

- In the beginning, Masonry was essentially imported from England
 - So IOT understand the history of American Lodges, it's important to first look at how things were set up in England
- English Structure
 - Lots of speculation about the origins in England
 - What we do know is that 4 blue lodges existed in London at the beginning of the 18th Century.
 - At this point in history, much of the membership consisted of educated and elite men
 - Most men were either from the gentry class or those who would be considered just beneath the gentry – who were hoping to improve their station in society
 - These were men who were unable to live off their estates, but still possessed education, financial resources or professional credentials
 - Keep in mind that this was during the period of enlightenment

- Strong emphasis on the pursuit of Truth through logic and the sciences
- Also, the high fees kept many who were not wealthy out
- Though the lodges had some differences, they each had some constitutional principles in common:
 - Members had to hold a belief in some type of deity
 - Emphasis on self-betterment
 - All members were to be treated as equals regardless of their social standing outside of the lodge
 - Membership required a unanimous vote
 - The activities of the lodge should be generally kept secret
 - As we see later, this was rarely enforced
- In 1717 the lodges banded together to form the first Grand Lodge.
 - It asserted the authority to regulate lodges under its registry and vested solely in the Grand Master the power to form new lodges

- No one really knows when lodges first came to the “new world”
 - Some historians think that there may have been some brothers in the Jamestown settlement in 1607, but there are no records of any meetings or chartered lodges
 - Similarly, Lord Baltimore, who received the land grant which ultimately became Maryland, was known to have been an active Mason in England, but there are no records of any lodges being formed by him or his peers in America
- One of the obstacles to forming lodges in America was the way in which they were created
 - Typically, a group of Masons in England
 - Moved to one of the colonies and decided to form lodge
 - Then would have to send a representative back to London to receive a charter
 - Example
 - James Oglethorpe received the royal charter for the colony of GA in 1732

- In 1735, he and other Mason's sent a representative back to London and received a charter for a lodge to be formed in Savannah
- Other lodges were formed in exactly the same way
 - Norfolk 1733
 - Cape Fear 1735
 - Charles Town 1736
- The lodges in the American South paralleled those of England
 - Character of the lodges were similar
 - Mostly gentry and upper class – those that could afford the time and money
 - Very few merchants or artisans
 - Just as in England, American lodges generally ignored the secrecy part of their charters
 - They were often seen as a group in public
 - They would wear formal attire in annual parades, particularly during the feasts of St.s John, Christmas and Easter
 - They dined publicly as a group

- They were known for their great toasts
- Often aspiring gentlemen joined for this very reason
 - Hoping that the public exposure with the lodge would elevate their own status in their community
- The public exposure also had some negative aspects
 - Anecdote about the Savannah Lodge
 - The Colonial Records of Georgia talk about how one evening in the late 1730's, several lodge members consumed a large amount of alcohol
 - And then tracked down the captain of the watch and stole his sword.
 - Later, they offered him membership in the fraternity IOT buy his silence
- The close relationship the Southern Lodges held with the Grand Lodge of England affected by the same rift the English Lodges experience in the mid-18th Century
 - In 1751 a rival grand lodge was formed in England.

- The new grand lodge, primarily composed of Irish immigrants, joined with the Scottish grand lodge to accuse the original English Grand lodge of perverting the craft
 - altering “makings, ceremonials, knowledge, Masonic language, and installation.”
- Particularly upset with two facets
 - Raucous behavior
 - Article XXII of the original constitution
 - You shall not go out to drink by night, or if occasion happen that you must go, you shall not stay past 8:00 having some of your fellows or one at the least to bear you Witness of the honest place you were in and you good behavior to avoid scandal
 - The elitist nature of the membership

- The new lodge wanted to re-focus the craft on the original principles which existed at the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717
- Consequently, they became known as the Ancients
 - Conversely, the members of the senior grand lodge became known as the Moderns
- The same thing, more or less, happened on the other side of the Atlantic in the colonies
 - The first American lodge to petition the Ancient Grand Lodge for a charter was in Philadelphia, but soon after huge numbers of Ancient Blue Lodges started to crop up
 - They became particularly popular in the south because of the manner in which the population spread across the region
 - In the north much of the population at this point tended to stay in larger cities – NY, Boston, Phila
 - Most of these cities are right on the coast –
except Phila

- This is particularly true of the upper class,
which is really where Masonry was well
established
- But in the South, people tended to push further into
the frontier
 - The south was much more dependent on an
agrarian economy
 - Gentry would create huge plantations and
estates well outside of the larger cities
- People on the frontier in the south would use the craft to
their advantage
 - In the 1760's the ancient lodges permitted many
more artisans and merchants to join
 - This was the dawning Masonry's hey day in the
south
 - Merchants and artisans used the fraternity to increase
their social standing among the gentry
 - Eventually the number of inland gentry and
merchants outnumbered the number of coastal gentry

- The artisans, merchants, and gentry alike would use the network created by the fraternity to facilitate trade between the frontier and the coastal regions
 - In reality social relationships led to economic relationships
- The ancient lodges were generally much more accepted by the communities they were in because they were less of a nuisance
 - This is again because they went back to re-enforcing secrecy requirements
- In the Mid 1700 a large influx of Scottish immigrant settled in the Chesapeake region
 - They requested charters from the Grand Lodge of Scotland and used their new connections to help connect the tobacco farmers of inland Virginia to the larger Atlantic trading network
- Eventually, a provincial grand lodge was established in America

- Eventually, a third class of citizens – a class other than the gentry and merchants – came to benefit from the vast networks of the fraternity
 - Politicians
 - Politics were supposed to be kept out of the lodge, but egalitarian nature and the weakly centralized republican structure in reality served to facilitate debate and discussion
 - Furthermore, lodge members were encouraged to philosophize and explore ideas
 - It is easy to see how such an environment lent itself to political discussion
 - In addition, a politician's connection to the gentry offered legitimacy and credence to his bid for office
 - It also provided them with connections to financial resources that might not otherwise have been available
 - connection to the fraternity appears to have provided a significant advantage to

- a good example is the state of North Carolina, where between 1724 and 1820 fourteen masons served as governor
 - and between 1776 and 1826, Masons served a total of 48 out of those 61 years as governor.
 - A more specific example would be Henry Clay. As an aspiring politician from the Kentucky frontier, he used the craft and its network to vault himself first into the state house and later into the US House and Senate.
- A secondary influence on the region was the introduction of military lodges
- Common in the British military – particularly among officers
 - British regulars were amassed in great numbers in the colonies
 - Defend frontier settlements against the French and Indians
 - Keep order in the coastal cities

- would come from England and form military lodges with their fellow soldiers
- Prior to the revolutionary war, these lodges had particular influence on the south, where men of society coveted titles
 - Military was one of the primary means by which to get a title
 - Since many of these gentlemen were Masons, it was common for them to form lodges with their military brethren
- Similar to non military lodges – junior officers saw the fraternity as an opportunity to advance their careers because it put them into direct contact with senior leadership
- For example in 1785 General Lafayette explained to members of Lodge No. 4 of Wilmington DE that
 - After I was made a Mason, General Washington seemed to have received a new light. I never had from that moment any cause to doubt his entire confidence. It was not long

after before I had a separate command of great importance

- While it not definitively known whether Lafayette truly owed his career advancement to the craft, the appearance of such advantages certainly appealed to many junior officers
- Was adopted by the colonial militias, as well as the first continental army during the revolutionary war
- Revolutionary War – the first Decline
 - The craft suffered from two stand points
 - First- many lodges were forced to close when all or most of their members left to fight in the war
 - Second – Modern lodges were strongly connected to the Grand Lodge of England
 - Ancients, on the other hand, by and large tended to support the revolutionary cause
 - The colonial victory over the British sounded the death knell for the Modern Lodges
 - Any that remained at the end of the war were closed

- The Ancient Grand Lodges assumed jurisdiction over all of the American Blue Lodges

- Post Revolutionary Period

- The popularity of the fraternity skyrocketed
- The fact that many of the so-called fore fathers were members added to it's allure
- Additionally, the social networks which were exploited for economic gain before the war were once again utilized by merchants, artisans and the gentry
 - The more success there interests had, the more the craft become of interest to other people
- Additionally, the new government that the Americans were experimenting with was a form of republicanism
 - And the success of republicanism was believed to be premised, at least in part on the morality of the people
- many came to believe that the morality stressed by the organization could help to sustain the new republican government

- Roles grew by the 10's of thousands and once again
- A good example of the prominence it reached
 - In Charleston, SC's 1825 City Directory, the SC Grand Lodge was listed in the public officials section among the state's military officers and legislators, rather than among other social groups and societies.
- Short Lived success – the second decline
 - The incredible success of its members from the business community, and the congregation of so much political power in one small group made non-masons suspicious
 - Even though the existence of the fraternity had become more public, it's meetings, in keeping with the Ancient Grand Lodge's principles, were still relatively secretive.
 - Furthermore, there were religious problems
 - Particularly from the rising number of Catholics and Baptists who condemned the fraternity for its non-denominational character
 - Final, culminating event 1826
 - William Morgan

- Denied membership
- Stated he was going to publish a book
- He was arrested on trumped up charges
- Brethren then abducted him from the jail
- And never seen again
- Had a trial – but it was a sham
 - The judge
 - DA
 - Many jury members were all masons
- While the Morgan story is widely known, no one really knows if it's true in all or in part
 - But it doesn't matter, because people believed it to be true
- The roles of northern lodges, which were closer in proximity, decreased sharply
- But enthusiasm, which was starting to dwindle already for the reasons already stated, also declined sharply in the South when the news spread

- In 1829 the first third party in American politics was formed – the Anti Masonic party
- And then in 1829- Morgan's book was published by David Bernard – thus revealing all of the secrets the lodges were so worried about
- Within a decade nearly half of the membership had left and the craft, at least in the South, never rose to the same prominence again