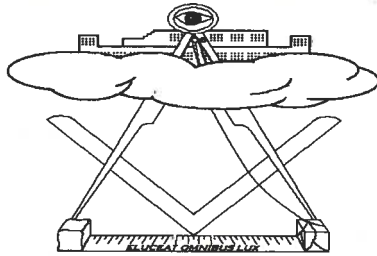


HONOLULU MASONIC



RESEARCH SOCIETY

Founded 2014
A Unit of Honolulu Lodge F&AM

Any opinions or research herein are the sole work of the author and do not necessarily express the opinions of the HMRS or its parent lodge

Creation of Anderson's First Constitutions (1723): Its Sources and Effects

By Damien Donavan,
Member HMRS, Honolulu Lodge F&AM

Andersen's *Book of Constitutions* of 1723 drew on a number of sources. Firstly, bible stories as a basis for the earlier events in his "Masonic" history and then his own imagination to create the more fanciful elements of this history; secondly, some Scottish traditions which have influenced the practice, development, and lexicon of Masonry, including the Schaw Statutes; and thirdly, other members of the English lodges, notably Grand Masters John Thophilus Desaguliers and George Payne. The Schaw Statutes had some impact on these constitutions, firstly, due to the influence they had already had on the development of Freemasonry to that time, but also in the influence they had more directly as Anderson drew on some elements from the Statutes, and Scottish influences of Masonry, in drafting his own constitutions.

Provenance of Andersen's *Book of Constitutions*

In writing the approbation to Anderson's *Book of Constitutions*, attributed to then Grand Master Wharton, Deputy Grand Master Desaguliers, and the Grand Wardens, Timson and Hawkins, the Grand Lodge officers noted that it had achieved the desired purpose of:

“all the valuable Things of the old Records being retain’d, the Errors in History and Chronology corrected, the false Facts and the improper Words omitted, and the whole digested in a new and better Method.”¹

Modern discussion suggests a number of possibilities as Anderson’s impetus for writing the *Constitutions*. One account has it that the Grandmaster in London at the time, John Montagu, thought the Old Charges inadequate and tasked Andersen to compile and “digest” the original constitutions and regulations to produce a set of more suitable, modern regulations.² The other is that Anderson himself had proposed to write a history of Masonry with the additional text growing out of that work.³ The last, and most likely, is an aggregate of the two; that he had already deigned to write the Masonic history, and, once written, was directed to include material that would constitute a more fulsome work in the form of a new constitution.⁴ In particular, he was directed to add the “Regulations” written by the second Grand Master George Payne, at which time he also compiled and updated the Old Charges.⁵ A number of other Grand Lodge Masons assisted Anderson in revising the work, especially in modernising the charges.⁶ Anderson submitted the completed work in 1722, it was scrutinised and reported upon by a 14-man committee, before it was sanctioned by the Grand Lodge on 24 January 1723,⁷ a two-page Approbation was included signalling the Grand Lodge’s endorsement.⁸

¹ *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, Philadelphia: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2006, p. 79.

² Albert G. Mackey, *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*, Moss and Company: New York, 1874, p. 123; Robert Macoy, *General History, Cyclopaedia and Dictionary of Freemasonry*, New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1872, p. 83; C. W. Leadbeater, *Freemasonry and Its Ancient Mystic Rites*, New York: Gramercy Books, 1986, p. 149; Edwin A. Sherman, *Brief History of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Oakland, California: Carruth and Carruth Printers, 1890, p. 21.

³ Lionel Vibert, “Freemasonry in Scotland and England Before the Formation of the Grand Lodges”, in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, Vol 25, 1976, p. 86.

⁴ Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Freemasonry*, Richmond, Virginia: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., 1951, p. 174, Bernard E. Jones, *Freemason’s Guide and Compendium*, London: Harrap, 1956, p. 181.

⁵ Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-183; Macoy, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁶ Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 2003, p. 34; Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁷ Emmanuel Rebold, *A General History of Free-Masonry in Europe*, American Masonic Publishing Association: Cincinnati, 1868, p. 96; Mackey (1874), *op. cit.*, p. 68; H. L. Haywood, “Chapters of Masonic History, Chapter X: The First Grand Lodge”, *The Builder Magazine*, 10 : 3 (March 1924). Gould reproduces the minutes of that Grand Lodge meeting, Robert Freke Gould, *A History of Freemasonry Throughout the World*, Vol II, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936, pp. 74 – 76. Knoop outlines some of the procedural issues surrounding the Constitutions adoption at the 24 January Grand Lodge meeting, see Douglas Knoop, *The Genesis of Freemasonry: An Account of the Rise and Development of Freemasonry in Its Operative, Accepted, and Early Speculative Phases*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1947, in particular in Chapter IX, available at <http://www.freemason.com/library/genes01.htm>.

⁸ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 181. See also the actual text of the Approbation in *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 – 79.

The Bible, the Old Charges, and Anderson's Fancy

Some accounts of Anderson's Masonic history describe it as fantastical or "fanciful, unreliable, and pretentious to a degree that often leads to absurdity".⁹ It refers to Noah and his three sons as Masons, Moses as a General Master-Mason, King Solomon as Grand Master of the Lodge at Jerusalem, and so on.¹⁰ In doing so, it suggests an unbroken progression or pedigree from "proto-Freemasonry" to modern Freemasonry, tracing a historical path through the operative masons and thus all the way to contemporary Freemasonry. Anderson's historical record is obviously flawed, from a purely historical point of view, which, according to the likes of Robert Cooper, is inexcusably perpetuated by modern Masonic historians.¹¹ Nevertheless, the point has been made that if this were a "wholesale innovation", constituting a "radical departure from existing practice" of the time, it is unlikely that the Grand Lodge members would have accepted it.¹² The most logical rationale for their inclusion is as "part of the allegorical or traditional background of the craft".¹³

Besides the "history", Andersen's *Constitutions* also drew on some of the old charges and manuscripts, such as the *Cooke Manuscript*.¹⁴ It contained a restatement of the Old Charges, a set of thirty-nine regulations, guidelines for forming a new lodge, poems and songs.¹⁵ One considerable innovation of the *Constitutions* was its instruction that Masons could be of any religion"

"...though in ancient Times Mason were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation ... yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves..."¹⁶

⁹ Mackey (1874), *op. cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁰ Harry Carr, *The Freemason at Work*, London: Burgess and Sons, 1976, p. 246; Ridley, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Manly P. Hall, *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, New York: Penguin, 2006, p. 269; Robert L.D. Cooper, *Cracking the Freemason's Code*, Rider: London, 2006, pp. 124 – 125.

¹¹ Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 – 127. Cooper also noted the 18th century historian, Charles Mackie, as being critical of such errors of historical fact.

¹² "The Origin of Freemasonry and the Early Years of the British Grand Lodges", in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, Vol 26, 1977, p. 92, reprinted from *Beyond the Pillars*, Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario, 1973.

¹³ Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

¹⁴ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

¹⁵ Vibert, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁶ *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

This has been referred by some Masonic scholars as the “de-Christianisation” of Freemasonry.¹⁷

Anderson’s Scottish Influence and the Schaw Statutes

Anderson’s *Constitutions* effectively became England’s equivalent of the Schaw Statutes of a century and a quarter before. While the Schaw Statutes directly affected Scottish Freemasonry, the movement of Masons between the English and Scottish jurisdictions meant that the framework and many of its guiding principles would have been shared, and thus had an influence on English Masonry.¹⁸ In addition, Andersen himself was a Scot, and he referred to or drew on Scottish Masonry and its customs on a number of occasions in his *Constitutions*, including introducing words, until that time used in Scottish, Masonic parlance, but which were not in broad English usage.¹⁹ This includes terms such as Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, and the word “grip”, where the English usage had been “token”.²⁰ It should be noted that the general terminology was borrowed and not necessarily directly copied. For example, Anderson used words like Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, rather than Schaw’s preferred “prenteiss”, and “fellow of craft” or occasionally “Fellowcraft” as a single word.²¹ Moreover, Douglas Knoop, for one, notes cases of usage of some of this terminology in England prior to the publication of Anderson’s *Constitutions* in 1923.²² This indicates that, although Anderson may have borrowed it from Scottish Masonry, he was not necessarily the first.

Vibert suggests that in introducing the notion, not known to English Masonry until that time, that “*Free-Masons* [shall not] work with those that are *not free* without an urgent Necessity”,²³ Anderson was drawing on the Schaw Statutes; in Vibert’s words, Anderson’s notion was “strongly reminiscent of a passage in the Schaw Statutes”.²⁴ A close reading of Schaw presents no such reminiscence. This is presented to demonstrate, further to Knoop’s point above about terminology, that the influence of Schaw, and other Scottish Masonic influences, on Anderson can be overstated.

¹⁷ Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons*, Dorset Press, 1986, p. 27; John J. Robinson, *Born In Blood*, New York: M. Evans and Company, 1989, p. 266.

¹⁸ See for example Robert Freke Gould *The History of Freemasonry: The Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions, Customs Etc.*, Vol IV, Ludgate: Thomas C. Jack, 1885, p. 319.

¹⁹ Gould (1936), *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 33 – 36, 45.

²⁰ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 182; Vibert, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

²¹ *Schaw Statute of 1598 and Schaw Statute of 1599* reprinted in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, 1986, pp. 86 – 91; *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, Philadelphia: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2006.

²² Knoop, *op.cit.*

²³ *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Vibert, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Notwithstanding this, Gould makes the point that Anderson probably did not borrow as much from Scottish Masonry for inclusion in his Constitutions as he might have liked (and which he did in the later 1938 edition) due to the constraints on his time to draft the document.²⁵ Further additions were made in the second addition of the *Constitutions* – published in 1738 – that came from the Schaw Statutes, for example “cowan”, which had not been in English Masonic parlance up to that time.²⁶

Conclusion

In developing his 1723 (and subsequent 1738) *Book of Constitutions*, Anderson drew on a number of sources, from the biblical stories and the Old Charges, to the input of other brethren, including George Payne’s Regulations, and his own fantastical imagination, as well as the influences of Scottish Masonry, including the Schaw Statutes. The *Constitutions* present a number of historical errors (or perhaps they could be more accurately described as intentional fantasies used for rhetorical effect) that have been decried by more modern Masonic scholars. This is in contrast to the suggestion in the “Approbation” to the *Constitutions* that the document achieved its aim, including that “the Errors in History and Chronology [were] corrected, the false Facts and the improper Words [were] omitted”.²⁷ Despite this, Anderson’s *Constitutions* have been important as a means of consolidating and formalising the practice of English Masonry, much as the Schaw Statutes did for Scottish Masonry, in the period after the establishment of the southern Grand Lodge in England.

²⁵ Gould (1936), *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁶ Mackey (1874), *op. cit.*, p. 191. Gould gives a more complete etymology of the word cowan, see Gould (1936), *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 34 - 35; *Schaw Statutes*, *op. cit.*

²⁷ *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

Bibliography

- Baigent, Michael and Richard Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge*, Corgi Books, 1990.
- Carr, Harry, *The Freemason at Work*, London: Burgess and Sons, 1976.
- Cooper, Robert L.D., *Cracking the Freemason's Code*, London: Rider, 2006.
- Gould, Robert Freke, *A History of Freemasonry Throughout the World*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.
- , *The History of Freemasonry: The Antiquities, Symbols, Constitutions, Customs Etc.*, Vol IV, Ludgate: Thomas C. Jack, 1885.
- Gould, Robert Freke, et. al. (eds.), *A Library of Freemasonry*, Vol II, London: The John C. Yorston Publishing Company, 1906.
- Hall, Manly P. *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, New York: Penguin, 2006.
- Haywood, H. L., "Chapters of Masonic History, Chapter X: The First Grand Lodge", *The Builder Magazine*, 10 : 3 (March, 1924).
- Jones, Bernard E., *Freemason's Guide and Compendium*, London: Harrap, 1956.
- Knight, Stephen, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons*, Dorset Press, 1986.
- Knoop, Douglas, *The Genesis of Freemasonry: An Account of the Rise and Development of Freemasonry in Its Operative, Accepted, and Early Speculative Phases*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1947, available online at <http://www.freemason.com/library/genes01.htm>.
- Leadbeater, C. W., *Freemasonry and Its Ancient Mystic Rites*, New York: Gramercy Books, 1986.
- Mackey, Albert G., *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*, New York: Moss and Company, 1874.
- , *History of Freemasonry*, 1898, available online at Pietre-Stones, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/mackeyfr.html>.
- Macoy, Robert, *General History, Cyclopaedia and Dictionary of Freemasonry*, New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1872.
- Millar, Angel, *Freemasonry: A History*, San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2005.
- Newton, Joseph Fort, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Freemasonry*, Richmond, Virginia: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., 1951.
- Pick, Fred L., and G. Norman Knight (revised by Frederick Smyth), *The Freemason's Pocket Reference Book*, London: Frederick Muller, 1983.
- Rebold, Emmanuel, *A General History of Free-Masonry in Europe*, Cincinnati: American Masonic Publishing Association, 1868.

Ridley, Jasper, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 2003.

Robinson, John J., *Born In Blood*, New York: M. Evans and Company, 1989.

Schaw Statute of 1598, reprinted in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, 1986, pp. 86 – 88.

Schaw Statute of 1599, reprinted in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, 1986, pp. 89 – 91.

Sherman, Edwin A., *Brief History of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Oakland, California: Carruth and Carruth Printers, 1890.

The Constitutions of the Free-Masons, Philadelphia: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2006 (this is the online version of Benjamin Franklin's 1734 reprint of the original 1723 edition of James Anderson's *Constitutions*).

"The Origin of Freemasonry and the Early Years of the British Grand Lodges", in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, Vol 26, 1977, pp. 87 – 96.

Vibert, Lionel, "Freemasonry in Scotland and England Before the Formation of the Grand Lodges", in *Yearbook of the Grand Lodge of Antient, Free, and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, Vol 25, 1976, pp. 75 – 86.

Waite, Arthur Edward, *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, New York: Weathervane Banks, 1970.

