

# History of Freemasonry in North America

Probable monastic origins.

We will remember that the term "YORK", if it has no connection with the York Constitutions of 926 under the reign of King ATHELSTAN, as the legend has suggested, refers however to an intense spirituality that originates from the culdean and Benedictine monasteries of the British Isles, and especially Yorkshire.

From the Grand Lodges of Ireland, York and Scotland.

## **I. The Grand Lodge of Ireland**

There is evidence that speculative masonry existed in Ireland as early as the late 17th century. The Grand Lodge of Ireland was formed in 1729 or 1730, and published its Book of Constitutions in that year. This Grand Lodge was the first to issue patents to many military Lodges of the British regiments during the period of colonial expansion.

Many of these early Irish Lodges as well as those attached to the regiments conferred the degree of Royal Arch Mason and Knight Templar within that Order.

In 1790, the Deputy Grand Secretary of this Grand Lodge wrote: "We Freemasons of Ireland are a branch of the ancient Masons of York".

Its coat of arms representing the Lion, the Ox, the Man and the Eagle, will evoke many landscapes known to the Brothers working at the Holy Royal Arch.

Let us recall that Laurence DERMOTT, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients in England, had been initiated in Ireland in 1740 as previously mentioned, and that she fiercely opposed the innovations introduced by the Moderns.

## **II. York Grand Lodge**

The Grand Lodge of All England, as it called itself, had records of proceedings and minutes of Lodges prior to 1705 but claimed its origin as dating from the constitutions of Masons drawn up under King ATHELSTAN in 926. It was founded in 1725.

With few exceptions, it controlled only Lodges in the YORK area.

Its activities were intermittent and interspersed with long periods of dormancy until 1792 when it permanently ceased to exist.

Because it was based in York, the source and origin of all English Masonry, it claimed to embrace the ancient duties and practices of operative Masonry. Thus, because of this historical location, many independent Lodges turned to it for membership.

York Grand Lodge regularly conferred the degrees of Knight Templar and Mason of the Holy Royal Arch, as the 4th and 5th degrees, giving them a connection with ancient York Masonry. Several documents reveal that the Lodges of his jurisdiction conferred these degrees.

While this Grand Lodge had few developments, its major contribution to modern Masonry was its historical links between Old and New Masonry. The Ancients often used its historical arguments, taking advantage of its low activity and reactivity to establish their own aspirations and arguments, without triggering any challenges or reactions from it.

## **III. The Grand Lodge of Scotland**

While the Lodges of Scotland admitted speculative members long before any other region of the British Isles, it was the last region of Great Britain to form a Grand Lodge. It was the Canongate-Kilwinning Lodge in Edinburgh that proposed the formation of a Grand Lodge in 1735.

At that time, there were more than 100 Lodges in Scotland and many of them were still made up mainly of operative Masons. This Grand Lodge was formed in 1736 when delegates from 33 Lodges met in a convent for this purpose.

The Lodges of Scotland were numbered on the basis of documentary evidence of their antiquity. As a result, there are still discussions about their respective seniority.

#### **IV. Other Grand Lodges**

For the sake of completeness, let us mention the following other Grand Lodges, although these bodies had only a short existence:

The Supreme Grand Lodge 1770 - 1775 or 77 in London: This was born of the split of some Lodges from the Grand Lodge of the Ancients. Most of these Lodges joined the Ancients after its demise.

The Grand Lodge of England south of the River Trent, which was founded in 1779 by the Lodge of Antiquity in London, in the sensibility of the Moderns, by Brother William PRESTON whom we will have to talk about later because he had a great influence on the form of the rituals.

This Grand Lodge had received patent from the Grand Lodge of York and returned to the fold of the Moderns in 1789.

William PRESTON: Initiated in 1760 in the Caledonian Lodge working under patent of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients, he passed with all the brothers of his lodge to the Moderns in 1761.

In 1777, he founded the ANTIQUITY Lodge and challenged the Grand Lodge of the Moderns, which expelled him, thus giving birth to the Grand Lodge south of the Trent River on March 29, 1779, under patent of the Grand Lodge York. Two other Lodges will belong to this body and will be with the first, reinstated in the Grand Lodge of Moderns in 1789.

PRESTON was a renowned Masonic ritualist. At a time when all transmissions were oral, he undertook the compilation of catechisms and instructions giving birth to the written ritual.

These "Prestonian Readings" were a source of inspiration and served as the basis for the York-type rituals developed and interpreted from them.

His "Illustrations of Masonry" of 1772, and its many expanded editions from 1775, followed later by the instructions on the first, second and third degrees of Freemasonry can be considered as the basis of the ritual instruction in most American jurisdictions, in a summarized form, mainly due to Thomas Smith WEBB, of whom we will speak later.

It is also because of the influence of these readings on a number of Masonic bodies that the Moderns invited him to join their obedience and reconsidered their positions with regard to the catechisms by questions and answers dear to the "Ancients", but initially rejected by the "Moderns".

PRESTON's work was widely used in England until 1813, when the newly formed United Grand Lodge adopted HEMMING's revisions, which consisted substantially of PRESTON's text, remodelled in its form. But by this time, Masonry was firmly established in the new world.

Thomas DUNCKERLEY: The English had sent to the theaters of colonial operations, troops essentially made up of Scots and Irish, supervised of course by Englishmen, but inferior in number. However, the Grand Lodge of the Moderns was forbidden until 1755 to give patents to military Lodges, while the Grand Lodge of Ireland was the first to issue them abundantly from 1750, followed by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Here again, the lack of reactivity and the rigorism of the Moderns penalized the development of the Lodges of their sensibility, whereas it is known that the Irish, the Scots and the Ancients, all attached to the same customs, had constant exchanges, guarantors of friendship and correspondences firmly established between them.

It is in this stormy landscape of the middle of the 18th century that Thomas DUNCKERLEY appears. An officer of the Royal, he was born in 1727 and received initiation on January 10, 1754 in a Portsmouth Lodge working under the constitution of the Moderns but in the "old rite" since he received in the same year all the degrees including the exaltation to the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem, which was in accordance with the tradition of the Ancients.

Dr. Oliver says of him in his book "The Revelations of a Square": "He had broad views of Masonry, and he despised sectarian controversies.

He frequently visited the "Ancient" Lodges for the purpose of ascertaining the real differences between the two systems... he carefully picked the flowers... and transplanted them into Constitutional Masonry ; for he actually found among the Ancients, to his unfeigned astonishment, several important innovations in the Masonic system, including some alterations of the ancient Landmarks and a new use of the Master's Word. (The Ark and the Rainbow by Revd N.B. CRYER).

As can be seen, Dunckerley was both a Brother belonging to the Grand Lodge of the Moderns, but working in the fashion of the Ancients, since his parent Lodge held the patent of the first Grand Lodge, long before the schism of 1751 and no doubt the constitutional and ritual changes of 1738.

As commander aboard the Vanguard, a ship of the Royal Navy, Dunckerley met the military Lodges in Quebec, which were essentially of "Ancient" inspiration.

This situation does not bother him since he knows the "old rite" and is admitted everywhere. Dunckerley is certainly a sympathetic, searching and knowledgeable Brother, non-sectarian and full of charisma, handling words and ideas with great ease. V.M. of his Vanguard Lodge, named after his ship, his reputation and his marked ecumenism, as well as his fidelity to the Grand Lodge of the Moderns, make him a perfect interlocutor for the Moderns who suffer from the growing influence of the Ancients, especially in these overseas territories.

Like PRESTON, he imposed on the Moderns the return to the catechism by questions and answers, considered archaic by the Moderns but so appreciated by the Ancients. There is no doubt that he will participate in the rewriting of ancient rituals, and that finally, he will get involved in the writing of the Charter of Compact of 1766 relating to the recognition of the Royal Arch Masonry, and the rapprochement of positions between the Moderns and the Ancients, which will become perceptible from 1770, to become effective in 1813, after his death.

For the anecdote, he will obtain from the Grand Lodge the right to initiate, pass and raise Masons on board any ship or vessel. He made four trips to Quebec City on his ship, the Vanguard, and again on board the Prince in 1761.

He will be designated by the military Lodges of Quebec, of "Ancients" obedience, as postulant Provincial Grand Master before returning to England, where he will receive confirmation from the Grand Lodge of Moderns of his appointment as District Grand Master of the Lodges of Quebec, to which he will deliver double patent.

It is necessary to see there his charisma and the esteem in which the Brethren military held him, since after his final departure for retirement, most of these Lodges returned their Charters to the Moderns.

## **V. The propagation in North America**

While speculative Freemasonry was in full formation in Europe and England, Lodges were being formed in the American colonies, largely due to the presence of colonial troops and garrisons sent to these foreign theaters of operations.

The earliest references to a Lodge holding its meetings in the American colonies date from before 1730, and include the minutes of St. John's Lodge in Philadelphia, as well as a draft of its constitution. We also have the handwritten constitution of this Lodge, written by Brother CARMICK and dated 1727, which, according to a well-founded tradition defended by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, was the legal Masonic authority under which the first American Lodge and Grand Lodge were formed, the latter during the year 1731, being thus the third Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the world, after England (1717) and Ireland (1729-30).

However, the Grand Lodge of 1731, which had become "Modern" by accepting the ritualistic modifications coming from England, did not survive the influence of the "Ancients" who founded a second competing Grand Lodge, which received its patent in 1761 and definitively supplanted the previous one at the beginning of the War of Independence (1775 - 1783).

This St. John's Lodge was an unpatented Lodge because under the Old Charges, Brethren were allowed to assemble, form a Lodge and work in it without a patent or charter. If such a Lodge was raised and worked permanently, it became a "Lodge of immemorial time" and therefore a regular Lodge.

Benjamin FRANKLIN, who became a Mason in Philadelphia in 1731, states in the official newspaper of Pennsylvania No. 108 edition of December 3 to 8, 1730, that several Masonic Lodges have been founded in the Province lately.

The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania has always claimed to this day, that the very first rituals in America were identical to those practiced today still under its jurisdiction, that is to say, in accordance with the "old rite".

To be objective, we can also mention the presence in Canada, then called New France, as early as 1634, of a Mason, Lord ALEXANDER, son of the first Earl of Stirling (Scotland), who was the master of King Charles I, who established a Scottish colony on the shores of the St. Lawrence. Lord ALEXANDER was a member of Edinburgh Lodge No. 1 of Mary's Chapel, whose minute book dates back to 1599, and according to tradition, already existed in 1491.

In 1738, the first Canadian Lodge in Annapolis, NOVA SCOTIA, was consecrated.

The Freemasons of BOSTON (Massachusetts) were just as active as those of Philadelphia during this first period. However, there is no record of meetings prior to 1733. In 1733, Henry Price was appointed Provincial Grand Master of New England by the first Grand Lodge of England. PRICE inaugurated the Provincial Grand Lodge on July 30, 1733 in Boston and established the "First Lodge". This lodge, St. John's Lodge, still exists today. Thus, Massachusetts claims to be the first state to establish "regular Masonry" in the American colonies. In view of what has been said above, this claim can only be justified from the point of view of a "regularity" of "Modern" sensibility.

In June 1730, a commission appointed Daniel COXE, Provincial Grand Master of New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but there is no record of any activity on his part.

James OGLETHORPE, founder of the colony of Georgia and its first governor, founded "The Lodge at Savannah" on February 10, 1733, which became "Solomon's Lodge" in 1776.

Provincial Grand Masters were appointed for various other colonial territories over the next 50 years.

At the time of the American Revolution, MASSACHUSETTS, PENNSYLVANIA and NEW-YORK had both Provincial Grand Lodges under the constitutions of the "Moderns" and the "Ancients".

These Provincial Grand Masters occasionally issued charters to Lodges in other territories without constituted Masonic authority. In addition, a significant number of "Lodges from time immemorial" were created, most of which were derived from military Lodges attached to British regiments stationed in the colonies. Most of these military Lodges had been granted patents by the Grand Lodge of Ireland and practiced "Ancient" Masonry.

The aristocratic nature of the Grand Lodge of Moderns in England was reflected in the colonies, which resulted in most of the members of their Lodges being loyalist and conservative during the war years, and most of them returned to England, causing the extinction of the Lodges of "Moderns" in the new world.

With the victory, the American Masons wanted to form their own Grand Lodge. They approached George WASHINGTON several times, offering to accept the Grand Mastership of the United States, but he declined the offer. Thus, each state constituted its own Grand Lodge with great difficulty, as the Lodges practiced a great disparity of rituals from different jurisdictions - Ireland, Moderns, Ancients, Scotland, the old rite for "time immemorial lodges" and even France with the influence of LAFAYETTE and the French expeditionary corps.

Nevertheless, 13 sovereign Grand Lodges were finally constituted at the end of the 18th century. Today there are 49 Grand Lodges in the United States, ALASKA being under the jurisdiction of the State of Washington, and HAWAI, under that of the State of California.

Initially, some of these new Grand Lodges defined themselves as belonging to the tradition of the Ancient York Masons, thus signifying their adherence to the customs and constitutions of the Ancients, while others recognized themselves in those of the "Moderns".

Even today, we find traces of this in the Grand Lodges of the United States according to the following names:

- Ancient Free and Accepted Masons
- Ancient Free Masons



or

- Free and Accepted Masons.

American Grand Lodges are sovereign in the government of symbolic Freemasonry within their jurisdiction. Each of their members and affiliated bodies is subject to their Laws and Constitutions. In practice, the long-established rights and privileges of these bodies require that one be a Master Mason. However, despite the differences, every American Mason is welcomed as a Brother in each Grand Lodge he may visit.

## **VI. Anti-Masonic attacks in North America**

The period from 1826 to 1845 following the MORGAN affair was a dark period for American Masonry.

As it had already happened in England, and probably for the same reasons, a hostile anti-Masonic agitation was born in 1798, carried out by itinerant preachers.

Pamphlets and brochures were regularly published from that time on, more than twenty years before the MORGAN affair which was to set everything ablaze.

This MORGAN affair was that of a crime of interest on which we will not dwell here, but we refer the Brethren who are curious to know what may have been written on this subject, to the reading of other works, its development having no direct interest with our subject. The climate of the time was already so bad that this affair triggered a real witch hunt against Freemasonry.

One can get an idea of the events and their intensity, by reading the work of Dwight SMITH - Goody heritage: One hundred fifty years of Craft Freemasonry in Indiana - "The period from 1826 to 1818 was a period of great change for the Freemasons.

"The period from 1826 to 1845 provides a striking example of the excesses to which insidious intolerance can lead.

The Grand Lodge of New York in 1826 had 500 lodges, but by 1846 had only 65...

In Vermont, Masonry was almost totally eclipsed for nearly thirteen years; a proposition introduced in 1833 to release all Masons from their oaths and to dissolve all Lodges and the Grand Lodge was passed by a vote of 79 to 42...

Michigan, by decree of its Grand Master Lewis CASS, ceased its work in 1829...

Illinois became dormant the same year...

In Maine and Pennsylvania, a large number of Lodges dismissed their Charters, and to a lesser extent Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and several others experienced a similar situation...

Charters were stolen, Temples and furnishings defaced...

Thousands of Brethren proclaimed their public renunciation of any connection with Freemasonry, including one who had been the First Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of New York for 15 years...

Former Masons, anxious to clear their name, even organized public demonstrations during which they opened the works, admitted abject individuals and conferred degrees before delighted audiences...

No instance of society escaped the venom; every association was poisoned by it; families were broken up, brother against brother, father against son, wife against husband...

The cultural communities went to the dogs, the laity were removed from the cult in a burst of bigotry, the Christian sacraments were refused to the members of the fraternity...

The school system was torn apart: teachers and students were expelled. Such was the excitement that on several occasions even children were beaten and insulted for being children of Masons; anti-Masonic primers and textbooks were even published...

All these efforts were made to deprive the Masonic bodies of their associative rights and to pass laws preventing the Masons from celebrating their ceremonies and holding their meetings...

In 1842 there were 141 anti-Masonic newspapers, published in 15 states, as well as almanacs in the same vein..."

To combat all of these disclosures, and following a similar process to that which had been put in place in England some 75 years earlier, changes were voluntarily made to parts of the ritual. The Tiling Committees in the Lodges soon adopted an attitude of total suspicion toward any unknown visitor passing through. The lack of uniformity of the rituals thus became not only an obstacle in the relations between Lodges of different jurisdictions, but also between Lodges of the same state.

Also, as soon as 1839, the crisis declined, it appeared essential to gather American Freemasonry to reunite what had been dispersed by these painful events and to try to unify practices and customs, one of the singularities of the American Brethren having always consisted in a persistent conviction that Masonic rituals should be identical everywhere, to the letter.

Meetings on this subject had already taken place in 1822, and it was the Grand Lodge of Alabama that re-launched the process in December 1839.

This initiative led to the Baltimore Congress of 1843, which will be developed in a separate section.

## **VII. The situation after 1813**

In 1813, the end of the schism declared in 1751 by the foundation of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients took place in England.

From 1766/70 onwards, the rapprochement of positions between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns" led to the merger of the two jurisdictions in 1813, under the name of the United Grand Lodge of England, a name it still bears today.

In order to contribute to the rapprochement of the positions between the two bodies, an ad hoc commission worked on the rituals within the framework of EMULATION LODGE OF IMPROVEMENT, which will give birth to a synthesis of the ancient and modern rituals, but in a spirit of consensus a minima. This ritual is known today as the Emulation or English rite.

But communications were slow, sometimes even non-existent, so that the American Lodges, if they heard about the 1813 modifications, did not take them into account, having themselves acquired firmly established habits.

The ritual basis of the new world had remained largely based on the work of William PRESTON already mentioned, in a summarized form due to Thomas Smith WEBB author of "The Freemason's Monitor, or Illustration of Masonry: in two parts" of 1797.

This WEBB version of the instructions, largely borrowed from PRESTON, became to a very large extent, the American rite, and remained so during the first half of the nineteenth century, without undergoing any notable modification.

From the ritual disparities that originated from the different transmissions received and the variants introduced by the oral tradition, the awareness of a search for uniformity was born as early as 1822, but was aborted because of anti-masonicism, and resumed at the end of the 1830s.

The Baltimore Congress of 1843, despite the imperfection of its results, had the merit of standardizing the instructions on the basis of the work of PRESTON taken up by WEBB, of anchoring American Masonry in a dominant sensitivity to the Ancients and York, and of almost completely standardizing certain points of the ritual and ceremonial specific to the American York system.

### **VIII. The BALTIMORE Congress 1843**

We have had occasion to explain that the new world had received its Masonic sources from the various Grand Lodges of the United Kingdom and even France, these origins explaining the varied uses in the practice of the profession, aggravated by the anti-Masonic madness of the period 1826 - 1842. Moreover, the war of independence having definitively consolidated the Ancients, more populist, democratic and separatist, efforts to standardize were thus undertaken from 1822.

These efforts also came up against the federalist and political character of a new country where the distances and territorial expanses could not favour a centralized European-type system.

In 1822, therefore, a group of Freemasons, also members of the United States Congress, advocating the standardization of Freemasonry, called a meeting on March 9 of that year in the Senate in Washington.

Resolutions suggesting that all Grand Lodges in the United States seriously consider the formation of a National Grand Lodge were adopted, and a Convent called for February 1823 in Washington, D.C.

Twelve prominent Brethren, including John MARSHALL of Virginia and Henry CLAY of Kentucky, were appointed a committee to forward the resolutions passed, together with a memorandum recommending their adoption, to all Grand Lodges.

This proposal was very diversely received...

The Grand Lodge of Ohio, for example, concluded that a General Grand Lodge would create only confusion and disorder within the entire Fraternity, but at the same time determined that meetings of delegates from the various jurisdictions could only be beneficial, and that the Right Respectable Grand Master, Brother John SNOW, was constituted a delegate of the Grand Lodge to such Convention of Grand Lodges as might be convened for the purpose of establishing uniformity of ritual.

The Grand Lodge of Indiana circularized the Lodges in its jurisdiction, and in the face of massive opposition, resolved that such a General Grand Lodge did not appear to be a project "either expedient or necessary".

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts agreed...

A subsequent attempt was made, the purpose of which is evident from the resolution passed by the Grand Lodge of Alabama at its Annual Communication in December, 1839, sent to all its correspondence in these terms: "Resolved, That all Grand Lodges in the correspondence of the Grand Lodge of Alabama be invited to elect a delegate, these to meet in General Convention on the first Monday in March, 1842, in the city of Washington, with the duty of determining a uniform ceremonial mode for all Lodges in the United States, and to decide upon other good rules in the interest and for the safety of the Fraternity."

The Grand Lodge of Alabama, the instigator of the project, was to find at its annual meeting in 1840 that only Connecticut, New York and Maryland approved the project while Kentucky declined the invitation.

It then voted to notify all Grand Lodges that it would be grateful to receive any advice on the project.

In December, 1841, the Alabama Annual Meeting was informed by its Grand Secretary that the plan thus submitted to all its correspondence, to meet in Convent in Washington in May, 1842, had been favorably received by the Grand Lodges of New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Michigan, Tennessee, and Mississippi, who saw it as an action eminently beneficial to the security of the Fraternity, and to make it possible that there should exist at least among the United States, a ritual uniformity

In December, 1842, the Alabama delegates in Grand Lodge were informed that the Washington Convention had failed to achieve uniformity of rituals, and recommended that each Grand Lodge appoint one or more experienced Brethren, to be known as Grand Instructors, to meet and agree upon : The necessary and proper scheme of instruction to be given to the Lodges and the Fraternity.

The decision to meet at some central place, at least every three years, to compare their "instructions" and to correct any variations therein.

This Washington Convention further recommended that the first meeting of the Grand Instructors so proposed be held in Baltimore on the second Monday in May, 1843.

What was discussed at this Convention is of interest for several reasons, although what happened to its recommendations soon became a hot topic of controversy throughout the country. Its consequences have not completely disappeared today...

These works are essentially known to us by the introductory text, under the pen of Dwight L. SMITH at the time of the republication of "The Masonic Trestle Board, adapted to the National System of Work and Lectures", first tangible result of this Congress.

As the ritual was transmitted orally, and no ritual or monitor existed in the early days of Masonry's development, local ceremonial differences were inevitable. The very fact that this Congress was held shows the concern of a certain number of Masons to see a uniform and univocal ritual put in place.

Sixteen of the twenty-eight jurisdictions then active in the United States were present at this Congress.

The National Masonic Convention which opened in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 8, 1843, and remained in session for nine days, was one of the most significant events in the history of Freemasonry in the United States, in that it revealed a real awareness of the problem. However, such meetings, before and after Baltimore, seem to demonstrate that no uniformity could, and perhaps never will, be achieved.

With few exceptions, the delegates did agree on the smallest details.

When they returned to their states, however, it appeared that they were almost all in total disagreement as to what had taken place in Baltimore, and when the proceedings of the Congress (or rather what was thought to be its conclusions), were brought together and put into form by Charles W. MOORE of Massachusetts and Stephan W. MOORE of New York, the delegates were able to agree on the details. MOORE of Massachusetts and Stephan W. B. CARNAGY, former Grand Master of Missouri, in "The Masonic Trestle Board," it was found to differ from another account prepared by John DOVE, Grand Secretary of Virginia, and presumed to have come from the same sources.

In any event, the conclusions of the Convention were widely followed. They included the adoption of a ritual system modeled on the "WEBB" ritual in its purest form, and which is still known as the "Baltimore Ritual. Gradually, most of its recommendations were adopted by American jurisdictions.

Although the Baltimore Congress did not completely achieve its goal of standardizing the ritual, it did contribute to it in four significant ways:

- Due Guard or Sign of the Oath
- Mobile and irremovable jewels
- The treatment of administrative matters to the degree of Master Mason
- The religious universality

Finally, we owe to the Baltimore Congress and its "esoteric work commission", the prohibition to print or write the ritual, nor to sell, buy or even possess it.

This is the reason why, even today, most Grand Lodges do not publish any written ritual, or if they do, the text is printed in code or with only the initials of the words (Grand Lodge of California for example).

The other purpose of this Congress, unofficial and much more delicate, was to try once again to constitute a permanent national organization gathering all the Grand Lodges of the United States in triennial meetings. Nothing was to come of this new attempt because of the fear that such an organization would eventually lead to a General Grand Lodge of the United States, the mere prospect of which had been strongly opposed for a long time.

### **IX. Synthesis and attempt at a conclusion**

By a combination of history which is not due to chance, American Freemasonry, attested in a proven way, has finally practically the same age as English Freemasonry, 1717 for the latter, 1729 for that of the New World, that is to say 12 short years...

The colonial wars in America, led by Anglican England with Irish Roman Catholic foot soldiers, the exactions, persecutions and sufferings endured by the populations and the troops, in Catholic New France and Acadia, the hegemonic power of the British crown towards its colonies, the government of the first Grand Lodge with its neo-paganist tendency, autocratic and centralizing, created schisms and divisions between England and its colonies, as well as between the Grand Lodges of Ireland and England for obvious reasons, and even within England itself.

It is therefore logical that Irish Masonry spread in numbers to the territories of the New World, soon relayed by that of the Ancients and inspired by York traditions. If the Moderns had their share of success in this first stage, they still suffered from a centralizing system which required that the Lodges of their jurisdiction receive a patent in due form to exist, which the Moderns did not do until 1755. Meanwhile, under the "Old Charges", Irish Masonry of York and Ancient inspiration, flourished without a patent and in all regularity at random troop movements and in garrison towns. It became dirty.

With the bourgeoisie who came to make their fortune in the new colonies, the Moderns found an important reservoir of loyalist and conservative Brethren who were submissive to their Grand Lodge, but, as in England, anxious to preserve their gains.



Their reluctance to welcome workers and people of low extraction into the Lodges led them to lose the fight against the Ancients once and for all with the arrival of the war of independence, which was that of the "Labour" against the "Tories".

Similar cleavages were to be found in the development of Masonry in Mexico...

At the beginning of the 19th century, the new United States was faced with a fragmented Masonic landscape whose unification was delayed by the serious anti-Masonic events of the period 1826 - 1842.

As a result, American Masonry was no longer concerned by the Treaty of Union of 1813, which united the two former English rivals and established the English "Union" rite of "Emulation", "Stability", "Universal", "West End", "Taylors", "Oxonian" etc...