MIDDLETOWN MASONS

1796-1826

A study of the role played by voluntary organization in a traditional community experiencing rapid dissolution.

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Term Paper
Professor P. Hall
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Social History Seminar
In a rudimentary community study much effort goes into comparing the different economic, political and social statuses of various occupational groups. This approach may supply us with a sound structural understanding of the community, but we are left wanting in an understanding of the full life experiences of these individuals. To what degree did members of these groups identify with each other as individuals having common plights and goals? How did these groups view their position in the community? How did the rest of the community view a selected group? A study of the Middleton Masons can add much to our understanding of these questions, and as a result supplement our understanding of the later 18th century, early 19th century Middleton community.

Between 1796 and 1826 Middleton's lodge, St. John's 2, underwent a series of changes which reflected the state of the community during this period. The lodge was never a heterogeneous compilation of individuals from all occupational groups and income levels in Middleton; in just thirty years we can identify three distinctly different groups of Masons who dominated the organization for a given time. Each group was made up of individuals from common economic, political and social backgrounds. Because the lodge is a voluntary organization, the fact individuals from similar backgrounds joined at the same time indicates their awareness of their common interests. In this way we can identify the collective values and goals of these groups by analyzing the institutional priorities of the Masonic lodge during each group's period of domination. Since the demands of Masonic brotherhood were consistently rigorous, no matter who dominated, Masonry can be identified as the impetus for collective actions taken by members in the general
community. Besides informing us of how certain groups viewed themselves, a study of Free Masonry can also clarify how groups were viewed by other members of the community. In itself a study of Masonry tells us little of value; when such a study is matched against the historical changes in Middleton, it is quite valuable.
Middleton Masons during the last two decades of the 18th century were a privileged group in comparison to the general population. Middleton's Lodge provided individuals already economically, socially and politically powerful with a means to supplement their power base. The bonds of brotherhood, which were taken quite seriously, nurtured merchants' and professionals' sentiments of commonality in plight and purpose. Along with maintaining the existing order, Masons sufficed their obligations to those below them. By portraying Masons during this period as guardians of the traditional community, the pressures they responded to are indicative of challenges to what Reverend Enoch Huntington called "the mutual harmony of society."\(^1\)

The economic pressures that Middleton merchants felt were common to all merchants during this period. The primary problem plaguing merchants was the lack of sufficient capital. Since there was no formal banking institution in Middleton until 1801, businessmen were limited in their attempts to raise capital reserves. Besides the obvious reliance on kinship ties, merchants could also initiate alliances with individuals outside of the family network. It is with these alliances that membership in the Masons was economically functional for merchants. It appears that Masonic brethren organized a proportionately higher number of business partnerships than non-members.\(^2\)\(^\) The mutual trust that is crucial to a partnership was fortified with the added bond between Masonic brethren.

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1/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, 1797, page 7.

2/ An informal analysis of advertisements in the Middlesex Gazette showed that Masonic brethren had initiated partnerships which were proportionately greater than their proportion of the population.
In practical terms, each Mason pledges upon his initiation that he will never wrong a fellow Mason. Loyalty to one another was not an obligation to be taken lightly. Even with extremely limited access to Lodge minutes, this author found an example of a Mason asking the Lodge to order his merchant business partner, also a Mason, to pay him compensation. The Lodge held a hearing to decide what satisfaction the wronged brother should receive from his partner.\textsuperscript{3} A Masonic historian, who had full access to Lodge meeting minutes reports that there are several instances where this practice of appointing a committee to assess damages was put into use.\textsuperscript{4}

We get an indication of how dedicated Masons were to their Masonic obligations by the fact that no Mason avoided payment of the sum, set by the Lodge court, by terminating his membership.

Besides formal partnership arrangements, Masons frequently engaged in informal efforts in cooperation. While unified under the cloak of Free Masonry, members were better equipped to meet the economic difficulties they encountered. Masonry provided them with a viable network they could use to their economic advantage. This network extended beyond the Middleton border to most cities in the nation; this of course was of special importance to merchants whose business activities necessitated contacts in many port cities.

The 18th century came to a close with the death of President George Washington. Washington was a Free Mason. The Middleton Masons used the occasion to resuscitate individual commitment to what Enoch Huntington called, "The mutual chain of dependence which subsists throughout the

\textsuperscript{3} St. John's 2 Lodge Minutes, January 2, 1792.

\textsuperscript{4} Storer, \textit{150 Year Anniversary}, page 44.
animal creation." Nearly the whole community gathered in front of the Lodge to form a processional of mourning citizens. Leading the procession were seventy proud Masons. The event included a sermon delivered by Free Mason and Reverend Enoch Huntington; brother Richard Alsop delivered a well received eulogy to conclude the event. The Free Masons voted overwhelmingly that all expenses for the event should come out of Lodge funds. The Masons organization and support of this large scale public mourning substantiates their adherence to an interdependent community where every one had a common stake and duty.

Reverend Enoch Huntington, in a 1797 address to the Masons, elaborates on the stabilizing role played by members.

Hence to soothe the unhappy, by sympathizing with their misfortune, and to restore peace and tranquility to agitated spirits, constitute the great ends of the Masonic institution.

For the Reverend, the Masons were the social and political stewards of the traditional community. Through his forthright criticisms of his Masonic brethren, Reverend Huntington gives us an indication of how the Masons veered from the straight path of Christianity.

A question confronting anyone seeking to understand this time period, is how genuine were the wealthy in their supposed blindness to self-interest and divinely ordained advocacy for the good of the whole? The Masons were not oblivious to the temptations. Huntington warns members of "the insolence and cruelty of wealth and power" when "the soul feels not a

5/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 9.
6/ Middleton Gazette, December 27, 1799.
7/ St. John's 2 Lodge Minutes, February 22, 1800.
8/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 9.
universal benevolence, and is not elevated above selfish and party views. "9/

For the most part Huntington dedicates his sermon to exalting, not criti-
cizing the Masons. We can gather, that at least from the Reverend's per-
spective, the institution of Free Masonry did promote "benevolence, friend-
ship and harmony" in the Middleton community.

The Masons, at this time did not hold themselves aloof from the com-
munity. It is through their special efforts to hold the community together
that Masons differentiated themselves from other members of the community.
While Reverend Huntington categorizes Masons as part of the "whole family
under God," he also recognizes their special position within the hierarchy
of the community;

I esteem the Masons as brethren in a peculiar
sense, as one with me, in the great design and
important purpose of carrying into accomplish-
ment the grace and blessings of the gospel which
brings us glad tidings of great joy. 10/

This statement verifies our conclusion that Masons took seriously their
role of stewardship in the community.

In concluding that Masons were drawn from the privileged sector of
the community and that Free Masonry nurtured members' sense of obligation
to those below them, we are left with only half of the equation which de-
fines a harmonious community; the other half of the equation concerns the
unquestioned deference of the lower orders to those above them. In other
words, everyone knows their place and accompanying duties. Through an
appraisal of local officeholders we find that by 1820 artisans and small
shopkeepers had posed a successful challenge to the merchant/professional

9/ Ibid., page 8.

10/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 13.
stronghold over Middleton politics. While the political changes that occurred between 1810 and 1820 are dramatic they are only the culmination of changes which began at least as far back as the beginning of the 19th century. We find that between 1798 and 1802 the Middleton Masons were challenged by a group made up of artisans and small shopkeepers. Acting under the assumption that the St. John's 2 organization was a manifestation of the power structure of the Middleton community, we can interpret this challenge as a refusal to accept the traditional demands of deference required of those of lower economic standing.

In the year 1798 Middleton Masons were warned about a group of "marauders pretending to be the true brotherhood in the town."11/ In 1802 members were given a pamphlet which listed the alleged "counterfeiters." During this period, in what appears to be a response to protests against the elitist merchant/professional membership, St. John's 2 admitted for the first time individuals we can identify as artisans. In a comparison between the "counterfeiters" and those artisans admitted to the order we find no substantial difference in wealth or occupation. The only difference is a geographical one; the counterfeiters overwhelmingly came from the south side of town, while the artisans admitted to the order came from the middle or north school section of Middleton. This pattern

## COUNTERFEITERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>TAX 1800</th>
<th>TAX 1810</th>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arba Bradley</td>
<td>Metal Worker</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>South School</td>
</tr>
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<td>--</td>
<td>121.78</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>London Bailey</td>
<td>Sea Capt/Art.</td>
<td>61.79</td>
<td>94.78</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Dunham</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>South School</td>
</tr>
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<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>84.50</td>
<td>South School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Gilbert</td>
<td>Shipmaster</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>22.36</td>
<td>South School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tinware Mnf.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Powers</td>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>South School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Maloney</td>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>North School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtland Field</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
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## MASONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>YEAR ADMITTED</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>TAX 1800</th>
<th>TAX 1810</th>
<th>RESIDENCE</th>
</tr>
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<td>William Boardman</td>
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<td>Barber</td>
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<td>85.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Doud</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>Hosiah Roberts</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizur Goodrich</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>North Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlet Smith</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>South School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph White</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>North School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Arnold</td>
<td>1801</td>
<td>Shipmaster</td>
<td>95.34</td>
<td>90.00</td>
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<td>Eli Barnes</td>
<td>1801</td>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>38.25</td>
<td>48.65</td>
<td>North Society</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

coincides with the fact that most of the merchant/professional members recruited after 1795 also came from the North School and Society, or the
middle school district of Middleton. It appears that the Masons did open up their ranks to artisans, but only those artisans who lived in sections of town where they could be monitored by Masons from merchant or professional occupation. The artisans or small shopkeepers admitted to Free Masonry were those individuals who accepted the power of social control by those above them; it appears that none of these members questioned traditional deference to one's betters, since none of them filled any of the offices of the Lodge, which at times numbered up to half of the active members.12/

The counterfeits on the other hand appear to have initiated an iconoclastic organization which openly challenged the existing community power structure, as embodied in St. John's 2. The fact that members generally came from the same part of town indicates their inability to organize a townwide effort. It is also important to note that three of the counterfeites had the same occupations as three of the artisans admitted to the Masonic order. While it may have been coincidental, it is possible that the predominantly merchant/professional membership sought to punish the counterfeits by initiating their competitors. Considering the combined economic power of St. John's 2 members, this kind of action could be employed as a forceful disincentive for any individual who questioned his proper position in the community. After 1802, when this organization apparently ceased functioning, the Masons stopped admitting any individuals we can identify as artisans or small shopkeepers.13/ Whether this means

12/ Ibid., 1799.

13/ Ibid., 1803. The State minutes make a reference that the "the imposters had ceased threatening the good name of Middleton's Lodge."
that the pressure they felt subsided, or was directed at other institutions can not be ascertained.

Between the period 1802-1806, new members were recruited mostly from the ranks of merchants along with a sprinkling of professionals. For established merchants Masonry was economically advantageous, as it was the breeding ground for business alliances and informal cooperation; he also found Masonry to be a means of reaffirming his social status. Many new Masons were still dependent on their parents when they were initiated; we can assume this because they were absent from tax lists in the year they joined. Conceivably Free Masonry, while extolling the twin principles of privilege and obligation, was a mechanism for socializing merchants' sons into their proper role in the traditional community. Overall St. John's 2 was an almost exclusively merchant dominated organization until 1806.

Up till 1804 the Masons' leaders were either from established merchant families, or were established merchants themselves. Not surprisingly the leaders reflected in occupation and social status the general qualities of St. John's membership. Transitions in organizational leadership and member recruitment strategies are difficult to identify, especially with a secret organization such as the Masons. By 1808 the Masons we find evidence of a dramatic change in St. John's 2; leaders of the Masons were almost all professionals, with new members being recruited from the ranks of professionals and small merchant/shopkeepers. The generators of this change were

14/ St. John's 2 Membership Lists

15/ Middleton Tax Records 1800 and 1810. There are numerous cases of individuals initiated in the 1790's not appearing on the tax lists until 1810.
Dr. William B. Hall and Joshua Stow. Initiated on the same day in 1795, Hall and Stow gradually assumed leadership positions in St. John's 2. The internal struggle for control of the organization appears to have intensified between 1805-1807; this is signalled by a drastic decrease in membership recruitment, a telltale sign of organizational crisis for the Masons.

By 1808 a new group emerged with seemingly total control of St. John's 2; along with Stow and Hall, Chauncey Whittlesey, Jr. Esq. and Alexander Collins, Esq. assumed leadership positions in the Lodge. They looked to two groups to fill the ranks of St. John's 2. The first group of recruits was drawn from the ranks of Middleton professionals; the second group consisted of small shopkeeper/merchants. Out of this new Masonic coalition at least four members can be identified as Jeffersonians:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Parsons</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levi Clark</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Pratt</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. Lewis</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Conkling</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Titus Hosmer</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Miner, Jr.</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Wolcott</td>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16/ St. John's Membership Lists. Between 1805-1807 only 4 new Masons were initiated; this compares to 21 new members for 1800-1802, 38 members 1796 to 1798.

17/ Connecticut Grand Lodge Convention Minutes 1808.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>TAX 1810</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henry Lyman</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Shopkeeper/Merchant</td>
<td>154.00</td>
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<td>Silas N. Phelps</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Storeowner</td>
<td>70.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam Williams</td>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Storeowner/Merchant</td>
<td>114.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Bennett</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Brewer</td>
<td>72.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel J. Bull</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>112.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asahel Loomis</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Merchant/Grover</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Cooper</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Merchant/Shopkeeper</td>
<td>130.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giles Miegs, Jr.</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Merchant/Shopkeeper</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herman Powers</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Grocer/Merchant</td>
<td>124.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam Cooper</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>243.33</td>
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Joshua Stow; Dr. William B. Hall; Alexander Wolcott, Esq. who was appointed collector of customs; and Chauncey Whittlesey, Jr., Esq. Whether this means that the Masons were all Jeffersonians can not be ascertained. It does appear that this group of Masons did form an alliance which initiated organized action which challenged the standing Federalist Mercantile power block in Middleton.

An example of organized economic action taken by Masons was the establishment of the "Connecticut Society for the encouragement of American Manufacturing," organized in Middleton during the year 1815. Two Masons who were successful in the power struggle of 1805-1807, Joshua Stow and S. Titus Hosmer, were also leaders of this organization. The other Masons in

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18/ Chamber of Commerce brochure filed in box titled "Middleton Industry, located in the local history ception of Russell Library."
the organization were drawn from the professionals and merchant/shopkeepers recruited from 1808 to 1810. This organization was founded to encourage the expansion of local manufacturing which had enjoyed a boom during the War of 1812. What is significant from our point of view is the fact that members from the two groups initiated into St. John's 2 some five to seven years before, professionals and merchant/shopkeepers, emerge as the dominant group in this organization; alliances cemented in their common Masonic

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Office</th>
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<th>Year Masonic Initiation</th>
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<tr>
<td>(President)</td>
<td>S. Titus Hosmer</td>
<td>(1789)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-president)</td>
<td>Alexander Wolcott</td>
<td>(1810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-president)</td>
<td>Nehemiah Hubbard, Esq.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-president)</td>
<td>Commodore McDonough</td>
<td>(1804)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellors</td>
<td>Elijah Hubbard, Esq.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levi Clark, Esq.</td>
<td>(1808)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Pratt, Esq.</td>
<td>(1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joshua Stow</td>
<td>(1795)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simeon North</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Watkinson</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isaac Conkling, M.D.</td>
<td>(1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asahel Loomis</td>
<td>(1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Alsop</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan Starr, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samuel Williams</td>
<td>(1810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Miner, Jr.</td>
<td>(1809)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Lyman</td>
<td>(1808)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
membership resulted in an organized community wide effort.

The "Encouragement of Manufacturing" organization appears to be made up of entrepreneurs excluded from the established merchant elite of Middleton. It is interesting to note that two abundantly wealthy merchants, Nehemiah Hubbard and John R. Watkinson, had never joined the Masons, although most merchants of similar status had at one time. This could be explained by either their refusal to accept the community obligations that were internalized by Masonry; this could also mean they were refused membership because of a pervading view among members that these two merchants were overly ambitious and consumed by self-interest. Whatever the case, the Masons that joined this organization, along with the St. John's 2 Lodge were a disruptive influence in Middleton's rapidly eroding traditional community.

Testimony to the shift in the position held by Free Masonry in the Middleton community is supplied by an 1811 speech delivered by rector of Christ's Church John Kewley, M.D.. Dr. Kewley made his address to the newly instituted Warren Lodge in East Hampton. Dr. Kewley was not a member of the Middleton Lodge. The speech, for the most part, was a criticism of the existing state of Masonry; many indirect references are made to the state of the Middleton Lodge, and thereby clarifies our understanding of how Middleton Masons were viewed in the eyes of the community. Essentially, Dr. Kewley viewed the Masons as economically ambitious, socially disruptive and religiously barren.

In a striking departure from Reverend Enoch Huntington's appraisal of Masons as religiously superior, Dr. Kewley points out the incompatibility of Free Masonry and Christianity by warning members;
From mistaken attempt to exalt Masonry above its just station, it may well be conceived as hath proceeded the secession and withdrawing of many of its members from its meetings, whose social and religious virtues would prove an ornament to any society, and whose countenance and support would contribute much to silence all opposition, which the ignorant and inconsiderate might be disposed to make.20/

Many other references are made regarding Masonry's replacement of religious organizations with their own man made organization. The church in Middleton's traditional community was the unquestioned guardian of virtue. The church also played a central role in social control; in this way the church was a mechanism to preserve the status quo and power of the community's merchant elite. Masons abandonment of the established church as represented by Joshua Stow's odd religious practices, is symptomatic of their refusal to accept the existing order in Middleton.

Dr. Kewley makes many pointed references to the economic ambitions of Middleton's Masons. "Ye cannot well be ignorant that in some places, Masonry hath been much perverted and abused, and hath become little else than a cloak or pretext for dissipation and self-interest." 21/ Complementing this accusation is the initiation of a practice which began during this period; for the first time Masons began putting the Masonic insignia on their business cards. 22/ This practice affirms that Masonry was now directly involved in members' attempts to procure economic gain.

While in the past Masons were considered upstanding members of the

21/ Ibid., page 14
22/ Middleton Lodge folder, Connecticut Grand Lodge, Wallingford, Connecticut. The folder contains a flyer which was distributed to Middleton Masons; it condemned all individuals, except Masons from putting the Masonic insignia on one's business cards.
community, Dr. Kewley refers to Masons during this period as infidels and drunkards.

Brethren beware. An anxiety to increase the number of its members, hath frequently opened the door of admission to unworthy characters, whose immoral, irreligious and dissolute conduct, hath given the world too much reason to speak disrespectfully of an institution which professes high things, and yet can tolerate such unseemly and criminal conduct in some of its members.23/

During this period Masons were more faithful to the demands for morality and virtue, as outlined in the Masonic handbook, than to the demands of the established church. Whether, as Dr. Kewley suggests, Masons were "steeped in drunkenness, is certainly questionable. Lodge minutes do report that a new office entitled "Purveyor" was created in 1811 "Whose duty it shall be to provide suitable liquor and provisions for the Lodge each evening of its meeting, and to procure a chest in which to deposit the same."24/ The seriousness which pervaded lodge meetings in the past was now distinctly absent. Not surprisingly there was little emphasis on charity during this period.

Masonry had become, if not a bastion of Jeffersonism, at least an organization of individuals who challenged the existing hierarchy and controls of Middleton's traditional community. During this period there was in influx of professionals some of who found it difficult to break through Federalists' monopolistic control of the professions. Masonry gave them an organization within which they could act on their common interests. The small merchant/shopkeepers who entered at the same time as these professionals were intent on taking advantage of the expanding opportunities in the local community;

24/ St. John's Lodge Minutes, February 27, 1811.
to do so meant they faced harsh reprimand from those above them who feared a loss of status. As a whole they represented a group who were individually and collectively undertaking economic, social and religious practices which put them outside the strict confines of a traditional community. They were men who did not find the Middleton community to be a secure setting. The professionals for the most part were not from established merchant families, hence did not have the guarantee of economic security. The merchant/shopkeepers had amitions to supplement their moderately successful position in the community. Overall, this was a group of relatively young individuals who brought much change to Middleton, along with much strife.

Once again we find ourselves in the precarious position of explaining a transition in membership type for the St. John's 2 Lodge. By 1820 the leaders of the Lodge and almost all of its new members were artisans and small shopkeepers. Up till 1820 the professionals, admitted between 1808 and 1811, still filled the leadership roles in the organization. But according to membership records no professionals and only a few small merchants were initiated after 1812. With clashes between Jeffersonian and Federalist elements subsiding quite possibly the need of some professionals to seek refuge with the Masons was reduced. Merchant entrepreneurs found their economic pursuits sanctioned in a rapidly expanding Middleton economy.

In regards to both of these groups, deviance from the careful eye of the established church could be pursued with less fear of reprisal.

For what had been considered the lower orders of the community, artisans and shopkeepers, the most dramatic changes were starting to take shape.

25/ Middleton Folder, Connecticut Grand Lodge, Wallingford. The list of Middleton officers between 1812-1820 included: Levi Clark; Stephen T. Hosmer; John L. Lewis; Joshua Stow; Asahel Loomis.
The pace of erosion of Middleton's traditional community was escalating. On the one hand this meant increased control of the community's political institutions, which many Masons were influential in obtaining. On the other hand, this meant the loss of traditional authority in the community. For the church this meant decreased influence and a resultant secularization of the community's institutions, specifically Free Masonry. In order to cope with this newly acquired individualism, citizens looked to alternative institutions to help bridge the gap; Masonry was just such an institution.

Possibly out of lack of concern for posterity or education, the artisans and shopkeepers which came to dominate Masonry in the 1820's made little effort to compile records of their activities and meetings. Hence we are left with very little information about Masonry during this period. As a framework for understanding the members and goals of St. John's 2 we shall use a sermon preached at the Lodge in 1826 by Reverend and Mason, Walter Colton.

Immediately we are struck with the different approaches taken by Reverend Colton and Dr. Kewley; while Kewley warns against putting Masonry on a pedestal, Reverend Colton does not hesitate.

God has found among these ruins, an Edifice of moral beauty and excellence; an Institution, erected to God, and dedicated to universal benevolence, which has been supported by the wise and good, for ages.26/

Whereas earlier Masons shaped the Lodge into an elitist organization removed from the rest of the community, this group did not seek to supplement status through Masonry; "His badge far from exciting vanity or pride, re-

26/ Dr. Kewley, Warren Lodge Address, page 1.
mind him of his frailties, vows and profound obligations."

This group of Masons appear to have viewed their role as similar to the role assumed by merchant Masons of the late 18th century. For the traditional community the benevolence and dedication of merchant Masons made them, for Enoch Huntington, "Godlike." For the chaotic 1820's when Middleton was rapidly evolving in a modern society, it is from the artisan, shopkeeper Masons which Reverend Colton demands, "Let Christ's unaffected simplicity, his unadored piety, find their lively representatives in us." By this time the mercantile class had either lost or abdicated the political and social control they once had over Middleton's traditional community. The community that confronted these artisan and small shopkeeper Masons was quite different than the one faced by merchant elite in the late 18th century. In the words of Reverend Colton, the community was now the "cold world;" this is a much different representation of Middleton than Enoch Huntington's "mutual chain of dependence operating in perfect harmony." As a result of these changes Masons propagated quite a different appraisal of the community's various institutions and of the goals of Free Masonry.

In Middleton's traditional community the guardian of morality and virtue was the established church. Those who deviated were ostracized as infidels. Dr. Kewley epitomized the community's contempt for those Masons who "put more trust vainly contrived regulations for conduct...and neglect piety, are doomed." Just fifteen years later Reverend Colton was inform-

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27/ Reverend Colton, St. John's 2 Discourse, 1826, page 4.
28/ Ibid., page 23.
29/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 11.
30/ Dr. Kewley, Warren Lodge Address, page 10.
ing the Masons that "Piety is not indispensable to the Masonic character; unexceptionable morality is ABSOLUTELY indispensable." The church could no longer institute the necessary social control in the community, hence individuals looked to an alternative institution, Free Masonry, for the necessary guidelines for behavior in a confusing society.

The morality that Masonry preached was modern; the emphasis was on preparing members to act as free individuals. Consequently individuals were no longer judged by their faith, but by their actions. As Reverend Colton put it, "Industry, prudence, benevolence, must be the three signets, that impress our conduct." Included in these demands was temperance. By 1818 the Lodge voted to ban all alcoholic beverages from the premises. The members refused to allow even the slightest deviance from accepted proper conduct.

A further indication of the disintegration of the community is the manner in which Reverend Colton criticized the Masonic institution. The faults of the organization were due solely to "disorderly" individuals. In sharp contrast Reverend Enoch Huntington does not emphasize the necessity of weeding the wicked members from the Masonic ranks;

That the Masonic principles and doctrines are not always conformed to by those who profess them is due to the frailty and infirmities of human nature in its present state. . . Imperfections and defects, sins and failures, are to be found amongst all bodies of men.34/

31/ Reverend Colton, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 11.
32/ Ibid., page 20.
33/ St. John's 2 Lodge Minutes, July 8, 1818.
34/ Enoch Huntington, St. John's 2 Discourse, page 10.
The faults that Huntington's community accepted, were singled out and condemned by Colton. Consequently, for the first time members, even officers, are expelled from the Masonic order in great numbers for not conducting themselves according to the strict tenets of modern morality.  

Even Masonic charity made an attempt to differentiate amongst the needy those who conformed to their moral demands and those who did not.  

As Reverend Colton puts it,

> Our benevolence is careful to WHOM it bestows, knows that the sufferer is worthy...There is no benevolence which merits our confidence, or reflects moral worth upon its possessor but that which prompts to industry; to frugality; and which enters into a man's every feeling, plan, and action.

While the Masons were generous with their funds they were also highly selective; if a widow was known to entertain men, or coddle a bottle too frequently, her chances of receiving Masonic relief were nil. Regardless of their selectivity, the Masons were a needy individual's last chance for relief. The community had ceased to act as caretaker, accept in institutional forms, for the community's less privileged. Reverend Colton describes the situation; "The cold world may forget the helpless, but our fraternity shall not." And they did not, for during this period the amount of charity doled out was significantly higher than before.

Along with providing an alternative philosophy of individual morality, Masonry provided sanctions for actions taken by the artisan/shopkeeper

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35/ Connecticut Grand Lodge Convention Minutes. No reason was given for any of the expulsions: Chauncey Beebe (1824); Charles Barber (1824); Donald Fuller (1826); John L. Lewis (1826).

36/ Reverend Colton, St. John's 2 Discourse, pages 17, 19.

37/ Ibid., page 21.
Masons. Colton speaks at length about the "chaotic" political climate in the Middleton community. Masons were actively involved in bringing about the dramatic political changes which engulfed Middleton. Merchant Masons of the late 18th century helped justify their attempts to preserve the existing order by claiming their Masonic obligations put them above self-interest; the present group of artisans used the same logic to justify their attacks on the traditional power structure of the community. In Reverend Colton's words, it is the supreme moral accountability which sanctions the actions of true Masons.

Men may cabal together for the destruction of obnoxious governments, but before they can give the final blow, mutual discord, distrust, jealousy will divide their plans to prevent a union of their strength. . .No social or civil compact can exist, unless it is bound together, and supported in its measures, by the principles of moral obligation, and it is upon these principles alone, the existence and success of our Institution depends. 39/

Masonry justified their actions; while at the same time it gave them an assurance that if they stuck to their principles, Middleton would once again experience the harmony of the, now extinct, traditional community.

38/ At least 3 members were community officeholders in 1820: Samuel Spaulding; Epaphrus Clark; George W. Bull.

Middleton's Masonic lodge underwent a series of drastic changes during the thirty years of our study. We end our study in 1826 because it marked the beginning of the infamous Morgan affair, which dragged on until the late 1830's. As one Master Masonic historian told me, "Free Masonry never regained it old position of prominence." We began our study by recognizing the first group of Masons as wealthy merchants and their sons. The lodge implemented the hierarchical structure by acting as an elitist organization. Along with promoting the needs of merchants, Masonry also informed members of their obligations to the rest of the community. Masonry provided a forum where merchants could thrash out their differences, thereby solidifying their control over the community. In our first transition Masonry is depicted as embroiled in an internal conflict between competing elites. Those professionals and small merchant entrepreneurs who were challenging the traditional community won out by gaining control of the lodge. While under the merchants Masonry represented the most valuable qualities of the traditional community; under this second group Masonry became a serious threat to the traditional community. Masonry was now an institutional manifestation of challenges that had existed for many years in less organized forms. As we enter the second decade of the 19th century Masonry opens its ranks to Artisans and small shopkeepers; in this way Masonry forges the democratization of community institutions. By the 1820's Masonry was oriented towards inculcating members with the, relatively new, individual and collective responsibilities which artisans and small shopkeepers were confronted with. In just thirty years Masonry's institutional attitude towards the traditional community went from wanting its preservation, its destruction and finally its reconstruction. As a result the history
of Middleton Masonry embodies much of the change that occurred during this crucial period in Middleton history.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


7. St. John's Folder, located in the Masonic History room, Connecticut Grand Lodge, Wallingford Connecticut. This folder contains fairly complete membership records, assorted pamphlets, and other relevant information on St. John's 2.

8. St. John's Lodge Minutes, located in "History of Lodge" file cabinet, St. John's 2 Lodge, Middleton Connecticut. These files did provide me with a sparse collection of Lodge Minutes. The full collection of Lodge Minutes is contained in the Lodge safety vault. I was unable to see them.