of the state legislature. Every Anti-Masonic congressman voted to receive the petitions that called for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the like. This is not too surprising: even a few Southern Whigs did the same. You could be an establishment figure like Massachusetts’ Caleb Cushing and favor hearing the petitions without

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actually favoring their passage. Anti-Masons voted to maintain Congressional power over slavery in the District of Columbia and, to a man, (along with every other Northern Whig) against the gag rule at every opportunity. Anti-Masons voted to recognize the independence of Texas in 1836, but vigorously opposed its admission as a state in 1844. Anti-Masons like Adams argued that the annexation of Texas, the resistance to abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and the gag rule in Congress were all part and parcel of the same kind of Southern attempts to assert undemocratic political power in the new nation: Whigs and even northern Jackson men might resist the gag rule and other Southern-friendly legislation, but anti-Masons had the rhetorical and intellectual tools with which to grapple them. More headily, many former anti-Masons like William Slade (still in Congress in 1842) backed the protest petition from Haverhill in 1842 that would have looked into measures to dissolve the Union in order to avoid Northerners maintaining Southern slavery. This was pretty heady stuff in the context of 1830s America, and a sign of just how riven the nation already was with sectional politics. Anti-Masons were more united on this issue than any other party in Congress in the 1830s, a reflection of their particular sectional and cultural origins. As discussed elsewhere, anti-Masonry was everywhere a Northern phenomenon, and a New England one at that, with penetration coming only in heavily-Northern settled areas of the South. There was only one ‘Northern’ political party in the 1830s, and indeed only one sectional party altogether, and that was anti-Masonry. 87

So here we have the first sectional party in American history; far more so than even Federalists after 1816. Only the anti-Masons’ intellectual and political descendants, the Republican Party, would have such a sectional appeal in the political world of antebellum America. This has, despite the greatest hopes of Jonathan Blanchard and his contemporaries, no

direct relationship to the Civil War. Southern secession was not driven by Masonry as such, though as discussed earlier secret societies like the Knights of the Golden Circle did greatly exacerbate the feelings of paranoia and mutual suspicion between the sections in the late 1850s and through the Civil War period – this is here speaking of perceptions of the Knights, not their reality. But the sectional tensions grappled with above are proof that the cultural clash between Northern evangelism and Southern social conservatism has very deep roots in American history; the moment the evangelicals of the Second Great Awakening had an opportunity to pit themselves against the elite republican society exemplified by the South, they took it. The political movement of anti-Masonry might have appeared to fade, but this was only because they had largely been successful in their efforts. Social anti-Masonry expanded from its critique of the Masonic institution to the slave and alcohol ones, connecting the political and the social again and again in the political rhetoric of antebellum America. One can make a real argument that the anti-Masonic Party represented the final destruction of the consensus politics of the early republic: no more were opposing politicians demonized on the increasingly bizarre personal grounds of the early 19th century, but rather on areas where the political met the social. This was no longer a vice of American politics. This was the new reality.

Moving now to political-cultural issues, the connection between women’s political mobilization and anti-Masonry is a current project of historians like Mark Carnes. Data collection is ongoing in this area, but there is a gap. Women rarely appear in the record of Jacksonian anti-Masonry, but were much more prominent in the story of Blanchardite Masonry. Women were part of the story as agents of religious societies that spoke against Masonry and as signers of petitions that went to the House promoting anti-Masonic causes. But they gained their voices later as part of a movement in which the mobilization of women in evangelical causes was respectable. As mentioned earlier, Blanchardian anti-Masonry was a strongly pro-woman party
closely allied with Blanchard's longtime friend Frances Willard, closely affiliated with the *Idalina*, the stock anti-Masonic text of the Blanchard years, was printed in the 1860s along with many contemporary works. They attacked Masonry as a breach of the marriage vows, one that kept men away from their wives even in Heaven. In anti-Masonic romances of the 19th century, the worried wife fearful of the secret order that took her husband away, and who sweepingly embraced him as newly returned to her when he abandoned the orders, became something of a stock heroic character. Similarly, men who criticized Masonry for its role as an alternative to the family were quite common. Masons were men who had abandoned their families for the order, a theme repeated everywhere from exposes of the Morgan murder to general culture war attacks on what Masons represented as an alternative to the 'family values' of the period. And that alternative was, at least from the perspective of tee-totaling New England evangelicals and their allies, a grim one indeed. “Schools of tippling drunkenness and debauchery covered with the cloak of religion,” as one newspaper put it, the “good reason” for women's exclusion from Masonry being that women would be wise to their “gullery.” By the same token, Masonic sneers about just how many of their opponents were concerned about women were common. They made associations with radical women as well, particularly the Fanny Wright who was something of a bugaboo for conservative American men in the first third of the 19th century. The gendered nature of the anti-Masonic movement has only recently been dealt with by historians; one can see echoes of it in the discourse in the talk of the manly virtues of their cultural antagonists like Andrew Jackson in particular. This dismissal of women's aspirations in the political and cultural sphere wasn't just idle talk by men eager to keep them down with unexamined motives; recent histories of male sociability of the period have shown that Masonry represent a sociability alternative for men who had not yet embraced the growing companionate marriages of the 19th century. Indeed, some historians have argued that the ultimate demise of fraternal societies in the
mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century came with the victory of companionate marriages in the social conflicts of the period.\textsuperscript{88}

Among the most valuable anti-Masonic tools for reaching the mobilized populace which was their main constituency were almanacs. Widely read in an agrarian society, these almanacs were the “million-tongued” voices that accomplished “so much evil,” more than “all the engines employed by our enemies against us” during the anti-Masonic period of Morgan. Containing anti-Masonic doggerel and insulting cartoons, accounts of Morgan's murder and of Masonic rites, these were widely read, among which was Williams Giddens' Vermont Anti-Masonic Almanac. One of the chief accusers of the murder of Morgan, Giddens has been profiled elsewhere as one of the leading lay scientists and observers of the period. These were secular conversion pamphlets along with advice for farmers, presenting the weather and phases of the moon along with some variant of the instructions to “SHOW THIS TO YOUR NEIGHBOR” to spread the story further. As far as I can tell they were mostly accurate, at least when they reprinted the words of Morgan and other Masons about the necessity of Masonic ritual, though the fantastic stories they tell of Masonic murders can be put down to the other fantastic stories told by their contemporaries in this period. The wounds they left in the psyche of 19\textsuperscript{th} century Masons who were not accustomed to being so mocked by the community, and were remembered decades later along with the other “mercenary presses” and “artillery of evil” launched against the order in those years, sometimes well into the later 19\textsuperscript{th} century. By then the “very great advantage” of the

Thetford Masons, the “shield” of the traveler and 'speedy introduction” had only recently become useful again. ³⁹

The above was a macro chapter that tried to wrestle with big questions about the Anti-Masonic Party, trying to sort out what place it deserves in our historical memory of the 19th century. The evidence suggests that there was a significant difference between the appeal of the anti-Masonic movement, a deep-rooted reaction in American evangelical culture that thrived through much of the 19th century, and the Anti-Masonic Party that can be best read as an evanescent outcropping in the era of the formation of the Second Party System. But even so, there remained deep connections between the movement and the party. The men elected to leadership roles at the 1830 convention, one that was much more a cultural convention than a political one, included figures like Joseph Ritner and Francis Granger who would go on to be among the most significant political leaders of the Anti-Masonic Party (and, not incidentally, leaders among the Northern Whigs of the next generation.)

Chapter Four:
“The Pure Lava of Anti-Masonry”: The First Congregationalist Church of Thetford, Vermont and the Anti-Masonic Struggle, 1829-1833

On April 7, 1829, Dr. Jonathan Allen addressed a statewide convention of Masons and Masonic allies in Middlebury, Vermont. “Previous to the last two years, the march of masonry in the United States has been steady and uninterrupted…The recent excitement against it has been but slightly felt in the section of country in which we live. The last four months, however, have seen it burst upon us like the sudden explosion of a volcano.” Middlebury’s leading physician, an active social reformer with connections outside the state, Allen was well-placed to see the changes coming to his native state. For their part, Anti-Masons were delighted by Allen’s metaphor and embraced it as their own, the Anti-Masonic Review of New York writing in reply “Yes, and on the 5th of August [1829] we saw the pure lava of Anti-Masonry pouring out upon the Green-mountains from the very capitol of Vermont.” Allen and his fellow Masons had ample reason to fear the power of Vermont Anti-Masonry. As with the larger American republic, Freemasonry had been at the heart of the foundation of Vermont. Ethan Allan, among others, had been a lodge brother. Within a few years of the younger (no relation) Allen’s speech, however, Anti-Masons would sweep into power in the governor’s chair and state legislature, dominating Vermont politics for a decade afterwards. Driven by fears of the market revolution then spreading through Vermont towns, the fossilized nature of “Good Feelings” politics in the state, and the spread of evangelical reform politics, anti-Masonry enjoyed a power in Vermont unmatched in the rest of the nation. No place in Vermont escaped the anti-Masonic tide, not even mill towns like isolated Thetford in the middle of Orange County. 90

The present work will examine the interaction between Thetford and anti-Masonry through the lens of the 1829-1831 battle in the Thetford First Congregational Church over the admission of Masons and anti-Masons. I came across Thetford’s records while working in the National Heritage Museum in Lexington, steered there by archivist Catherine Swanson. Thetford’s records are useful because they are exhaustive, carefully-jotted original handwritten records of the culture war over Masonry on a small scale, complete with Xs where community members changed their minds about the cultural tensions in Thetford and hastily blotted out their names rather than be associated with one side or another. They are also useful because microhistories of the anti-Masonic moment are very rare – even the most small-scale histories of anti-Masonic sentiment have generally been on the regional scale (as in Goodman's work on New England) or the state scale (as with Roth's work on the rise of anti-Masonry in Vermont). Working at the micro level lets us “ask large questions in small places,” as Joyner put it, facilitating the exploration of big historical moments by looking at how they played out 'on the ground.” In the tension between the Congregationalist anti-Masons and their erstwhile co-religionists of St. John’s Lodge No. 41, historians can get a look at what anti-Masonry was on the micro scale rather than in the larger cockpits of county, state, and national politics. The struggle over anti-Masonry in Thetford was one of neighbor against neighbor, played out not through political dimensions but religious and cultural ones. There were no ambitious office seekers in Thetford, or for that matter “sinisterly designing” Masons: anti-Masons believed they were defending Christianity and freedom of speech in the public square and battling an unequal, anti-republican institution in the name of public virtue, while Masons believed they were defending

their homes and businesses from an attack that struck at the very heart of what it meant to be a Vermonter. The fight in Thetford was in many ways a fight for Thetford’s soul.91

In 1830, the Thetford area was at its peak, a prosperous town of mills and sheep farms that was an attractive destination for immigrants from elsewhere in Orange County and the state. Abutting the Connecticut River along the state line (as well as straddling the smaller Ompompanoosuc), the town was well-placed to take advantage of the bustling New England river trade. Indeed, Thetford’s first three steam boats: the Barnet, Adam Duncan, and John Ledyard would reach the waters of the upper Connecticut that same year. The First Congregational Church meetinghouse had recently been transported out of the town proper and onto the green at nearby Thetford Hill; with citizenship no longer directly tied to Congregationalist membership, the town had sold its share of the church and it was no longer an openly political institution. (With church leaders like Orange Heaton and William Latham already living in the area, it was a very convenient move. Elsewhere on the Hill, Moses Cadwell and Moses Jr. ran the lead mine, Cadwell and his son later to turn against his former Revolutionary War commander William Heaton by joining the anti-Masons. Nearby stood Thetford Academy, center of the town’s educational life and an institution closely associated with the town’s Congregationalists; men like Asa Burton and Asa Bond had made this center of New England juvenile education possible. The Hill was a fast-growing neighborhood in those years, holding the homes of not only Burton and his successor Elisha Babcock, but their future antagonists in the anti-Masonic battle Thomas Merrill, William Thayer, and Silas Follett. To the north, Post Mills, at the edge of Thetford proper and close on Lake Fairlee, held the home of

merchant David Bruce who would later nearly tear the church apart with his application for admission, along with many of the region’s new small factories and mills. In the heart of Thetford proper, the Methodists (taking advantage of their new freedom to participate in society) would erect their own church a few years later.92

The great decline of New England that would eventually see the depopulation of much of Vermont had not yet occurred in the 1830s, that great migration was primarily a phenomenon of the post-Civil War period. But the Thetford region was in the middle of agricultural and industrial transformation in the 1830s, a moment that deserves a closer examination before we turn our attention back to the town proper. Merino sheep had come to Vermont just before the War of 1812 (imported directly from Portugal by diplomat and Vermonter William Jarvis) and had spread like wildfire through the region: poor farmers who had once traded pork and grain in cities could transform themselves into prosperous sheeprun managers and wool factory investors by turning their fields over to sheep. (New England sheep raising would later decline after the Civil War when the markets of the Far West came online and out competed the sheep ranchers of the East). The growing wool economy, though it did not replace New England traditional agriculture, did spur the development of specialized labor in small town like Thetford. Farmers who had previously been self-sufficient now could go into town, sell their sheep or the wool they’d harvested to the growing mills and wool factories, and buy what they needed from merchants in the town. (Anti-Mason Bartholomew Fullington’s family raised sheep, as did his antagonist Abiah Howard and his brother Truman) This also meant that, as farms shrank and sheepruns grew, that more and more farmers and their families were settling in town looking for work. The growing power of the cities and of the “village aristocracy” there made many farmers

uncomfortable, as it did those in towns like Thetford who for whatever reason were unable to benefit from the growing economy of the region.  

When he assumed his post as pastor of the First Congregational Church of Thetford in February of 1831, Elisha G. Babcock could have considered himself a lucky man. Born to an artisanal background in Milton, Massachusetts, the thirty-two year old Babcock was an Amherst graduate and veteran of a rural pastorate in the backwoods of Wiscasset, Maine, Babcock had inherited one of the most significant Congregational churches in the state. Asa Burton, the titan of Vermont Congregationalism, had made the Thetford church a center of religious education for the state: some sixty New England Congregationalist pastors had studied there under Burton’s care. Small and isolated though Thetford was, it had played a leading role in missionizing the West, sending pastors, missionaries, and college presidents all over the Old Northwest. Babcock found, however, a pastorate in some trouble: the elderly Burton had actually been forced into de facto retirement in 1825 thanks to his opium addiction and had (via complaints about how much better he was paid, as well as heckling him during sermons) forced his successor (and stepson) Charles White to take up a missionary post in Indiana at what is still today Wabash College in 1829. (Burton’s preferred candidate to succeed him, Edward Hovey, had already gone west) Newly-married and new to Thetford, Babcock was supposed to provide the church leadership Thetford’s Congregationalists had been missing since the onset of Burton’s illness and with White’s departure, but in fact the new pastor found himself almost completely beholden to church leaders like Timothy P. Bartholomew, Jared Hosford, and Orange Heaton; among the

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leading figures in Thetford town, the newly-rebuilt church, and not incidentally member of St. John's Lodge No. 41, the center of Thetford Masonry.94

Freemasonry came to Vermont in the early 1780s along with the other instruments of early republican civilization. Masonry came to Thetford itself in 1815 with the charter of the Lodge, and Asa Burton himself had come out to speak at its dedication, delivering a sermon on the ‘benevolent love’ of Freemasonry. York Rite Freemasonry enjoyed a powerful influence in the Congregationalist Church in Thetford; Burton’s orthodox Calvinism wasn’t the sort to cause trouble with such a powerful organization in town. It had been left, in the years before the 1820s, to Thetford’s Baptists to have any criticism to make of Freemasonry. (Burton would later be sympathetic to the anti-Masonic crusade, but there is no evidence he had any reservations about Masonry earlier in his career, unlike more evangelical pastors of the period). But Vermont, and Thetford, was changing. Congregationalist churches of New England had long-practiced Calvinist self-policing among congregants, and Thetford had certainly been no exception. In 1827, one Amelia Sweetland had been outright excommunicated for “neglecting communion a long time, for dancing and other vain amusements,” while in 1830, Edward Meader faced church discipline for “encouraging Diodate Newcomb to drink in a public house.” (The unhappy Diodate, whose troubles with “strong spirits” make up their own file in the church records, would be pitted against the two publicans in the congregation, Hezekiah Porter and George O. Strong, when he joined the anti-Masonic group in 1832). In 1827, the congregation had held that as a rule “…this church views attending Balls and Dancing by professors of religion, highly criminal and censurable.” The Church had never hesitated to investigate the private lives of its...

congregation, with swift excommunication for those who would not repent and confess their sins.  

But by the late 1820s, ideas of what constituted sinful conduct were changing for New England Congregationalists. Revivals that had swept Vermont (and Orange County in particular in 1827-1828, much to the alarm of the Congregationalist ministers in the area) had helped spread the evangelical ideals of the Second Great Awakening throughout the region. Faith was changing in this era as ideas of the New Divinity and its liberal successor New Haven theology swept through New England: the idea that the world itself could be improved through faith. With its evangelical tradition and strong interest in the reform project through years of support for philanthropic practices and religious education, Thetford was a natural place for a new kind of religious faith to spread, even to what had previously been relatively conservative congregations like Asa Burton’s former flock. The new breed of religion was interested in social reforms like the anti-slavery crusade, temperance, an end to domestic violence, and the growing crusade against Masonry. This is not to say that social reform was limited only to anti-Masons; after all, Middlebury’s Jonathan Allen was a leading anti-slavery and temperance man in antebellum Vermont as well as being a leading Mason. But Vermont was particularly suited to become a center of anti-Masonic sentiment thanks to its second-tier frontier setting, small towns, and heavily religious civic life. The still-extant Danville North Star was the leading anti-Masonic newspaper in Vermont, and the North Star’s Danville was the leading trading metropolis for small towns like Thetford. It is no wonder that the ‘pure lava’ flowed so well as it did.  


Thetford’s struggle with anti-Masonry began not with anti-Masons on the offensive, but rather with Masons on the defensive. On March 10, 1829, fifteen members of the Thetford First Congregational Church, who were also members of St. John’s Lodge, signed a document assuring their neighbors that Freemasonry and Christianity (and Congregationalism in particular) were perfectly compatible. The March 10 manifesto reads like the Congregationalist public document it was intended to be: Masons were “desirous of giving their testimony to the perfect harmony of the two institutions [Christianity and Freemasonry]...[Masonry was] not equal to Christianity in importance, but we do regard it as a charitable and moral institution of which a Christian man may avail himself to very great advantage.” The signers of the manifesto could certainly all personally attest to the “very great advantage of Masonry,”; they included William Latham, who had served as town treasurer and selectman, prosperous business owners like George O. Strong and Hezekiah Porter, and Constable Orange Heaton. (Three members of Thetford’s new Baptist Church also signed the manifesto; given nascent Baptist hostility towards Masonry, these men were taking more of a risk than their Congregationalist lodge brothers) These men were pew holders and church members, among both the most powerful men in the congregation and in the town of Thetford proper. Thetford Masons had reason to be concerned about the growth of anti-Masonry in their region; in addition to the anti-Masonic newspaper just across the border in Caledonia County, their Fifth Congressional District would elect an anti-Masonic Congressman to office. What should be notable is not that Thetford’s Masons felt the urge to defend themselves, but rather the language in which they did so.97

On February 18th of that year, Doctor David Palmer of Thetford, Master of St. John’s Lodge No. 41 in Thetford, addressed the town and his lodge brothers at the opening of the new “Masonick” lodge in town. Palmer was speaking before the great anti-Masonic struggles hit

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Thetford and addressing a generally friendly audience (his remarks were picked up and widely reported across the region, in the journalistic style of the time), but even with such a crowd the town physician was clearly on the defensive. Palmer’s speech was extensive (and constitutes the best evidence for the Masonic state of mind in Thetford just before the crisis reached the city itself), and is worth an examination. Palmer is quick to reassure his listeners that Masonry is a “society…unpretending and simple in its character,” indeed, these are the first anti-Masonic charges he seeks to rebut: no wonder, given how men like Palmer were working to reassure their fellow New Englanders that they were as American and republican as they were. Palmer went on to connect anti-Masonry to foreigners, particularly foreign kings “the monarchs of Spain and Russia, the Grand Turk of Constantinople, and the Pope of Rome,” all appear as the enemies of Masonry in Palmer’s narrative. He goes on to say that “But it has been reserved to our own country, and to the present period, to exhibit the curious spectacle of people living under a free government, commencing a barbarous, unprovoked attack on the society of freemasons.” Palmer goes on, as many Masons of the period did, to connect American Masonry with members of the Revolutionary tradition like Washington, Marshall, and Jefferson, before closing with a look at the “absurd and unprincipled crusade against the peace of society“ that was anti-Masonry. Palmer is clearly writing in a context of established anti-Masonic discourse in America, as well as Masonic apologetics: no surprise, given that this was three years after the murder of Morgan.98

Palmer in particular focuses on the anti-Masonic controversy then brewing in Vermont, arguing (as have some historians since) that anti-Masonry there was influenced by the local political situation: lacking a significant opposition party to the Jacksonian Democracy now that Adams Republicanism was nationally moribund, anti-Jackson forces seized on the anti-Masonic movement as a potential gateway to political success. And indeed it is true that the ‘one-party’

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98 David Palmer, Albany Anti-Masonic Record, August 8, 1829.
system of Democratic-Republicanism in Vermont did give way very quickly to a thriving two-party system once the anti-Masonic movement gained its start. But while Palmer’s theory might explain the rise of national and even state-wide anti-Masonry, it has little to say about the origins of local Masonry (particularly in a town like Thetford) except as a general offshoot of “demagoguery“. As Charles McCarthy showed over a hundred years ago, there were solid economic reasons for Vermon ters to vote for a National Republican ticket – internal improvements were essential to the economic prosperity of the state, particularly the Connecticut River towns (which Thetford was closely connected to by trade) that were centers of anti-Masonic sentiment. Vermont anti-Masons earned a “glorious result” as they captured political control of the state in 1830, but why that particular result was earned is still under investigation by historians. To uncover why a culture war party was so much more important than an economic one, we have to examine the other side of the coin and examine (here and elsewhere in this chapter) how anti-Masons in Vermont attacked and criticized their Masonic foes.99

Traditional anti-Masonic engagements with Masonry have focused on rumors of the “personal degradation” or “diabolical character” of Masonic meetings, at best “schools of tippling, drunkenness, and debauchery“ and at worst “The Key to the Bottomless Pit.” Occasionally sounding more than a little unhinged to modern readers, the putatively overheated nature of anti-Masonic rhetoric has frequently been held against Masons by modern historians. But there were no reprisals in Vermont against Masons even during the peak of the anti-Masonic movement – though the charter of the Vermont grand lodge was revoked by the state legislature, even the mildest anti-Masonic measures failed to pass the state legislature. Even bills abolishing extra-judicial oaths, a key component of the anti-Masonic political project, failed. Anti-Masons were most successful when they imitated their economic allies, the National Republicans. Thetford Masons had no need in 1829-1830, a quiet year in Thetford, to engage rhetoric that they

were part of an “Illuminatio plot organized by Voltaire”, or even to join larger appeals then organized in the state against the “artful agitators” of anti-Masonry. That denial would come later, when Thetford Masons joined the state lodges in general in issuing denials of any guilt in the murder of William Morgan. Rather, Thetford Masons were specifically assuring their neighbors that Masonry was compatible with Christianity, a dichotomy deeply threatening in that time and place.100

Some of the 19th century competition between church and lodge was simply one of organization. In an era when wealthy people and families bought church pews and at the tail end of an age when church membership gave Vermont citizens the right to vote (only recently in Thetford had church and state been separated, forcing the Congregationalists to move to a new church building off the town square), Masonic lodges were drains on both the time and money of the wealthy men church leaders hoped would cultivate membership in their churches both for Calvinist reasons of public success and simple desire to protect their own ‘investment’. But for the most part, evangelical Christianity of the 19th century had serious criticisms to make of Masonry: “the power of money, and mystery, and secret organization, and gaudy parade to subvert our principles and convert our hearts,” that “Masonry and intemperance go hand in hand”, and in general that all the sins of 19th century American Christianity could be found in Masonic lodges. And those criticisms can be amply found in the writings of Thetford

100 York Republican, January 31, 1831. Boston Anti-Masonic Christian Herald, March 12, 1829 Isacc Gayman, The Key to the Bottomless Pit, or the Daguerrean Likeness of the Beast with Seven Heads and Ten Horns, With His Foot Prints, and the Number of His Name, Found Between the Lids of an Old Bible, Whose Contents Were Blotted Out by the Omnipresent Secret Orders, Spiritually Called Egypt and Sodom, wher, also, our Lord was Crucified (Lancaster, 1852, n.p.) McCarthy, 509. Brief Report of the Anti-Masonic Convention at Fanuiel Hall, December 1829-January 1830 (Boston, 1830, n.p) 30-31. Appeal, 1-5.
Congregationalists, who typically relied on the ‘Christian republican’ strategy when dealing with Thetford’s Masons.\textsuperscript{101}

In October of 1831, Presbury West Jr, Eben Cummings, and King Heaton applied for membership in the Thetford Congregationalist Church. While this was no longer the act of citizenship it had been for their fathers, the importance of Thetford’s Congregationalists in the bustling mill town meant that Congregationalist membership was a key prize for men of distinction. And West, Cummings, and Heaton were all in their own ways men of distinction: Presbury West Jr. was an attorney and son of a justice of the peace (and son-in-law of Asa Burton himself, no protection for West in the past given the opium-addicted Burton’s stormy relationship with his family), Eben Cummings a wealthy farmer and future railroad investor who had once owned most of the land in what is now North Thetford, and King Heaton a wealthy, eccentric tavern owner from East Thetford. These were some of the most prominent, powerful men in Greater Thetford (for all that Heaton had been subject to increasingly bizarre rumors) and their admission to the Thetford church would not have been particularly controversial in previous eras. (Heaton alone, given the rumors that he was a body-stealer who had made his money supporting anatomical experiments, might have run into trouble, but not the others.)\textsuperscript{102}

But by 1831, with anti-Masonry sweeping the nation and a national Anti-Masonic Party running a Presidential candidate, things have changed in Thetford. Vermont's great cities (such as they were) had sent representatives to the Baltimore convention, while the year before a delegation of seceding Masons from Orange County's Randolph had told dire stories indeed of

\textsuperscript{101} Jonathan Blanchard Argument on Secret Societies, (Cincinnati, 1850, Blanchard) Joshua Giddins, Anti-Masonic Almanac for 1830 (Giddins, Vermont, 1830)

Masonic oaths to the anti-Masonic convention in Philadelphia. This time, objections were raised in the church in a ‘blackball’ petition issued by church members William Thayer, Thomas Merrill, Asa Bond, and David Kinney on October 29, 1831. Merrill and Kinney are obscure figures today, but Thayer and Bond were important men in Thetford in their own right. Asa Bond was an old man, a Revolutionary War veteran and pensioner living with his son Amara’s family, among the more respectable men in the community. Asa was not the wealthy man he had once been, but he was still among the most respected men in the community. As for William Thayer, Thayer was both an attorney and one of the leading figures in the church: Babcock’s predecessors White and Burton had relied heavily on Thayer as an ambassador to other churches and reliable committee member for other significant church functions. Indeed, Thayer’s son William Withington would grow up to be a Congregationalist minister. Thayer in particular had taken a leadership role in policing the congregation in the past; many complaints against church members in the 1820s bear Thayer’s name, ranging from women who had abandoned their husbands to farmers who had gone drinking in the city, and he had usually been successful in his prosecutions. Thayer would continue to take a leadership role throughout the anti-Masonic controversy that blossomed in Thetford after the fall of 1831.103

The criticisms that Thayer and his allies had of the prospective members are meaningful cultural artifacts, given that they were associated with the kinds of church trials that were a common cultural moment in the rather blue-nosed Thetford congregation. The October 29 blackball petition’s 14 points have very little to do with the personal character of West, Cummings, or even Heaton, but a great deal to do with Masonry in Thetford. There are no accusations of Satanic worship or open complicity in murder, rather the situation is more

complex. If Freemasonry was “with its rights and obligations evidently inconsistent with the Gospel,” what was so inconsistent about them? The greatest concerns of Thetford’s anti-Masons at this point were about oaths: Masons, they said, “take oaths unknown at the time, pledge their lives…[take] illegal unauthorized oaths, etc”, potent charges in small-town 19th century America in general and in Thetford in particular. It was an era of great economic change in Thetford; saw and grist mills were opening in nearby Union Village and in Thetford proper, the first steamboats were about to make their way onto the Connecticut River of which Thetford’s native stream was a tributary, and hundreds of people were flooding into the tiny town to take advantage of the new opportunities for work, seeing a better life than subsistence farming in the very poor soil of Orange County. With oaths as the primary means of economic security as people came and went in the burgeoning community, a society that made men swear falsely was a poor precedent indeed. 104

Making matters worse, or so the anti-Masons said, was that Masons must “report any who may secede…to thwart their interest and derange his business.” And (again, according to the Manifesto) Masons did not just promise to divert the laws of economics on behalf of their brother Masons: “[Masons must] keep a master Mason’s secrets save murder and treason…swear to be chaste only toward females near akin to a master Mason, swearing to obey grand laws of the grand lodge and bylaws of the Lodge to which they belong…may be contrary to laws of God and Country…to deliver a master Mason from distress where the grand sign is given.” Taken together with “…personating the Almighty…uniting in a ceremony that mimics death…profane use of the name of God,” these were certainly potent charges to make about small-town New England businessmen and their allies in the 1830s, undermining them as businessmen, Christians, and even Americans, given how elsewhere Masonry had been branded a source of

“democratic hostility, and republican dread,” given its “constitutional fault… and unaccountable public action.” Masonry was presented as hostile to both the republican politics of the past and the democratic politics of the future, theoretically implicating all Americans in the necessity of its restraint. As is discussed elsewhere, these were common accusations made against Masons by anti-Masons across the northern tier of the United States; that tropes of that particular argument having long-since reached Thetford.\footnote{“Objection,” 1831. Henry Dana Ward, \textit{Anti-Masonic Review}, November 1828, 334. \textit{New York Spectator}, August 12, 1830, np.}

The twenty-ninth of October was a Thursday in 1831, and by the following Wednesday (November 4, 1831), Babcock and the leaders of the congregation had acted. Cummings and the others were admitted to the congregation and the issue of Masonry itself was, or so Babcock and the others might have hoped, permanently set aside. At a mass meeting of select members of the Congregation, twenty-nine of the brethren signed a resolution that the church would make no discussion of Masonry. Carefully avoiding any endorsement of Masonry or attacks on the dissenting brethren, the November 4 resolution must have looked something like a compromise to men like Babcock and his allies, looking to avoid the secretarian eruption in Thetford that had killed churches elsewhere. Instead, the resolution said that “much bitter invective has been introduced, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and to the dishonor of religion… alarmed at these affecting examples and forcibly impressed that no good can ever result to the cause of Christ or the interest of religion by discussing this controversy in any form or moment,” and that the church would “not hear or attend to any complaint” made solely on the basis of Masonry. And indeed, if a majority of church members had held with Babcock’s ruling and there had been significant debate, odds are good that Masonry might have prevailed in Thetford. As it was, many of the leading churchmen (and it was all men, at least so far, though women did have a vote in the congregation) like Bela Child and Isacc Cummings, powerful men who sat on the church
committees, did sign the resolution with no qualms. Timothy Bartholomew, among the oldest men in town and who would die of “apoplexy after attending church on a very cold Sunday” that very year, also signed. But Babcock had overplayed his hand: on the day of the vote, he had addressed the congregation, called for an hour of silent prayer, and then the church had voted. This lack of discussion outraged anti-Masons, particularly as it seemed to violate the tenants of Thetford’s own church bylaws which provided for a “visible church“ and in the covenant that called for the congregation to “watch over their brethren and sisters, and support church discipline.”

And thus, though the resolution had passed “by a very large majority,” the story was far from over. Divisions had already appeared even as the anti-anti-Masonic resolution went forth, with one church member, Obadiah Hosford (an elderly farmer and patriarch of one of the many branches of the powerful Hosford family) actually having his name scratched off the original list of signers. Within a month of the 11/4 resolution, an organized body of anti-Masons nearly equal in size to those who’d signed back in November were petitioning the church to hear their case. On December 3, 1831, they pled for the church to “read and examine their covenant obligation“, to compare their most recent resolution to the Gospels, and to avoid shutting out discipline.” Between Hosford (who had now switched sides, it is Hosford himself who is the most likely source of the “by request” written by his x-ed out name in the church archives, though historians cannot of course be sure), William Thayer, and Amasa Bond, whose great wealth had helped found Thetford Academy, these were some of the leading members of the Congregation. That there were now twenty-six names on the list of dissenters suggested that the schism Babcock had hoped to avoid was in actuality just beginning. With their congregation faced with potential

106 Thetford Church Resolution, November 4, 1829. Thetford Church Papers, NHM.. n.a., Confession of Faith and Covenant of the First Congregational Church in Thetford, Vermont: April 4, 1831 (Thomas Mann, Dartmouth, 1840), 5-6, 30-31. McCartney, 74-75
disaster, Babcock and the church committee offered to withdraw the offending resolution if anti-Masons would pledge to abandon their efforts to introduce a church ‘discipline’ on Masonry. This failed; the church minority had been pushed too far to back off now. Thayer replied that it would be “inconsistent with our command of Christ and covenant obligations,” and that it was their intention to “carry the controversy to a declaration against Masonry.”

When another petition failed in February of the next year, the anti-Masons appealed not to Babcock but to the nearby Congregationalist congregations of West Norwich and Fairlee by issuing a “Petition of Grief” against Babcock and his allies in the congregation, with Babcock eventually joining them in a joint appeal to their neighbors. The dissenters charged that Babcock had “violated Matthew 10 [the church’s doctrinal justification for internal policing], shut out gospel discipline, and [made] an exception of a certain class of persons.” By speaking now in the language of class, albeit in terms a 19th century Vermont evangelist would understand, the Thetford anti-Masons were beginning to draw on criticisms of Masonry broader than simply ethical and religious ones. Anti-Masons of the day were very concerned about the “arrogance of Masonry“ and the “village aristocracy“ that it seemed to empower; one particular ill-advised Masonic speech from the 1820s about the political and economic power of Masonry against governments being pulled out again and again by anti-Masonic writers looking to make a point. The idea that Masonry was bringing class to Thetford was both a spiritual threat (given the leveling tendencies of New Divinity Congregationalism) and an economic one, given

107First Petition for Church Meeting, December 3, 1831, Thetford Church Archives. His cousin Isaac would become one of the region’s leading abolitionists in later years. Committee’s Terms, n.d., Thetford Church Archives, NHM. Anti-Masonic Review, Nov. 1828, 326. McCartney, 68. William Chauncy Langdon, The Pageant of Thetford (Thetford, Vermont, 1911), 30-33.
contemporary fears in small towns like Thetford about the village aristocracy and its power over farmers. 108

Even more remote than Thetford, West Fairlee and Norwich lacked the local industrial centers that made the threat of Masonic takeover so frightening: there were no circles of wealthy Masons in town to inspire resentment in ‘gentile’ farmers. Norwich had even supported Jackson in 1828, unusual for the day, hoping that the military hero would support a town with a military academy and bring internal improvements to the region. (However, both, like the rest of Orange County, had unanimously voted for the Democratic-Republican candidate in 1826, an election that presaged the birth of anti-Masonry not long after.) Norwich and West Fairlee, through their pastors, advised calm: they said the gag resolution should be struck down but that anti-Masons in the congregation should let the matter rest. Faced with pressure from their neighbors not self-evidently involved in the Masonic takeover of Congregationalist churches, the dissenters evidently backed down: church trials return to their usual character of investigating drunkenness and dancing in the congregation. Things might have been different had they chosen to speak to representatives from Caledonia County with its strong anti-Masonic tradition, but evidently Babcock and his followers were not inclined to take the chance. As anti-Masonry swept the region in 1832, Babcock and the rest of the church committee must have thought they had escaped the ‘volcano’ sweeping the region.109

The short-lived peace in the church would come to an end thanks to two men; Silas Follett, an anti-Mason who aroused the wrath of church leaders, and David Bruce, a Mason who


109 Jacob Ullery, Men of Vermont (Brattleboro, Transcript, 1894), 127. Roth, “Transfiguration,” 146. William Hartley Jeffrey, Successful Vermonters: a modern gazetteer of Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties: containing an historical review of the several towns and a series of biographical sketches of the men of mark who have won distinction in their several callings, and who have become conspicuous in the professional, business, and political world. (Higginson Book Co, VT, 1904), 230, Niles Daily Register, December 22, 1832, 267.
was perhaps too close their ally. Though a wealthy member of the church and a frequent supporter of evangelical causes, Silas Follett seems to have been a difficult man to like. Follett was the complainant against a great many of his fellow parishioners in church trials, a man deeply concerned with the sexual morality of the women of the church and the personal conduct of the servants of his fellow parishioners. He had been a leader among the congregation’s anti-Masons, and took Babcock’s gag rule very badly. In the summer of 1832, a complaint was sworn out against him by the William Taylor family; the Taylors being his fellow parishioners and William Taylor a leading Mason in the congregation. (Taylor had signed the initial Masonic declaration three years earlier). Follett’s trial testimony is frustratingly vague on specifics, but evidently the turbulent man had a great deal to say about Masonry and Babcock. “talked about the difficulties in the church on the subject of Masonry and also made several remarks about our minister and said that he had lied and said that which was not true…indeed his conversation was so unpleasant to me that I did not pay so much attention.” Years later, a more sympathetic church committee would write of Follett’s conduct that he “had an ardent temperament, strong prejudice, and bold spirit which fitted him to become affected by the prevalent excitement of the times,” but in 1832 the Committee was not inclined to be merciful.110

Follett was expelled from the church for violating church discipline, infuriating anti-Masons. Follett was so outraged at his expulsion that he never again returned to the church, and spent the rest of his life as a Baptist. Expulsion, rare earlier in the century, had become a major tool of Church discipline by the 1830s, reserved for those who had brought the most disgrace to the community. Follett’s quarreling with his fellow parishioners, particularly about Masonry, had been treated as the church would have treated a notorious drunk. This created a crisis that

only brewed up hotter in the summer of 1832 when local Mason David Bruce applied for admission to the Church. Thirty-eight years old, an 1812 veteran and head of a prosperous merchant household, Bruce was a native of Post Mills, the hamlet nearby Thetford where the Congregationalists had relocated themselves after 1830. Joining the Congregationalist Church would have provided Bruce, an apothecary and justice of the peace, some significant business opportunities, given the clannish nature of many congregations and small towns in New England in those days.\footnote{Randolph Roth, “Can Faith…” 8-9., \textit{Baptist Missionary Magazine}, October 1861, 376. Hamilton Child, \textit{Gazeteer of Orange County, Vermont, 1762-1888}, (Syracuse, Orange, 1888), at \url{http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vermont/OrangeThetford.html} His brick house still stands in Thetford today. “Thetford Walking Tours,” Thetford Historical Society, 2009. \url{http://www.thetfordvermont.us/docs/Walking%20Guide%20Feb09.pdf} McCartney, 109-111.}

But Bruce (who had been something of a ne’er do well in his youth) refused to break with Masonry as previous new members had, and in fact was one of the leading Masons in the community. (As an ‘adhering Mason’, Bruce would have been unable to join the Baptist Church in Post Mills and so had reason to go looking for another congregation.) That he had applied within weeks of Follett’s August expulsion outraged anti-Masons in the congregation, who issued a three-part rebuttal against Bruce’s candidacy, the most important of which were the last two: Bruce “would not abandon Freemasonry…as Freemasonry is a worldly interest and adherence to it is an occasion of grief to a large portion of Christians,” and finally “[w]e would not object merely because he has been a Mason,” but they “cannot feel satisfied for continuing to follow a lodge.” (It cannot have helped any that Bruce was the sort of Post Mills merchant who many of the anti-Masonic farmers in the congregation had become increasingly beholden to with the rise of the sheep economy in the area.) If Thetford’s Anti-Masons (most of whom signed the petition) could not expel Masons from their church, at least they could make sure that no more Masons did join the body. But Bruce was admitted, prompting Thayer and other Masons to begin
to “meet every Friday at 1 PM until next church conference to remove cause of difficulty, correct misunderstanding, and for each brother and sister to free our own minds, for peace, love, and gospel ground.” Despite whatever hopes might have been attached to the separate organization, neither side gave in and as the harvest season ended and farmers had time on their hands again, the crisis worsened. On October 1, 1832, a group of twenty-seven Thetford anti-Masons issued a formal declaration to the church committee. “[We] felt this church to be our home, its brothers our brothers, its sisters our sisters…so long as a majority of the Church and our Rev. Pastor are inclined to receive adhering Masons and defend their institution, undue Masonic influence exists among the members; we may not expect impartial decisions in cases of discipline from the church nor impartial decisions from the pastor.” The October 1 resolution differed from previous Masonic protests in several ways, most especially because of how it ended “[we] withdraw our connection from your body as a church...[we] will unite or create a new body where we can enjoy rights of conscience and our Gospel privileges will prevail.” This was not simply a rebellion of men; this was a rebellion of families; Sally Thayer, Sarah Bond, and Jemima Thinny joined their husbands, while women like Rachel Fletcher and Deborah Hovey left on their own account. (Cynthia Follett finally left the church that had already banished her husband).112

As usual in Thetford, the October resolution makes no particular condemnation of individual sins of Masons: this is for anti-Masons in Thetford story about Masonic domination of civic institutions, not Masonic corruption through rites and oaths. Dissenters complain that “the minority are not heard, conscientious scruples are ignored…undue Masonic influence which has pressed Church and Pastor away from duty.” This sort of criticism of the power of Masonry would be a recurring theme among Vermont anti-Masons, and seems to have dominated the struggle over Masonry inside the Congregationalist Church. The threat wasn’t what Masons did

in their lodge (though plenty of Vermonters were concerned about that), but rather what Masons did in their efforts to control the larger community. This effort was about the effort to “shake off the reins of Masonry” rather than reform what went on inside lodges themselves. Anti-Masons were sensitive to Masonic accusations about the “reign of terror” that their rule would bring, and were conscientious about using political measures rather than punitive ones when investigating the power of Masonry. And indeed, the final resolution to the Thetford crisis was to come through the lens of resolving power in the community rather than battling the misdeeds of Masons. 113

In April of 1833, months after the October withdrawal, another group of anti-Masons left the Congregational Church in Thetford, the dissenters “having got no reply” from the congregation and the church committee. It was April 15, a week after Easter Sunday, and as David Thinney (a leading anti-Mason) noted, they had finally removed “the yoke of wood bondage,” and wanted “instructions for a new church.” This final blow was too much for the fissuring church, and two days later Babcock and the other members of the church committee (even the Masons among them) appealed to the dissenters to join them in calling an ecclesiastical council to Thetford to decide how to handle the Masonic crisis. This was as grave as it got in New England Congregationalism; there were no higher authorities to appeal to. Clerics came from all over the region; Nathan Lord from Dartmouth [this was early in Lord’s career, when he was still a respectable evangelical abolitionist and not the pro-slavery outsider who would one day be forced from his post as Dartmouth’s President, Chester Wright [who had recently retired from his role at the First Congregational Church in the state capitol and who would later leave his home to the state to serve as the governor’s mansion until the 1960s) from relatively distant

Montpelier, and others from closer-by (notably none from Norwich and West Fairlee) to try and figure out who was in the right in Thetford. With anti-Masonry triumphant in Vermont and churches fissuring across the nation in 1833, this was a very great crisis.  

With HF Leavitt from Piermont as their scribe, they began meeting in the pastorage in Thetford on April 14, 1833. The hard part was getting the dissenters at a conclave summoned by Babcock. But come they did, after some pleas from the Council, and after prayer the Council closed to hear their story the next day. (Only the minutes, not a transcript of the Council, survive, a common thing in an era before modern shorthand when even Congress lacked a regular recorder of speeches) After ‘considerable desultory conversation,’ both minority and majority were unable to “unite by choosing mutual [representation] to the Council. The minority did not “refuse the council, but [said] the council is not neutral.” After all, as Thayer and Kinney noted, “[we] do not understand whether the church calls us to make defense before the Council as criminals…or whether we may stand before the council and show the causes of our grief.” Ultimately, they noted that the council was “wholly ex parte” and that they had “no voice in calling it”: they did not oppose its meeting, but were not “bound to abide its decisions.” Ultimately, the Council’s ruling (arrived after an hour’s deliberation) could hardly have been more favorable to the dissenters, though the clerics of the Ecclesiastical Council did give some cover to their fellow minister.  

The Council held that the dissenters had been wrong to attack Elisha Babcock’s character; they should not have broken from their native congregation. However, they went on to


say that in all other respects, the dissenting anti-Masons had been in the right: Bruce should not have been admitted and that Follett’s case should be re-examined. Furthermore, though Babcock had acted with the best of intentions, “the Church should hear all complaints presented conscientiously”, and so the resolution that had banned all discussion of Masonry in the Church should be abolished. More importantly, the Thetford First Congregational Church should “refrain from all connection to Masonic proceedings,” not because the members of the Council believed anything unwholesome about Masonic practices but rather because “Masons are an occasion of offense to their brethren, and should withdraw.” Though “both have been honest and misunderstood” the settlement the church had reached after February 29th of the year before, this was unquestionably a ruling in favor of the anti-Masons. And indeed, anti-Masonry did triumph in Thetford. St. John’s Lodge they stopped meeting for two years during the crisis (1829-1831) and ultimately vanished altogether in 1848 (also the year Elisha Babcock died): like many Masonic lodges in New England, they never recovered from the anti-Masonic tide of the 1830s. This is not to say the crisis in Thetford simply resolved itself with the Council’s ruling; the dissenters continued to criticize Babcock’s leadership and call for him to make a public apology, while some like Silas Follett never did return to the church. But the majority of the dissenters did return, and the crisis in Thetford did end with a victory for the town’s anti-Masons.116

Today Thetford is a quiet Vermont town of two thousand, catering to the tourist trade from New York and elsewhere in New England. In an age of highways, airplanes, and the Internet, Orange County is still one of the more isolated parts of Vermont. The scars left on the landscape by the ‘volcano’ of Anti-Masonry have long since faded. Elisha Babcock’s First Congregational Church still occupies the (now much-expanded) building where the congregation moved in 1830 at the end of Congregationalist domination in Thetford; while St. John’s Lodge

116 Tillotson, 74-76, Thayer, et al, June 4, 1833, October 23, 1833
No. 41 never reopened. Few Thetfordians today remember that there was a great battle over Masonry in their town, in those halcyon years in the 1830s when Thetford briefly flirted with industrialization before succumbing to the long rural and industrial decline that afflicted the rest of New England until the late 20th century. And perhaps Thetfordians have good reason to forget: the quiet struggle inside the walls of the Congregationalist Church and in the homes of its parishioners was not the sort of conflict readily embraced by public history, even with a town very interested in telling its own story. There were no lynchings or riots in Thetford, no murdered brewers or burned newspaper offices; there were not even very many harsh words exchanged outside the confines of Congregationalist theological disputes. Masonry may never have recovered in Thetford, but Thetford itself shrugged off the Masonic controversy within a few years. But that the story ended there does not mean historians can simply dismiss anti-Masonry as “paranoid delusions…quickly forgotten“ as Paul Goodman unfortunately did.117

And it is the very decorum of the Masonic battle in Thetford that makes it worthy of study for historians. Thetford was in the heart of Orange County, a major center of revivalism, and Orange County was in the heart of Vermont, a major center of the New England reform project and deeply connected to both the Christian republicanism of the 1830s in general and the rise of anti-Masonry in particular. If historians were going to find any evidence of violence directed against Masons, of campaigns of mass intimidation or slander, they would find it in Thetford. Instead, we find a struggle more cultural than cruel, a battle that was less over the sins of Masons and more a conflict over what sort of town Thetford and its church would be: as anti-Masons might have put it, would Thetford be a place where petty aristocrats could dominate all institutions and squash any attempted dissent, or a place that lived up to the ideals of American

republicanism and Christian equality then sweeping the region? Thetford’s anti-Masons were not ambitious office-seekers or religious fanatics; they were New England republicans determined to protect their liberties against what looked to be an all-powerful secret society. Few in Thetford were seriously concerned with Masonic oaths and sins, but a great many of Thetford’s citizens grew very concerned with faced with the loss of their civil liberties. The religious anti-Masons written about by Paul Goodman were indeed present in Thetford, but even inside the Congregationalist Church the successful anti-Masonic reaction was much more social than religious. Similarly, Thetford’s Masons and their allies appear in the record as neither innocent members of a fraternal society or as sinister agents of Voltaire’s “Illuminatus.”

Rather, they were men of means and power in the community taken by surprise by significant criticism of the order that was a major underpinning of their social and political power in the community. Masonry had been respectable in Vermont for a generation, offering the kind of security necessary for frontier settlement even in relatively law-abiding New England. The turn against Masonry came for economic reasons in concerns against the powerful dominating the state, but it came for cultural reasons as well. This is not to say their opponents were the sort of working-class rebels who were then active among the Workies in New York state and elsewhere: this was a rebellion of wealthy farmers against wealthy townsmen, of neighbors against neighbor. The turn against Masonry came for religious reasons as the Second Great Awakening swept Vermont, but also for political and social reasons as the Jacksonian electorate found a political movement that accommodated their politics. It was a surprise to everyone. When Masons defended themselves against attacks that from their perspective came from nowhere, they pushed too hard and were caught in the reaction against the money power that would dominate Vermont politics for a generation. Anti-Masonry in Thetford, as elsewhere, was

not a reaction against a powerless minority as it has so often been portrayed by historians, nor was it a ‘paranoid reaction’ of evangelical fervor: rather it was a genuine rebellion against a powerful ruling class and the implications of its power for Americans, one that quickly blossomed from concerns about Masons to a larger story about a rebellion against the power of wealth and distinction that was all too American.
Chapter Five:

“The Splendor of the Black Lodges”:
Anti-Masonry and Prince Hall Freemasonry

In September 1831, at the Anti-Masonic Party’s convention in Baltimore that nominated William Wirt for the Presidency, New York businessman and anti-Masonic politician Myron Holley addressed his fellow anti-Masons in terms seemingly better-suited to a politician from considerably further south. “There is a bearing of Freemasonry, not yet embraced in this address, which is replete with the most distressing apprehensions. There is located in Boston a Masonic body, denominated the African Lodge, which dates its origin before the American Revolution, and derived its existence from a Scottish duke. This body acknowledges no allegiance to any of the associations of American Masonry. Its authority is co-extensive with our Union. It has already granted many characters to African Lodges. We are afraid to intimate their location, to look upon their proceedings, to count their inmates, or to specify their resources.” Holley was by no means the only antebellum anti-Mason to connect fears of white Masonic subversion to Southern terrors of black conspiracy. Holley was an abolitionist and later champion of the Liberty Party, but some among his successors were less invested in black rights and more willing to speak openly of the connection between black organization and white Masonry. Twenty years after Holley’s speech, another anti-Mason wrote “Let Freemasonry once spread its baneful influence thoroughly amongst the slaves of our Southern and Western States, and the scenes at St. Domingo would be sunk into insignificance, compared with those which would follow.” During the campaign of 1836, anti-Masons like an anonymous supporter of Massachusetts candidate A.H. Everett openly sneered at the “private life” of the miscegenationist Vice-President (and Mason) Richard Johnson of Kentucky. These were by no means the first time anti-Masonic politicians and leaders would make use of anti-minority rhetoric to fuel their political agenda;
comparisons between the Masons and the Jesuits were common in anti-Masonic literature, with one Anti-Mason turned Know-Nothing of the 1850s warning that “the Catholics were taking over, just as the Masons tried twenty years ago.” Both before and after the Civil War, American Anti-Masons often made direct connections between Catholic and Masonic secretism, sometimes chuckling over occasions when church and lodge were in conflict.\footnote{Proceedings, 1831, 81. Henry Gasset, “Freemasonry of the Colored People in the United States,” in Catalogue of Books on the Masonic Institution, (Boston, Damrell, 1852) 105. n.a. “Anti-Masonic Address, 1836” in National Heritage Museum Collection, Lexington, MA. Henry Dana Ward, Anti-Masonic Review, November 1828, 325. David Brion Davis, “Some Themes…” 212. Jonathan Blanchard, Freemasonry Illustrated, (Chicago, Ezra Cook, 1879), 342.}

But the connection between anti-Masonry and fears of specifically black subversion through what was then often called ‘African Masonry’ seems considerably more complicated than fears of Catholic conspiracy. Anti-Masonry was the first mobilization of the Northern evangelicals who became the anti-slavery politicians and leaders of the next generation. Thaddeus Stevens, Thurlow Weed, and William Seward all got their political start as anti-Masons, with men like Stevens pushing against racial injustice even early in their political careers. As will be discussed below, Myron Holley himself was a leading anti-racist and champion of black equality. Postwar anti-Masons like Jonathan Blanchard vigorously connected their Masonic antagonists to the ‘slave power’ and fears of Confederate subversion, writing that “[Masonry] went south, joined itself to the slave power, ruled the country from Jackson to Lincoln, and came back north by the Democratic party and the war” and early issues of Blanchard’s \textit{Christian Cynosure} are full of attacks on the Klan and other Southern secret societies without direct rhetorical connections to Masonic plots. (Indeed, Blanchard anti-Masonic speakers working for the NCA often were forced to take shelter in African-American communities when attacked by whites during Reconstruction.) Myron Holley himself was a good anti-slavery man, a founder of the Liberty Party alongside John Greenleaf Whittier who had his funeral expenses paid by his old political allies in 1841. Anti-Masonry itself was primarily a
Northern phenomenon; though Southern lodges suffered in the years that their Northern lodge brothers did, anti-Masonry as a mass movement almost universally stopped at the Mason-Dixon Line before 1860.¹²⁰

This chapter will examine the relationship between anti-Masonry and Prince Hall Masonry in the 18th and 19th centuries. The goal here is to sort out the ways that anti-Masons, a stereotypically anti-racist, pro-African-American group, grappled with the ‘problem’ of African-Americans eagerly participating in the institution they so despised, albeit with no cooperation from the white Masons who were (both for anti-Masons and black Masons) generally their primary cultural antagonists. My argument here is as follows: Anti-Masons were skeptical of black Masonry and did criticize it occasionally, calling attention to it in occasional speeches addressed to the black community. They also made use of anti-black rhetoric in occasional failed attempts to reach out to Southern whites. However, Prince Hall Masonry generally survived unmolested by northern Anti-Masons because Northerners could not convince themselves to fear and hate an organization that was ultimately powerless. Though black Masonry provided its members with the same class unity and historical justification that it gave their white counterparts, its inability to connect with the larger American story of civilization made it ultimately a very minor threat to anti-Masonic visions of American civilization. (Ironically, black Masonry did provide for elite means of control in one region: Liberia.) When there were crackdowns against black Masons in the 1840s and 1850s, they came not from anti-Masons but from their enemies: Southern slaveholders who feared the conspiratorial power of black secretism even as they themselves used Masonic lodges as a means of promoting cultural unity among their fellows. Anti-Masonry was simply too much a Northern political party to engage in the kind of hysterical anti-black politics of the South, and by the time Southerners were growing

concerned about black secretism. Northern anti-Masonry was too evangelical, and too Northern, to ever cooperate with Southern slaveholders. Ultimately, however, despite the support of such noteworthies as Frederick Douglass, anti-secretist politics would prove no more successful among blacks than whites. The cultural unity and historical justification provided by Masonry was as important, if not more so, for black Masons as for their white neighbors, as black Masonry provided both artisanal respectability for the upper tier of the black working class and revolutionary reassurance for those who sought social change in the antebellum United States.121

Black Masonry in America dates from the March 6, 1775 induction of Prince Hall and fifteen other Boston free blacks into the Lodge No. 441 of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, a British military lodge attached to the British garrison in contemporary Boston. Hall, soon the master of African Lodge No. 1 of Boston, worked consciously to model black Masonry after white. With its bylaws that declared “All preferment amoninge us is by Real Worth and Personal merit only,” and that “We [will] admit [no one not] having a tongue of Good Reporte,” Hall’s Masonry sounded very much like the elite Ancient and Modern lodges of his neighbors. Indeed, even Hall’s admission through British Masonry was by no means irregular in that era. Many white lodges maintained cultural ties to parent lodges in Britain even after backing the rebellion, and efforts to found a postwar national white grand lodge ultimately because of, among other things, a desire to maintain ties with Great Britain and the historical authenticity it represented. Securing the lodge’s charter through the auspices of the Duke of Cumberland (the Scottish duke who so alarmed Myron Holley a generation later) was a bit more unusual, but even by 1784 many American lodges still had significant ties to Britain. It would not be until the late 1820s that

Boston black Masonry would formally break with Great Britain, as part of an effort to win support for a national black lodge system among their fellows in New York state.\textsuperscript{122}

The connection between British nobility and African Masonry in the United States was something widely remarked on in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, with the white Masonic anti-Prince Hall literature taking time to ridicule the “great EFFINGHAM” who was the patron of Prince Hall Masonry along with the “Mandingo speech” of its members. And it wasn’t just white Masons who took note of the connection. In the Jacksonian period, Myron Holley made sure to remind his audience of that “Scottish duke” to whom black Masons owed their allegiance. In 1852, Henry Gassett made sure to emphasize the “Grand Lodge of England” to whom black Masons allegedly owed allegiance. (Gassett was engaged in an argument with Holley’s speech, showing that African Masons were in fact “genuine freemasons” rather than simply the offspring of one nobleman’s ambitions). For his part, Martin Delaney, apostle of black Masonry, assured his readers that “let it suffice to say, that hostilities which commenced between Great Britain and America in 1775, absolved all Masonic ties between the two countries…” Outside of racial politics, foreign lodges were the greatest champions of African Masonry in the United States, and would be one of the key driving agents of the eventual reconciliation of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. (At least in the North - the postbellum period saw a significant culture clash between white and black Masonry that endures today even in the South.) But in the context of the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the ‘problem’ of foreign influence in the black lodges was something which Prince Hall Masons like Martin Delaney had to grapple with in the public sphere. This

came despite the fact that black Masonry had once been about African-Americans proving they were the social equals of their American neighbors.\textsuperscript{123}

Hall was interested in the economic and social potential of Masonry, promoting it through his efforts at cooperation with whites in Boston as a means of integrating African-Americans into the cultural and economic life of the city while at the same time allowing the nascent black middle class to peel itself away from the growing black working class. In short, he was a typical Mason of the early republic. (Depicted with light skin, a queue, and typically in Masonic dress, the historical image of Hall in relationship to his fellow Masons was always very much in the vein of the respectable middle-class man of the early republican period) Companion lodges sprouted in the years that followed the foundation of the Boston lodge. By 1797 there were African lodges in Philadelphia and Rhode Island, the latter of which would become the parent lodge of Liberian Masonry in a later generation. Within a few years of Hall’s death in 1808, there were black lodges in the District of Columbia, New York City, centers of free black life in contemporary America. By the death of William Morgan in 1826, official Prince Hall lodges had spread to the free black populations of Maryland and Delaware. These were theoretically middle-class organizations that catered to the intersection between the upper tier of the black working class and the tiny middle class of these regions, black membership in the lodges at least theoretically offering a gateway into white social respectability. They were sailors and world-travelers like Nero Prince, Hall’s successor as Grand Master of the Boston African Lodge, doctors like Martin Delany (among the first black doctors in the United States), hair-dressers like Vermont’s Peter Smith (who would later expose the still-sharp tensions between white and black Masons in the 1850s) and other community leaders. They championed Haiti and held rallies

commemorating its independence, in an era when even white evangelicals warned against African nations becoming “another San Domingo.”

This was the public face of black Masonry at the height of Northern anti-Masonry, a loose federation of lodges with no clear national leadership, stretching across the North with an isolated, individual presence only in the Upper South. Despite the middle-class origins of the movement, black Masons were primarily members of the black artisanal class, preachers and carpenters, the upper tier of the black working class. The chief organizing moment of contemporary black Masonry came when black lodges began to spurn union with white lodges and offer themselves independently to African-Americans. Could anti-Masons have made an issue of black Masonry, if they had been so inclined? Certainly there were some contemporary whites who pointed with alarm to the threat of Northern black cooperation and what it represented for Southern blacks. “That a plan has been maturing for many years by the better informed free blacks of the North, most of whom are Free Masons, for the final liberation of the slaves, I firmly believe; and as I firmly believe those plans have been made in the dark recesses of the African lodges,” wrote a correspondent of the National Journal (soon reprinted in the Liberator) wrote a month after the death of Nat Turner. Indeed, the primary antebellum critique of black Masonry was the threat it allegedly posed to slavery. “The white Masons have refused to grant us a Dispensation,” wrote Philadelphia’s black Masons to their would-be parent lodge in Boston in 1797, “fearing that black men living in Virginia would get to be Masons, too.” These were no idle fears. Despite Prince Hall’s pledge, good middle-class assimilator that he was, to avoid any involvement in rebellion, African-Americans across the South were keen to make use of Masonic rhetoric to further ends of revolution. As Corey Walker recently showed, Gabriel’s

Rebellion of 1800 was grounded solidly in Masonic language and understanding. “That the first time he heard anything of a conspiracy and insurrection among the blacks was from the prisoner [George] that he came to his house at dusk or dark where he was cutting wood, and asked him if he would join a free-masons society; this deponent [Ben] replied no, because all free-masons would go to hell; upon this, the prisoner said it was not a freemason society he wished him to join, but a society to fight the white people for their freedom…” Indeed, as Walker points out, there is substantial evidence for the involvement of exiled French Masons (if only at one remove) as confederates of Gabriel and his allies, given Gabriel’s warnings against attacking French whites in particular and the fears of white American masons that their French lodge brothers were a “subversive and potentially destabilizing element.”¹²⁵

Ben Woolfolk’s testimony was largely ignored in 1800; the anti-Illuminati panic of the era (really a fear of specifically French cultural and political subversion through the lens of Masonry) had largely played itself out and anyway had largely been confined to Jedidiah Morse’s New England. But by the two decades before the Civil War, Southern whites were beginning to meaningfully crack down on black Masonry. Maryland, ever-fearful in the post-Turner era of free black socialization, cracked down on black lodges in the 1840s. “Every free negro or mulatto who [joins a secret society] shall be deemed guilty of a felony and [be sold to pay the fine]” if caught. On a second offense, black Masons apprehended in Baltimore (even those from out of state like those dangerous African Masons of Boston) would be sold into slavery for life. And indeed, as Wallace and DuBois noted, white Southerners were right to fear

the freedmen and elite slaves who were the leaders of black Masonry in the Upper South: artisans like Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, and others would become leaders of slave resistance or out and out revolts all through the antebellum period. Three years later, Baltimore finally allowed elite black charitable societies to meet, should they pay heavy taxes to the state and allow white representatives to join their ranks, a measure that Virginia newspapers in the 1850s advocated for their own free black population. “We understand,” wrote the American Beacon in 1852, “that there are other secret societies here among the negroes. They have their meetings regularly and have adopted secret signs and tokens. We have not heard their names the others taken, one may be the order of the Lone Star [emphasis in the original] for all we know. But think that in these times of impudence and insubordination among this class of our population, these societies, should be ferreted out and broken up.” (That the Beacon found the idea of black Masons as absurd as black members of the order of the Lone Star (a pro-Southern empire group that sought to promote American expansion into the South and West) will be explored in a subsequent chapter.) 126

From the perspective of white Americans, black Masonry continued to grow more threatening as the decades went on. By the 1850s, Martin Delany was completing the cultural authentication ‘leg’ of Prince Hall Masonry, calling back to an imagined Ethiopian and Egyptian heritage (in much the same language that his white Masonic peers used when they called back to the Bible, Greece, and Rome) while at the same time moving towards a vision of black nationhood as radical and nationalistic as anything espoused by his contemporary European radical Masons like Garibaldi and Forbes. Delany would remain one of the intellectual fathers of Prince Hall Masonry through the postbellum period, and remains one of the most influential African-American intellectuals of his generation. But for the most part, white anti-Masons and

their allies continued to ignore the ‘threat’ of black Masonry throughout the postbellum period. Though Jonathan Blanchard attacked ‘Colored Masonry’ with the same authority that the National Christian Association opposed any other manifestation of secretism in postbellum America, Blanchard’s focus remained on the threat posed by white Masons to African-Americans, particularly through what he charged was their catspaw: the Klu Klux Klan. William Lloyd Garrison, an anti-Mason with close professional and personal ties to some of the leading anti-Masons of Massachusetts, went further. (Garrison became so associated with the anti-slavery cause and the eventual withdrawal from politics that accompanied it that it is easy to forget that he, like many northern evangelicals, was an active contributor to anti-Masonry early in his career.) Even in the antebellum period, he used black Masonry as a means to attack white Masonry and racial prejudice in the contemporary United States, sneering at the white Masons who were “ashamed of being on equality with blacks. [Emphasis in the original.]…It is evident from this that, neither avowedly or tacitly do the blacks admit the pre-eminence of the whites; but it is as evident, a pre-eminence is claimed by the whites.” For radicals like Garrison, black Masonry represented the ‘lie’ of white Masonry, proof that Masonic claims about universal brotherhood beneath the Masonic banner were false.\footnote{Martin Delany, \textit{Principia of Ethnology} (Philadelphia, Harper, 1879) 23. William Lloyd Garrison to Anonymous, June 29, 1832. \textit{The Liberator}, September 7, 1832, March 19, 1831. Immigrant Masons, those who rejected the race bar to membership, were not included in Garrison’s analysis, but then Garrison’s cultural-political views were grounded in particularly American understandings.}

And indeed, Garrison was probably right to be so suspicious, at least of his fellow Americans. (European and Asian Masonic lodges had traditionally been fundamentally multiracial, as in Britain and the Philippines; it is no accident that Prince Hall went specifically to a British lodge to secure his legitimization in the 1770s.) Though traditionally white Masonic lodges opposed fellowship with black Masons over concerns over Prince Hall’s charter, the demographic history of white resistance to black Masonry remains suspicious. It was primarily
white Southern Masons like Charles Mitchell of Texas who led the opposition to Prince Hall Masonry in the 20th century, and to this day it is the white lodges of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, West Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Florida that continue to disemfellow their black lodge counterparts. 19th century Freemasons were even more explicit, at least in their private writings. Though publically declaiming any racial animus against black lodges, the postbellum elder statesman of Masonry, Albert Pike, was explicit when speaking (or so he thought) only to his fellow Masons. “I am not inclined to meddle in the matter [the integration of black lodges]. I took my obligations to white men, not to Negroes. When I have to accept negroes as Brothers or to leave Masonry, I shall leave it. Better to let the thing drift. Apres nous, le deluge.”

But Masons had no monopoly on institutional racism, or the clandestine use of race, in the politics of the 19th century. Indeed, even most anti-Masons lacked Garrison’s instinctive egalitarianism. Nativism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism were all in some ways intimately connected to the reflexive evangelical Protestantism of many anti-Masons; for them Masonic claims of egalitarianism were proofs of sin in and of themselves rather than false claims to be rebutted. “To make their institutions palatable,” lamented one anti-Mason, “they [Masons] have incorporated into their rites and ceremonies, Christian, Jewish, Mahomedan, and heathen rites; and probably, if they had it in their power, would spread their religion by the sword.” So why did these northern anti-Masons, men like Myron Holley and Henry Gassett, not make more aggressive use of anti-black rhetoric to promote their cause in the South? They surely could have used the help. Though lodges across the Deep South were fissuring and collapsing in the 1820s and 1830s, with even Southern stalwarts like Quitman’s Mississippi faltering, there never was a

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successful anti-Masonic political breakthrough in the South. (Erickson, a Masonic lay historian, agreed that there were significant declines in Southern Masonic membership in the anti-Masonic period, but blamed those on local causes rather than the anti-Masonic movement itself.) Though anti-Masons occasionally made efforts to reach out to Southerners; nominating William Wirt (as an alternative to Henry Clay) and paying occasional lip service to the threat of black Southern lodges, anti-masons never made a serious effort to engage Southerners in the areas of secret power they feared the most.129

As mentioned above, part of the issue was that Northern black Masonic lodges were simply not very threatening to white northerners when compared to their white counterparts. A loose coalition of several thousand middle-class African-Americans, most of whom were at best artisans or small merchants catering to their local communities, was far less likely to threaten the republican liberties of the day than the hundreds of thousand strong various Masonic orders of the Jacksonian period, whose members were not the heads of a nearly powerless minority but leading members of powerful local, state, and national communities. Beyond that, however, was that ultimately black and white Masons had fundamentally different visions of citizenship, Americanism, and Freemasonry as a whole, a divided vision that ultimately put black Masons far closer culturally and politically to northern anti-Masons than white Masons. Part of this divide can be seen in the language that Frederick Douglass, a close ally of Northern anti-Masons like Garrison and Stevens, used in his criticism of black Masonry in the antebellum period. “for in popular demonstrations of odd-fellowship, free-masonry and the like, we expend annually from ten to twelve thousand dollars. If we put forth a call for a National Convention, for the purpose of considering our wrongs, and asserting our rights…., we shall bring together about fifty; but if we call a grand celebration of odd- fellowship, or free-masonry, we shall assemble, as was the

case a few days ago in New York, from four to five thousand — the expense of which alone would be from seventeen to twenty thousand dollars…We should not say this of odd-fellowship and free-masonry, but that it is swallowing up the best energies of many of our best men, contenting them with the glittering follies of artificial display, and indisposing them to seek for solid and important realities…” Douglas went on to charge that whites preferred the social implications of black Freemasonry with its pomp, display, and middle-class aspirations to the genuine radicalism of social reform. “We do not pretend that all the members of odd-fellow societies and masonic lodges are indifferent to their rights and the means of obtaining them…We desire to see these noble men expending their time, talents and strength for higher and nobler objects than any that can be attained by the weak and glittering follies of odd-fellowship and freemasonry.” Douglass does not see black Masonry as liable to lead to a slave revolt or popular uprising, he views it as a waste of time for African-Americans looking for self-betterment, and arguably one that ultimately served the interests of whites. What Douglass omitted, however, was that there genuinely was a revolutionary component to black Masonry, one very different than the republican social conservatism largely espoused by their white counterparts but intimately compatible with the ultimately democratic vision of American anti-Masonry. Sometimes this came in relatively tame form as (after the Civil War) when black Masons like Boston’s Lewis Hayden joined anti-Masons in vigorously attacking the Johnson administration and its betrayal of the aspirational visions of the Civil War. Other times, divergences were even more radical. There were some black Masons who were very much the would-be Jacobins that white Masons putatively feared.130

130Frederick Douglass, “What Are the Colored People Doing For Themselves?” July 14, 1848. At http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=766 Lewis Hayden Caste among Masons : address before Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the state of Massachusetts at the festival of St. John, (Boston, 1866, np.) 72.
The idea of a coalition, even an unspoken one, between Anti-Masons and European-affiliated secretist radicals is non-intuitive enough that it deserves further explanation. After all, 19th century anti-Masons drew strongly from nativist tropes while condemning Masons. In the 1880s, Jonathan Blanchard charged in the 1880s that “Communism, Socialism, and Nihilism…are but aliases of the Secret Lodge System,” while a generation earlier anti-Masons had made charges that Masonry was “tyrannical and slavish…of kings and slaves and bigots, etc.” More plainly, at the same anti-Masonic convention that nominated William Wirt and where Myron Holley first murmured against the threat of African Lodges, American anti-Masons (in a rare moment of shared memory with their Catholic counterparts across the Atlantic and in Latin America) charged that “…the commencement of the French revolution [showed] that this deluge of human blood, and the subsequent anarchy of that nation, resulted, not so much from the true spirit of national liberty, as from the principles of infidelity [emphasis in the original] extensively propagated in every country of Europe, by means of secret associations.” So how can we explain the idea that anti-Masons and black Masons were ultimately on the same page? Part of the distinction is simply an issue of chronology; by the time significant elements of black Masonry were radicalized by the increasingly slave-driven society of the 1850s, anti-Masonry was largely in abeyance. When Henry Gasset blasted the threat of black Masonry and praised Maryland’s crackdowns against black secretism, he was one of the very few American anti-Masons who had not prioritized the anti-slavery cause over the anti-Masonic one. But the other reason is that ultimately the shared vision of Northern civic society they shared was not so different. 131

The radical roots of black Masonry have only recently been explored by contemporary scholars, Peter Hinks’ To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren being the contemporary foundational text of the dialogue. Black Masons like Martin Delany and James McCune Smith were indeed part of

an secretist international revolutionary movement expressed through the Masonic lodges, closely affiliated with European radicals like Hugh Forbes and Giuseppe Garibaldi. With white skin they might have been the kind of upwardly mobile, middle-class businessmen and intellectuals that Prince Hall and his immediate followers had aspired to be, but with racial tensions rising in antebellum America black Masons became leaders in espousing a revolutionary, inclusive vision of American citizenship. Though rightly considered an early black nationalist (along with his colleague Delany) and condemned even by his fellow white radicals as promoting “a counter race contempt, antagonism, and rage” against whites, Smith was ultimately a radical first. “Money is not that nobler [American] ideal but liberty, equality, human brotherhood, in a word manhood, that is the nobler ideal.” Similarly, Martin Delany, though he called back to African legacies and Egyptian heritages through Masonry, remained committed to an American vision of citizenship. “We are Americans,” wrote Delany in 1852, “having a birthright citizenship—natural claims upon the country—claims common to all others of our fellow citizens—natural rights, which may, by virtue of unjust laws, be obstructed, but never can be annulled. Upon these do we place ourselves, as immovably fixed as the decrees of the living God. But according to the economy that regulates the policy of nations, upon which rests the basis of justifiable claims to all freeman's rights, it may be necessary to take another view of, and enquire into the political claims of colored men.”

Interestingly, despite the power of Prince Hall Masons in Liberia, Delany and most of his fellow black Masons (like the African-American community as a whole in antebellum America) were deeply skeptical of the Liberian experiment, at least until the failure of Reconstruction seemed to prove that black citizenship was an insurmountable obstacle in the context of 19th

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century America. In happier times, Delany wrote that “Liberia in Africa, is a mere dependency of Southern slaveholders, and American Colonizationists, and unworthy of any real respect from us.” Though white Masons like Quitman and Gonzales could find common cause with their Masonic lodge brothers in the United States and Cuba, Delany had no such imagination that Masonry would make good citizens in Liberia, despite the power that black Masonry had in a country where in 1851 the President and his brother were eagerly petitioning white lodges in America and Germany for authentication for their lodge. Even when Delany came to embrace emigration to Liberia, he had no illusions about Masonic power there. Note that even this early, however, Delany is not skeptical of the idea of black emigration as such: he simply notes with contempt that Liberia is not a *de facto* independent republic.¹³³

For men like Delany, then, black Masonry was not the guarantee of citizenship that it would ultimately become for whites: it lacked the arrogance that Stephen Bullock has noted so alarmed anti-Masons about white masonry. Some black Masons went further than Delany and Smith. While the latter was closely affiliated with radicals like John Brown, further west black Mason Moses Dickson was building a private, secret army (just the sort of thing that Blanchard and others would later insist Masonry was for Albert Pike in the 1860s) through the mechanisms of Masonry. The Cincinnati-born Dickson’s Knights of Liberty (aka the Knights of Tabor or the International Order of the Twelve) began first as a planned insurrectionist army before shifting focus to support for aiding black fugitives in St. Louis and assisting their migration West; a mirror image of what Dickson’s white counterparts were doing with Border Ruffians going to Kansas in much the same period. The would-be revolutionary settled down after the war and

became a leader of Missouri black Masonry, as well as a champion of the Exoduster movement of a later generation.  

In short, Dickson was that chimerical figure of terror for anti-Masons before and after the Civil War: a Mason plotting to lead a revolutionary insurrection inside the United States, then maintaining a secret army during the Civil War. As Mark Lause noted in Secret Society, Dickson’s claims may have been exaggerated postwar puffery, but enough evidence exists of a loose national network of revolutionary African-Americans of the period to make their absence from anti-Masonic political and cultural rhetoric suggestive. Anti-Masons certainly had no hesitation about blasting Albert Pike, the Confederate general turned Masonic statesman who was “leader of a burlesque baptism, the leader of the rebel Indians, who murdered and scalped the Union soldiers at the battle of Pea Ridge.” Some of this was no doubt the resentment of evangelicals against a successful ex-Confederate (as discussed in the chapter on Pike and Blanchard), but anti-Masons were equally willing to attack the Grand Army of the Republic and its members for the secrecy of their orders and otherwise lambaste even erstwhile allies for their connections to Masonry. “The Masons "and Grand Army of the Republic, the two secret orders which set the fashion of parading one day annually in the church.” Even other secret orders of the day relatively unconnected to Masonry were the subject of anti-Masonic skepticism, with the Fenians and the Grange all associated with attacks by the NCA. The union of evangelical Republicans that attacked the “small Masonic monkeyshines of Colfax and Grant” would surely not have hesitated to target any potential Masonic threat. But the anti-Masons of the day were almost completely silent on the subject of Moses Dickson and his no-fooling revolutionary army, despite the fact that Dickson, grand master of the Prince Hall Masons of Missouri by the early  

1870s, was surely famous enough to be known by these national organizations. And if the anti-Masons weren’t looking at Dickson, or Hugh Forbes, John Brown’s military advisor and revolutionary European Mason, or the many other international American Masons involved in trans-racial politics in the antebellum US, that’s a significant fact in and of itself.135

So why didn't they so look? Because the only people interested in cracking down on black secretism in the antebellum period in any meaningful way were antithetical to Northern anti-Masons in every way that mattered: white slave-owners of the Border South both fearful of the threat of slave revolt organized through black Masonry and eager to make life in Maryland as unpleasant as possible for free African-Americans. On January 15, 1842, a gathering of Maryland slaveholders petitioned the state legislature “That no meeting of negroes for any purpose shall be permitted after sunset; and all laws inconsistent with provision, to be repealed.” It was a divisive convention, one with vigorous debates about what rights slaveholders should accord African-Americans, but the notion of banning black secret meetings passed without a whimper. A year later, the state legislature responded to the fears of their white slaveholding constituents. “Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, That from and after the passage of this act, it shall not be lawful for any negro or mulatto in this state to become or continue to be a member of any secret society whatever, whether such society shall hold its meetings in or without the limits of this state.” The law targeted both in-state and out-of-state black Masons, responding to Southern fears of interstate black conspiracy behind the walls of secretism. Driven by a petition from the Baltimore courts, the law was a product of the fears of urban whites in particular about the black secret orders of the city. Black Masonry in Baltimore dated back to 1825; one of the oldest black lodge systems in the South. Penalties were steep (as

laws targeting free blacks generally were in Maryland in this period), calling for heavy fines and imprisonment for a first offense, and being 'sold south' for a second. These were harsh penalties even for the period, as noted in contemporary newspapers. There were friends of secret societies in the legislature that day, but no one objected: negroes ‘professing to be masons’ were not given the same kinds of social and cultural consideration by slaveholding whites that white Masons got, not even a lesser degree of Masonic respect.  

Elsewhere in the South, restrictions like this were generally unnecessary. Lacking a large black middle class, states in the Deep South and Upper South could control their black population by generalized crackdowns on black autonomy and meetings in the first place. Only in the Border South, with a black middle class gradually gaining connections to the free black middle class of the North, were these anti-Masonic laws necessary. Before 1860, black Masonry in the South had spread only to Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, all areas with unusually large free black populations possessing a respectable African-American middle-class. The history of exactly when black lodges opened in various Southern states remains contentious. I am using Muraskin's analysis (derived from Palmer) here. (There is much to be said on the complicated issue of Freemasonry among African-American members of the Cherokee Nation in what was then the Indian Territory. That work that will have to wait for a scholar of Native American history to take a closer look at the subject.) In Richmond, by the 1850s, Virginia black Masons faced similar steep restrictions. “If any negro shall organize, or attempt to organize, or form any secret society of negroes, for any purpose whatsoever, or [attend a meeting], he shall be punished [by whipping.]” Things were more quiescent in Delaware, as was usually the case in the history of slavery. In Kentucky, meanwhile, black Masons in Louisville were able to carve out a kind of

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cooperative relationship with their white lodge confederates relatively unusual in the South, with white Masons occasionally defending black Masons from anti-black organization laws in the region, as with the mass arrest of the Mt. Moriah lodge in 1853. But this kind of cooperation was rare, black Masonry in the South generally functioning as something close to the Masonic lodges of revolutionary Italy in this period rather than as a vehicle for cooperation with local whites.\textsuperscript{137}

Staying on the subject of race, Anti-Masons tended to be particular defenders of Native Americans against the depredation of white settlers, one of the many reasons that anti-Masonry had so much difficulty penetrating into the West. However, some Native Americans like Ely Parker found homes and a place for themselves in the context of Masonic lodges. Parker, most famous for his role as a champion of antebellum Native American identity and in his service as one of Grant's lieutenants during the Civil War, was also one of the leading Masons of the 1850s. Inducted into Batavia Lodge No. 88 in 1847 (the same lodge whose master William Seaver had led the arrest of William Morgan two decades previously, albeit having closed down and reopened in the meantime), Parker found a kinship in the lodges that his skin color and origin made it very difficult for him to find in the broader community. Parker moved to US Grant's Galena in the 1840s, where his Masonic membership shielded him from some of the particularly virulent anti-Indian racism extant on the much more active American frontier. (Wars against Native Americans had happened within a few years in the region). But the lodge's protection for Parker came at a price. “Where shall I go when the last of my race shall have gone forever?” Parker famously asked the same Chicago convention of 1859 that tried and failed to bring about a national Grant Lodge, “Where shall I find home and sympathy when our last council-fire is extinguished...I will knock on the door of MASONRY...” As did other Native Americans,

particularly those recruited (much to the ire of anti-Masons) by Albert Pike, Parker found equality in Masonic lodges – but only as a member of a noble, dying race. His African-American brothers-in-arms generally found the problem of their skin to be insoluble within the context of white lodges.¹³⁸

The racial question would ultimately be one of the chief reasons why a national anti-Masonic Party was impossible. Anti-Masons though they were, it is impossible to imagine abolitionists like Myron Holley (much less Frederick Douglass!) making common cause with Southerners to break the power of black secret societies. Could Holley, who famously “declined to accept office from the Whigs on condition of being gagged by slavery,” whose daughter Sallie became one of the great champions of black citizenship and African-American education, have allied with Maryland slaveholders? Holley might have feared the power of black Masonry in the North, but note that his criticisms of black Masonry are focused on its secrecy rather than the threat of Masonic power or its corrupting effects on the citizenry. He certainly did not fear black organization nor black civic life in the 19th century United States. On the other end of things, Frederick Douglass's “We should not say this of odd-fellowship and free-masonry, but that it is swallowing up the best energies of many of our best men, contenting them with the glittering follies of artificial display, and indisposing them to seek for solid and important realities. The enemies of our people see this tendency in us, and encourage it. The same persons who would puff such demonstrations in the newspapers, would mob us if we met to adopt measures for obtaining our just rights. They see our weak points, and avail themselves of them to crush us. We are imitating the inferior qualities and examples of white men, and neglecting superior ones. We

do not pretend that all the members of odd-fellow societies and masonic lodges are indifferent to
their rights and the means of obtaining them; for we know the fact to be otherwise,” speaks to the
reality of the black Masonic experience from the perspective of an outsider, with no secret fears
of its power. 139

Overall, the anti-Masonic movement in the North had very little impact on the spread of
black Masonry in the region, or indeed in the South despite the efforts of people like Blanchard
and Hinman to direct upwardly mobile African-Americans towards education and schools rather
than to secret lodges. Indeed, as with the contemporary spread of fraternities, many black
Masonic lodges greatly benefited from the sudden easy availability of Masonic literature and
speakers during the 1820s and 1830s with the loss of so much white Masonic employment and
with the easy availability of Masonic secrets now that Morgan's work had seen publication.
Frederick Douglass' skepticism about the utility of black Masonry did not survive, in large part,
the Civil War, probably because black Masonry became so essential to black community and
spread so rapidly in the postwar period into the South and elsewhere. By the late 19th century,
most black leaders in the 'mainstream' were comfortable with black secretism, particularly the
ever-accommodating Booker T. Washington, with only a few evangelicals still critical of the
power of black lodges. But those evangelicals were indeed critical, using the same criticisms
they had deployed against white masonry to focus specifically on secret societies among African-
Americans. 140

With anti-black secretism laws tightly incorporated into the project of destroying the
black middle class and placating fears of black rebellion, it would have been impossible for anti-

139Wright, Holly, 276. Dorothy Schneider, Slavery in America, (New York, Facts on File, 2007), 446.

140Booker T. Washington, The Story of the Negro, (PA, U Penn, 2005 ed), 148-170. x. Christian Cynosure, July 18,
1895, n.p.
Masons to make common cause with the anti-black Masons of the South. When black Masonry did spread to the South in the 1860s, it came behind Union armies as in Louisiana and elsewhere that black citizenship necessarily translated into that understudied tier of black manhood in the 19th century: Masonry. Anti-Masonry was a Northern party, with even those few Southern anti-Masons located in areas with strong northern settlement like west-central North Carolina. (The Journal was published in Wake County, then particularly full of gold miners, many of whom had come from the North. It is difficult to imagine any other Southern newspapers but an anti-Masonic one complaining about the 'manstealers' afoot in Wake County. ) Some Northern anti-Masons did eventually turn their attention to black Masonry, Jonathan Blanchard and others. HH Hinman, an anti-Masonic speaker on the payroll of the National Christian Association, wrote after the Civil War that “Whatever may have been the previous convictions of those engaged in the education of the colored youths of the South, they have with great unanimity concluded that [secret societies] are pernicious and...out of place in a republican government.” Similarly, other religious critics of Masonry launched their own attacks against black Masonry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of this came simply from numbers; black membership in Masonic orders naturally swelled with emancipation. But another is an issue of culture: by the late 19th century, the need for common cause against the mutual enemy in the South was no longer an issue for most Northern evangelicals. Even Jonathan Blanchard, who remained an anti-racist to his grave, had come to accept the power of Southern whites, writing that “at least they were more trustworthy” than Northern whites who had only embraced abolition after Southern secession. The decline of the culture war of Reconstruction meant that Northern evangelicals inclined to anti-Masonry no longer needed to avoid attacking African-Americans so as to avoid appearing too Southern. The alliance between Prince Hall Masonry and anti-Masonry, always an unspoken one directed against a mutual enemy, no longer mattered.  

141

Members of a despised minority, members of the upper tier of the black artisanal working class, whose cultural agenda often masked a close affiliation with international radicalism and the fomenting of domestic insurrection, 'Prince Hall' Masons were seemingly the perfect antagonists for the anti-Masons of antebellum North America. Conflicts were rare, however, as black Masons were too powerless, too non-threatening, and ultimately too closely affiliated with the social, cultural, and political agenda of Anti-Masons to make convenient scapegoats for the anti-Masonic agenda. The older generation of anti-Masons like Henry Gasset and Myron Holley did occasionally call attention to the revolutionary threat of black Masonry, but the new generation, men like Stevens, Seward, Garrison, and the other radicals for whom anti-Masonry would be the first step into anti-slavery politics, as well as black leaders skeptical of Masonry like Frederick Douglass, seemingly recognized that African-American Masonry shared a common agenda with them: breaking down the orders that “elevated a few who subverted republican equality, corrupted morals, and betrayed Christianity,”; the power of the white supremacist, republican power of the South with its close alliance with the republican, whites-only world of Freemasonry. Though postwar anti-Masons like Jonathan Blanchard eventually broke with “colored Masonry” once the common threat of the South was no longer an issue, black Masonry was never a significant issue of concern for northern Anti-Masons because of the relationship between Masonry and Southerness, and thus anti-Masonry and Northerness. How that tie came to be, and how it played out in the context of Southern society, is the provenance of the next chapter.142

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142 Goodman, 241.
Chapter Six
“And Every Lodge a Hotbed of Secession…”:
The Connections Between Masonry and Southern Identity in the Culture of
19th Century America

On July 3, 1863, for the second time in his military career, Lewis Addison Armistead
charged a fortified Union position at the head of his brigade and met with yet another defeat.
This time, amid a hail of bullets that blasted open his arm and leg, it cost him his life. Though
rescued by Union forces and taken to a military hospital, the badly-wounded Armistead died of
sepsis on July 5, 1863. Armistead’s death at the culmination of Pickett’s Charge helped make
him a hero of the Lost Cause memory of the war, most recently commemorated in the 1993 film
Gettysburg. With his bisectional friendship with Union General Winfield Hancock and his
famous deathbed repentance, Armistead seemed the perfect dead hero of white postwar memory.
A member of Alexandria-Washington Masonic Lodge No. 22, Armistead was also the hero of
postwar Masonic memory, a champion of Masonic virtues who had allegedly died a secular
martyr in the arms of a brother Mason from the North while the battle raged all around them.
Armistead became a legend whose story in death became far more influential, and certainly far
better known, than his not-particularly-successful military career could have been. Though
contemporary historiography has largely refuted the more hagiographic accounts of Armistead’s
death, the story of his death and what it represented about trans-sectional Masonic unity made it
an important narrative for his fellow successors. The war remains a key moment in the history of
American public memory, and Masons are no exception – the trans-sectional nature of American
Masonry is one of the most popular narratives about the history of the lodges in 19th century
America. 143

143James E. Poindexter, "An Address Delivered Before R. E. Lee Camp No. 1, C.V., Richmond, Va., January 29,
In 1995, amateur Masonic historian Justin Lowe turned his attention to the history of Masons in the Civil War, writing, “the War seemed to destroy the bonds of any organization it touched. All the organizations, that is, except one: Freemasonry.” Lowe’s conclusions about the “subtle but pervasive influence of the Masonic fraternity during the war” are the common Masonic story of the Civil War, echoed by Masonic historians from Albert Mackey to Michael Halleran. In their account, Masonry was a trans-sectional institution of mercy and fraternalism, one that allied itself with no cause during the conflict. (Of course, what those historians is talking about is specifically white Freemasonry. Prince Hall Masons like Martin Delany were among the first African-American troops to enlist in the Union Army, and their experience as community leaders, organizers, and professionals often prepared them for political careers after the war. Like other institutions of black freedom, Prince Hall lodges followed the Union Army and by the end of the Civil War had spread through the old Confederacy like wildfire.)

There was indeed much trans-sectional white Masonry during the Civil War. According to Masonic historians, hundreds of thousands of Masons served in the Union and Confederate armies. (The traditional Masonic figures list about 300,000 Masons as serving, a plausible fraction of the 5.5 million who fought. Given that Masonic historians have not been above spreading emotive folktales about Masonic service in the War, we should take this figures with a grain of salt – it served the interest of no Mason to downplay Masonic service. But on the other hand, the heavily Southern white male base of Masonry, the kind of ambitious or social man with something to gain from the lodges, was a natural source for enlistment during the conflict.) Masons in the war, as usually generally drawn from the ranks of the middle class and above, represented nearly all factions of the conflict - everything from secessionist generals like Lew Armistead to Charlestonian Unionists like Albert Mackey, from Union generals like Winfield

Scott Hancock to Lincoln’s Radical Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. (Though even Stanton, who would end his life as one of the most vigorous opponents of the Slave Power, had begun his political career as a member of Jackson’s Democracy. Masons were otherwise generally hard to find among anti-slavery men) To a certain extent, this vision of trans-sectional Freemasonry is a product of the consciously apolitical, broadly-appealing postwar Masonry of Albert Pike’s generation, but it cannot be denied that Masonry was indeed a trans-sectional institution during the Civil War. “American Masons know no north, no south, no east, no west, but only one common country, united and indivisible,” wrote James Southgate in 1867, the Ohioan speaking for an entire generation of Masons.145

But though Masons claimed trans-sectionality, Anti-Masons had a very specific, very sectional vision of their antagonists. Anti-Masons charged that “During the rebellion, every Masonic lodge was a hotbed for treason, and every one a council chamber of secession…they had means of communication little understood even at this day, power that could not be measured, and almost unlimited wealth, and they used it to foster civil war.” Anti-Masons blamed Masons for “eight millions of our people fighting for slavery, a cause which would have been their ultimate ruin.” In 1868, very early editions of the Christian Cynosure specifically (and accurately) saw parallels between Southern Masonry and the Klu Klux Klan then freshly in the business of destroying black sovereignty. (The Klan consciously borrowed the rituals of Masonry as a way of appealing to whites already familiar with secret societies, and of course thanks to the recruitment base of the first Klan many of their early members like Nathan Bedford Forrest (and perhaps Albert Pike) were Masons) Given the source, perhaps this is not too surprising.

Blanchard, after all, blamed not only the “Ku Klux” and “Knights of the Golden Circle,” on Masonry, but also “Communism, Socialism, and Nihilism,” conflating all as “aliases of the secret lodge system.” But Blanchard was by no means the only contemporary to make that connection. “Much surprise was expressed at the great number of Masonic Lodges met with,” wrote a Union soldier near the end of the war, “They appeared more plenty in [the South] than they are in the North…That the Confederates realized their need of a cementing agency will not be questioned, and that men sufficiently corrupt were numbered among its members, is also patent.” (Having provided the previous quote, Halleran drops the issue almost entirely – a telling moment for what is putatively a history of the intersection between Freemasonry and the Civil War.)\textsuperscript{146}

Absent from the anti-Masonic literature (and the Masonic from this period, for that matter) is any grappling with the existing divisions between American Masonry. The tensions between York Rite and Scottish Rite, between northern Scottish and southern Scottish Rite, are largely absent from both Masonic and anti-Masonic literature of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The truth is that talking about Masonic divisions served the interest of neither Mason nor anti-Masons. Masonic authenticity was grounded on its age and distinctive cultural authority, thus making rival Masonic factions something to ignore. Masons discuss their rivals largely in the context of anti-Masonry, suggesting that it must have been those other Masons whose stories anti-Masons were telling. Similarly, for anti-Masons who saw all secret lodges as Masonic pawns and threats against their society, divisions between Masons were easily worth dismissing – if anything, as discussed in the Prince Hall chapter, ‘outlaw’ Masons appear in anti-Masonic literature with alarm as Masons whom even the lodges can no longer control. Masons emphasized the trans-sectional nature of their institution (when in fact Southern Scottish Rite probably had the advantage in at least organization, and would ultimately be victorious in the factional disputes

after the war), while anti-Masons emphasized the Southern domination of the institution. Admittedly, while Masonic emphasis on nationalism had strong antebellum roots, anti-Masonic attacks on the Southern nature of Masonry largely originate from wartime and postbellum cultural clashes. Significantly, as will be discussed below, Southern emphasis on the Northern nature of anti-Masonry can be traced back to the Jacksonian period.\textsuperscript{147}

Southerners had ample reason to see connections between themselves and Masonry. By the 1850s, more than ten percent of the eligible white male population of Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida, were Freemasons, with nearly as impressive numbers throughout the Old Southwest. By percentage of population, every slave state had an outsized Masonic contingent. Only Gideon Welles’s Connecticut even approached the kinds of Masonic numbers seen in typical slave states, and even Connecticut lay far behind the typical Southern state. This should be no surprise – the Old Southwest was a famously violent, corrupt place where debts ran high, men went bust, and in which an institution like Freemasonry, with its promise of personal and financial stability, was even more valuable than elsewhere in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century United States. But the survival of Southern Masonry, particularly Southwestern Masonry, had a particularly doleful effect on the relationship between Masonry and section. As discussed elsewhere in this work, Masonic lodges and other secretist groups like KGC castles did indeed become cauldrons of southern imperialism in the Caribbean, Border Ruffian infiltration of Missouri, and a great many other moments of secret slaver action. It was a Confederate general who became the progenitor of postwar Masonry, not a Union man. The roots of the sectional divergence of Masonry deserve closer examination.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{147}Brent Morris, \textit{Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry}, (Evans, Chicago, 2010), 141, 2010 ed. Sources for the divide do exist, as in Henry Evans’s \textit{The History of the York and Scottish Rite in Freemasonry}, but are largely ignored by contemporary Masonic historiography.

\textsuperscript{148}Halleran, 52-53. Halleran has done the number crunching here, but his statistics are supported by the contemporary census and Masonic sources like Robert Morris from 1860.

http://www.matawanlodge.org/famous.htm
Masonic Membership in 1858 compared with the 1860 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No. of Lodges</th>
<th>No. of Members</th>
<th>1860 Male Census 18-45</th>
<th>% of Masons By Population</th>
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</tbody>
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1859 Masonic census derived from the 1859 Grand Lodge convention in Chicago. As Halleran admits, there are some problems with these numbers. There were, of course, many Masons over the age of 45 in the late 1850s. Additionally, the figures derive from a Masonic census associated with a failed attempt at the formation of a National Grand Lodge. One of many failed attempts at the formation of a national American overseeing body of Masonry, the convention, attended by then-Masonic luminaries like Albert Pike and Ely Parker, failed as a result of stiff opposition from state lodges like those in Iowa, New York, and several other regions. Masonic historians have generally presented this failure at national organization as being a result of competition over ritual, with the acknowledgement that no national lodge system could bring unity to the wide variety of 19th century Masonic rituals. (It would take a significant revision of them by Albert Pike after the war to make anything like a national rite system possible) Many states sent observers rather than full delegations (though their statistics were still included in the overall tabulation) and it is hard to call their results scientific. But since the absences from the 1859 convention were not sectional (Alabama and Rhode Island did not attend the convention except as observers, neither did Ohio or Tennessee) and with no evidence in the literature to suggest a plethora of elderly Masons in any particular region, we can take the general impression of Halleran's numbers, showing a strong overrepresentation of Masonry in the South, as trustworthy. The overall culprit behind the failure of antebellum Masonic unification seems to have been inertia – lacking any existential threat by the 1850s, with state lodges much less
threatening to the public than a national one might have been, Masons were willing to keep with their traditions. 149

And as discussed elsewhere, cultural threats against Masonry were quite real in the 19th century. No one event was more threatening to American Masonry than the rise of the anti-Masonic movement. But that threat came in very different ways, north and south. Of the hundreds of Masonic lodges in New York state open in the 1820s according to Albert Mackey (given the many divisions and factions within Masonic orders, as well as inaccurate histories, it's tough to pin down exact figures: Mackey's data because he was among the most widely accepted 19th century Masonic historian) had fallen to perhaps 50 in the mid-1830s, from around 25,000 to around 3,000 members. Across New England and the rest of the North, various state lodge systems were hit very hard: Vermont (one of the most anti-Masonic states in the Union) actually shut down their grand lodge for some years at the height of the controversy. Even in the South, a place where political anti-Masonry was almost unheard of, many lodges folded in the 1820s and 1830s under pressure from Southern cultural anti-Masons. The connection between the failure of the lodges and the actual anti-Masonic movement of the period deserves further investigation. This was a period when commercial and business ties were growing in the Old Southwest as areas that had once been a howling wilderness were closely connected to each other in a developing economy; the need for Masonry might have elapsed about the time a serious anti-Masonic movement began. But that needs more data to explore more closely. In any event, the fall of the lodges in the South was far less severe than comparable moments in the North and had (as Morris' evidence shows) nearly reversed itself by the 1860s in a way that simply hadn't

happened in the North. Throughout the South, lodges endured the Jacksonian collapse far better than their Northern brothers, both in terms of survival and in terms of regeneration. Even so there were successes in the North - despite the collapse noted by Tillotson, there were still a small but respectable percentage of Masons in 1850s Vermont.150

The purpose of Masonry was not to defend slavery. But white American masonry, before, during, and immediately after the Civil War did reinforce the cultural power and intellectual worldview of the white South. White Masonry was so Southern by the time of the Civil War because Northern anti-Masonry had been so much more successful than its (virtually non-existent) antebellum counterpart. The outsider evangelical impulse that produced Anti-Masonry, the same that produced anti-slavery and temperance politics, was generally unwelcome in the white South of the 19th century: most mainstream religious movements had already been coopted to be defenders rather than antagonists of power. Similarly, consciously antiquarian and elaborately ritualized, Masonry appealed to the same parts of Southern elite culture that eagerly embraced Classical history, Egyptology, and other strategies for reinforcing the antiquity of a brand-new nation. By acting as an agent of white reconciliation during and after the war, one that still consciously rejected union with their African-American counterparts, white Masons promoted the creation of a postwar consensus that remembered only honor, Masonic and otherwise, without embracing the causes that had actually caused division in the first place. There were no secret cabals of would-be Illuminati plotting to seize power in the antebellum South. However, there were organizations that did promote the kind of cultural separation that ultimately led to secession, and many of those were Masons. Masonry was a symptom, not a disease, but it was one that made matters worse for the patient. Just as with Christianity and other competing ideologies of the antebellum period, Northerners and Southerners, whites and blacks,

turned to the ideology and resources of Freemasonry to defend what was already in their interests. 151

What’s missing here is a smoking gun, one that may not actually exist in the first place. There were, as far as can be determined with the evidence at hand, no Southern Masons who explicitly made the connection between Masonry and secession before secession itself – Masonry became a justification for secession only after secession had already taken place and Masons were joining their neighbors in change. In 1861, Masonic lodges north and south both called for union and peace between the sections, only embracing secession and war when the conflict had become inevitable. Only a small handful of Northern Blanchardites seem to have been particularly concerned about Masonic infiltration of the Union Army during and after the War. The cultural linkages between Masonry and Southerness that are remarked on here were not widely remarked on in 19th century America except by a small handful of radical anti-Masons. There were secret societies with a strong interest in promoting secession, particularly George Bickley’s Knights of the Golden Circle, but while those were often inspired by Masonic lodges (and drew on the same antiquarian/Romantic heritage desires which Masonic ritual played to), the KGC were not directly affiliated with Masonry as an institution except by inspiration. But as discussed above, the mirror image of this argument was frequently made in the 19th century. Southerners found deep cultural connections between anti-Masonry and abolitionism, something which does seem to have been borne out by the research of subsequent historians like Paul Goodman. When Niles Weekly Register lamented in 1840 that “we have lost [the election] by the blindness and fanaticism of the anti-Masonic and abolition factions in a few counties [in upstate New York]”, they were echoing the words of Montgomery Blair in his writings about the cultural

151 See works like Stephen Montford Vail’s much reprinted The Bible Against Slavery and its opposite number, Nathan Lord’s 1854 “A Letter of Inquiry to the Ministers of the Gospel of All Denominations on Slavery.” Lord, discussed earlier in the Thetford chapter, was that rarity: a New England minister and strong defender of slavery. See Southern Cross for the story of the cooption of Southern evangelical Christianity early in the 19th century.
connections between the Northern reformers, and even among the anti-slavery men who were pleased at the support they gained in print from anti-Masonic newspapers. Anti-Masonry certainly was Northern, helping drive the cultural changes that made Masonry so Southern. What this suggests to me is that, to a certain extent, Masonry became Southern by default – the cultural changes in the North that greatly damaged the power of upper-class secretism there were not replicated in the South in the 19th century. While the societies of both regions were changing, the North was not just changing but reforming, consciously abandoning the old society and embracing the new, in an era when Southern society was consciously attempting to embrace the past. 152

Masonry and antiquarianism were closely linked, in a way that particularly reinforced the American and the Southern relationship with the imagined past. The American relationship with the antiquarian past was a complicated one with roots in both peculiarly American cultural relations with the past and in the larger British/Enlightenment entanglement with Classical culture. After all, Americans had inherited their intellectual preoccupation from the British Enlightenment, which had used classical texts as a counterweight to medieval thought while calling back to the rationalism of that imagined intellectual golden age. The antiquarian past largely rested on the two pillars of classical and Biblical times, with Ancient Egypt occupying an uneasy place between the two in American cultural memory of the deep past. (Medieval nostalgia was present, as witness the Gothic Revival movement, but wouldn't become a serious factor in American life until the postbellum period. The medieval period was too irrational and ultimately too Catholic to catch the popular zeitgeist of antebellum America. Only in the highly ritualized confines of Masonic lodges were medieval rites appealing.) Americans took from this a legacy of what the Genoveses called “cyclical time”, giving them an understanding (or an

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imagined one, anyway) of the rise and fall of various civilizations, while Christianity gave them an idea of man's ultimate progression. Americans (especially Southern Americans) were particularly invested in stories about ancient Greece with its combination of democracy and slavery, with ideals about Roman statesmen having largely fallen out of fashion with the rest of the neo-Classical movement in the early 19th century.153

Masonry was also entangled with the birth of scientific racism in the United States, particularly through the work of Anglo-American Egyptologist George Gliddon. Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind*, an 1854 work that combined phrenology and Egyptology to argue that Egyptians were European rather than African was one of the leading American works of race science in the antebellum period. Gliddon also appears in Masonic histories as one of their leading scholars, delving into the intellectual roots of Masonic language and finding a connection between them and Egypt as well. The globe-trotting Gliddon, who traveled between the United States and Egypt delivering lectures and studying skulls, would have derived significant advantages from membership in an international organization like Masonry. That Gliddon was a Mason is not sinister in and of itself, but it is suggestive of the kind of civilization which Masons were working to construct – one that was ultimately founded on white supremacy. The British-born Gliddon’s chief American collaborator was South Carolina-born physician Joshia Nott, and their foundational work on white supremacist American ethnology would be read again and again by white Southerners in the years leading up to secession. Gliddon and Nott gave not just religious

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but scientific authenticity to the society in which they lived, further constructing and reinforcing
the pyramid of slavery in which they lived.154

Southerners were particularly invested in the past (much to the occasional derision of
British travelers to the South), and for good reason. Self-consciously antiquarian, Southerners
hearkened back to Britain, to ancient Greece and Rome, to the Bible, to Egypt; to whatever era
allowed them to use the imagined precedent of historiography to justify the seeming
contradiction under which they all lived: plantation slavery in the home of freedom. (Plenty of
Southerners didn't seem to think this a contradiction, but the fact that so many Southern
intellectuals became preoccupied with defending slavery suggests that some of them were at
least sensitive to the possibility: an intellectual culture of defense doesn't spring up without the
possibility of a successful offense) Southerners were even among the first Americans to embrace
medieval studies and the Gothic revival, medieval history playing to Southern emotionalism as
well as offering further evidence of the need for rulers and the ruled. Ironically, given the parlous
state of Southern higher education, the Southern love affair with the classics often brought about
intellectual dependence on Yankees. The Northern tutor of a Southern aristocrat family became
something of a cliché in the literature of the antebellum United States. I am here strongly
influenced by William Lee Miller’s histories of Southern ethical politics. Eliza Francis Andrews’
1882 *Prince Hal, or the Romance of a Young Man* is one of countless books with that theme,
which after the war commonly drew on narratives of sectional reunion to wed a tutor to the
daughter of a Southern family. The South was by no means unusual in its reliance on classical
texts in the intellectual sphere; having provided much of the groundwork for the Enlightenment,
particularly the English one, Greek and Roman texts (generally, but not exclusively, read in their
English reprints) were the core of much of higher education in both the North and the South in

154 John P. Jackson, Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, racism, and science: social impact and interaction*, (Denver, ABC,
American Anthropology"*, *(Histories of Anthropology Annual*, 2007) 142
this period. But Southerners were particularly devoted to the cause, certainly capable of producing intellectual culture in the area of classical studies.\footnote{Genoveses, \textit{Mind of the Master Class}, 328, 668, 4. William Taylor, \textit{Cavalier and Yankee}, (New York, George, 1961), 134.}

This preoccupation with the past was of course not limited to the South in the antebellum United States. But as the Genoveses have shown, there was something peculiarly Southern about this intellectual relationship. As Southerners abandoned their brief flirtation with antislavery politics at the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, they needed an intellectual cover for the embrace of plantation slavery in the midst of a revolutionary republic. They found it in Christianity and the Bible with its defense of slavery, and with equal strength in their imagined memory of the past. The “ubiquity of slavery, dependency, and hierarchy” was a concern for Northerners and Southerners, true, but it was of particular concern for Southerners who actually had slavery right outside their door as they wrote their histories. And writing histories was indeed something Southerners were very interested in doing. John Izard Middleton’s \textit{Grecian Remains in Italy} was one of the more famous guides to Europe at the dawn of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Middleton having become something of an intellectual exile in Europe like many of his fellow literary Charlestonians. Reaching back a few centuries, Alabama doctor Josiah Nott was one of the co-authors of \textit{Types of Mankind}, an 1854 early work of ethnology that functioned as one of the first serious American works on Egyptology. The Southern relationship with the classical world was literally stamped on the landscape. Though classical architecture was all the rage through much of the nation in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and early-to-mid 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, no city remained more classical than perhaps the ur-city of the American South: Charleston. As Maurie McInnis has shown, it would be “deeply naïve” to assume that Southerners made these aesthetic, historical, and intellectual choices in a vacuum removed from the larger society in which they were embedded: they had a reason to cling to an antiquarian past of rulers and ruled far removed from the American
experience. Indeed, given the general Southern relationship with education, the reason for their interest in classical, medieval, and Biblical heritage must have been profound. That reason was almost certainly the institution of slavery. The classics served the additional function of propping up Southern attitudes about gender and power as well: women were denied a classical education because the virtues that came with it were considered peculiarly male, while the disempowered in society were excluded with callbacks to the precedents of Greece and Rome. In an era when women were embracing their place as “republican mothers” in the North and otherwise gaining mastery of the domestic sphere, and in which working-class groups (and groups to mobilize those who employed the lower tier of the working class) were growing in the North, Southerners had particular need to justify their relationships with the poor and with women.156

Though it often occupied an uneasy place alongside classical texts on the shelves and in the minds of 19th century American Protestants, the Bible and its history were another major intellectual preoccupation of Americans. Conflicts between the classical and biblical message were common in the North, with anti-Illuminatus Timothy Dwight leading the charge against the use of Homer at Yale well into the early 19th century. In the South, however, the power of the nascent Bible Belt meant that white Protestant Christianity and classical education were singing from the same hymnal: endorsing the power of the elites of society against the weak. Southern evangelicalism had begun in the early 19th century with as much of an outsider, anti-authoritarian impulse as its northern counterpart, critiquing slavery, the inferior status of women, and the place of the poor on the grounds of soul freedom. Under pressure from plantation owners and other Southern patriarchs however, Southern Christianity evolved into an instrument of power rather than an enemy of it: sometimes heavily ritualized, sometimes not, but always endorsing the idea

that the rule of the elites (and the slavery that justified it) were divinely ordained) This was the era of the birth of the Bible Belt, of the transformation of evangelical Christianity into something not of this world. (It would ironically be anti-Mason Jonathan Blanchard who would, in his retirement, help export that variety of religion into Northern Protestantism by means of his support for Dwight Moody.) It was an age when Southern white manhood was reinforced by Christianity into a medieval, martial society that “combined the heroic image of the cavalier knight with the righteousness of the Christian saint.”

More than any other secular institution with the possible exception of higher education, Masonry shared the particular Southern vision of biblical and classical heritage in the 19th century. Anti-Masons jeered at the “pretentions” of Masonry in this period, and indeed given the classical education which many American Masons possessed, the claims made by Masonic historians are a little startling. Deliberately conflating 'operational' with 'speculative' Masonry, Masonic historians of this period transformed the story of an 18th century secret society with historical roots in medieval guild craftwork into the story of Western civilization. They found Masonry in ancient Greece and Rome (though some complained about the 'licentiousness' of the latter) and declared that it had been Masonic lodges that had secretly preserved the wisdom of the ancients for the modern era. They deliberately connected themselves to the mystery cults of Greece and Egypt, beginning an occult connection that would later be carried forth by Albert Pike. The 'origin story' of 19th century Masonry was of course famously Biblical (much to the outrage of anti-Masons), connecting their story to that of the apocryphal Hiram Abiff of Solomanic times. Some Masonic historians, though sometimes earning the skepticism of their colleagues for doing so, even called back to the antediluvian days before the Flood and attributed Masonry to the very birth of the liberal arts under Enoch. Masonry provided Southerners looking

for a historical justification for their lives with a particular script to follow, a tale of elite,
intellectual survival in a fallen world that was very important to a Southern society that (for
whites) was overwhelmed by the threat of race war and collapse (the latter having happened, at
least arguably, to their fathers and grandfathers during the American Revolution.) 158

The same applied to Masonic visions of Christianity, which by the early 19th century had
become the kind of highly ritualized, quasi-medieval vision of the faith that appealed to
Southerners while at the same time horrifying Northern anti-Masons. Weinbrot points out, as
Bullock mentions, that Masons, if anything, embraced the classical world more than many of
their 18th and 19th century contemporaries. Just as they would clash over slavery, anti-Masons
and Masons vigorously fought over the meaning of religion in the Order. Masons called Masonic
Christianity back to the imagined heritage of medieval crusaders and knights of old, while anti-
Masons saw Masonic Christianity as the opposite of everything they understood about faith and
the meaning of Christian republicanism. And ultimately both were correct! This was an era when
Southerners painted themselves as “rightful heirs to the best of the Middle Ages,” aristocrats who
embraced the medieval stylings without the 'corruption' of Catholicism. There was nothing like
this abortive medieval revival in the North, where if anything medieval revivals were largely
associated with the more ridiculous moments of British popular culture like the failed attempts to
revive jousting at the end of the Napoleonic period. As Freehling has outlined, however,
Southern elites (and their Masonic lodges) were as ever willing to embrace the kind of medieval
revivals that had failed even in countries where the Middle Ages had actually happened. As
discussed above, Masonry had initially resisted the Gothic and medieval revivals of the early 19th

in Albert Mackey, American Quarterly Review of Freemasonry: 1859, 510. See Freehling's analysis of the
paintings of Allston, among others, for how themes of isolation and cultural protection played themselves out in
19th century Southern thought.
century. With their strong connections to the neo-Classical world (ones they never really abandoned), Masons originally reacted to the revival of the medieval period with skepticism. After all, the Masonic vision of the survival of Classical mores through the “Ruins of Gothic Ignorance” was a major theme of Masonic historiography. But by the early 19th century, Masonic lodges were eagerly embracing the kind of medieval ritualization that they (and their communities) had once rejected. 159

The 'father' of the medieval revival of Masonry was the New Englander Thomas Smith Webb, but his vision of a heavily ritualized Masonic mystery cult strongly inspired by the Christian legacy of the Knights Templar and other crusaders (no wonder, though, that it was the ever-mysterious Templars who were his chosen subjects) would prove the most successful in the American South. Previous scholarship about Webb's work has focused on the connections he made between Romanticism and Masonry, an incredibly important transformation given the rise of the Romantic movement in the American South in the 19th century. With its emotionalism and its antiquarianism, Romanticism played well to Southern audiences. This is often presented as a Southern reaction against industrialization as part of the larger anti-industrial project of the Romantic movement of the early 19th century. But the Southern reaction that produced romanticism was much more complicated than that; it was a reaction against their disconnection from the global capital markets with the end of the American Revolution and was arguably implicitly political. Turning to the works of Walter Scott gave Southern Americans, a group particularly conscious of their parvenu history, not only an imagined ethnological connection to cavaliers and knights in shining armor, but a very real historical justification for what they were. The imagined connection to an ancient past gave cultural authenticity to the leaders of a new nation, just as it did the same for African-Americans who otherwise lacked a voice in

contemporary American culture. This is not to say white Southerners lacked a voice in
contemporary culture – rather, they often dominated it. But as the Southern worldview began to
diverge from the Northern in the 19th century, turning to history let them break from the old
without having to present themselves as the new.160

This was also true, almost entirely, inside the lodges of those Scottish Rite Masons who
had enthusiastically embraced the new Masonic rites put out by Thomas Smith Webb. (It is
certainly no accident that the most infamous single competitor for Masons in the Old South as
the Civil War approached was George Bickley's Knights of the Golden Circle, a quasi-Masonic
organization that drew very heavily from medieval imagery in its writings. Bickley was a con
artist recouping losses from failed money-making schemes, but the fact that he could ‘sell’
himself as so much more is deeply suggestive). Webb's Freemasonry was deeply ritualized,
crafted in an appeal to sway the emotions of its members in a way that had been impossible for
the more 'sociable' rites of early republican Masonry. Ironically, Webb's Masonic lodges would
often find themselves hotly engaged in political and social contests with anti-Masons who were
quite deliberately making use of the politics of sentiment. When members of Masonic lodges
attacked the “phrenzy” and “volcano” of anti-Masonry, they were attacking the transference to
the political of what they had already done with the social and the cultural. When anti-Masons
declared that “[we] could not think it allowable, to treat lightly or obscurely, a subject connected
so deeply with the foundations of civil order..” they were calling out to an expanding world of
the acceptability of emotion in discourse in the 19th century. Webb's Masonry called back to an
imagined Biblical and medieval past with the Knights Templar and other imagined recollections

Cavalier*, (LSU, 1999), 70.
of past that transformed current Masons into exemplars of Christian virtue through elaborate ritual. This was a return to the elaborate “golden age” which so many Southern writers hearkened back to, reinforcing their beliefs in the cyclical nature of history while playing to the rising emotional movement of which so many took part. As Robert Fogel has shown, Southern plantation owners were after profit as much as any Yankee capitalist and were eager to take part in the modernity of the 1860s when it meant more luxury goods and other advantages; but it's also true that the vast majority of Southern plantation owners acted as if they were not! No wonder so many anti-Masons were offended by this; the romanticism of the medieval past was a sharp contrast to their own contemporary focus, and adding the character of Christianity to it only made matters worse. The Massachusetts-born and New England-bred Thomas Webb was not trying to make Masonry more appealing to Southerners, but the effects of his reforms on matching the cultural necessities of Southern Americans was particularly impressive.161

The cultural needs of the small elites who made up Southern society and its Masonic membership were particularly important. It's no accident that Masonry by the late antebellum period was dominant in the Old Southwest and other near-frontier regions of the Southern United States. As Kathleen Kutolowski has written in her look at the history of specifically Masonry in upstate New York, it was just the sort of second-generation frontier setting that produced high concentrations of Masonic membership. As in the North, Masonic membership provided economic stability in turbulent economic times: as seen in the life of Henry Clay (who had some of his first legal successes in Kentucky working for his fellow Masons, particularly helping wrestle with the problem of lodge brothers who had defaulted on a loan and simply left the area), access to Masonry meant at least the promise of economic security and the suggestion a debtor could potentially be tracked down. This was particularly important in the frontier; it was

especially important in the South with its weak rule of law, rapidly fluctuating cotton economy and other boom and bust cycles that made resort to legal authorities over economic matters extremely difficult. Given the relationship between Masonic lodges and community building on the frontier, Anti-Masonry was always at a very heavy disadvantage in frontier areas, one reason why it failed to make significant penetration into the Old Northwest despite the significant presence of New England settlers in the region. Matters were even more pronounced in the South. Masonry was essential given the economic culture of the American South, giving it the kind of stability that allowed it to survive even the anti-Masonic reaction of the 1830s. One Southerner who chose to move north rather than stay in the economically dangerous South was Thomas Lincoln.¹⁶²

In addition to reinforcing their economic desires, Freemasonry provided for the political needs of Southerners beyond even the cozy relationship that Masonry enjoyed with power in the North. Some of this was the same phenomenon observed by Formisano and others: the recruitment and internal vetting of the lodge system, as well as the communications network to which it was engaged, made Masonic lodges a convenient recruiting ground for political organizations looking for reliable candidates who were already well-connected. This was all the more important in areas with weak party systems (like Regency New York or the Deep South) where personalities rather than politics often dominated local elections. (In areas like South Carolina, where property restrictions existed either on the ballot box or on the candidates themselves, Masonic membership was an even better gateway to power.) This was all the more important in the South where the question of slavery pressed sharply on people and a wrong step could ruin careers, as it did the formerly reliable Robert Walker of Mississippi when he became

mildly cool on Kansas in the 1850s. It was particularly important to have a means to vet candidates in a society where a politician's 'betrayal' could be imagined to undermine the peculiar institutions that were at the very root of Southern society. From Andrew Jackson to Henry Clay, Masonic membership was widely-spread and bipartisan among Southern political leaders of the early 19th century without raising any serious opposition from more than local complaints. And as discussed elsewhere, Masonry was not particularly partisan, though it was deeply political.163

Masonry was political in a way that had, up until the early 19th century, been compatible with the American experience: republicanism. Masonic republicanism was not the republicanism of openness and honesty, the world without the private sphere that anti-Masons often strove for and saw Masons as drags on. Rather, Masonic republicanism was of the exclusive, Enlightenment sort: a world where a small group of well-meaning, well-connected men could make decisions on behalf of their neighbors for the good of the community. As Bullock had shown, while 19th century Masonry did substantially expand its membership, it was an expansion of the elite rather than reaching down to the bottom. Even though this world was gradually frittered away in Southern politics as the 19th century went on (South Carolina was in this, as in most other things, something of an outlier in American history), Southern politics remained dominated by the kind of wealthy planters that were particularly keen on joining secret orders. It was the kind of transition seen in contemporary Masonry: the base of power didn't change, it simply expanded. It was no accident that some of the most enthusiastic Southern Masons of the 19th century (John Quitman, Albert Pike, and others) were relative newcomers to the worlds of power. Their Masonic membership was one of the tools they used to achieve power in the plantation South. That this was an essential part of the Masonic experience can be seen from the reaction against it by anti-Masons. The exclusivity of the Masons, the minority groups they left

out, their restrictions on the poor, and their exclusion of women, was a major centerpiece of the anti-Masonic reaction. As Halleran recounts, more than one anti-Masonic observer during the Civil War took note of the expansion of Masonry in the South before the Civil War and charged that it was part of a deliberate attempt to co-opt the 'poor white trash' of the region into support for the elite. This was by no means uncommon in a slave society.164

Throughout the 19th century, anti-Masons were convinced that Masons were directly invested in slavery. This is not the Blanchardite allegations that Masonry had been behind secession and civil war, though as discussed elsewhere that was a major allegation made by anti-Masons after the Civil War about their Southern antagonists. The idea that 'free' Masons were in no way free was a major project of the anti-Masonic movement. So-called 'free' Masons themselves were merely slaves to the lodge, while Masonry itself had allegedly enslaved the nation. “Whoever is opposed to freemasonry and really desires its extinction, must use [ballot boxes], or confess himself a slave or tyrant,” declared the national anti-Masonic convention of Philadelphia, words echoed by many of their contemporaries. (It would be tempting to say that this kind of language was proof of anti-Masonic anti-slavery tendencies, but of course Confederates often made the charge that Northerners were seeking to enslave them in the antebellum United States.) The murder of the 'freeman' William Morgan was a major preoccupation of anti-Masons, while anti-Masons vigorously suggested that the 'binding with oaths' meant Masons were unfree in the context of 1820s republicanism.165


Masonry was not pro-slavery, particularly not in its European or African-American branches. As discussed in the Prince Hall chapter, black Masons were among the leading forces for African-American cultural, social, and economic power in the antebellum United States. International Freemasonry was a centerpiece of radical biracial politics in the United States and in Europe, while many Northern Freemasons enlisted in the US Army during the Civil War. Indeed, there were slightly more Masons in Lincoln's inner circle than Jefferson Davis'. (The association between Southerness and Masonry was so strong, however, that Davis had to publicly deny Masonic membership while in retirement.) However, Masonry and slavery as it is existed in the United States were certainly compatible. As discussed in the filibustering chapter, white Masons of Cuba thought nothing of calling on their American lodge brothers for help in their war against the Spanish government in the name of both national independence and the maintenance of slavery, the latter being one of the reasons why Northern support for the war with Spain never fully materialized in the 1850s. (Indeed, arguably the most successful moment for war with Cuba came in the 1870s when a Republican United States considered intervention on behalf of a revolutionary army of liberation on the island) And if there were Masons in the Union Army, there were Masons in the Confederate government and army as well. Stephen Mallory made Confederate naval policy and championed Masonic filibustering in the Southeast, while Lewis Armistead's death while displaying the “Grand Hailing Sign of Distress” briefly made him a hero to Masons. Indeed, not every Southern Mason was a Confederate: Albert Mackey, who became the leading historian of Masonry after the Civil War, was one of the very few Unionists in Charleston itself. (This may have had something to do with the fact that Mackey was also one of the very few Unitarians in that city)166

As for the lodges and the Confederacy, they generally adopted what was the middle of the road stance for most Southerners, opposing war but welcoming it as Confederates when it came. (Albert Mackey, a Unionist nearly alone in fire-eater mad Charleston, was a very rare exception). Masons pleaded for “brotherly love” and support of the “glorious work”, but Southern Masons wanted to avoid war, not secession, and the potential breakup of lodges that would come with it. By the mid-1860s, like most of their fellow Southerners, even Masons who had previously called for peace and amity were able to reconcile Masonic ideals and the cultural and political necessity of supporting the Confederate cause. Though Masonic lodges, and individual brothers, did aid Union men fallen on the battlefield, or send aid to Union prisoners, this was a symptom of Masonic brotherhood and charity, not of genuine Union sentiment. As with so many other bisectional institutions during the war, social pressure and personal commitment to slavery meant that Southern Masons abandoned their bisectional pretensions to back the cause of their neighbors during the Civil War. In this they were not too different from the churches, political parties, and other institutions that had been their rivals and partners. But Masonic problems with the memory of the Civil War remain, particularly since Masonic historiography continues to embrace the bisectional, white narrative of the war.\footnote{Halleran, 56-58}

Postwar Masonic historiography continues to have a troubled relationship with the legacy of the Civil War. In contemporary Masonic historiography, moments like the foundation of the Brazilian city of Americana, a community populated largely by Masonic Confederate diehards who fled the United States after 1865, are treated as triumphant moments in Masonic history. For Masonic historian Walter Klein, these Masons who abandoned their national ties rather than accept legal equality with their former slaves “stuck it out nobly” in Brazil as they forged their mixed identity. In other terms, Masonic historiography has proudly laid claim to anti-Masonic
charges that Andrew Johnson's political career and postwar Presidency were shaped by, and ultimately saved by, his Masonic ties. Charges that Johnson was acquitted by the vote of Edmund G. Ross (made famous by *Profiles in Courage*) because of the latter's Masonic ties, and that Johnson pardoned Albert Pike thanks to his relationship with Masonry, were widely accepted, even endorsed, by 19th and 20th century Masons. Now it might be that this is just proof that Masonic historians accepted what was after all the standard narrative of the Johnson Presidency for much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries: that Johnson was an unjustly persecuted victim of Radical Republicans. (Many of whom, as has been discussed before, were anti-Masons!) But it is also evidence of the ultimate social conservatism of Masonic historiography, primarily older, white male historians of a primarily older, white male institution that has often taken conscious steps to remain just that. Masonic historiography remains largely sympathetic to the Southern cause, just as Masonry itself was during the war.168

But of course, all that proves is that Masonry (like Christianity and American freedom) was an idea that could be made basically compatible with Southern life and the maintenance of slavery. But there were few contradictions to sort out. The imagined world of 19th century Masonry, with its retrograde politics and society, was (in the context of its own era) was not just compatible with but actually friendly towards slavery. Masonry wasn't “the most formidable engine that could be invented, the most of all calculated, to overthrow the institutions of Freedom,” but it was an an engine thereof. By defending the power of elite white manhood against all comers, Masonry defended the organization of elite white manhood in the United States: slavery. Sometimes this was indirectly, as when Masonic orator James W. Thompson reminded his anti-Masonic listeners that there are organizations “gradually working for

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emancipation of slaves within our borders,” and suggested anti-Masons might not want to
discredit his organization at the expense of theirs. Other times it was when Masons ridiculed
their enemies as would-be abolitionists, Vermont Mason N.B. Haswell saying that as the anti-
Masonic Party declined “the horrors of Masonry were transferred to the horrors of Slavery.”169

The elite society of Masonry was more than compatible with the elite society of planta-
tion slavery. This was the “decidedly and totally republican government, friend to order, and
promoter of freedom,” that Mason John Sheppard praised in 1831. It was one that excluded
“slaves and persons born in servitude,” on the grounds that it was a violation of the 'social
equality of the lodge', while even freemen allegedly had the 'slave manners' first noted by the
Greeks. It was a consciously antiquarian organization that called back to the world of the Greeks
and Romans, making connections to the world even of the Bible and antediluvian times. Masons
dominated the American government even more than slaveholders did in the early 19th century,
defending a vision of American republicanism largely inherited from the 18th century Enlighten-
ment that had proved almost completely compatible with slavery: when they went further than
that era, they went even further back in time to endorse a vision of the shared European past that
was in the mid-19th century explicitly a tool of the powerful to enforce the status quo and (as
shown by the Genoveses) one particularly beloved of Southerners, medieval Europe. American
Freemasonry, at least the organization belonged to by a majority of whites, was a defender of the
status quo, conservative, and sometimes even reactionary in the context of 19th century American
politics and culture.170

It is no accident that the great opponents of 19th century Masonry, Northern evangelicals
and their allies, were among the great social and cultural reformers of the period. (This is a far

169Citizen of Massachusetts, Free Masonry: A Poem in Three Cantos, (Leicester, Whitmore, 1830) 37-38. James W.
170Sheppard, “…Lincoln Lodge,” June 24, 1831, 9. (St. John's Day was a significant Masonic holiday, perhaps the
most significant of their calendar, and several important Masonic documents of the period share similar dates)
cry from the traditional depiction of anti-Masons as the forces of evangelical reaction against Enlighten-ment reform, a point that will be more further developed in the next chapter.) No wonder Masonic lodges in the North so readily disintegrated in the Jacksonian era; they were champions of the early republic even as the Jacksonian system was swarming over their fences. (The 'Jacksonian revolution' was thus largely a Northern phenomenon in terms of social repercussions despite its putative base in the South and the political changes wrought by those years.) And few conflicts in American history were a more straightforward conflict between defenders of the old order (the Confederates were political, not social or cultural, revolutionaries) and champions of reform (once the politics had been sorted out to give Emancipation the driver's seat.) than the American Civil War. It's not easy to do the historiography of Southern Masonry: the records of many lodges were destroyed by the conflict itself, and what records did survive were often shaped by Masonic historians with a strong interest in promoting the bisectional vision of Masonry that existed after the war (as part of Pike's realignment of the movement) as the perpetual story of the relationship between Masonry and section in the United States. There was a bisectional impulse in antebellum US Masonry, and that anti-Masonry hit both Northern and Southern lodges, albeit the former far more severely than the latter. Indeed, sometimes the Morgan controversy does not even appear in the story of Southern Masonic lodges told internally in the 19th century, a far cry from Northern lodges where remembering the story of Morgan was a ritualistic cry back to the dark times from which they had emerged. These divergent experiences arose from how the antiquarian, republican (of one particular sort), and emotional focus on antebellum white Freemasonry played into the cultural anxieties and desires of 19th century Southerners.171

But what of Southern anti-Masons? Masonry reinforced Southern aristocracy and anti-
quarianism, while Southern hostility to social reformers (particularly those who attacked the

powerful) generally kept anti-Masonry north of the Mason-Dixon Line. But this is not to say they did not exist. As discussed elsewhere, there was an abortive anti-Masonic movement in Wake County, North Carolina, and one in Maryland and Delaware that played as much to fears of African-American conspiracy inside Masonic lodges as white. But even in the Deep South, anti-Masonry was not unheard of. Of the seventy-odd delegates at the 1830 Masonic national convention in Philadelphia, 10 were Alabamans. Alabama sent more delegates than the much more populous New Jersey, much less putative centers of anti-Masonry like Vermont. They were led by Joseph Babcock, a leading Methodist and “pillar of [that] church” in 1820s Alabama. Babcock was from Cahaba, the former state capitol of Alabama. Cahaba had lost its place as state capital in 1826, with prosperity going up the river to Selma. Not coincidentally, this made Babcock a leading evangelical Christian who had just been shut out of the growing Alabama prosperity, much like his counterparts in the North. Methodism in Alabama was socially hostile to Masonry in the Jacksonian period, declaring that “the cause of God...could not prosper while connected to freemasonry.” (As discussed below, Babcock's business dealings were a continuing problem for him.) But that particular species of social reform passed quickly in Alabama, and by the late 19th century (as seen in Anson West's history) Alabama Methodists were far more focused on doctrinal disputes than anti-Masonry.172

The brief Southern flirtation with anti-Masonry had passed by the next Presidential election. The sectional balance had shifted sharply between 1830 and 1831, with the small Southern contingent vanishing and the Northern delegation far more powerful. There were no delegates from Alabama or anywhere further south than Maryland, and only one delegate each from Mary-

land and Delaware, respectively. We can explain the enlarged Northern delegations by looking at
the enhanced strength of the Anti-Masonic Party by 1831. With a national party that had now ful-
ly risen from a national movement, with Congressmen and state legislators in place, and with
now a Presidential nomination to be decided, attending the convention had more rewards than
what was essentially an enlarged political protest rally the year before had offered. But there
were no hope of such rewards in Alabama, which would go to the Jacksonian ticket by one of
those overwhelming majorities unique to the electoral history of the American South in 1832.
The challenge to established political authority represented by mature anti-Masonry, as distin-
guished from the call for reform that it had been early on, had no future in the Deep South with
its tightly unified authority. It would take Jackson's crackdown on the Bank and the Nullifiers to
create an opposition party in the Deep South. Indeed, elsewhere in the contemporary Deep
South, it would be Masons who did the challenging of civil life, not of anti-Masons, but of the
cultural building blocks on which intercontinental peace rested in the 1850s. ¹⁷³

http://www.uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/state.php?fips=1&year=1832&f=0&off=0 Thomas B. Alexander,
On September 1, 1851, Venezuelan-born ex-General Narciso Lopez was publically executed in Havana, Cuba. He died the “wretched…infamous death of the garrote,” strangled to death before a large crowd of Cubans. The slow, torturous death as the cord pulled tight and his windpipe broke before the jeering crowd was quite the comedown for the former Bolivarian soldier-turned-reactionary general-turned Cuban revolutionary, but then that was the point. After years of exile raids launched from the United States, the Spanish government sought to end their filibuster problem with a demonstration of power. While previous filibustering expeditions had been arrested and deported, Lopez, his chief followers, and most of the Americans under his command were executed by garrote and firing squad as a means of striking terror into the filibustering community. And indeed, despite riots in the New Orleans that had been one of Lopez’ strongholds, the 1851 raid was the last great filibustering expedition launched against Cuba. Closely allied with Americans, Lopez was part of a tradition of antebellum Latin American revolutionaries in Florida, Texas, and Mexico, who drew their inspiration from American causes and American dollars. Historians of the mid-20th century like John Hope Franklin explored the connection between filibusters and the American South; the romanticism, the trading ties, the desire to expand slavery, and to protect elite culture. What has remained relatively understudied is the connection between filibusters, revolutionaries, and other pro-American political movements in antebellum Latin America is their particular connection to American Masonry, and
thus Masonry’s connection to the particular vision of American empire that drove American
cultural expansion in antebellum Latin America.\textsuperscript{174}

Scholars sympathetic to Masonry, or at least hostile to anti-Masonry, have shaped most of
the historical narrative about anti-Masons and their cause in the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries. By
condemning Jacksonian democracy, they alienated the New Deal historians of the mid-20\textsuperscript{th}
century; by opposing economic political radicalism at the turn of the century and eventually
being subsumed into the rising tide of fundamentalist politics in the same years, anti-Masons
alienated the historians of a later generation. Perhaps because of this, historians have
traditionally dismissed anti-Masonic charges of secret conspiracies behind 19\textsuperscript{th} century
imperialism with the same scorn with which they traditionally treat the movement. (Hofstadter ,
as discussed above, treats Anti-Masonic rhetoric as uniquely paranoid and overheated; as if
Whigs didn’t speak of King Andrew Jackson and Democrats of Whigs as abolitionists and
British agents.) Only recently have some American historians become interested in treating anti-
Masonry as anything more than an aberration of Jacksonian evangelical fervor; and even those
historians like David Walker Howe and Paul Goodman have been more interested in revising our
understanding of the political and cultural roots of anti-Masonry rather than examining the
specifics of the charges anti-Masons made against their rivals. Despite the new respect accorded
anti-Masonic politics in the historical record, few historians have examined the specifics of the
charges made by anti-Masons, especially their accusations about the transnational implications of
American Freemasonry. It is taken for granted that there were no Masonic conspiracies of any
size in 19\textsuperscript{th} century America, and that those who feared the power of Freemasonry were
scapegoating their fears of atheism, capitalism, and anti-republicanism on a generally innocuous

\textsuperscript{174}Thomas W. Wilson, An \textit{Authentic Narrative of the Piratical Descents on Cuba}, (Havana, np, September 1851),
1996), 222.
fraternal brotherhood. And indeed, the majority of American Freemasons were engaged in no conspiracies against the public welfare.\textsuperscript{175}

However, again and again through the history of the borderlands of 19\textsuperscript{th} century America, US Freemasons appear as agents of a specifically Southern vision of American empire – a vision that combined Americanism with the kind of elite-driven, slaveholding society that dominated the politics and culture of the South in the antebellum United States. In West Florida, Texas, Mexico, and Cuba, American Masons operating as revolutionaries, political reformers, or armed mercenaries fighting on behalf of local causes, came together through the organizational structures and ideological justifications of Freemasonry in secret organizations to overthrow governments, lead revolutions, and radically reshape the nature of local, national, and international politics. In some aspects, these filibusters were Robert May’s “romantic Southern imperialists, consumed by images of themselves as knightly Cavalier warriors,” looking to expand their economic and political power. With its heroic “Knights Templar”, deliberately aimed to appeal to the imagined memory of Christian crusaders and conscious antiquarianism, the Masonry of 19\textsuperscript{th} century America had a great deal of appeal to the consciously antiquarian Southerners who read Walter Scott and dreamed of empire and royalty of their own. Masonry was a romantic organization, playing to the anxieties of 19\textsuperscript{th} century bourgeois businessmen by giving them an imagined world of elite Classical, Christian, and medieval civilization to retreat to – a masculine alternative to the societies in which they lived. The romanticism of Masonry and filibustering appealed to the same audience, a particularly Southern one by the 1850s thanks to the demise of American Freemasonry in the North after 1826. Moreover, Masonry was not just a cultural organization but a political and economic one, providing for transnational economic and personal relationships in an age of burgeoning 19\textsuperscript{th} century nationalism. Given US domination of  

19th century American Freemasonry, the strong transnational ties it induced, and its appeal to the kinds of romantic, masculine, and Southern elites that made up the leadership of the filibustering movement, it is no wonder that when Cuban, Mexican, and Spanish liberal Masons turned to their American lodge brothers for help they found a group eager to come to their assistance. American anti-Masons needed no conspiratorial imagination to recognize the danger that, from their perspective, Freemasonry did indeed pose to stable government in the Western Hemisphere in the early 19th century. Moreover, when governments like Spain, Mexico, and Cuban colonial authorities cracked down on local Masons during the 19th century, they were not simply Catholic bigots reacting against an ecumenical secret society: rather, they had legitimate reasons to fear Masons as agents of the imperial power to the north. There were other romantic groups, other militant groups, other Southern-dominated groups, other social networking tools, but none combined all the ingredients for filibustering support together under the same roof the way Masonry did.176

In 1810 (a decade before Masonic officers deposed the King of Spain), an American-backed revolt in Spanish West Florida seized control of the Spanish colony and delivered it into the hands of the United States. American diplomatic pressure on Spain to relinquish the region to American authority had been intense for over a decade, and the weakness in Spanish authority, compounded by the Peninsular invasion of 1808, and the growing success of the Hidalgo revolt in mainland New Spain, convinced American colonists living in West Florida that the time was right for revolution. Within weeks of their initial uprising, the American settlers leading the revolt had thrown the region open to the slave trade, seized long-disputed land from their Spanish neighbors, and invited in the American military to garrison the area. Two decades later

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in Texas, the pattern was repeated: a revolt dominated by American-born colonists seized control of a Spanish-speaker border region where national authority was weak, and with the connivance of the American government the new independent republic survived and ultimately became an Anglophone, slaveholding part of the United States. In both revolts, virtually every significant leader was a member of a Masonic lodge in good standing, whatever parts of the United States had once been their home before coming to Florida or Texas. Davis, a leading historian of West Florida, is skeptical of a direct connection between American Masonry and the Florida uprising, but he was weighing the West Florida uprising singularly rather than as part of a larger story of frontier imperialism. Stephen Austin had personally met with New Orleans Masons to raise money for the revolt in 1835, an investment that proved more than beneficial to those Louisiana Masons in later years. Masons made up much of the government in both the period of the Texas revolution and its independence. Masonic ties gave men like Austin access to wealthy, powerful individuals with a personal commitment to transnational culture and politics, a valuable tool for the would-be expansionist.177

As Masons dominated the leadership class of the Old Southwest, the primary source of American settlers for Spanish Florida and Mexican Texas, their high numbers among the revolutionaries of Florida and Texas is no surprise. Despite the “Black Legend” centered around Mexican politician Gomez Farias and his supposed involvement with a cabal of Louisiana Masons who plotted to detach Texas from Mexico as a prelude to Southern secession and the establishment of a Southern republic, there is no direct evidence of overt Masonic involvement (as Masons) in the Florida and Texas revolutions; while Louisiana capitalists did support the

Florida and Texas Revolutions, and many of those capitalists were Masons, so far no proof has yet emerged that those Masons supported their fellows across the river because of Masonic ties as such. The folk traditions about Masonic cabals behind the Texas revolution seem to have been products of Mexican fears of Masonic subversion rather than direct evidence of same. Americans of the Old Southwest did not need Freemasonry, American or otherwise, to favor the spread of American institutions abroad. However, Freemasonry, with its strong, beneficial fraternal ties and its American focal point in the 19th century Western Hemisphere, did greatly assist those Americans in their desire to spread American institutions abroad. Given that the United States combined a tradition of old, successful Masonic lodges with cultural and economic prosperity, as well as a legal system that supported and culture that defended Masonry, perhaps it is no surprise American Masonry, particularly of the York Rite in this period, enjoyed such an influence over its neighbors.  

Complicating matters is the strong documentary evidence that American agents did attempt to use American Rite Freemasonry to subvert the Mexican government in the 1820s. Indeed, subverting the Mexican government seems to have been a major diplomatic project of the United States in the 19th century. In 1825, South Carolina politician Joel Poinsett was the closest thing the American government had to a Latin American expert. A ‘special agent’ appointed by President Monroe to investigate the revolutionaries of Argentina and China in the 1810s, Poinsett had toured newly-independent Mexico a decade later at the behest of President Monroe, his Notes on Mexico having become the go-to text on Mexico for American politicians in the “Era of Good Feelings.” Poinsett had provided a strong influence on American policy, defending the Latin American revolutionaries, encouraging the Monroe administration to deny

diplomatic recognition to the short-lived Iturbide regime between Mexican independence and the establishment of the Mexican Republic in 1825. (Ultimately Monroe had recognized Mexican independence, but thanks to Poinsett no American minister was dispatched until Iturbide’s fall in 1825) Poinsett was a natural choice for the first American ministership to the Mexican Republic, a job he assumed almost immediately upon the establishment of a Mexican republican state.179

Given the American interest in Texas, as well as a successful British diplomatic offensive in the years before Poinsett’s arrival, his job would have been a difficult one under any circumstances, but Poinsett proved to have unique problems as a diplomat despite his extensive experience with the region (and fluent command of Spanish, unusual for an American in the 1820s). Though Poinsett had been an enthusiastic defender of Latin American revolutionaries, those same revolutionaries had never been particularly enthusiastic about Poinsett personally: his enthusiasm for the project of American democracy and determination to spread that project abroad (because of what seems to be a genuine belief that American-style federal democracy was the best government and because of how much it would aid American investors in Mexico) had transformed itself into “imprudent aggressiveness” and “evangel[ing] for democracy” in his previous assignments. When Poinsett arrived in Mexico City and announced to Exterior Relations Minister Lucas Alaman that he was pleased the Mexican government had established a republican government like his own, he convinced the already suspicious Alaman (a conservative and closet monarchist) that the American government did plan to subvert the government of Mexico that Alaman had hoped to establish. Iturbide’s Mexico was a fractious, unstable government coming off a decade of bitter colonial warfare – American, British, and other national governments did attempt to ensure the establishment of a friendly government in

Mexico City, and one of the more efficacious strategies was the formation and promotion of friendly secret societies among Mexico’s elite. Poinsett’s efforts along these lines were to prove controversial at best, and certainly unsuccessful by most measurements. Poinsett’s five years in Mexico City proved tempestuous and largely unsuccessful, with Poinsett finally recalled in 1830 after years of ineffectiveness and squabbles with the Mexican leadership. Given American ignorance about the Mexican government and the strong suspicion of norteamericanos among the Mexican ruling class, perhaps it was inevitable that any diplomat in Poinsett’s position would have failed.\textsuperscript{180}

Unlike most of his potential diplomatic counterparts, however, Poinsett was in a unique position to not simply fail but to by his efforts complicate the diplomatic situation even further. His knowledge of Mexican culture, command of Spanish, and popularity among many Mexicans (albeit not those in the ruling class of the early 1820s) put him in position to influence Mexican politics outside the realm of personal diplomacy. Masonry existed in Mexico before Poinsett’s arrival, Scottish Rite Masonry having arrived through the French and Spanish during Napoleon’s time. Thanks to its colonial connection, Scottish Rite Masonry was associated with conservatives and centralistas in Mexican society. (It was, however, still officially banned in Mexico thanks to Spanish-era laws indifferently enforced by the new regime) But Poinsett, an enthusiastic York Rite Mason who would later become a martyr for American Masons (and something of a bogeyman for anti-Masons), saw the potential of American Rite Masonry as a means of influencing Mexican political culture. With his rival Lucas Alaman temporarily forced from power in 1825, Poinsett saw the potential for organizing a pro-American political party through the establishment of York Rite Masonry in Mexico. In meetings spied on by concerned British agents, Poinsett and his supporters turned the developing York Rite lodge system into a pro-

American political party, encouraging attacks on Mexican conservatives inside the *Yorquino* movement as well as spreading rumors of another Spanish conspiracy against an independent Mexican state. Though York Rite Masonry in Mexico predated Poinsett, Poinsett’s connections to lodges in America meant that he could get charters for those Mexican lodges, allowing them to make their own connections to the larger world of fraternal American Masonry.181

Within eighteen months, the tension between Scottish Rite and American Rite Masonry had spun itself out into a new political movement in Mexico, the *Escoceses* and *Yorquinos* having assumed the former position of the *centralista* and republican parties, respectively. Poinsett officially withdrew from the York Rite Masons once they became a significant political party, but his secret dispatches to Washington reveal that he was at the very least privy to their plans to elect a *Yorquino* President and otherwise take control of the Mexican government. Poinsett was convinced that the Scottish Rite Masons in Mexico were in the pay of the British ambassador, so perhaps it is no surprise he would seek to build a counterweight to his much hated British rival Lucas. Tensions between the *Escoceses* and *Yorquinos* did ultimately turn into a short civil conflict in 1827-1828, when a group of Scottish Rite Masons led by Nicholas Bravo, the Vice-President, rebelled against the authority of President Victoria, for Poinsett’s expulsion from the country and the extinction of all secret societies. Bravo’s rebellion was defeated but Vicente Guerrero, the general who defeated that uprising, ultimately became the successful *Escoceses* Presidential candidate in the next election, and it was under Guerrero (who had once

been an *Yorquino* and ally of Poinsett) that Poinsett was ultimately asked to leave the country in 1830.\(^{182}\)

How much responsibility Poinsett can be given for the rise of the *Yorquinos* has been the subject of vigorous debate since the late 1820s. Anti-*Yorquinos* accused their rivals of being pawns of the American minister, while *Yorquinos* themselves claimed that Poinsett had only provided the initial fraternal linkages between American and Mexican York Rite Masons. To this day, Poinsett often appears in the literature as a sinister puppet master, manipulating Mexican politics for American ends, in Mexican historiography about the post-Iturbide period. Poinsett himself claimed in his dispatches back to Washington to be the victim of anti-American agitation and European pressure in Mexico, but notably he never actually denied interfering in Mexican society: he simply charged that Scottish Rite Masonry and European agents had done so already, so it was natural he would try and counteract their actions. Back in America, Poinsett became a divisive figure in the relationship between Masons and their enemies; to Masons, he was a martyr who had “suffered much for Masonry” from the “accursed leaven” of a new republic, a prime example of Masonic victimization, while for anti-Masons his record was proof positive of the dangers of Masonic conspiracy and Masonic power-mongering. If Masons could start a civil war in Mexico, who was to say they couldn’t start one in America?\(^{183}\)

The most convincing evidence is that Poinsett patronized and promoted an existing York Rite Masonry, helping connect it to the larger fraternal organization in America, rather than

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simply creating American Rite Masonry out of thin air in his new home. The evidence elsewhere, however, is compelling. In his efforts to build an American-style republic in Mexico, Poinsett did promote the secret order which he admired and patronized all his life, helping provide an organizational framework for a political party that sought to undermine the conservative centralista government of post-Iturbide Mexico. That Poinsett’s influence existed is not to take agency away from the Mexicans who were already members of outlaw York Rite lodges, or for that matter Mexicans who already favored closer ties to the United States. But his aid tied those causes, for that generation at least, to perceptions of both Masonic and American imperialism in the nation. Mexicans opposed to stronger ties with the United States thus had ample reason to fear American Rite Masonry, just as anti-Masons in the United States in the 1830s had reason to be skeptical of Masonic promises that Masonry had nothing to do with politics. However, much can be said to defend Poinsett’s record: he did hope to avoid war in Mexico, even one waged by his supporters against his enemies, and pulled away from York Rite Masonry in Mexico when it became apparent that his presence in the Order was undermining the institution that he hoped to patronize. The same cannot be said, however, for his successors in the 1840s and 1850s, who used Masonic influence and Masonic power alongside their Cuban lodge brothers to attempt to carve out an American empire in the island of Cuba.184

By the 1840s, the struggle for Cuban independence was already intimately associated with Cuban Freemasonry. Masonic lodges, unified by their doctrines of “liberty, equality, and fraternity for the free-born”, had spread quickly through Cuban upper classes in the 19th century, just as in their English-speaking neighbors to the north. As elsewhere in Latin America, those same elites took a strong interest in the idea of republican independence, especially with Spain

distracted by years of long guerilla warfare against Napoleon and the many successful independence movements on the mainland. The first Cuban Masonic lodge had been chartered in 1804; six years later members of that lodge were arrested and deported to Spain for promoting insurrection. In the 1820s, another Cuban independence movement organized through the lodges the *Soles y Rayos de Bolivar*, only to find that their hoped-for South American patron (and fellow lodge brother) Simon Bolivar had no interest in supporting yet another independence movement while still in the middle of establishing his own power at home. When King Ferdinand came to power a year later (having been deposed by Masons earlier in the decade), Madrid cracked down on Masonry, forcing Masonry throughout the Spanish empire into a liberal underground.185

Years of civil war in Spain and increasing pressure on the unstable *moderado* government of Queen Isabella had made Cuban elites increasingly restive under Spanish authority. Though Isabella was no reformer by European standards, the absolutist Bourbon government in Spain had rarely been friendly towards African slavery in its colonies, a situation exacerbated now by the influence that the anti-slavery British and French governments had over the Infante Isabella. Cuban elites, many of whom were Freemasons, feared the threat of emancipation in Cuba as either the prelude to a Haitian-style race war or as the downfall of the sugar economy of the island as had happened in the British Caribbean after independence there in the 1830s. Fears of a republican revolution in Spain that would bring about colonial emancipation, just as had happened in France at the same time, only exacerbated the fears of Spanish elites. (As for anti-slavery Cuban exiles, Chaffin explores how the Havana Club’s decision to back Lopez’s imperial hopes in Cuba proved disastrous for exile liberalism.) In 1848, after a crackdown by colonial authorities saw the arrest of some Cuban Masons and the flight of revolutionary leader Narciso

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Lopez into exile in America, members of the “Havana Club”, a secretly Masonic social organization and revolutionary hotbed, dispatched their first representatives to Masonry in North America.\(^{186}\)

They found a fertile field for their work. Fears of the “Africanization” of Cuba were just beginning in this era, but American dreams of Cuban annexation went back nearly to the beginning of the 19\(^{th}\) century. Thomas Jefferson had written to John C. Calhoun in 1820 that the United States ‘ought, at the first possible opportunity, to take Cuba,’ while even John Quincy Adams (who would later become a vigorous anti-imperialist) had speculated in the 1820s that American annexation of Cuba was likely within half a century. Increasing commercial and cultural ties between Cuba and the United States through the 19\(^{th}\) century increased support for Cuban independence among Americans, with such luminaries as John O’Sullivan and other advocates for Manifest Destiny taking up the charge of Cuban independence (and then annexation to the United States) after visiting the island and interacting with Cuban revolutionaries at home. Not only were Americans interested in the commercial and cultural possibilities of Cuban independence and annexation, but American Masons took a particular interest in the Havana Club and its contemporaries. American Masons, who in the late 1840s were in the beginning of their revival after the peak of political anti-Masonry in the 1820s and 1830s, were eager to assist lodge brothers beset by an anti-Masonic government abroad. Masons saw themselves as the heirs to the revolutionary legacy of the American Founding Fathers (most of whom had been Masons), and the Cuban revolutionary movement offered American Masons a chance to be the fighters for independence that their grandfathers had once been. Southern Masons took a particular interest in adding another slave state to the Union. American Masonry

was largely a Southern organization by the 1840s and 1850s, the evangelical revival that had killed Freemasonry in the North for a generation having been largely connected with antebellum culture war issues in the Northern United States. This meant that Cuban exiles found a network of allies that was particularly Southern, driven by the deliberate antiquarianism of both Masonry and Southerness in this period, and strongly connected to the growing expansionist movement of the period. 187

Cuban representatives in America, particularly American-educated Ambrosio Gonzales, frequently made use of Masonic ritual and symbol in making contacts among the American elite. Sometimes this was for organizational purposes, as when 19th century Cuban exile governments used fraternal connections to build relationships with Tammany and other contemporary organizations. Sometimes their needs went much deeper. When Gonzales was dispatched to America in 1848, he made contact with US Army General William Worth using the “oaths, grips, and signs” of American Rite Masonry. Worth sheltered Gonzales and introduced him to sympathizers in the US Army officer corps, several of whom Gonzales would later fight alongside during the American Civil War. In return, Gonzales introduced Worth to brother Masons who were also exiles from the failed 1848 uprising: Lopez and Cisneros. Though Worth was transferred to Texas (and away from his Cuban contacts), Gonzales and the others were undeterred, offering command of the army of American mercenaries they hoped to hire first to Mason Caleb Cushing, then securing a connection with Masons Stephen Douglas and Daniel Dickinson. Worth and Cushing both turned Gonzales down, saying the would-be revolutionaries needed to prove their bonafides with a genuine popular uprising first before they could take up arms against Spain, while Douglas and Dickinson also made a revolution contingent on US

support: in other words, Masons or not, these national military leaders were not willing to risk their careers and lives except on a sure thing. Indeed, the national government ultimately took action against the filibusters, dispersing the filibuster training camp opened in Mississippi in 1849.188

On the state and regional levels, however, Masonic support for the Cuban exiles was aimed far more directly. Contacts in the Mississippi state government in the person of former senator (and Mason) John Henderson won a permanent headquarters for Gonzales and his Southern allies, this time in New Orleans in the home of Laurent Signur, newspaper editor and son of the founder of the first Louisiana Masonic lodge. Henderson gave Gonzales access to the governor of Mississippi, John Quitman, a staunch advocate of pro-slavery expansion and the “father of Mississippi Masonry.” In yet another meeting organized around Masonic rituals, Quitman agreed to resign his post as governor and assume command of a follow-up expedition that would support Lopez’ planned landing. Quitman pressured officials of the Louisiana and Mississippi state militia to release arms and armaments to the would-be filibusters, his allies signing the writ of guarantee that agreed to pay the state for costs should they be lost in battle. With Quitman in reserve, dozens of American Masons flocked to the expedition’s banner, making up the highest levels of the expedition’s leadership: in addition to Lopez, Gonzales, and Quitman, regimental commanders (who had helped recruit their regiments through the lodges) like Chatham Wheat of Louisiana, Theodore Hawkins of Kentucky, and Peter Smith of Mississippi all had been leading members of their local Masonic lodges. Indeed, many in their ranks had been inspired by the “universal feelings of philanthropy” and “Mason personal

friends” associated with the Order, as well as a desire to increase the power of the American South. Filibusters hoped that an independent Cuba would become part of the United States, another slave state to add to the power of their region. For his part, Quitman’s support for his lodge brothers in their Cuban ambitions would eventually see him among those indicted for violations of the Neutrality Act.189

But the May 19 landings failed. In a recurring problem for 19th century American filibusters in Cuba and elsewhere, they proved unable to rally the Cuban population to their side despite the presence of Cuban liberal elites among their officer corps. Even Cuban exiles were at times uneasy about working with Americans who favored annexation instead of independence for a ‘free’ Cuba, while Cuba’s black population knew well the fate they would suffer under pro-slavery American rule and were united in supporting the Spanish government of the period. With several in their number killed or captured, the survivors fled back to the United States, where they found a warm Masonic greeting waiting for them. Arriving on the docks in Key West, a badly wounded Ambrosio Gonzales flashed the “Grand Hailing Sign of Distress” aimed at Masons in the crowd and was ultimately rescued by a government official: future Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, there as collector of customs for the port, had his servants rescue the badly-wounded Gonzales (who was now a fugitive from American justice thanks to his violation of the neutrality laws) from the dock while another Key West Mason provided the escape boat that eventually got Gonzales back to the mainland. (Gonzales’ injuries had been severe; one American newspaper actually reported his death.) The failure of the expedition, and the subsequent indictments of its leaders, was no obstacle to Southern Masons: Gonzales, Lopez and others were the guests of honor at a gala Masonic celebration in


Though the New Orleans trials began too early for these hopes to be realized, the filibusters were successful in their efforts to more tightly bind themselves to Southern Freemasonry. With Lopez admitted to an English-speaking lodge in Georgia, and with Masonic newspapermen in the South cheering on the defendants in Masonic language, the trials finally were concluded with hung juries for all three defendants (and those leaning towards acquittal) before the government finally dismissed all charges. As Masons noted at the time, Freemasons did not directly influence the outcome of deliberations: prosecutors seem to have taken pains to keep Masons off the various juries, only one is known to have sat. But the powerful agitation on behalf of the filibusters, both from Masons and those outside the order who favored their cause, cannot have gone unnoticed by a New Orleans jury. Though anti-Masons would later write approvingly of Cuban crackdowns on Masonic lodges during times of major civil unrest, the Lopez crisis seems to have largely passed by contemporary anti-Masons. Coming at a time when the movement was largely in abeyance, perhaps this is not particularly surprising. Henry Gassett, the only American anti-Mason still active on anything like a national scale in the 1850s, did call attention to the “sudden and surprising release…of General Lopez,” but his audience was not what it once had been.\footnote{New York Daily Tribune, May 25, 1850, 1. Lopez’ landing was reported on with great excitement across the United States. Glasgow (Mo) Weekly Times, June 6, 1850, 4. September 18, 1851. Jeffersonian Republican (Stroudsburg, PA) January 9, 1851, 2. de la Cova, 110-111. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 28, 1850. Christian Cynosure, April 25, 1895 Gassett, 15.}

By contrast, the filibusters had certainly come to the attention of Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, Georgia politician-turned-Texas-founding-father, and not incidentally member of

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Columbian Lodge No. 7 (which had provided multiple revolutionaries for Texas, including the martyred James Fannin). Lamar, experienced in the art of revolution, provided the letters of reference that established Gonzales’ bona fides with Governor George Towns and other leading Georgia Masons, helping Gonzales build the support network in Georgia that would ultimately provide a keystone for the final stages of the 1848-era filibuster movement. Lamar, like many American backers of the Lopez expeditions, enthusiastically supported Lopez and his cause without believing Cuban victory was likely: he thought the “habit of servitude” was “second nature” to Cubans and that they lacked the “capacity for attaining and maintaining liberty.” He supported a Cuba detached from Spain and annexed to the United States. With the strong support of the state government and a widely-spread network of largely Masonic supporters, Gonzales was able to raise funds, sell bonds, purchase cannon and secure volunteer manpower all throughout the Peach State. And his work was not limited to Georgia Masons. Gonzales traveled throughout the Deep South in this period, building a secretive network of lodges and sympathizers in Georgia, Florida, and beyond. Whether in Jacksonville, Savannah, or New York, Gonzales found Masons willing to take up the cause of their lodge brothers. This was not simply a matter of Southern Masons acting out of sympathy for the South; when the federal authorities closed in on Gonzales in April of 1851 (who was after all openly flouting the Neutrality Act with his recruitment efforts), it was Masons who sheltered and protected him. Sometimes this was simply Masons with federal duties winking at his operation, as when the US Marshall in Savannah (according to Gonzales) allowed him to openly work against the law because of his Masonic sympathies. Other times, Masonic protection went further, as when the Northern-born Whig Elias Barstow took in Gonzales as a guest at his remote plantation when federal authorities finally did close in on the Cuban exile. Barstow was an opponent of the filibustering movement, but protected Gonzales in the name of his fraternal obligation to protect a brother Mason in distress. Fleeing this latest federal crackdown, Gonzales took shelter in South Carolina (a state
with an unfriendly relationship with the federal government in 1851) in the homes of many of the state’s prominent Masons, even meeting his future wife Harriet when her father William (a member of Harmony Lodge No. 22 along with his sons) offered him shelter at his estate. When Gonzales resumed his work in Georgia, now under an even heavier veil of secrecy, Masons again protected him, with Masons like John Hardee Dilworth (another federal agent, this time a customs collector) openly assuring Gonzales that thanks to his Masonic allegiances (and their own political sympathies with his cause) that they had nothing to fear from him. Indeed, though Dilworth knew Gonzales was by now a fugitive from American justice, he offered the exile leader shelter and hospitality overnight and transportation to a nearby cache of arms secreted there by the filibusters some months earlier. Again and again, wherever Gonzales went in the United States, American Masons defended and protected the man and his enterprise in the name of their common fraternal allegiance, even when those Masons did not share his political and military ambitions for the island of Cuba. 192

But even as Gonzales integrated himself successfully into American society, Cuban society was moving beyond his reach: a major uprising in Camaguey, Cuba on the portentous day of July 4, 1851 (led, not incidentally, by Masons) sent shockwaves through the Cuban exile community in America and the filibustering movement as a whole. Though the movement was quickly quashed (Aguero and his troops were arrested on July 22, the very day word of the initial uprising reached the American press), news that the long-awaited popular uprising in Cuba itself (or what appeared to be one, anyway!) had finally come galvanized those who had hoped to bring political change to the island. Narciso Lopez reacted immediately, organizing a hasty force of New Orleans volunteers and leaving for Cuba on August 2, leaving behind even exile

stalwarts like Gonzales when they were unable to reach Lopez in time. As Lopez left for Cuba, a torrent of torchlight parades and popular rallies across the South sympathetic to the exile cause sped him on his way: in Baton Rouge, Jacksonville, New Orleans, Tallahassee, and elsewhere, hundreds turned out to cheer for Lopez and Cuban independence. And everywhere, though not exclusively, they were organized, led, and addressed by Masons. In Louisiana, a hotbed of Masonic imperialism, the mayor of Baton Rouge (a Mason) addressed a cheering crowd of hundreds of pro-annexationists. In New Orleans, Masons took the lead in organizing committees for Cuban relief. Further north, Nashville's Cuban rally, organized by leading Masonic journalists, politicians, and soldiers, was one of the largest in the history of the city up to that time. In Mississippi, Maryland, Washington itself, in Savannah, and the backwoods of Tennessee, Masons took the lead in celebrating and promoting Lopez’ mission, as can be found by a comparison between who attended and addressed pro-filibuster rallies and who was a member of what regional Masonic lodge. Given the strong anti-political cast of American Masonry after 1826, the heavy, public, Masonic involvement in support for Lopez is all the more surprising – this was not, it seems, a cause on which Masons were divided the way they would be about secession a decade later. (Every Louisville paper reported on the pro-Lopez demonstrations, among the largest in the region up to that time) It should be noted that these are not anti-Masonic newspapers – these are celebratory accounts of successful rallies rather than attacks on them and their members. Masonic involvement in these matters was no secret, and no shame, through most of the South.193

But it all fell down, hard, when Lopez’ force found that the short-lived uprising they had hoped to support had been no match for the Spanish garrison on the island and neither were they

when pitted against the full weight of Spanish power on the island. In what would become a recurring theme in American filibustering movements in Latin America in general, and with attempted exile incursions into Cuba in particular, political support among an exile community backed by Americans would prove to be of very little advantage to the invaders. Within two weeks of their landing on Cuba, Lopez’ army was gone, either via Spanish prisons, the grave, or flight back to the United States. Sorely pressed by the recent uprising and with diplomatic relations fraying, this time the Spanish government was not inclined to show mercy; many American prisoners were executed summarily after their capture. (Lopez was publically strangled to death in Havana before the month was over, as a lesson to future revolutionaries) Some of these became Protestant Christian martyrs for a later generation, a few like the Crittenden scion who joined so many border-staters in the invasion were particularly canonized even in the anti-Masonic press at the turn of the next century. Others were held prisoner, and their families and friends turned to the government: specifically Benjamin French, the most powerful Mason in Washington, to lobby the Fillmore administration to secure the release of the Americans still held prisoner by the Spanish. But as many American Masons had expected, Fillmore was unsympathetic; the former Anti-Mason had no brief for the fraternity and had strongly opposed the filibuster movement. Support for filibustering was much more associated with Democrats than Whigs (never mind Republicans) in the 1850s, thanks to the strong Southern support for the contemporary Democracy. But with Americans threatened and an election year coming, Fillmore did intervene on behalf of the American prisoners in Cuba and secured the release of several imprisoned American Masons. Though Masons throughout America mourned Lopez’s death, with some toying with avenging his defeat (and the deaths of many of his American allies), the defeat of the Lopez August 1851 expedition spelled the end of Masonic filibustering in Cuba before the Civil War.¹⁹⁴

Masonry retained its revolutionary associations in Cuba through the 19th century, with the later generation of Cuban revolutionaries like Maceo and Marti retaining ties to Masonic lodges in Cuba. To be a Mason remained deeply politically awkward for Americans in 19th century Cuba, with at least one guide to the island, written for American businessmen and published before the Spanish-American War, actually urging Americans not to make any mention of their Masonic ties on the island (which was then in the beginnings of the revolution that would ultimately be terminated by American intervention.) American anti-Masons occasionally remarked on the crisis in Cuba in that period, but their gradual marginalization meant they were increasingly hyper-focused on American domestic affairs. 195

In the 1860s, anti-Masons (and the Radical Republicans they had become) connected the Knights of the Golden Circle, probably the most famous transnational militant secret society of the antebellum United States to the Masons, charging that it was “under [their] auspices men were raised for the Lopez raids [the largest antebellum filibustering expedition against Cuba] upon the island of Cuba,” and that “when designs to seize the hemisphere for the South failed, the land pirates found work at home.” Though largely a money-making scheme by their founder, Dr. George Bickley, the Southern, expansionist, revolutionary rhetoric of the Knights had made them famous across the United States as a symbol of the ‘Slave Power’ in the 1850s and 1860s, and remained a bogeyman for Northern evangelicals for another generation. (As Mark Lause has written in Secret Societies, the ‘real’ Knights were much less threatening than they appeared – however what mattered was that Northerners had ample reason to believe that sort of talk.) And one reason those charges about the Knights (and by extension, the Slave Power as a whole) were


195 Christian Cynosure, December 23, 1873, np
so believable was the connection between Masonry and Southern expansion. A generation before Bickley, William Collom, writing in the pages of the *Sun Anti-Masonic Almanac* declared that American minister to Mexico (and Mason) Joel Poinsett had caused a Masonic civil war in Mexico between York (American) Rite and Scottish Rite Masons, the York faction being sympathetic to the United States while the Scottish Rite (being a reflection of anti-Jacobin British Masonry of the late 18th century) group was allied with British interests in Mexico. In the 1870s, postbellum Anti-Masons charged that Masonry had been behind the Civil War and the Confederacy, and that it was no accident Confederate General Albert Pike was the new leader of American Masons. “…for the spirit of Imperialism which was represented by the Southern slaveholding Aristocracy under the despotic power of Masonry and the churches it controlled had never been opposed by any extent as it has been by the Anti-Imperialistic, Anti-Slavery, Anti-Masonic Party,” said *InLook Magazine* in 1905, echoing charges anti-Masonic politicians and evangelicals had been making for decades. Allegations that Masons promoted imperialism were potent charges in the 19th century, stories that played well to the anti-war evangelicals who were the core base of anti-Masonry, suspicious of militaries, foreign nations, and the sort of cross-cultural cooperation represented by fraternal orders like Freemasonry.196

Neither York Rite nor Scottish Rite Freemasonry created American antebellum imperialism, Manifest Destiny, or the independence movements in 19th century Florida, Texas, and Cuba. American Masons were not so different from their peers. However, American Freemasonry did prove influential in the execution of those ideas into reality. By providing a secret, sometimes revolutionary network sympathetic to American imperial interests, American Freemasonry provided flesh and bone for American imperialism and conquest across the South.

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in the antebellum United States. Other groups, like the Knights, were more committed to the
imperialist cause than Masons were. But no other transnational organization of the day combined
the antiquarian spirit, broad reach and prestige throughout the American South, and social
networking power, of American Freemasonry – Freemasonry provided the historical
justifications, the social networks, and the warm bodies of filibustering all conveniently in the
same organization. Inspired by Masonic ideals of liberty and revolution, American Masons and
their Latin American lodge brothers rebelled against what they saw as corrupt and oppressive
governments in the tradition of their American revolutionary predecessors and their imagined
Cavalier and crusading ancestors. When 19th century anti-Masons attacked American
Freemasonry as a danger to democracy and agent of imperialism, they were speaking not out of
prejudice, but out of a reasonable understanding of American Masonry’s entanglement with
slavery and empire in 19th century America.
Chapter Eight

“‘With charity for all and with malice toward none,’” we bring this question [Should Christians join secret societies?] to all those serve Christ. We mean by secret societies, not literary scientific or college associations, who merely use privacy as a screen against intrusion, but those affiliated and centralized “orders” spreading over the land, professing mysteries, practicing secret rites, binding by oaths, admitting by signs and pass-words, solemnly pledging their members to mutual protection, and commonly constructed in “degrees” each higher one imposing fresh fees, oaths, and obligations and swearing the initiated to secrecy even from lower degrees in the same Order” wrote Jonathan Blanchard in his 1867 *Secret Societies: A Discussion Of Their Character and Claims.* Like many evangelical Christians of the 19th century, Blanchard’s answer was no, writing in his work published through the Western Tract and Book Society of Ohio that secret societies destroyed “patriotism…Christianity…and community.” But Blanchard was not content to rest there: the Vermont-born preacher had become “the leader in the crusade against secret societies” by 1870, founder of the National Christian Association, the last major American anti-secretist organization, in 1874, and a Presidential candidate on the American ticket in 1884. American historians have generally treated Blanchard’s National Christian Association simply the last gasp of a “paranoid style” in American political history. Among the few contemporary historians willing to study Blanchard and his contemporaries are historians like Mark Carnes, who studied the NCA through the lens of focusing on their enemies: Pike’s Masons and the other secret societies of Gilded Age America. 197

The postwar revival of Anti-Masonry, organized by Jonathan Blanchard of Wheaton College, has traditionally been neglected by political historians of anti-Masonry. Blanchard and his contemporaries are not mentioned at all in Vaughn, the standard work on general Anti-Masonic history. Outside of histories of American Protestantantism and works on the colleges he

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led, Blanchard primarily appears in the historical literature as a friend of Thaddeus Stevens. Certainly the anti-Masonry of the National Christian Association was far less successful electorally than its Jacksonian-era counterpart. While William Wirt won over 100,000 votes in 1832 and carried Vermont, his successors James Walker in 1876 and John W. Phelps in 1880 never earned more than a thousand votes between them and never came close to carrying a single state. (There is significant variation in the figures quoted for the American Party’s Presidential bids; I have chosen to go with the more commonly accepted figures that place typical American totals in the hundreds.) When unable to find a more prominent Presidential candidate to run in 1884, after being nominated by his own ‘American’ Party at the 1882 convention in Batavia, Jonathan Blanchard reluctantly endorsed Prohibitionist candidate John St. John. Despite nationally published calls for an “American Party, simple and pure, without the native,” that would put aside the old culture wars of antebellum America in the name of bringing down “our national Dagon”, both politically and culturally the anti-Masonic revival of Jonathan Blanchard can best be considered a failure. The “American Party” was a failure even within the narrow confines of evangelical electoral politics, and the Gilded Age saw most Protestant denominations become more, not less, accepting of secret societies. Only a few relatively small denominations like the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the Mennonite Brethren have retained their 19th century hostility to secretism into the 21st century.  

Though the crusade against secret societies was a failure, it is nonetheless a worthy subject of study for historians. The failure of the anti-Masonic crusade helps demonstrate the changes in American gender politics between the Jacksonian period and the Gilded Age. The Gilded Age was a very different era than the Jacksonian period; the new white-collar industrial workforce, made up of young men made particularly discontent by memories of the Civil War, was eager to embrace the meaning offered to them by fraternalism in a way that had not been

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true in the primarily agrarian America of the 1830s. Party systems were stronger too thanks to the rise of the Australian ballot and the expanded postwar federal government with its widely available opportunities for patronage. The vigorous party systems of the 1870s were far more difficult to penetrate than the far weaker Jacksonian-era one party state had been. It also helps demonstrate the fundamental basis of the anti-Masonic movement as one of section, driven by the particular evangelical concerns of the Northeast in the Jacksonian period. With the ‘cultural cringe’ of postwar religion, in which religious reform retreated from the public sphere for a generation, and with particularly the conscious cultural construction of an anti-sectional American narrative (one that was ultimately quite Southern), even the churches that had previously sheltered anti-Masonry were uncomfortable with its message. Blanchard’s anti-Masonry failed because the nation around it had changed irrevocably from the Jacksonian period.

Additionally, the anti-secretists of the postwar period, like their predecessors in the Jacksonian period, were not single-issue fanatics: they were anti-racists and supporters’ of women’s rights, temperance men and women who advocated for a Christian republic that favored an eight-hour work day, opposed the carrying of firearms and cruelty to animals, anti-nativists despite a strong cultural tradition among American evangelicals going in the other direction, and were strong advocates of the Northern evangelical school of reform then in the process of transforming itself into Moody-style fundamentalism. Blanchard’s seemingly quixotic battle against postwar Masonry was more than just an evangelical struggle against a competing business model, as it has often been portrayed by historians of religion. In addition to their views on Masonry and women, Blanchard and his contemporaries were racial and social egalitarians who condemned “the power of money, and mystery, and secret organization, and gaudy parade to subvert our principles and convert our hearts.” Postwar anti-Masonry spoke to the

199 Roberts, 382. I generally accept Mark Carnes’ arguments for the psychological appeal of fraternalism to young men of the postwar era. Carnes, 15. The very different economic, political, and cultural climate of the 1830s had meant a very different popular relationship with Masonry. Christian Cynosure, October 2, 1873. For how the strength of Gilded Age party politics (and the rewards systems it mastered) could keep factions together, see Margaret S. Thompson, “Ben Butler vs. the Brahmins: Patronage and Politics in Early Gilded Age Massachusetts,” The New England Quarterly June, 1982, 163-186
discontentment of the rural North after the Civil War, attacking the power of trusts, condemning
the abandonment of the Reconstruction amendments by the Grant administration and its
successors, and calling for direct Presidential elections rather than relying on the Electoral
College. The anti-secretist movement failed, convincing many evangelical leaders like Blanchard
to embrace pre-millennial Christianity and turn away from broader issues of social reform, but it
enjoyed some isolated victories in weakening the public power of the secret societies of the

This chapter will investigate both Masonry and anti-Masonry in the postwar period,
trying to uncover why a movement that was so successful in the 1830s was not just a failure but
a laughable failure in the Gilded Age. By the same token, investigating the success of postwar
Masonry will help uncover what it was that successful secret societies offered their members in
the 19th century. Blanchard and his contemporaries were heirs to the abolitionist project,
continuing the reform project interrupted by the war, and focusing on the anti-secretist cause that
had dominated Northern evangelical thought before the rise of anti-slavery politics. That their
coalition failed helps illustrate the underlying nature of anti-Masonic politics, its intimate
connection with the very roots of 19th century evangelical reform movements, and finally with
the cultural changes in the United States after the Civil War. In a Jacksonian age of reform, anti-
Masonry could prosper; in the increasingly conservative America of the Gilded Age, the anti-
elite politics of anti-Masonry could not survive as a national movement. This helps illustrate the
uniquely political nature of Jacksonian-era anti-Masonry, and takes it beyond the traditional
confines of religious historiography. A solely religious anti-Masonry could never survive as a
national movement outside of increasingly fringe evangelicals; it required the political confines
of the 1830s with its weak party loyalties, previously unmobilized population of voters, and growing sectional divides in order to survive.201

The postwar anti-secretist movement helps further illuminate the way Jacksonian anti-Masonry played a role as the first great sectional and evangelical religious movement. The reformers had, if anything, been too successful: the reformist churches had become a challenge to the authority of male householders, driving them into the arms of fraternal societies. This was a serious issue for contemporaries - Smith has found evidence of reformers actually downplaying the influence of women in their movement despite high concentrations thereof. In an age of reform like the Jacksonian era, the anti-Masons were successful; in an age of reaction like the Gilded Age, they found things far more challenging. A party of Northern resistance to Southern institutions was no shape to resist an age of growing cross-sectional consensus. Furthermore, it was only by becoming a mass political movement that anti-Masonry was able to have a significant and long-lasting cultural impact in the 1830s. For Blanchard, who compared political anti-Masons to “the host of preachers who helped mob abolitionists one day and in a few months shouted themselves hoarse for abolition and chaplaincy,” and who held that “Morgan Anti-Masonry sunk because it became simply political, and political action cannot cure religious and moral evils,” the kind of political compromises that had made Jacksonian anti-Masonry possible were impossible to make. “Pugnacious, unconciliatory, irascible, learned, brilliant in speech and thought,” Blanchard, who once condemned his former friend Henry Ward Beecher as “a crafty leader of degeneracy and corruption…[who deals] the love of Christ to sinners with the indiscriminate fondness of a successful prostitute,” was the wrong man to lead a national political crusade with any hope of success. Unable to grasp the new issues that would motivate later evangelicals without abandoning the now-outmoded anti-secretism, Blanchard saw both the old reforms and the new slip through his fingers before his death in 1892. Ever-quarrelsome, Blanchard proved to be a poor choice to organize a party with a national following, for all that his tremendous drive and evangelical connections had allowed him to organize the revival of

anti-Masonry in the first place. A man remembered thirty years later by Knox College students as a famously strict disciplinarian, Blanchard the politician had something of a tin ear for what people outside evangelical circles wanted to hear. (Knox College in Galesburg, IL had been Blanchard’s first, failed attempt to build an anti-secretist ‘Christian’ college in antebellum Illinois) In 1883, his condemnation of a dead man’s membership in secret societies forced him to abandon his eulogy for the deceased mid-service after the outraged family demanded that he leave. Blanchard’s anti-racism and defense of the Reconstruction amendments helped ensure that anti-secretism would never be particularly viable in the Southern United States, while his party’s advocacy of “justice to Indians” made things very difficult in a West Blanchard himself had never been particularly comfortable in. The American Party was largely his creation, and perhaps because of his influence was never able to rise above its limited base. 202

By contrast, Masonry enjoyed tremendous success in the postwar years, particularly the reorganized Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite under the leadership of former Confederate general Albert Pike. Discontented men no longer at home in the reformist churches of the day, lacking the manly rituals of political engagement and aspirations of pre-industrial republican manhood that had dominated life for their fathers fifty years earlier, were eager to embrace the masculine world of fraternal societies. Pike, an autodidact and student of the occult, was eager to provide his fellow Masons with a world of rich meaning that would let them engage with a manhood neglected in the respectable middle-class workforce of postbellum America. One of the most influential, albeit now obscure, intellectual and cultural figures of the Gilded Age, Pike’s work created a secular alternative for Masonry that met the emotional needs of its members without seeming to pose a threat to larger American cultural constructions and civilization. This is not to say that Pike’s support was universal – just the opposite. Men like Blanchard despised Pike, declaring of him that “The record of Benedict Arnold is white compared with this compound of treason, cruelty, and fraud,” and indeed Pike’s reorganized Masonic rituals of 1860

and especially his 1874 Morals and Dogmas were largely Pike’s own creation as he regularized the long-disordered Masonic rituals of the many splintered Masonic groups of 19\textsuperscript{th} century America. Pike was able to speak to the larger concerns of his readers in a way Blanchard never could, his organizational leadership rising even as Blanchard’s began a long, slow, steady decline.\footnote{Anonymous, “The Scotch Rite: The Quarrel As It Stands,” \textit{Voice of Masonry} (February 1867) James Richardson, “Centennial Address,” (DC, Pearson, 1901), np, Richardson added a startling “[Pike] brought forth a system of morality more nearly perfect than was ever built before by human hands.”}

A lawyer and diplomat able to straddle both the white world and the Native American one, a Northern transplant in the South and veteran of both the US and Confederate armies, Pike was able to create a world of fraternal ritualism that could speak to hundreds of thousands of white Protestant men growing increasingly disenchanted with the anonymous nature of industrial work and the ‘feminization’ of reform churches and other community activities. Pike’s influence on Masonry (then primarily a Southern institution) was tremendous; he was the “Second Creator”, the “Moses”, the man who had done more for Masonry than “any man in a century and a half.” Analyzing Pike alone took up hundreds of pages of Blanchard’s writings on Masonry. By contrast, Blanchard was an anti-racist who hated the Prince Hall Masons, an advocate of an eight-hour work day who hated unions, a vehement opponent of the Confederacy who condemned the GAR: the Jacksonian fear of the small-town elites that had once galvanized Christians like Blanchard was simply out of place in the industrial America of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The age of republican sincerity was long since over.\footnote{J.D. Buck, \textit{Mystic Masonry} (Cincinnati, Clarke, 1891) 262-263. Carnes, 212.}

Is Mark Carnes right that the National Christian Association was a feminine response to the masculinity of Masonry and other secret societies? Albert Pike’s reforms had helped cleanse the lodges of alcohol and had injected a “sobering religion”, thus making the lodges far less threatening to the notions of masculinity of the period. It is certainly true that women were a common vehicle of anti-Masonic sentiment in the postwar period, just as they had been in the days of Morganite anti-Masonry. Jonathan Blanchard was a close ally of several of the leading
women of 19th century evangelicals, particularly Francis Willard and Mary Ellen West, a Knox alum and family friend. He only reluctantly endorsed the Prohibitionist candidate in 1884, still condemning the alliances between the temperance lodges and the various secret societies that supported their aims. Many of his colleagues would do the same, allying with prohibitionists but still clinging to anti-secretist values inside a movement with a powerful alliance with secretism. Blanchard was a supporter of women’s suffrage, and one of his few failures came when he was unable to persuade his fellow secretists to support women’s suffrage in the American Party platforms of the 1870s. Given the tremendous gulf between votes for the American Party Presidential candidates and subscriptions to Blanchard’s *Christian Cynosure*, much less attendance at NCA conventions, the evidence is certainly strong that the primary support base for the Blanchard Anti-Masons lay among non-voters. Anti-Masonry in the 1830s had provided a vehicle for women to participate in the political and cultural clashes of the day; with the Great Awakening dying away and religious fervor at a relatively low ebb, with women focusing on the more socially acceptable reform causes like temperance (or the more immediately valuable ones like suffrage), anti-secrecy was important only to a small selection of evangelical Northern women. At least one historian has suggested that it was the temperance movement that dealt the final blow to anti-secretism in 1887 when Frances Willard backed an alliance with the Knights of Labor over retaining public ties to the NCA.205

Similarly, given the strength of the Third Great Awakening and the ongoing Muscular Christianity movement, Blanchard’s antisecrecism was unable to make significant traction even inside churches. Though Blanchard was able to win over some; Oliver Wendell Holmes “scorching the feathers and tinsel of the puissant knights and grand lordlings of the lodge,” as well as converting several churches and other newspapers, in general his attack faltered even among his fellow evangelicals. While temperance was a national movement, anti-secretism was always centered around Blanchard himself and his circle in the NCA, along with the elderly

abolitionists and women who shared his views. It was an age when an ideal Christian should be able to “out-walk, out-run, out-jump, out-skate, out-swim, out-fish, out-hunt, and out-preach any other man for twenty miles around,” one in which the radical evangelicalism of people like Blanchard with its strong focus on the virtues of women and the negative consequences of their separation from men was increasingly out of place. At least one Masonic writer snickered that women should have more voices in their church: after all, men had Masonry for their own institution! Even the NCA itself worried at times about the “emasculating” of the churches. In an isolated few denominations, anti-secretism won out over fraternalism, ironically (given the proto-feminist roots of anti-Masonry) transforming their churches into bastions of male involvement. But for the most part, “Masonry was popular, and what is [the Church] but popular?”

Blanchard’s arch-nemesis Albert Pike had his own relationship with America, gender, and class. Pike and Blanchard were of the same generation; born three years apart in Massachusetts and Vermont, respectively, and both moved West with the new Jacksonian age. Both men were defenders of Native Americans against white oppression, a risky political stance for two Westerners who certainly had a strong regional investment in the establishment of ‘white civilization’. Pike was a New Englander who had moved west in the 1830s as well, but while Blanchard had embraced evangelical Christianity and stern New England rectitude, Pike had gone in the other direction. If Blanchard was the “leading light” against Masonry in the post-Civil War period, Pike was its “Sovereign Grand Commander” from the late 1850s until his death in 1891. Blanchard was the great organizer of anti-Masonry, given credit by his biographers for the strength and power of the National Christian Association through the end of the 19th century, but Pike was the great organizer of Masonry, the “All-Time Goliath” whose recreation of the degrees of “Ancient and Accepted” Scottish Rite Masonry helped Southern Jurisdiction Masonry survive and prosper in the postwar United States. One was the last great pre-Civil War evangelist, continuing his crusade long after his contemporaries had turned in

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other theological directions; the other was an occultist and dabbler whose intellectual world would take him far beyond the confines of 19th century American Christianity. There is a statue to Albert Pike built on federal land in Washington DC, while none such exists for Blanchard; seemingly a strange dichotomy. The conflict between the two, and how it failed to gain significant traction in contemporary American public life, helps show how much American political and cultural life had changed by the period at the end of the war.207

In 1859 Albert Pike became Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry. As a young man, he had had the sort of multi-faceted career common to the West: working as a poet, journalist, trapper, and historian before making the law his career. For a man like Pike, who traveled throughout Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, and elsewhere in the West, secret societies like the Oddfellows and Freemasonry were a necessity in a 19th century world where secret ties provided the business connections otherwise impossible for out-of-towners. They were particularly valuable for the Northern-born Pike, whose Whiggish (and later Know-Nothing) politics made him an outsider in heavily Democratic Arkansas, and who urged Arkansas and the South to stay in the Union until secession. He was from a later generation than the Jacksonian Masons who had clung to pretensions of antiquity, writing in 1858 (in direct reference to several older texts of Masonic history) “Nor is it to be denied, that there is some warrant for this, in the unfortunate proclivity of over-zealous and injudicious brethren to make the history of Masonry remount to the time when Adam, in the Garden of Eden, was Grand Master…” (Not all of Pike’s successors were as willing to accept Pike’s version of events, largely accepted by historians, in which Masonry came to Charleston in 1801 as a result of Masons from the French Caribbean fleeing to the United States: many later documents do their best to restore the antique pretensions which Pike had done his best to combat)208

207 Art DeHoyes, A Cloud of Prejudice (Texas, 1990) 4-5, 16. James Rogers, “Albert Pike and Freemasonry,” The New Age Magazine (April, 1986) Vol 4. Fred Allsopp, Albert Pike: A Biography (Montana, Kissinger, 1992) xi Pike’s views on Native Americans were complex; he was sincere in mistaking Native American fraternalism as simply a relative of his own Masonic ties, and seems to have used fraternal sentiment as proof of Native American civilization.

By the time he became the leader of American anti-masonry in the late 1860s, Blanchard was no stranger to evangelical politics or controversy. (Indeed, for men of his generation, they were largely one and the same: a famous anecdote had Blanchard say that “You need not be worried when the world hates you” as comfort to his son and successor Charles A. Blanchard early in his own career). Fifteen years old when William Morgan was murdered, Blanchard came of age in rural Vermont, living in the geographical heart of the Second Great Awakening at the height of that movement in the 1830s, embracing the “perfect state of society” as a goal for Christian statesmen from a very young age. Having been a youthful evangelical in his native Vermont and educator at an academy in upstate New York, the young Blanchard enrolled in Andover Theological Seminary in 1834 just before the school’s profound split along ‘gradualist’ and ‘immediatist’ abolition lines. Disgusted by what he saw as the compromising nature of his would-be instructors, Blanchard left Andover in 1836 to become a lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Life on the lecture circuit evidently held little appeal for the young evangelical: within a year he had returned to school, this time in the more salubriously abolitionist climes of Cincinnati’s Lane Seminary, and was ordained into a post at Cincinnati’s Sixth Presbyterian Church that same year. He debated A leading figure in Cincinnati and Ohio’s abolitionist community, Blanchard was recruited by his fellow anti-slavery men to head Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois; an anti-slavery Presbyterian college recently founded as a “Yankee utopia.”

But Knox was not the utopia of which Blanchard dreamed. His return to Congregationalism alienated him from the Presbyterians of Galesburg, while his Liberty Party politics angered the local anti-slavery Whigs who saw him as a dangerous divider. In particular, the always-quarrelsome Blanchard feuded with the paterfamilias of Illinois evangelicals, George Washington Gale, who had moderated his own radical beliefs thanks to age and the political realities of Illinois in the 1840s, much to the fury of Blanchard who in 1850 wrote angrily to the American Home Mission Society that, “you prefer the apparent unity and success of the

organization, to setting your gospel . . . against this Godless injustice to the poor negroes."

Blanchard’s enemies finally dethroned him at Knox in 1857, and after some years agitating against secret societies in Galesburg, Blanchard became President of the Illinois Institute in Wheaton, Illinois, which he would shortly transform into Wheaton College. Even for evangelicals, forceful advocacy for anti-secretism was growing politically awkward by the Civil War period. The worm had turned, and would not be revived until the postwar period. By 1861, American Anti-Masonry was largely in the hands of particularly radical evangelicals like Blanchard. American anti-secretism was still quite relevant, and would become more relevant as the war itself began. Northern fears of Southern subversion through the Knights of the Golden Circle were a common theme of internal Northern politics during the Civil War. But opposing all secret societies, by the 1860s, required a particular sort of cultural focus.210

Blanchard had personal reasons to oppose secret societies, the cause he would make his own during his twenty years as President of Wheaton College. (While some historians have falsely claimed that Blanchard was an Odd Fellow, this is a result of a misreading of the anti-Odd Fellow texts published and edited by the National Christian Association during Blanchard’s time as its head. The National Christian Association published the bylaws and rituals of 19th century secret societies in order to embarrass them, not advertise their services. Blanchard was as eager to condemn the “oaths, signs, and grips” and “ridiculous ‘boys-plays’ ceremonies of the Odd Fellows as he was of the Masons. While the Odd Fellows might have been a natural ally for an evangelical like Blanchard, the NCA never hesitated to condemn otherwise natural allies like the Grand Army of the Republic or the American Protective Association if those groups carried out rituals they felt to be secretist and unchristian.) Like many New England evangelicals, he had embraced anti-secretism in Vermont during his youth in the 1820s, and had maintained his anti-secretist beliefs even after becoming an anti-slavery man at Andover. For men of Blanchard’s background and generation, anti-secretism and anti-slavery were part and parcel of the desire to “build a perfect state of society”, one without the “mental slavery and despotism of Masonry” or

the “ultimate ruin of our people...[slavery].” Conditions at Knox and Wheaton, where he repeatedly came under attack by some of the influential figures in local Christianity, exacerbated Blanchard’s innate suspicion and mistrust of secret societies. As his biographer Richard Taylor has pointed out, Wheaton-area Masons did indeed sue Blanchard and the school in a period of extreme financial crisis for barring Masonic members in the 1860s, while Blanchard’s many enemies did indeed plot together to overthrow him as President of Knox College in 1857. Blanchard’s enemies in Chicago made sure that little funding from outside evangelical sources came to Wheaton, increasing the college’s independence from outside sources. He needed no “paranoid style” to see Masons as his personal enemies; indeed they were. But Blanchard’s personal crises do not explain the size of the postwar anti-Masonic movement that accumulated around Blanchard and his allies, nor the eventual demise of that movement in late 19th century America.211

Jonathan Blanchard’s “perfect state of society” never came. Not only did precious few Southern planters become born-again Christians and free their slaves, most Northerners were never persuaded by Blanchard’s brand of evangelical Christianity. Indeed, most Northern Protestant churches remained much more interested in “the apparent unity and success of the organization” rather than Blanchard’s “immediatism in morals.” Though Blanchard was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a bitter enemy of slavery and strong opponent of racism, he was deeply uneasy about the Civil War, and his National Christian Association would ultimately write a very scathing attack on the GAR called “Why a Christian Should Not Join the GAR” in the 1890s that condemned both the secretism of the Grand Army of the Republic and the killings of the Civil War itself. If Blanchard was uncomfortable with some Union veterans, he had no qualms about his hatred of the Confederacy: “We have seen eight millions of our people fighting for slavery, a cause which would have been their ultimate ruin,” he wrote in 1875, thanks to (as he had written earlier) “the power of money, and mystery, and secret organization,

and gaudy parade to subvert our principles and corrupt our hearts.” He wrote near the end of his life that “[The] Union would not be standing today if God had not in His mercy put this government in the hands of anti-Masons.” The profound theological and political shock of the war, as well as the many industrial changes that came in its aftermath, left Blanchard (like many of his contemporaries) looking for answers. What could have caused such a disaster in American life? Masonry, the lodges, were Blanchard’s solution to the problems of 19th century America. “I believe that Satan concentrates all his dark assaults through that evil net-work,” he wrote in 1874 to his life-long friend Gerrit Smith, and Satan was a real force for destruction in Blanchard’s world.212

In 1867, with Wheaton on a better financial footing and the war over, Blanchard called a convention of anti-Masons in Aurora, Illinois (now a suburb of Chicago near Wheaton) to revive the great anti-secretist crusade. There were eighty-five men and women at the 1867 Christian Convention, a foretaste of the first National Christian Association meeting that was to come a year later in Pittsburgh when 175 delegates from 13 different denominations gathered together to implore “all churches of Christ” to exclude Masons from their membership and formally bring the National Christian Association into being. Not long after the Pittsburgh convention, Blanchard began publishing the *Christian Cynosure*, the core newspaper of the National Christian Association, which would remain in print until the 1980s. As Blanchard’s biographer Richard Taylor has noted; the NCA leadership was dominated by older abolitionists, a “goodly number of old men” among the crowd at every convention. Even at the Aurora convention in 1867, a sympathetic ministers declined his invitation writing that, “At three score and ten, a man should leave the field to younger and abler combatants,” another “I would gladly convene with you, but the infirmities of age forbid me that pleasure,” while another anti-Masonic ally was unable to attend for being “now in his 85th year and nearly blind, but seeing clearly.” Blanchard himself was in his late fifties at the Convention’s first meeting, while his friends like Gerrit

Smith and George Cheever, who would become fixtures at later NCA gatherings, were even more superannuated. Convention meetings and the pages of the Cynosure are full of references to abolition days; Blanchard remembered how “Freemasonry protected slavery until it fell by civil commotion,” while some of the very few Southern anti-Masons (Blanchard had noted elsewhere that the friendly conventioneers stopped at the ‘line of Mason and Dixon) pleaded with the NCA to cut references to anti-slavery politics out of its rhetoric to better sell the movement in the South.213

Given the age of its members and relatively small size (the Christian Cynosure itself generally sold about 6500 copies even on its best weeks, more people than consistently voted for the American Party in Presidential elections), it would be easy to dismiss Blanchard’s NCA as just a minor offshoot of the last vestiges of the Second Great Awakening: indeed, many Blanchard biographers have used his legacy and the failure of postbellum anti-Masonry to chronicle the transition between the end of the Second Great Awakening and the beginning of the pre-millennial age of fundamentalism in the late 19th century. But there was more to Blanchard and postbellum anti-Masonry than the last vestiges of the Second Great Awakening, more than the “apprehension and dread” of men and women confronting the end of their movement: there was a significant postwar revival of Masonry in the United States, one famously dominated by its Southern contingent and personally headed by ex-Confederate Albert Pike. As William Fox had written, Southern Rite Scottish Freemasonry, which would eventually become the dominant Masonic institution in the United States, was relatively puny in the years before Pike’s ascension – even during Pike’s time, the organization’s rapid growth still gave it only a few thousand members. he Southern Jurisdiction did not begin a reliable count of members until the 1880s, but Fox speculates that numbers were smaller in the immediate postwar era. The Southern Jurisdiction Rite would grow rapidly after the 1880s, however, and have nearly fifty thousand members at Pike’s death. But despite its relatively small numbers ‘on the page’, Pike’s Southern

Rite enjoyed a dynamic presence in the cultural zeitgeist of both secretists and anti-secretists. Pike’s role as a champion and popularizer of Masonic rituals made him a hero to Northern and Southern Jurisdiction Scottish Rite Masons alike, while his organization’s move to Washington, and alleged political influence, made him a special enemy of anti-Masons.214

Perhaps it is not so surprising that Northern evangelicals would be fearful and resentful of the “Grand Commander”, who reorganized both Northern and Southern Freemasonry behind rites he had personally devised, not surprising that the anti-Masons would call on outsiders to “look upon the men they have in high places” in the 19th century. Northern evangelicals had every reason to fear the power of secret societies like the Masons, or like their contemporaries and fellow secretists, the Fenians who hoped to drag the United States into a war with Britain in the name of Irish independence. (Even thirty years after the end of the widespread Fenian movement, the Fenians were still remembered as “fruit of the lodges” alongside “Jesuits…Mafia…Labor Unions,” and other cultural enemies of middle-class evangelical Protestants like the Blanchards.) They particularly feared the Klu Klux Klan, arguing not only that the Klan and the lodges occupied a similar social space, but that the former was directly inspired by the latter. And indeed, this charge was true. This is traditionally presented as breathless allegations of Albert Pike's secret Klan ties, ones vigorously rebutted by Masons, but the truth is far simpler than competitive narratives of Pike the sinner or the saint. The First Klu Klux Klan was a secret domain of elaborately staged masculine ritual, an organization with deep cultural similarities to contemporary Freemasonry. The Cynosure celebrated the government's conflict with the Klan, and hoped to see similar measures applied against American Masonry.215

There were, by all appearances, secret armies growing under the tutelage of the legacy of the American South and Freemasonry in the America of the early Gilded Age. It is no wonder

215 American Tyler, April 15, 1903, np. Northern Jurisdiction Scotch Rite Masons were concerned by the growth of their Southern brethren, but far less so than of ‘heretical’ movements like Cerneau Masonry. Christian Cynosure, January 1, 1874, December 4, 1879, November 16, 1893, np Carnes, 8. The Klan drew heavily on the rituals of the Sons of Malta, an organization that presented itself as 'true Masonry' to many of its members. Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, October 22, 1859, np.
anti-Masonic leaders were so fearful. Taken together with the social upheaval brought about by the war, perhaps it is no surprise that Anti-Masonic leaders hoped to “[unite the North and South] in a common opposition to the Masonic lodge in order to restore a national American tone of sentiment to the country” while at the same time combating those who appeared to be their old enemies. Blanchard personally despised Pike, holding him up (alongside Albert Mackey and Daniel Sickles) as proof of all that was wrong with Masonry. Given US Grant’s Masonic sympathies, as well as the significant postwar growth of the Southern rite, Blanchard and his followers argued that “In Washington, Pike, Mackey, and the lodge are supreme,” praising their members who dared open an NCA chapter in DC itself. Pike’s organization grew and grew even as Blanchard’s shrank – Pike’s rituals would even be largely adopted by ‘dissenting’ Masonic groups like the Northern Jurisdiction and Prince Hall Masons, helping ensure the survival of his legacy beyond the confines even of his own organization. By the time of Pike's death in 1891 and Blanchard's in 1892, it was clear that Masonry had triumphed over anti-Masonry in the postwar world – even Blanchard was by the end of his life admitting that he at least preferred honest Masons to dishonest evangelicals. The literature tends to take for granted that Pike's success was as inevitable as Blanchard's failure, but investigating why secretism triumphed over anti-secretism in the Gilded Age is a job worth doing.²¹⁶

Pike’s America would ultimately triumph over Blanchard’s, for all that the few thousand members of the postbellum Southern Jurisdiction Scottish Rite lodges were close in number to the relative handful of evangelical Northerners who read the Christian Cynosure, attended National Christian Association meetings, or voted for American Party (Anti-Masonic) Presidential candidates. This reflects the larger triumph of the South in ‘winning the peace’ after 1865 and arguably was one of the many cultural shifts that made that victory possible. Pike had done away with most of the more bloody-sounding rites of Morgan-era Masonry that had so offended early 19th-century anti-Masons, replacing them with moral and ethical persuasion, as well as the results of Pike’s many decades as a student of the occult producing a remarkable series of occult writings. Pike had done badly out of the Civil War era too; he had been

²¹⁶ Christian Cynosure, April 30, 1874. Fox, 396.
condemned as a race traitor for his alliances with Native Americans during the war (not for the alliances themselves but because of the brutal massacres of white troops he had allegedly overseen at Pea Ridge, a deep embarrassment to the contemporary Confederacy) and removed from his Confederate command after several unsuccessful battles. Forever flirting with bankruptcy, Pike’s Masonry was as much his protection and world as Blanchard’s Christianity was his. Pike’s salary was paid by the Southern Rite that he headed from 1859-1891, his Washington home was bought for him by Masonry. (Though Pike sometimes proclaimed that “he who makes of [Masonry] a religious belief falsifies it and naturalizes it,“, at least one biographer is willing to accept the other Pike who wrote “the religious faith taught by Masonry is indispensable to the attainment of the great ends of life.) He regularized not just Masonic dogma, but Masonic rites, organizing a revised set of rituals (putatively drawn from the works of Frederick the Great, but likely Pike’s own production) that became widely accepted after 1861 among Masons of the Southern Jurisdiction. Pike’s 1874 *Morals and Dogma* was a difficult book to read even in its own era, and indeed Pike famously complicated matters for Masonic historians by writing a massive book providing the putative philosophical and theological underpinnings for post-Morgan Freemasonry without offering much evidence of his sources. Given Pike’s tendency towards personal and intellectual fabulations, as well as his vast intellectual experience and broad range of studies, the evidence does seem strongest that Pike was, as creator or reviser, the intellectual father of most of what became Southern Jurisdiction Masonry in the United States. Pike’s “New Empire of Light” represented both Masonry, and a nation, on the road to recovery from previous disasters and looking for meaning in the new era. Pike presented a vision of Masonry that was bisectional and ultimately non-confrontational, giving white middle-class men a chance for heavily ritualized fraternal bonding without challenging their duties as citizens or Americans. There would be conflict associated with postbellum Masonry, primarily along gendered lines, but the “Secret of the Universal Equilibrium” that Pike offered to potential Masons was of great cultural appeal in the postwar era. By the same token, Pike’s interest in ecumenisms and ‘Eastern religions’ made him a particular enemy of evangelicals.  

By contrast, the National Christian Association and the American Party (Anti-Masonic) seemed to be offering nothing new. Contemporary newspapers repeatedly ridiculed the age and infirmity of their members, while NCA leaders were constantly on the defensive when it came to the age of their movement. All the American Party (Anti-Masonic) Presidential candidates were close allies of Jonathan Blanchard personally: James Walker was Blanchard’s colleague at Wheaton, while John W. Phelps of Vermont was his cousin and a childhood neighbor. Neither were particularly national figures before the election; Walker was famous only as a writer and advocate of Christian causes (particularly the Bible in the Public Schools), while Phelps was mostly known for the way his strong support for abolition had essentially ended his military career during the Civil War. Neither man went to any serious effort to campaign; though Phelps did persuade the National Christian Association to hold a full convention in Chicago to nominate him, one carefully timed to hopefully steal the thunder of a simultaneous Masonic convention in the city. Neither candidate attracted much press outside of local papers; Vermont papers said a few kind words about the “venerable and esteemed townsman” Phelps who had been nominated by the “Faithful Few”, while the Chicago Tribune took the opportunity to ridicule the "old men, women and children, with a slight sprinkling of vigorous blood in the person of a few middle aged reformers“ at the convention. The somewhat uncharitable New York Times added “In one town in Ohio, the name of which is for obvious reasons withheld, a prominent Democratic politician is known to have had upward of 27 cents in his possession during the week before election, and to have boasted that with this money he could buy the support of three small boys, sons of a worthy widow lady, who were outspoken advocates of the gallant Phelps and the glorious Pomeroy. In another town in Michigan the grossest intimidation was practiced by the physician of a lunatic asylum, who locked an Anti-Masonic patient in his cell, and prevented him from going to the polls in a state of nature----emblematic of purity—and voting the Anti-Masonic ticket. Thus, with the aid of money and violence, the Republicans and Democrats, in unholy alliance, succeeded in nullifying the will of the people and placing a Masonic Administration in power.” Anti-Masons were madmen, children, and women to both the press and the Masons who did rebut their claims – powerful gendered critiques given the reality of that
time and place, though ones that has to be applied very carefully. The age of the typical anti-
Mason and their seeming backward focus has occasionally caused problems in the historical
record, as when William Messner in 1985 (in the only recent Phelps biographical piece) made the
understandable error of calling Phelps a conservative – nothing could be further from the truth.
Phelps and the other postbellum anti-Masons were radical reformers associated with an older
tradition of evangelical political action. One might call them reactionaries, and not be far from
the truth, but their movement and its horror at the bisectional, white-male elite society of the
postbellum period was nothing like a genuinely conservative movement. 218

The NCA did occasionally enjoy favorable coverage from the contemporary press, with
even the traditionally hostile Tribune eventually backing Blanchard's efforts to block Masonic
cornerstone laying of Chicago public buildings in the 1870s. But these were isolated moments,
with the prevailing sympathies of the day solidly against the revived movement. Typical reports
from contemporary newspapers would report on NCA doings, quote Masons, and end with a
discussion of the 'prevailing theory' of anti-Masonic history that drew heavily from accepted
Masonic historiography. However, other evangelical causes like temperance enjoyed much more
favorable coverage in this period than anti-secretism, presaging the American Party (Anti-
Masonic)'s eventual merger with the Prohibition Party in time for the election of 1884. The late
19th century was after all an era of revival and religious change in the postwar United States as a
nation rallied for answers (prompted by the cultural changes brought on by the war) and found
them in the confines of churches. This was generally not an era when Christian leaders were
widely condemned in the press, with the mass media rallying behind even proto-televangelists
like Henry Ward Beecher when they ran into trouble with popular opinion. Figuring out why
anti-secretism came in for so much derision in the popular press is worth examining.219

Phelps and Conservative Reform in 19th Century America,” Vermont History, Winter 1985,
http://www.vermonthistory.org/journal/cw/WolcottPhelps_v53.pdf
http://www.vermonthistory.org/journal/misc/JohnWolcottPhelps.pdf Carnes, 76. Carnes points out that the papers
were free to be much more gendered in their attacks on anti-Masons.
219 Maysville Evening Bulletin, September 16, 1882. The Bulletin was a Democratic newspaper, but lacked the
antipathy towards Northern reformers of the 19th century Tribune. MEB, August 23, 1882.
Part of the problem was, as discussed above, the widespread postwar success of contemporary secret societies, which preceded the anti-Masonic reaction of the postbellum period. Fueled by wartime acquaintances and camaraderie, just as it had after the American Revolution, the nation's Masonic lodges were rapidly growing and had a wide membership among professional classes like the press. Masonic and Masonic-allied journalists, many of whom were members of some middle-class secret society or another, had no interest in promoting anti-Masonic politics. But there were certainly other factors at work. Another serious 'problem' of anti-secretism vs. temperance seems to have been one of class. Though anti-secretism and temperance had common roots and were often allied, the middle-class nature of secret societies made it very difficult for churches to successfully challenge them in an era when Masonic lodges were vigorously engaged in the process of promoting middle-class respectability. Drinking was a vice of the poor and the working class, whereas secret societies of the late 19th century sought out sober, middle-class businessmen for their ranks. The disorganized Masonry of the 1830s had been replaced by the tightly-ordered, militarized Freemasonry of the 1870s, the small farmers and businessmen of Jacksonian America had been swallowed up by the industrial workforce. (Many Christian denominations of the period saw similar transformations as their churches became much more tightly organized than they had before the war.) On the other end of things, as reform increasingly became an elite project, their reform gradually focused on those outside their own circles. The exclusion of women from Masonry could be defended as a positive goal, now that Masonry and a needful manhood had become intimately bound. Ironically, as Carnes notes, women did eventually help bring down Masonry, not through political agitation, but through the rise of companionate marriages in the mid-20th century.220

Jonathan Blanchard died in 1892, leaving the leadership of the National Christian Association to his son Charles, who not incidentally succeeded him also as President of Wheaton College. Though the senior Blanchard's death cemented the end of the political relevance of postbellum anti-Masonry, the movement enjoyed a surprising degree of vitality on the

evangelical fringe – after all, beyond a certain point it was only the true believers left. The Cynosure gradually shrunk, transforming itself from a weekly to a monthly newspaper in 1897, the organization itself slipping out of the hands of the Blanchard family and interdenominational Christian politics into the hands of the Christian Reformed Church in particular. Though much of the Cynosure's archives from the 20th century are missing, what we have is a newspaper (and an organization) still clinging to anti-secretism even as the culture war shifts on – articles condemning the violence and secrecy of Orangemen are printed alongside calls for a “World League Against Alcoholism.” (The Orange Order would have been natural allies against the Catholics who remained a mortal enemy of the kind of Protestants who ran the NCA, but the anti-secretist movement still embraced its convictions.) As the decades went by, the leadership died off and the organization continued to shrink. By 1900, the organization had gone so far as to praise the Christian virtue of the same Latin American filibusters they had once condemned. In 1979, unable to pay its rent, the NCA left behind the offices at 850 West Madison that they had held for over a century. Today the area is a quiet, underbuilt neighborhood with the downtown just in view, the old religious struggles now gone from the landscape. With its headquarters closed, the National Christian Association closed its organizational doors for good in 1983.

American anti-Masonry left the public sphere as it entered it, a fringe movement among the religious with precious little influence on national politics. Postbellum anti-Masonry failed to achieve the kind of political or cultural dominance it had achieved in the Jacksonian period. The consensus politics and strong two-party system of the Gilded Age made it impossible for the small parties of the day to achieve a breakthrough, while the relentlessly middle-class, male-dominated nature of postwar Masonry made it impossible for anti-Masonic theology to seriously challenge it among a middle-class, male-dominated electorate. When the class barriers that had once excluded some were removed from Masonic doctrine by the reforms of men like Albert Pike, who encouraged a reform of Masonry that allowed for an institution with genuine mass appeal, the internal bourgeois politics that had once given anti-Masonry a wedge against

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221 Christian Cynosure, May 1897, Christian Cynosure, May 1923., Christian Cynosure, July 1900, np.
Masonry were simply no longer present. The steep decline in sectional politics and conflict in the Gilded Age as Northerners and Southerners came together to celebrate a white male vision of the United States meant that the kind of sectional politics represented by anti-Masonry, with its strong roots in New England reform, meant that there was no longer a significant place for anti-Masonry in the public sphere. The eye of reform, as it did on matters of race, gender, and other antebellum cultural clashes, turned away from the lodges and never returned. The American anti-Masonic movement was a creature of the mid-19th century, an age of reform and social transformation in which the secret power of the lodges appeared to be a very real threat. In the postbellum era, with its conservative cultural turn and emphasis on unity among whites, anti-Masonry could not survive. By the 1890s, even reformers like Francis Willard had largely abandoned the Blanchard family and their crusade. The reformers of a new generation would have new challenges to face, and the Masonic lodges would more often be their allies than their enemies in the cultural changes at the beginning of the 20th century.
Conclusion

The story continues. In 2012, French con man Thierry Tilly was convicted of “violence against vulnerable people, arbitrary detention and abusing people weakened by “psychological subjection” for his role in one of the most elaborate crimes in recent French history. Using a confederate, Tilly had convinced the wealthy De Védries that they were being secretly targeted by Freemasons and that only he and his anonymous allies could rescue them from the conspiracy. Tilly tormented the family for more than a decade, extracting millions of dollars, seducing the family's junior matriarch, and even persuading family members to torture each other for his financial benefit. Tilly’s story reads like something ripped from the pages of a Dan Brown novel, or rather as if such a work of pulp fiction had been deliberately recreated out in the real world. Baroque as Tilly's story may be, it is a sign that fear of Masonry remains deeply embedded in the culture of the Atlantic world, an elderly, neglected relative of the fixations of the present. The 20th century saw significant anti-Masonic sentiment elsewhere in Europe, particularly on the far right that saw connections between one cabal of secret conspirators (the Jews) and another. Anti-Masonry has largely fallen out of favor in Europe these days, its support limited to wealthy cranks like the De Védries. But even in Europe there are still resurgences of anti-Masonic suspicion, as when the Welsh Assembly recently asked all Masonic members to publically declare their affiliation after a corruption scandal – note that there was excellent grounds for the Welsh government to be concerned, and that it took an appeal to the EU to bring about a change of policy. Anti-Masonry remains vital in parts of the world like Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East, where Masonry retains its association with secretive Western power and control by unknown foreign cabals. Saddam’s Iraq banned Freemasonry as a suspected ally of Zionism.222

The United States too has its anti-Masons, carrying on the cause decades after even the National Christian Association finally shut its doors in the 1980s. (Some of whom would no doubt alarm their co-ideologues in the Muslim world by repeating breathless allegations about how “it should not be considered inconceivable that [the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood] was influenced by Britain's Masonic Brotherhood.” (and what a delightfully conspiratorial turn of phrase!) Jack Chick, one of the most notorious evangelical tract writers still active today, has reprinted his “That's Baphomet” tract repeatedly since its first publication in the mid-1980s. In 2013, Beyonce Knowles was accused of flashing an Illuminati symbol during her Superbowl halftime show, leading to much dire whispering from conspiracy circles about Masonic infiltration of rap music. Sites like Freemasonrywatch today carry forward the old traditions of tracts, almanacs, and other samizdat works of anti-Masonry onto the Internet, giving readers breathless account of secret Masonic conspiracies, Masonic hand-signals flashed on television if they only know where to look, and other tales that give many emotional rewards for embracing the doctrine of anti-Masonry. There are many crank theories on the Internet, of course, but that this particular one remains vital is worth investigating by historians. That anti-Masonry remains a vital fear, even at the cultural fringe, when so many other evangelical movements of the 19th century have passed is not an argument for its legitimacy, but it is an argument for its deep resonance with the culture of the past and present. Fear of a secretive organization of the powerful plotting against the working class, or the middle class, or any other emotionally threatened group is a very powerful cultural draw. Late 20th and early 21st century anti-Masonry in both its American and global varieties can best be understood as an offspring of the kind of 20th century populism written about by the authors above, fears of secrets used as a way of not engaging with the existing problems of society.

Perhaps it is understandable that the default setting for much of the academy is distrust, even derision, of a movement that is today so closely associated with the worst excesses of the international right wing. Anti-Masonry has so often been “psychologized” as part of the larger liberal effort of the 20th century to treat the right wing in such a fashion. But the anti-Masonic movement of the 19th century was far more complicated than its descendent, today's fringe evangelical and cultural movement. There was a strong paranoid tinge to much of anti-Masonry, one that predated and postdated the successful 19th century movement that became the political party for a time. The truth is that there were many anti-Masonries; Jedidiah Morse's and Jonathan Blanchard's theological critique of a secular society, the upstate New York rebellion against the lodges that seemed to be ruling their lives, the abolitionists and precious few slaveholders who used anti-secretism as a means of attacking the elites that seemed to be dominating their nation, the evanescent sectional political party that was ultimately subsumed by national politics and the lasting national movement that survived far longer than it has been traditionally credited with doing. Though 19th century anti-Masonry began and ended with Protestant reformers trying and failing to reshape a secular society around them, through much of the 19th century the anti-Masonic movement was only culturally one of religion. Anti-Masons justified themselves by appeals to American liberty and republican virtue, using de facto rhetoric about democracy and the popular will as emotional and cultural reinforcement of their arguments. They were, in a very real sense, the first American political party in the modern sense, one prepared to compete on a level playing field with competitors by use of popular opinion, an emotional electorate, and party organization at ground level to match their counterparts' roles as elite organizers. The parties of the First Party System were closer to competitive elite groups than genuine rivals for popular
opinion, while even Van Buren's Regency was crafted in the context of a national one-party state despite the political opposition Van Buren faced at home. They were also the first sectional party, defending the democratic, evangelical culture of the Northern United States against what appeared to be a serious, elite threat organized by the most powerful people in the country. If there were no secret Dan Brown-style cabals in 19th century America, anti-Masons rarely saw politics in that light. They saw a growing secular power that sought to create an aristocracy in the United States, one that would overthrow existing cultural relationships in the name of a republican order that meant the empowerment of some on the backs of a few, one that would ultimately pit itself against fundamental notions of American liberty. At the same time, Masons, with their close ties to the early republican era and the close elite relationships of the 1820s, were right to be suspicious of the “phrenzy” of anti-Masonry. It did indeed represent a serious threat to the politics and culture of the early republic, and indeed would play a significant role in its overthrow. There was a culture war in the 19th century between Masons and anti-Masons, one that finally played itself out in military conflict in the 1860s. (It is admittedly the great vice of historians of 19th century America to find a connection between their work and the Civil War, so I want to be careful here – the anti-Masonic movement did not cause the Civil War. But it did help prepare Northerners and Southerners for conflict against each other outside of direct questions over slavery, and it did illuminate just how deep the cultural gaps between the sections were).

And just as there were multiple anti-Masonries, there were multiple Masonries. This is key – the diversity of the Masonic experience was one that both Masons and anti-Masons had an interest in downplaying. But the experience was diverse, and Masonry and its social function had different meanings for different people. There was the relatively simple York Rite spread by Joel Poinsett and others across Mexico; there was the much more complex Southern Jurisdiction of
the Scottish Rite (with all of its extra opportunities to get members to pay more money and become more committed to the cause) that eventually became the dominant American Masonry thanks to the additional emotional rewards it offered members and the internationalist message popularized by Albert Pike. There was the Northern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite that failed to successfully compete with its Southern neighbor. There was the internationalist anti-slavery organization allied with Gabriel, Hugh Forbes, and John Brown of which Garibaldi was an enthusiastic member; there was an equally internationalist pro-slavery movement in the American South and across much of Latin America that saw American Masons rushing to defend their Cuban lodge-brothers in the name of slavery. Masonry represented the highs and lows of elite culture in 19th century America – paternalism and charity, education and mobility, but also social control and anti-democratic political work. It is no wonder that the diverse Masonic causes became, at least for a while, closely associated with Southern politics, just as their rivals the anti-Masons became the ur-political movement of the North. Having been occasionally asked, when presenting my work, when I will have a show on the History Channel (and not as a compliment), I want to make it clear that this work was not written with the a priori notion of condemning American Masonry, or indeed any other secret organization. Secret societies are far more a product of locality than they are of whatever cultural place produced their origin – though there are a few cases of people abandoning class, religion, or politics because of Masonic ties in the literature, it is fair to say that Southern Masons were generally pro-Southern because they were Southern. But at the same time, I do not regard secret societies as having been entirely neutral in this ongoing historical process. It is true that secret societies allow societies and cultures to perform the kind of enculturation that reinforces a particular sort of elite republican social values, even in cases where those values would otherwise be coming into contact with the larger culture. Masonry provided a shelter for the kind of Latin liberals in South America with just as much fervor as it did their Southern lodge brothers in the antebellum United States. Secret
societies need not be dangerous to the community around them – whether labor unions or middle-class minority movements like Prince Hall Masonry, many 'lodges' have worked for the betterment of their community. It is when elites gather together, even the small-town would-be elites of Masonry, that a potential threat does exist to the surrounding society.

This dissertation has sought to both support and expand on the existing literature. Revisionist historiography argues that the anti-Masons were not simply paranoid cranks, but responding to legitimate cultural and economic concerns in the context of Jacksonian America. Going one step further - anti-Masons used the old language of republicanism and the nascent language of democracy to attack Masons with at least as much fervor as they used evangelical language about Christianity. While they were the “Christian republicans” of previous analytics, they were equally democrats, working to build a society where equal treatment under the law could be guaranteed despite whatever secret organizations were belonged to by the rich and powerful, and where popular will was a legitimate expression of the good of the republic. Moreover, anti-Masons were not simply justified but often correct in their critiques of the power of secret societies. The transnational organization of Freemasonry did allow it to function as a transmitter of revolutionary ideas beyond national borders, allowing for French revolutionaries to support rebellious slaves and American Southerners to support rebellious slave-owners while all operated within the confines of the same general movement. At the same time, the deliberate archaism of Masonry helped it survive in the Deep South, which generally lacked the kind of major religious reform movements which drove anti-Masonry. And anti-Masonry was ultimately an organization about reform – the first social reform movement to become a political one in American history. This drove the evangelicals who made up anti-Masonry to strange alliances, in particular their de facto cooperation with African-American Masons who shared their conviction that the white-dominated society of the slave South was in need of structural reform. Masonic
ideology, with its secret authority, white male supremacy, and 18th century republicanism, was one of the many ideologies that held the South together. But anti-Masonry was one of the first Northern political ideologies, setting the stage for the cataclysmic culture war that was to come.

Much work remains to be done in this field, some of it outside the scope of the present text. Jedidiah Morse has lacked significant scholarly attention for many years, with only a few historians in the 1980s paying significant attention to the culture wars of the 1790s and what they spoke about the religious and political tensions of the period. Though the detailed records of Thetford have been available to historians through the National Heritage Museum for some years now, relatively few scholars have made significant use of them. The relationship between black Masonry and anti-Masonry, two antithetical cultural actors on the same side of the culture war, has never before been seriously grappled with by historians. The recent digitization of the National Christian Association's records, including the complete run of the *Christian Cynosure*, will greatly aid historians of Wheaton College and others engaged in writing about the religious and political history of the Gilded Age. Blanchard has lacked a scholarly biography for decades now, and only recent works like Carnes' *Secret Ritual and Manhood* have treated him as more than just a minor figure in American religious history. Revisionists like Ron Formisano and Kathleen Kutolowksi have pushed back against the pathologization of minority groups and populist movements in the context of the political history of the 19th century, but their work still has not yet replaced the much-read popular works of the mid-20th century. A genuine history of American Freemasonry that treats the institution as the complex work of cultural identity-forming and economic security that it was, one written by someone without a Masonic or anti-Masonic ax to grind, has yet to be written, though some promising scholarship is these days coming out of the University of Sheffield. The present work has sought to correct some of the imbalances in both the historiography of anti-Masonry and Freemasonry, giving both their due as
important moments in the political, cultural, and intellectual development of the 19th century United States.
The postmodernists are right - there are no neutral histories. We cannot, as historians, present an objective account of the past. So we do what we can, judging and weighing the evidence, and let our successors sort out something closer to the truth. Our predecessors in the field had even fewer scruples about objectivity in their profession. This is particularly true in the case of those sources about anti-Masonry, a movement generally written about by its most bitter enemies and bitter partisans for most of the 19th and 20th centuries. As discussed above, even the New Deal historians of the mid-20th centuries brought a deep anti-populist bias to the study of third parties and outsider political movements that has required some significant revision by the contemporary academy. The present work has had to rely quite heavily on 19th century histories of the anti-Masonic movement and the Morgan abduction, none of which can reasonably be said to be neutral. Some are works by Masons written in vindication of the murder of Morgan or of cultural crimes in general, others are works by anti-Masons that tell their version of the savage stories of their enemies. They were printed by relatively small presses in their own era like Ezra Cook in Chicago, Blanchard's chief publisher, or one of several state Masonic publishing houses. As many of these sources are relatively obscure even to specialists of 18th and 19th century American history, I want to spend some space here discussing them and laying out the intentions of the authors.

Robert Morris was one of the leading Masonic writers of the mid-to-late 19th century. The “Poet Laureate of Masonry” was an educator, writer, and ritualist who played a major role in the foundation of the Order of the Eastern Star. His 1883 *William Morgan*, published not incidentally during the height of the anti-Masonic revival of the Blanchardite period, was an attempt to sum up and lay to rest the lingering cultural fears whipped up by Morgan's disappearance. Morris' biases are obvious – as will be discussed in more detail below, he ridicules Morgan's appearance,
questions his character and sanity, and enjoys relying humorous stories about anti-Masons suffering indignities at the hands of Masons. But his work remains valid for use here – Morris's prestige and the legitimate volume of research he put into what is a substantial book made it the ur-text for many post-Gilded Age Masonic historians, and his work remains a standard primary source on the period for Masonic historians today. Morris's research was exhaustive and certainly impressive, albeit analyzed from a particularly Masonic perspective. A Massachusetts-born transplant to Mississippi, Morris ended his life as one of the most prominent Masonic writers from his home in Oldham County, Kentucky, where he had worked for many years at Eureka Masonic College. P.C. Huntington's 1886 *A Masonic Light on the Abduction and Murder of William Morgan* is cut from a similar cloth, albeit not as detailed as Morris'. Morris and Huntington share their very middle-class contempt for the working-class Morgan's character, and both think he vanished into Canada after his 'abduction' by the hands of Masons. Widely reprinted, Huntington's work too became a valuable one for Masonic historians.224

By contrast, Samuel D. Greene's 1873 *The Broken Seal* was one of the earliest post-bellum histories that lionized Morgan and strongly attacked his alleged killers. (Given that Greene's book was published by Chicago's Ezra Cook and the Christian Cynosure, this should be of no surprise). The book, widely reprinted by anti-Masons, was written by a New England transplant to upstate New York who had been close by during the Morgan controversy. Greene, a former Mason expelled from his local lodge in February 1827, is also one of the original sources for stories of the interaction between 19th century Freemasonry and Joseph Smith's Mormonism – not a field which this present work has the space to venture into. Suffice it to say that Smith's vision of Heaven, with its layers of enlightenment depending on the investment one put into the organization that sponsored it, certainly does bear a striking similarity to Masonic notions of

enlightenment. An alert, intelligent man and wide traveler in New England and upstate New York at the height of the Morgan period, Smith surely could not have been unfamiliar with Masonry and the broad structures of its beliefs. But that work is for another historian to carry out. Meanwhile, Thurlow Weed's 1884 *Autobiography*, another work kept in print by the *Cynosure* (along with Morgan's own book) is another piece strongly engaged with the anti-Masonic controversy. Written as the now-powerless Weed lay dying, the book is a vindication of a political life that had been excluded from the American political mainstream for decades. Though Weed reserves space for his postwar clashes with the Republican Party establishment that ultimately ended the old boss's career, he reserves some space in his narrative to vindicate the old struggles of his political youth – anti-Masonry. Having risen to power first as an anti-Masons, Weed lays out his personal encounters with the movement and his firm conviction that Morgan was indeed murdered by his fellow Masons. Weed in particular engaged with the now common story of the “Good Enough Morgan” that was so beloved of Masonic historians, claiming that he had never actually discounted the necessary veracity of the Munroe/Morgan corpse (that will be discussed in more detail below.)

So the primary 19th century sources on the anti-Masonic movement and the murder of William Morgan are not just biased but old – written years and even decades after the rise and fall of the anti-Masonic movement (sometimes in the context of a contemporary revival) by men picking through the history of forty, fifty, even sixty years earlier as they sought to either attack or defend the lost world of Jacksonian Anti-Masonry. The historian thus needs to be very careful in his analysis of these sources. Contemporary newspapers are another fertile field for historical analysis, particularly since a major portion of the anti-Masonic cultural project was control of the newspapers that were a major source of contemporary discourse. The leading anti-Masonic

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newspaper of the late 19th century was Jonathan Blanchard's *Christian Cynosure*, with the glossy *Inlook Magazine* replacing it at the beginning of the 20th century, but there were many more anti-Masonic newspapers in the contemporary United States equally useful to historians. 226

David Cade Miller's *Batavia Republican Advocate* was of course the first anti-Masonic newspaper in the United States, but Miller's relative isolation and business problems (particularly with the bottle) meant that his paper was not a major influence on the national discourse. Thanks to Thurlow Weed's existing Adamsite political connections, Weed's *Albany Evening Journal* was one of the first and largest anti-Masonic newspapers. In writing this work, I have relied heavily on Henry Dana Ward's variously-titled *Anti-Masonic Review*. Grandson of a Revolutionary War general, author of such books as *Glad tidings : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, leading Millerite Adventist, Ward published his anti-Masonic work early at the beginning of his long career as a radical evangelical. The recently-digitized *Christian Cynosure*, the leading newspaper of Jonathan Blanchard's era of anti-Masonry and one he personally edited out of Wheaton for many years, was another incredibly valuable work. The *Cynosure* is an opinion paper full of letters from anti-Masonic pastors and fellow travelers about their 'encounters' with Masons, historical reminiscences about Morgan Masonry, advertisements for histories of the Illuminati, and active calls for new political action in the context of postbellum America. The work is particularly savage about the power of white Masons in the south, calling on the government to protect African-Americans from white secret societies in post-Reconstruction days. (And indeed, we know that white secret societies were in fact murdering African-Americans and their allies in the South in this period) After Blanchard's death the newspaper's focus seems to slip, and the *Cynosure* (though remaining anti-secretist) became largely indistinguishable from other evangelical newspapers of the day, announcing (among other things) that it was Jesuits who

226 The full text of the Christian Cynosure may now be accessed through archive.org thanks to recent digitization efforts by Wheaton College. [http://archive.org/details/christiancynosur6blan](http://archive.org/details/christiancynosur6blan) Carnes, 199
founded the Illuminati in order to destroy religion. But at its height, the Cynosure was a valuable cultural work showing the last remaining anti-secretist evangelical subculture in the 19th century and how said organization viewed both itself and its most hated enemies.  

On the other side of things, Boston's *Masonic Mirror, and Mechanic's Intelligencer* was a valuable source both for the mechanics of Masonic publishing and how Masons in the media reacted to the outpouring of Masonic sentiment in the late 1820s. The Mirror folded in 1828, just as the anti-Masonic reaction in New England was erupting to life across the region. E.B. Childs' *Albany Masonic Record and Albany Saturday Magazine* was a very useful source for the Masonic perspective on the events of anti-Masonry. Childs founded his newspaper devoted to “Masonry, Science and the Arts, Popular Tales, Miscellany, and Current News” in Albany in February of 1827. Anti-Masonry was sweeping upstate New York by then, and Childs was eager to “do away with the erroneous impressions which exist against the masonic institution.” Childs' work is significant because the battle over the press and what it represented was a significant part of the culture war between Masons and anti-Masons. Some of this was just a desire for publicity, as when anti-Masonic political conventions affirmed “the duty is more and more imperative...to support those presses that support anti-Masonry.” But other times it was a product of genuine fears about the respective power of their enemies. “Leave us in the hands of masonic magistrates, judges, juries...and the masonic press, and then what is public liberty worth...?” asked one anti-Mason on the floor of the 1830 national convention. 

Anti-Masons were convinced that the public would rally around their cause “if there was truly a free press in this country,” and sure that the Masonic domination of the mass media was

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as sure as their putative domination of other areas of the general public. They lamented the absence of a “bold, independent – truly anti-Masonic press” where it was gone and called for its restitution when it vanished. And the record does seem to support this – editors were “so much under the influence of Masons, on account of their patronage” that anti-Masonic coverage was often a problem in what were then mainstream newspapers. This is not to say there were secret cabals of Masons plotting to destroy anti-Masonic journalists, but the business realities of the day made it very challenging for anti-Masonic editors to seriously tackle the question of Masonic power in their communities. When Masons drove Thurlow Weed's first newspaper out of business in 1828, it was a deeply political move, carried out because of Weed's role in connecting anti-Masonry to Adams Republicanism, but nonetheless it was an attempt to silence an anti-Masonic editor for his views. Similarly, anti-Masons put pressure on the “Masonic portion of the press”, deliberately targeting newspapers unsympathetic to their views as “Jack Masons” even when those organizations had no real connection to the existing Masonic lodges. For all that anti-Masons traditionally take the blame for paranoid and over-florid discourse on the subject of Masonry, it was a Masonic newspaper that wrote “On him the impress of ignominy is as indelibly placed as that mark which was fixed by the hand of the Omnipotent on the forehead of Cain.” In a partisan age with a new electorate to reach, Masons and anti-Masons vigorously battled each other for control of the public discourse, seeking to reach out and motivate the dialogues of the newly-empowered democratic society in which they were firmly embedded. If the anti-Masonic ‘style’ was paranoid, it was because they lived in a paranoid age.\footnote{Albany Masonic Record, January 5, 1828. Donald J. Ratcliffe “Antimasonry and Partisanship in Greater New England, 1826-1836,” Journal of the Early Republic, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer, 1995), 199-200}

It is a given in the historiography that the Anti-Masons were afraid of Masons. In books like Nancy Schultz’s \textit{Fear Itself: Enemies Real and Imagined in American Culture}, David Bennet’s \textit{The Party of Fear}, and Arthur Goldwag’s \textit{The New Hate}, they appear as fearful
reactionaries, as early nativists who emerged from a “welter of hysteria and speculation,” and otherwise as products of a paranoid reaction against murder. As discussed in the historiography section in more detail, New Deal historians were if anything even more hostile to the sanity of Anti-Masons. But what I want to argue here is that while certainly some anti-Masonic voters were frightened of international Jesuit-Masonic conspiracy (the language appears too often in the sources to ignore) was that it was anti-Masons who were feared rather than afraid: the particular threat they posed to the political and social consensus of early 19th century America (particularly for Masons) was enough to galvanize their opponents into reaction against them. Anti-Masons were political and religious crusaders, champions of righteousness against sin. The battle against Masonry was one that many of them, reading between the lines, truly seem to have enjoyed for all that they regretted its failures later in life. The ‘fear’, if anything, was on the other end.

In closing, historiography has been important for this work because a major project of both Masons and anti-Masons was the construction of imagined histories for themselves, their intellectual community, and their nation. As will be discussed in more detail below, Masons called back to some very ancient heritages to reinforce the authenticity of what was almost certainly an offshoot of early Enlightenment rationalism. The use of the story of Hiram Abiff is well known as the foundational myth of Masonry, the murdered architect, the loyal apprentices, the martyrdom at the foot of Solomon’s temple are all stories as famous to Masons as the Christian story is for members of that particular faith. Masonic histories called back much further, both to the medieval trade guilds to which Masonry arguably owed its cultural (if not institutional or physical) heritage, but to an imagined Classical, Biblical, and medieval past that saw Masonry as the cornerstone of the civilization which 19th century Americans were so eager to embrace. By the same token, the “imposing and false pretensions” of Freemasonry were a major intellectual project of anti-Masons. Some of this was based on the “sacred writings”, as
when anti-Masonic preachers at national conventions went out of their way to show the incompatibility of Masonic history with the Bible. But in their emphasis on “speculative” Masonry over “operative”, in their repeated attacks on the imagined history of Masonry (which indeed did stretch the limits even of the historiography) of the 19th century, it’s not hard to read the cultural project of anti-Masonry as one engaged in delegitimizing the imagined history of Masonry. A major project of this involved grappling with Masonic use of callbacks to the history of revolutionary America. That George Washington was a Mason remains a talking point of 20th and 21st century Masons; their institutional predecessors were no less eager to call back to the revolutionary heritage of their organization. Images of Washington in his Masonic apron were and are very common in the literature, particularly after Washington’s 1799 death transformed him from a politically charged Francophile Federalist to a heroic American demigod. Anti-Masons made it a major project to grapple with Washington’s Masonry in particular, repeatedly asserting that Washington’s Masonry was deeply dissimilar from its Jacksonian variety. (And indeed, as Stephen Bullock has shown, early republican Masonry was quite different from the post-Webb ritualized Masonry of the Jacksonian period) Constructing their own history, as well as tearing down Masonic visions of the past, was also a major project of anti-Masonry as well, as seen in their callbacks to the life of Jedidiah Morse and repetitions of the murder of William Morgan.230

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