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## Tilting at Windmills The Utopian Socialist Roots of the Patriot War, 1838–1839

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## ARTICLE

# Tilting at Windmills: The Utopian Socialist Roots of the Patriot War, 1838–1839

**Albert Schrauwers**

THE AMERICAN PATRIOT MOVEMENT inducted between 40,000 and 160,000 men across the northeastern states into the clandestine Hunters' Lodge. The Lodge represented widespread violent support of the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. A grassroots military presence, the Patriot movement not only threatened British rule, but also led to the largest deployment of American troops against their own citizens since the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. The culminating Battle of the Windmill of November 1838, at Prescott, Upper Canada, is related in numerous primary and secondary sources and is iconic of these narratives, with their emphasis on tragicomic military action and personal prowess<sup>1</sup>: abandoned by their leader, the disorganized patriots, "tilting at windmills," were quickly routed by superior British forces, leaving 48 dead, a further 11 executed, and 60 sentenced to transportation to Australia.

Despite the magnitude of such events and their international ramifications, recent historians have paid scant attention to the Patriot War, although many firsthand narratives exist.<sup>2</sup> This lack of interest can be attributed to

1. Marc L. Harris, "The Meaning of Patriot: The Canadian Rebellion and American Republicanism, 1837–1839," *Michigan Historical Review* 23 (Spring 1997): 33–69.

2. Andrew Bonthius, "The Patriot War of 1837–1838: Locofocoism with a Gun?" *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (Fall 2003): 10–12. Much of the historical literature consists of compilations of newspaper serials: Robert B. Ross, "The Patriot War" (originally published in the *Detroit Evening News*, revised for the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society), *Michigan Pioneer Collection* 21 (1892), 509–609; L. N. Fuller, "Northern New York in the Patriot War," *Watertown Daily Times*, newspaper serial, 25 parts, March–April 1923; E. M. Waterbury, "Oswego County during the 'Patriot War' of 1837–41," *Oswego Palladium Times*, newspaper serial, 57 parts, February 1844–April 1847. The following are standard American works on the war: O. E. Tiffany, "The Relation of the United States to the Canadian Rebellion of 1837–1838,"

the difficulty of positioning the war in relation to the nationalist historiography of the Rebellions, whose importance seemingly rests on their being the *last* of those “Atlantic revolutions” inspired by the republican conception of liberty (to which this war remains a curious footnote).<sup>3</sup> To be understood in its own context as a popular social (*republican*) movement within and against the republic, the Patriot War requires comparative attention to the transnational cultural flows and shared histories of developing British, American, and Canadian Owenite socialist movements and institutions.<sup>4</sup>

The Hunters’ Lodge, which organized these Patriot raids, was a secret society that resembled the Freemasons, with its Grand Lodge in Cleveland, Ohio. Given the secrecy that surrounded the Hunters’ Lodge and the Whig biases of those who reported on it, we know little of the individuals who organized the movement and less yet of the social and cultural context that might have led them on such a quixotic mission.<sup>5</sup> For example, the 70 unknown delegates from five states that attended the secret, week-long “Patriot Congress” in Cleveland in September 1838 appointed a provisional Canadian republican government that included president A. D. Smith, “chief justice of the peace at Cleveland”; vice-president Colonel Nathan Williams, “a wholesale grocer”; and the commander-in-chief of the Patriot Army of the West, General Lucius V. Bierce, “an attorney at Akron.”<sup>6</sup> These sparing biographical details obscure the larger, multifaceted Owenite socialist movement within which, I will argue, the Patriot War should be located. Using the leadership of the Hunters’ Lodge to define a cohort, I provide here a prosopography, or collective cultural biography of the founders of the illusory Republic of Canada and of the institutional and discursive world of this wider movement. This technique has

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*Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society* 8 (1905): 7–147; Carl Wittke, “Ohioans and the Canadian-American Crisis of 1837–1838,” *Ohio Archeological and Historical Quarterly* 59 (1949): 21–34; Oscar A. Kinchen, *The Rise and Fall of the Patriot Hunters* (New York: Bookman, 1956). The Canadian perspective on the war can be found in two largely anecdotal histories by Edwin C. Guillet: *The Lives and Times of the Patriots: An Account of the Rebellion in Upper Canada, 1837–1838* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) and *The Patriot Agitation in the United States, 1837–1842* (Toronto: Nelson, 1963). See also Shaun J. McLaughlin, *The Patriot War along the Michigan-Canada Border: Raiders and Rebels* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2013).

3. Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776–1838*, Peter Feldstein, trans. (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014).

4. Art Redding, “‘A Floating Population’: The Niagara Corridor and Canadian/American Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century,” *Comparative American Studies* 13 (June 2015): 79.

5. Harris, “Meaning of Patriot,” 53. Harris contrasts Whig-inspired rhetoric of these reports with the republicanism expressed in memoirs by Patriot exiles to Tasmania (not included in this survey), who, he notes, differed again from those who were not captured and transported, but who never bothered to explain their actions. For a rare exception, see Bonthius, “Patriot War of 1837–1838.”

6. Kinchen, *Rise and Fall*, 38–39.

been used “when the main problem is political” but a web of purely social and economic ties existed that “gave the group its unity and therefore its political force, and to a considerable extent also its political motivation.”<sup>7</sup> The method was used to similar effect by Charles Beard to explain the class interests of the Founding Fathers in shaping the American federal constitution, as well as by Bryan Palmer to explore political protests by pre-Rebellion working-class mechanics against the Kingston Penitentiary.<sup>8</sup>

This mass popular movement to wage a foreign war against the British Empire came together in a relatively short period across five states despite the concerted efforts of the US government to repress it, an accomplishment begging explanation. Craig Calhoun argues that “preexisting communal relations and attachments to tradition are essential to revolutionary mobilizations” in this period, highlighting the necessity for the collective biographical approach taken here.<sup>9</sup> A comparative cultural study of this cohort’s biographies decentres the Patriot War and the military actions on which most historians have focused and instead places that focus on the sets of preexisting discursive practices that shaped this social movement and hence encouraged the cohort’s participation. This article thus expands on one of the few studies of the political ideology of Hunters’ Lodge propaganda: Andrew Bonthius’ characterization of the Patriot War as “Locofocoism with a gun.” Bonthius’ study similarly emphasizes “the commonalities of life in the US and UC [Upper Canada], using Ohio as a test case, which led American and Canadian radical ‘reformers’ to join hands in battle.”<sup>10</sup> This movement was tied together by shared institutional forms, ideologies, leaders, and practices that provided the basis for establishing trust and hence enabling rapid mobilization in the Hunters’ Lodge. The point is to underscore the preexisting institutional ties of Patriot leaders, as well as to use their life histories as a means of demonstrating the interlinkage of what might otherwise appear to be disparate and unrelated cultural movements. Calhoun comments on the ways in which later master narratives have placed these various “new social movements” in separate fields and rendered the connections among them invisible.<sup>11</sup> In particular, the organization of the Hunters’ Lodge should be situated within Owenite socialist networks and their engagement with the emerging Painite labour movement.

7. Lawrence Stone, “Prosopography,” *Daedalus* 100 (Winter 1971): 47.

8. Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1913); Bryan Palmer, “Kingston Mechanics and the Rise of the Penitentiary, 1833–1836,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 13 (May 1980): 7–32.

9. Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 88.

10. Bonthius, “Patriot War of 1837–1838,” 12.

11. Craig Calhoun, “‘New Social Movements’ of the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Social Science History* 17 (Autumn 1993): 410.

In its postcommunitarian phase, Owenite socialism in Britain and America sought to influence a number of radical social movements engaging with its core educational mission, some of which drew the movement into the labour politics of the era. It is important to underscore, given the well-known early communitarian emphasis of the Owenites, that they never proposed the redistribution of property as the means of ending social inequality; that inequality was produced, they argued, by unequal education. They proffered a series of educational initiatives, including the “village of cooperation,” as the means of overcoming that social inequality, not inequities of wealth; their stated goal was to mold a “new moral world” by shaping the ethical character of impoverished children so that they could identify their “own happiness with the happiness of society” as a whole.<sup>12</sup> In the 1830s, after the collapse of the New Harmony experiment, the Owenites, with their educational concerns, thus found themselves drawn into such disparate movements as the freethinkers, phrenology, the Working Men’s movement, and its successive political parties. The social movements at the core of this study – freethought, Freemasonry, and free banking (Locofocoism) – were all associated with the emergence of Painite civic republicanism and the labour politics of the early republic and have parallels in similar movements behind the Upper Canadian Rebellion.<sup>13</sup>

By means of this analysis, I oppose these related civic republican movements against the Whig-evangelical alliance in the emergent “second party system” of the period. These republicans formed the left wing of the Jacksonian war on the second Bank of the United States and the “moneyed aristocrats” that ran it. As Ducharme has noted, the Rebellions fomented this same form of Painite republicanism against an alternate form of Whiggish “modern liberty” that was to serve as the ideological basis of the emerging Liberal Order in the Canadas.<sup>14</sup> The Rebellions and the Patriot War, I argue, must be viewed in the context of Owenite popular radicalism in the period; “the popular radicalism of the 1830s was a hybrid of transplanted practices, thoughts, assumptions,

12. J. F. C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 139–147. See also Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (1984; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 190–211.

13. For the American case, see Mark Lause, “The ‘Unwashed Infidelity’: Thomas Paine and Early New York City Labor History,” *Labor History* 27 (June 1986): 385–409; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, Chap. 5, 215–216, 235; Steven Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 137–162. For the Upper Canadian case, see Albert Schrauwers, “*Union Is Strength*”: W. L. Mackenzie, *the Children of Peace and the Emergence of Joint Stock Democracy in Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Albert Schrauwers, “The Gentlemanly Order and the Politics of Production in the Transition to Capitalism in Upper Canada,” *Labour/Le Travail* 65 (Spring 2010): 9–45.

14. Ducharme, *Liberty in Canada*; Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81 (December 2000): 617–645.

and sensibilities. In the material circumstances of a new and emerging society, these translated into an ensemble of arguments about rights that was simultaneously British and American, rooted in readings of Enlightenment thought and Age of Revolution ideology that were not so much articulated in the texts of politics as in the theatrics of discontent.”<sup>15</sup>

The Hunters’ Lodge had four degrees, of which non-commissioned officers held the second, “field officers the third, and commissioned officers of the highest rank the Patriot Mason’s degree.”<sup>16</sup> The cohort considered for this article consists of the American members of the Hunters’ Lodge of the second degree or higher, or who held executive roles in the provisional government, and who were not killed in action or transported.<sup>17</sup> I have excluded those transported because an analysis of the six exiles, generally of the first degree, who returned to write their defenses is available.<sup>18</sup> A focus on the American leaders of the Lodge facilitated a later comparison with the Upper Canadian Rebellion leadership, including William Lyon Mackenzie and Dr. Charles Duncombe. Finding detailed information on many remained difficult, hence this sample is biased – as is typical in histories of this period – towards elites, for whom the documentary record is fuller. For instance, the difficulties posed

15. Bryan Palmer, “Popular Radicalism and the Theatrics of Rebellion: The Hybrid Discourse of Dissent in Upper Canada in the 1830s,” in Nancy Christie, ed., *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 403–404.

16. Kinchen, *Rise and Fall*, 57.

17. Members of this cohort include Dr. Abram Daniel Smith (age 27 at the time of the convention), president; [Jo]Nathan Williams, vice-president; John Grant Jr., secretary of the treasury, president of the Bank of the Republic of Canada; Donald M’Leod (59), secretary of war, an Upper Canadian; Lucius V. Bierce (37), commander-in-chief; John H. Harmon (19), adjutant to the commander; Henry S. Handy (34), commander-in-chief; Gilman Appleby\*, commodore (Lake Erie); William Johnston, commodore (Lake Ontario), an Upper Canadian; John Brunson\*, commissary general; Dr. John Ward Birge (Burge) (35), major general; William Putnam (44), major general, an Upper Canadian; Elijah Jackson Roberts (35), major general; Dr. Edward A. Theller (34), major general; Dorephus Abby (46)\*†, colonel; Salathiel C. Coffinberry (29), colonel; Cornelius Cunningham (32)\*†, colonel; [?] Harvel\*†, colonel; Oliver B. Pierce (30), colonel; Martin Woodruff (40)\*†, colonel; Dr. Samuel Underhill (43), publisher of Patriot newspaper the *Bald Eagle*, spokesperson; John R. St. John (33), spokesperson, conventioneer; Dr. Charles Duncombe (46), conventioneer, an Upper Canadian/American; Abraham Truax (44), conventioneer, a recent Upper Canadian originally from New York; Loring P. Harris\*, conventioneer; Benjamin Stone\*, conventioneer, an Upper Canadian; Amos White\*, conventioneer. Next to nothing is known of those whose names are marked with an asterisk. Those who died or were executed are marked with a dagger.

18. First-degree members proved to be significantly younger, with no career trajectories to trace. See Harris, “Meaning of Patriot.” I have, however, included Dr. Edward A. Theller, whose capture was short enough to allow his reengagement, as he recounted in *Canada in 1837–38* (2 vols.) (Philadelphia, 1841). See also Donald M’Leod, *A Brief Review of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the U.E. Loyalists and Scotch Highlanders in 1783; and of the grievances which compelled the Canadas to have recourse to arms ...* (Cleveland, 1841).

by generic names such as that of A. D. Smith (no first name given in the historic record) were mitigated by his having been a doctor, lawyer, justice of the peace, Masonic deputy Grand Master, and Wisconsin Supreme Court judge.<sup>19</sup> The results are thus suggestive, though not conclusive, about the nature of the broader movement.

## The Preexisting Social Networks of Patriot Leaders

AS THE AIM OF THIS PROSOPOGRAPHY (or collective biography) is to underscore the cultural and institutional context of the Hunters' Lodge, and not individual motivations, I start with an examination of the life of a figure central to that context, Isaac S. Smith, who played no known role in the Patriot War.<sup>20</sup> The point of this study is to decentre the military narratives of the Patriot War and to refocus debate on the underlying discursive network of networks that tied the Patriot Hunter leadership together. Smith was a pivotal figure linking the freethought movement, free banking, and Freemasonry movements in the Great Lakes region; tracing his life gives a snapshot of this network of networks and its economic basis and allows us to see the moments at which Patriot War leaders were brought together through their pre-existing relationships and shared outlooks. The Patriot leaders operated in the context of these broader networks, the transnational basis and scope of which needs to be underscored. The Great Lakes basin – or “Niagara corridor” – “is the real cradle of North American radicalism, a radicalism nurtured by movements of peoples and flows of ideas, by commerce, contacts, exchanges and transactions across and between races, classes, and local and national communities. The Niagara corridor became a transnational matrix of radicalism all through the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century.”<sup>21</sup>

Isaac Slocum Smith (1792–1860) was born into a very large New Bedford, Massachusetts, Quaker family with ties to the shipping industry; he followed his older brother Stephen to New York, where they became supercargoes for Quaker merchants sending wares to England, France, and Spain.<sup>22</sup> Having

19. His (rarely used) full name was Abram Daniel Smith. See Ruth C. Dunley, “A. D. Smith: Knight Errant of Radical Democracy” PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 2008.

20. Primary sources on Isaac S. Smith include: Lucy William Hawes, *Buffalo Fifty Years Ago* (Buffalo: The Courier Company, 1886); F. Byrdsell, *History of the Loco-Foco, or Equal Rights Party* (New York: Clement & Packard, 1842), 75–76; Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America, 1825–1850* (New York: Octagon, 1974); *A Concise View of Black Rock, including a Map and Schedule of Property Belonging to the Niagara City Association* (Black Rock, NY, 1836); William Lyon Mackenzie, *The Life and Times of Martin van Buren* (Boston, 1846), 90; Clark Waggoner, ed., *History of the City of Toledo and Lucas County, Ohio* (Toledo: Munsell & Co., 1888), 373–374.

21. Redding, “Floating Population,” 84.

22. Rebecca Williams Hawes, “Abraham and Zerviah (Ricketson) Smith and Their Nineteen Children,” *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches* 30 (1910): 22–28.



acquired some wealth, Stephen Smith moved to Syracuse, New York, where he operated the Onondaga Salt Company, which was to become one of the largest salt producers in the United States. His younger brother moved even farther west, to Buffalo – the terminus of the newly constructed Erie Canal – about 1825, where he soon lost his job as an insurance agent because of his loudly proclaimed deistic views.<sup>23</sup> Isaac S. Smith then became partner in a forwarding company and canal boat line, primarily shipping salt from his brother's company at Salina westward, over Lake Erie, thereby enabling the cheap return transport of western salted pork and beef to the East Coast. The salt trade evidently made him a millionaire. By 1835, the partners co-owned the Erie Canal transportation company running between New York and Buffalo and sole-owned a shipping line running between Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit on Lake Erie; he soon invested in key real estate assets in the port lands of each of these new settlements, which were the termini of canals running deep into Ohio.<sup>24</sup> Smith established his adopted son Archibald in Cleveland; Archibald Smith operated a barge line on the Ohio Canal to Akron.<sup>25</sup> Isaac S. Smith speculatively hoped to repeat this success in Toledo – the terminus of the new Miami and Erie Canal – through the co-purchase of 700,000 acres of "Ohio Canal lands" and by investing in the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad, which was to connect Toledo with the Kalamazoo River onward to Lake Michigan and Chicago, bypassing Detroit and the upper lakes.<sup>26</sup> Lastly, he partnered with several other Buffalo shipping companies to develop Black Rock (near Buffalo) as a secondary port terminus for the Erie Canal. It was this last investment that would prove to be his downfall, leading to the collapse of his empire in the general financial crisis of late 1837 when the bank he co-owned could no longer cover the interest charges on his increasing debts.<sup>27</sup>

23. *New York Evening Post*, advertisement running weekly throughout 1825. Smith was forced to resign as secretary in April 1827.

24. Hawes, "Abraham and Zerviah (Ricketson) Smith," 27; Edwin Williams, *The New-York Annual Register for the Year of our Lord 1830* (New York: J. Leavitt, 1830), 129; *Black Rock Advocate*, 23 June 1836; *Buffalo Whig*, 29 April 1835.

25. J. H. Kennedy, "The Municipal Growth of Cleveland," *Magazine of Western History* 4 (1886): 75.

26. Harry N. Scheiber, "State Policy and the Public Domain: The Ohio Canal Lands," *Journal of Economic History* 25 (March 1965): 94, 110; H. S. Knapp, *History of the Maumee Valley* (Toledo: Slade Mammoth, 1872), 554–556; Waggoner, *History of the City of Toledo*, 373–374.

27. Roger Whitman, *The Rise and Fall of a Frontier Entrepreneur: Benjamin Rathbun: "Master Builder and Architect,"* Scott Eberle & David Gerber, eds. (Buffalo: Syracuse University Press / Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society, 1996), 90, 93, 94. See also *A Concise View of Black Rock*, 40ff.; *Laws of the State of New York, passed at the Fifty-Ninth Session of the Legislature, begun and held at the City of Albany, the Fifth Day of January, 1836* (Albany: E. Crosswell, 1836), 594–600; Mackenzie, *Life and Times of Martin van Buren*, 90; "Report of the Register in Chancery, in answer to a resolution of the Assembly, calling for certain information in relation to the affairs of the City Bank of Buffalo," No. 87, 28 January, *Documents of the Assembly of the*



Over a decade-long period, Smith had thus established a transportation network that spanned both shores of the Great Lakes, siphoning off freight and traffic from the St. Lawrence and Montréal to the Hudson River and New York. Similar transport linkages tied other Patriot War conspirators to this network. Henry S. Handy, Patriot general, had helped build the Chicago harbour in 1834, allowing access farther west to the Mississippi along the Illinois and Michigan Canal. He was in Toronto with his brother-in-law Judge Orange Butler in 1837 to meet with reform politician Marshall Spring Bidwell; it was from Bidwell that Handy first learned of the Rebellion before organizing military aid in Detroit in the Secret Order of the Sons of Liberty.<sup>28</sup> Butler was the contractor for Smith's Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad. He and Handy were seeking to influence the routing of the Great Western Railroad through Upper Canada to link to theirs, allowing western traffic to avoid the slow passage by boat through Lakes Michigan and Erie to the Erie Canal or a longer and slower planned rail route along the south shore of Lake Erie.

Similarly, Judge John Grant Jr. of Oswego, New York, who was to become president of the Patriot bank, was a partner in two shipping lines on Lake Ontario – one in partnership with the American-born Canadian Reform politician and merchant Abraham Truax of Kingston. Truax was also the Kingston agent of the Toronto-based Bank of the People, a Reform institution intimately connected with the organization of Mackenzie's Rebellion. With the opening of the Oswego Canal link to the Erie Canal, Grant and his partners hoped to draw Upper Canadian traffic away from the St. Lawrence, through Oswego to New York. The opening of the Canadian Welland Canal also opened Lake Erie to their line, providing another alternate route to Detroit in addition to the Erie Canal or the railway. Truax was to flee Kingston and join the Hunters' Lodge after the Rebellion.<sup>29</sup>

While Smith would clearly appear a typical speculative frontier capitalist, he – no less than the paradoxical factory owner and communitarian Robert Owen – was engaged in a series of related progressive political and social movements on the Owenite labour fringe that spanned concerns from common

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*State of New-York, Sixty-Fourth Session*, vol. 4 (Albany: Thurlow Weed, 1841), 14–18.

28. Lillian Gates mistakenly identified Patriot general J. W. Birge as the author of an unsigned letter recounting a meeting with Bidwell and Butler, "my brother-in-law" in Toronto, and the subsequent organization of the Sons of Liberty in Detroit based on similarity between the author's handwriting and that in another letter from Birge. In fact, Handy – not Birge – was Butler's brother-in-law. Gates, *After the Rebellion: The Later Years of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1988), 349.

29. Grant was also collector of customs at Oswego and agent for the Albany and Oswego Line and the New-York and Oswego Line. See "Early Sailing Days in Oswego," letter, *Oswego Palladium*, 20 January 1877, *Maritime History of the Great Lakes*, accessed 18 November 2016,

education to freethought to phrenology. Although there is no mention of Smith in relation to the Patriot War (unsurprising, given the business crisis he faced at the time), he appears repeatedly in connection with the later leaders of the Hunters' Lodge in other contexts. These activities illustrate the institutional intersections that brought future Patriot leaders together. Smith's more easily recovered biography thus makes the hidden cultural and institutional ties among those leaders more visible and provides a more vivid individual portrait of the confluence of what have otherwise been treated as disparate and unrelated cultural and political movements.

Smith took a first, unusual public political stance shortly after arriving in Buffalo, when he organized a Masonic procession on behalf of a Mordecai Noah, coeditor of the *National Advocate* and a prominent Grand Sachem, or leader, in the Tammany Society, a bulwark of the Democratic Party in New York.<sup>30</sup> Noah had been Smith's travel companion in Spain and, in 1825, had turned to Smith when purchasing 2,555 acres on Grand Island, in the Niagara River at the mouth of the Erie Canal, as a "refuge for the Jews." The planned city of Ararat – its name indicating, perhaps, a new instantiation of Solomon's kingdom – never got much further than the full Masonic procession in August organized by Smith to lay the cornerstone.<sup>31</sup> Smith's association with both Freemasonry and the Democratic Party placed him at clear odds with the antimasonic-evangelical alliance behind the emerging Whig Party. It is difficult to document Smith's involvement in the Freemasons after the rapid rise of the Antimasonic Party shuttered the Buffalo Lodges after 1829.<sup>32</sup> Patriot general Elijah Jackson (E. J.) Roberts of Detroit, another compatriot of Smith, is a more public example of the ways in which Freemasonry intersected with the complex development of the working class (or "mechanics") movement, Owenite socialism, and freethought.

Roberts had articulated in the law office of Erastus Root, a radical Democrat nominated for governor by the Working Men's Party, a fringe of the Jacksonian Democrats, in 1830. He had also been co-editor of the *National Advocate* with Mordecai Noah and went on to edit a series of newspapers, most pertinently the Masonic *Craftsman* in Rochester (1829–31) and in Detroit (1838–40). The Rochester *Craftsman* was founded specifically to defend Freemasonry from crippling antimasonic attack, but the paper was equally vocal on Working Men's Party issues such as imprisonment for debt, the use of prison labour,

30. Hawes, *Buffalo Fifty Years Ago*, 6.

31. H. Perry Smith, *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, with illustrations and biographical sketches of some of its prominent men and pioneers*, vol. 1 (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 429–434.

32. Other evidence of his membership or interest includes his donation of a book, *Ancient Mysteries and Free-Masonry*, to the Young Men's Association of Buffalo. *Sixth Report of the Executive Committee* (Buffalo: Salisbury & Clapp, 1842).

and a lien law for the protection of labourers in the building trades.<sup>33</sup> Roberts was also a vocal supporter of the freethought Friends of Liberal Principles and Equal Rights, a group that staged meetings in opposition to tract and missionary societies and their Sabbatarian campaigns in the midst of Charles Finney's infamous Rochester revival meetings.<sup>34</sup> Roberts' political activity thus intersected with that of Smith, with whom he came to work.

Smith was first elected as an alderman in Buffalo's first city council, in 1832, and again in 1834; Roberts moved to Buffalo in 1832 and served as clerk of that council before moving to Detroit.<sup>35</sup> The two men had helped organize the Buffalo Mechanics Society to further Working Men's Party issues, making Buffalo the location of the largest branch of the party in the northeast.<sup>36</sup> In 1833, Smith was nominated for lieutenant governor of New York by the Owenite faction of the fractious party.<sup>37</sup> As the Working Men's Party transformed into the Equal Rights Party (or Locofocos), Smith was again nominated, this time to stand for governor in the 1836 election. His acceptance letter for that nomination promoted common education and reflected the anticorporate, "hard money" party policies of this "free banking" party.<sup>38</sup> Smith's son Archibald was elected to Cleveland City Council in 1836 as part of the same Locofoco city council faction as Hunters' Lodge organizers A. D. Smith, Nathan Williams, Samuel Underhill, and John R. St. John.<sup>39</sup>

Isaac S. Smith was also central to the parallel development of the freethought anti-evangelical movement. He had lost his first job as an insurance agent in Buffalo in 1825 because he had been distributing the pamphlets of the Free Press Association, a freethought Painite organization. Later, the wealth his transportation company generated allowed him to pursue this grievance to greater effect, becoming copublisher of the newspapers *Priestcraft Exposed* and the *Plain Truth* (the latter subtitled *Devoted to the Defense of Primitive Christianity, and to the Exposing of Frauds Committed under the Garb of Religion*).<sup>40</sup> These papers had ties to Roberts' Masonic newspaper the

33. Ashlar 1, 6 (1856); Jama Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class in Antebellum America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 113–116, 272.

34. Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class*, 115.

35. *Revised Charter of the City of Buffalo* (Buffalo, n.d.), v, vi.

36. Mark Goldman, *High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo, New York* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 39.

37. Walter Hugins, *Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class: A Study of the New York Workingmen's Movement, 1829–1837* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 22.

38. Byrdsell, *History of the Loco-Foco*, 75–76. See also speeches published in the *Buffalo Patriot*, 25 February 1834 and 4 March 1834.

39. Kennedy, "Municipal Growth of Cleveland," 75.

40. *Correspondent*, 26 April 1828, 219; Kathleen Riley, *Lockport: Historic Jewel of the Erie Canal* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005), 57–63. Smith also published articles in the freethought

*Craftsman* in nearby Rochester – which shared their anti-evangelical, Working Men's Party involvements – as well as to Underhill's Cleveland newspaper, the *Liberalist*. Smith was also the Buffalo agent of the Owenite newspaper, the *Free Enquirer*.

The Free Press Association was reborn in 1836 as the United States Moral and Philosophical Society for the General Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, of which Smith was then elected president.<sup>41</sup> This society had an Ohio branch, whose members included many of the Hunters' Lodge leadership, such as president A. D. Smith and commander-in-chief Bierce, some of whom, like Underhill and John Harmon, had been members of the Owenite Kendal Community in Ohio.<sup>42</sup> As part of its anti-evangelical mission, the society promulgated such "useful knowledge" as phrenology and animal magnetism. Isaac S. Smith was to become the vice-president of the Western Phrenological Society at Buffalo in 1839.<sup>43</sup> By then, Underhill and A. D. Smith were similarly proselytizing phrenology and animal magnetism in Cleveland.<sup>44</sup>

Politically, then, Isaac S. Smith was at the centre of the Owenite labour movement as it moved beyond its communitarian phase to infuse and fracture the Democratic Party in the early 1830s. Many of those within his personal network in the Locofocos were also prominent Freemasons, which, like their affiliation with the Democrats, placed them in opposition to the emerging antimasonic-evangelical alliance in the Whig Party. As Palmer has argued, such alliances bred a hybrid radical discourse accenting social and cultural "*oppositions*" in a "theatrics of discontent" that was not an explicit part of political platforms.<sup>45</sup> This radical discourse thus also aligned itself with the freethought movement, which had its own roots in Owenite thought, in opposing evangelicalism. These cultural, religious, and political social movements made common cause against the Whigs, those held responsible for

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newspaper the *Correspondent*, including reprints of handbills he had distributed in Buffalo in response to a "piety line" of canal boats that refused to travel on the Sabbath. See the *Correspondent*, 28 June 1828; see also the pamphlet in which Smith defends himself from the denunciations of the Buffalo Episcopal Church, entitled *Both Sides: Being a Correspondence between a Priest and a Layman; – with remarks*. Reprinted in the *Correspondent*, 30 May 1829, 300–303.

41. Post, *Popular Freethought in America*, 116, 160–162.

42. Richard J. Chero, "No Harmony in Kendal: The Rise and Fall of an Owenite Community, 1825–1829," *Ohio History* 108 (1999): 26–38.

43. *American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1 (1 March 1839), 200.

44. *Annals of Cleveland 1818–1935*, vol. 20, part 1 (1837; Cleveland: Works Progress Administration in Ohio, District 4, 1936), 10 February 1837, 228 (abstract 1423); 6 September 1837, 228 (abstract 1424); 6 November 1837, 228 (abstract 1425); 7 November 1837, 229 (abstract 1427).

45. Palmer, "Popular Radicalism and the Theatrics of Rebellion," 404.

increasing economic inequality and the financial crisis that it spawned for common producers.

This schematic description of the institutional development and Owenite ties of the Freemasons, freethought, and free banking movements is meant to highlight the network of networks shared among the Patriot Congress conventioners. It is an attempt to demonstrate the specific points where their life trajectories crossed and where a shared secular republican culture was developed. The remainder of this article, however, is less concerned with elaborating on the specific ties between patriots in these networks, or with exploring their personal actions or motivations; it turns instead to a discussion of the cultural intersection of these institutional networks and the ways in which these varied intellectual traditions undergirded and promoted the development of the Patriot movement as a utopian socialist experiment. Having set the stage, I now delve more deeply into the social, cultural, and economic significance of these oppositional movements during the crushing depression that ensued after the international financial panic of 1837.

## Freemasonry

NOT ONLY WERE THE PATRIOT Hunters' Lodge and Freemasonry both secret organizations of hierarchical degrees devoted to the republican ideal, but their leadership overlapped. The similarity in structure and ritual was often noted at the time, such that the Hunters' Lodge was also referred to by its organizers as the Patriot Masons.<sup>46</sup> A. D. Smith, the presumptive president of the Republic of Canada elected at the Patriot Hunter convention, would instead ultimately become the deputy Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Wisconsin in 1845. Duncombe, leader of the London rebellion, had been elected Grand Master of the independent Upper Canadian Grand Lodge in 1836. Roberts was editor of a Masonic political newspaper, the *Craftsman*. Bierce helped found the Akron Lodge in 1841 and was Ohio Grand Master in 1853. The leader of the disastrous Battle of the Windmill, John W. Birge, was raised by his older cousin, Chester Griswold, who was fifth Grand Master of Ohio (1818). John Grant Jr., treasurer of the Patriot Hunters and president of their bank, founded the Oswego Lodge in 1819 and was its master. Colonel Salathiel Coffinberry became the Grand Master of Michigan in 1865. The leadership of the Patriot movement's Republic of Canada had thus, at various times, also led the Masonic movement in the Great Lakes basin, including Upper Canada, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin.<sup>47</sup>

46. Edward P. Alexander, Kharles Dunkombe [Charles Duncombe] & W. L. Marcy, "The Hunters' Lodges of 1838," *New York History* 19 (January 1938): 64–69.

47. "Grand Lodge of Wisconsin," *Ashlar* (Detroit) 2, 11 (1857): 497; *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (hereafter *DCB*), s.v. "Duncombe, Charles," accessed 18 November 2016, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/>; Lazerow, *Religion and the Working Class*, 114–117; Gen. L. V. Bierce,

Freemasonry enjoyed explosive growth after the Revolutionary War; in New York alone, there were 20,000 Masons organized in 425 lodges by 1825. Freemasonry played a critical role in the period, serving as a melting pot in which men of diverse religions, ethnicities, and social ranks could establish a politically and religiously neutral space; as New York governor and Masonic Grand Master Dewitt Clinton wrote, Masonry served as “neutral ground on which all the contending sects of Christendom may assemble in peace” around a “common center.” While Masonry espoused opposition to sectarian exclusivity, forbidding religious discussion or dissension, it embraced a self-conception as a sacred institution. Increasingly, the fraternity was called upon to consecrate bridges, Erie Canal locks, government buildings, monuments, and even churches, with the spread of cornerstone-laying ceremonies. Masonic leaders had faith in “notions of reason, progress and harmony [that] gave them a cosmopolitan vision transcending religion, politics, and even nationality. This appealed mightily to a generation hopeful, yet troubled by increasing sectarianism and partyism.”<sup>48</sup>

As the example of Governor Clinton highlights, Masons held “influential civic positions out of proportion to their numbers” – although this did not necessarily follow from their economic strength. Despite this association with elites, Masonry was by no means an urban phenomenon, and lodges sprung up in even the most sparsely developed areas. It appealed largely to non-evangelicals, such as Episcopalians, Universalists, and the unchurched, for whom “Masonry may have functioned as a surrogate religion. Lodge funeral rites could be sufficient for such.”<sup>49</sup> Masonry was thus a mimetic religious discourse, a highly visible nonsectarian “civil religion” (to use an older theoretical vocabulary) that authorized rites and institutions through its claims of the uninterrupted transmission of “ancient wisdom” derived from Solomon’s Temple.<sup>50</sup>

An important element of Masonry’s popularity was its role as a mutual aid organization, or what was then more generally referred to as a “friendly society.” Friendly societies developed in the late 18th century as community self-help insurance organizations designed to alleviate the tragedies of accidents, sickness, and old age.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in organizing the funerals of its members, a lodge carried the costs and supported the surviving family. Freemasonry not

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*Historical Reminiscences of Summit County* (Akron, 1854), 8; “Oswego District Masons News,” *Oswego Valley News*, 5 March 1881; “Salathiel C. Coffinberry,” *Masonic Review* (Cincinnati) 21, 5 (1959), 260–264.

48. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 165, 150–153, 546.

49. Kathleen S. Kutolowski, “Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Antimasonic Anxieties,” *American Quarterly* 34, 5 (1982): 543–544, 555, 553.

50. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 163–183.

51. Eric Hopkins, *Working-Class Self-Help in Nineteenth-Century England: Responses to Industrialization* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 9–26.



only served the same functions as a friendly society, but, with its emphasis on charity and the selfless gift, culturally framed the ritual traditions of other groups, such as the Odd Fellows.<sup>52</sup> The friendly societies were singled out by Robert Putnam for the means by which they established networks of mutual obligation and trust that encouraged a culture of political participation in democratic political processes: “social trust in complex modern settings can arise from two related sources – norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement.” Friendly societies were a form of “social capital” that “makes democracy work.” The network of financial interdependence woven by the Masonic lodge was thus indicative of the localized associational economy of the period predicated upon maintaining credit ties in the face of economic downturns.<sup>53</sup> Masonry “provided economic benefits to ambitious young men engaged in commercial, professional, and artisanal occupations even as it reinforced the mutual involvement that encouraged both economic gain and social harmony.”<sup>54</sup>

Freemasonry, like the revivalistic religious traditions of the period, drew on a powerful set of “techniques of the body” to achieve conversion experiences. This set of bodily techniques is clearly at play in “speculative” Freemasonry’s “craft,” its means of disciplining virtue and morality in its members; as one Mason of the period noted, the lodge was a nonsectarian “rigid school of social virtue.” As a nonsectarian school of virtue, the fraternity exercised moral discipline over its members through a graded hierarchy of ritualized training, reproof, suspension, and expulsion. Masonic brother John Clark argued in 1827 that Masonic rituals provided a “long and continued training” through “signs, addressed to the *eye*, the *ear*, and the *touch*” by which Masonry could impress its lessons “with a greater force upon the mind.”<sup>55</sup>

The Hunters’ Lodge borrowed unabashedly from Freemasonry’s so-called sublime science in defining its own hierarchical order of degrees. The concluding ritual of the initiation of the Masonic Knights Templar degree, for example, presented the initiate with a skull filled with wine, “emblematic of the bitter cup of death,” and he was commanded to drink an oath to fulfill his Masonic obligations. Those who recoiled in revulsion and refused were

52. Daniel Weinbren & Bob James, “Getting a Grip: The Roles of Friendly Societies in Australia and Britain Reappraised,” *Labour History* 88 (May 2005): 87.

53. See the large literature emerging from Robert D. Putnam, with Robert Leonardi & Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1993), 171. In the case of Upper Canada, see Albert Schrauwers, “Money Bound You – Money Shall Loose You’: Gift Giving, Social Capital and the Meaning of Money in Upper Canada,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (April 2011): 1–30. On the associational economy, see Tony A. Freyer, *Producers versus Capitalists: Constitutional Conflict in Antebellum America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

54. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 204–206, 213.

55. Quoted in Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 140.



quickly surrounded by knights with drawn swords.<sup>56</sup> A similar melodramatic ethos infused the initiations to the four degrees of the Hunters' Lodge; one initiate recorded how he was blindfolded and asked to swear he would maintain lodge secrets, and when the blindfold was released he found "a naked sword was then pointed at my breast, and two pistols flashed across my face." He was told, "As you see light, so you also see death presented before you in the most awful shape and form, from which no earthly power can save you, the moment you attempt to reveal any of the secrets which have, or may be known to you."<sup>57</sup>

Despite its early broad popularity and status, Freemasonry was under extreme threat by the time of the Patriot War, with New York State membership dropping from a peak of 20,000 members in 425 lodges in 1825 to barely a tenth of that in 82 lodges a decade later.<sup>58</sup> In 1826, the secretive order of Freemasonry became the subject of very public protest throughout the "burned-over district" of upstate New York, Ohio, and Vermont, giving birth to the Antimasonic Party. The Antimasonic Party capitalized politically on the public outrage over the disappearance of William Morgan, a stonemason in Batavia, New York, after he had threatened to publish the secrets of the Freemasons. Public fury centred on the systematic abuse of justice by Masons in protecting their own from punishment. This short-lived single-issue party eventually merged with the Whigs and evangelicals before the Rebellions, but not before it had transformed party politics in the new republic.<sup>59</sup> While this innovative party has been the subject of extensive analysis, its very success as a social movement ensured that Freemasonry practically disappeared from public view in the Rebellion period. Within this political context, the Patriot Hunters' deep Masonic roots gain particular significance.

Early analysts mistakenly attributed antimasonry to "an impassioned, leveling attack by members of the 'lower classes' against the village and urban aristocracy."<sup>60</sup> The antimasonic movement was, in reality, concentrated in the oldest, richest Whig-dominated townships along the newly opened Erie Canal, and its leaders included some of western New York's most prominent creditors and land speculators; these were the men who controlled the large land companies (such as the Ogden, Holland, Genesee, and Pulteney land companies in New York and the Western Reserve in Ohio) that held the mortgages

56. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 139–158, 261–262.

57. Kinchen, *Rise and Fall*, 127–128.

58. Ronald Formisano & Kathleen Kutolowski, "Antimasonry and Masonry: The Genesis of Protest, 1826–1827," *American Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1977): 139–165.

59. Robert O. Rupp, "Parties and the Public Good: Political Antimasonry in New York Considered," *Journal of the Early Republic* 8 (Autumn 1988): 256.

60. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 116.

of large numbers of poor farmers in New York and Ohio.<sup>61</sup> It was this same group who owned the limited number of chartered banks that largely controlled the availability of commercial credit and hence the flow of trade; these were the “moneyed aristocrats” about whom the Jacksonian Democrats complained. These men, excluded from civic and political office by the patronage of Democratic governor Martin van Buren’s Albany Regency, utilized the rising tide of antimasonry as a means of mobilizing those evangelical voters created by the Finneyite revivals centred around Rochester.

The agrarian “poorhouse” townships of upstate New York remained largely unmoved by the tempest, firmly embracing their Masonic lodges and demonstrating their anti-Whig sentiments through regional outbursts such as the Mayville riot in the southern tier of the Holland Land purchase in 1836, just before the Rebellions, to protest the tightening of credit on their mortgages in the midst of the global financial collapse.<sup>62</sup> The Patriot War should be viewed in the context of such regional agrarian unrest, with Masonic ties situating Patriot leaders politically in opposition to this new nexus of financial capital and religious power in the emerging antimasonic-evangelical alliance in the Whig Party. Hence some, such as the Patriot newspaper publisher Underhill, were less Masons (“I have taken one and only one degree in masonry, and that I paid no further attention thereto”) than anti-Antimasons (“truly as I feared [Masonry] and quietly as I gave it up I am greatly deceived if I have not ten thousand times the cause for fear in political antimasonry ... with the despotic designs of this aspiring religious hierarchy much to be feared”).<sup>63</sup> This seemed equally true of the *Craftsman*, Roberts’ Masonic newspaper, which was never “intended to defend the Masonick [*sic*] institution” but to “oppose a faction who have taken it upon themselves to misdirect the honest feelings of the community and ... rise to power on the ruin of better men.”<sup>64</sup>

## Freethought & Utopian Socialism

JUST AS PATRIOT LEADERS were frequently found in the leadership ranks of Freemasonry in the northwest, so too did they dominate the freethought movement. The free enquirers had held annual civic celebrations on Thomas Paine’s birthday since 1825, which finally coalesced in the first national freethinkers’ organization in 1836, the United States Moral and Philosophical Society for

61. Kathleen S. Kutolowski, “Antimasonry Reexamined: Social Bases of the Grass-Roots Party,” *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984): 277.

62. Charles E. Brooks, *Frontier Settlement and Market Revolution: The Holland Land Purchase* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 215–218.

63. Samuel Underhill, “Chronicles, Notes, and Maxims of Dr. Samuel Underhill contained in the Stark County Historical Society,” 24 June 1830, unpaginated typescript (H-22-10), Massillon Public Library, Massillon, OH.

64. Quoted in Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 306.

the General Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The founding of the Moral and Philosophic Society was the culmination of a decade-long crusade by “free thinkers” against the “fits of political religion” infusing the Whig-antimasonic-evangelical alliance.<sup>65</sup> Free enquiry embraced the central narratives of secular civic republicanism, hence overlapping with Masonic irreligion. This movement, whose central ritual was the celebration of Paine’s birthday, had as its goal the establishment of a secular civil society in a renewed republic.

This society was founded on 1 August 1836, at a national convention at the lyceum in Saratoga Springs where Isaac S. Smith of Buffalo was elected as its president.<sup>66</sup> Smith, as we saw earlier, had also been the Working Men’s Party candidate for lieutenant governor of New York in 1830 and the Locofoco candidate for governor of New York in 1836.<sup>67</sup> The Ohio Moral and Philosophical Society, a branch of the national freethought organization, was founded in 1836 with Underhill as president and Harmon and Bierce as vice-presidents; all were prominent in the organization of the Ohio Patriot lodges.<sup>68</sup> A. D. Smith and Williams were also directors of the Cleveland branch of the Ohio Moral and Philosophical Society.<sup>69</sup>

The freethought movement was first organized as the Free Press Association, in 1827, in defense of George Houston, publisher of the *Correspondent*, an early journal of biblical criticism in an era when blasphemy convictions were still possible. Houston had helped found America’s first Owenite community at Haverstraw, New York, in 1826–27; Underhill, later president of the Ohio Moral and Philosophical Society and publisher of the freethought *Cleveland Liberalist*, had briefly joined that community before moving to the Kendal Community in 1827–28. A surprising number of Patriot leaders had taken an active role in the relatively small number of utopian socialist colonies of the Old Northwest, and almost all of them were veterans of the Owenite faction of the Working Men’s Party. Besides Underhill, Harmon (aide-de-camp of Bierce) had lived in the Owenite Kendal community. Following the Patriot War, more yet – including Thomas Low Nichols, editor of the Patriot newspaper the *Buffalonian*, and Dr. Edward A. Theller, Patriot organizer and newspaper publisher in Detroit – led Fourierist communities.

The short-lived *Correspondent* was eventually superseded by the *Free Enquirer*, the official organ of Robert Owen’s New Harmony community in Indiana, edited by his son Robert Dale Owen and Fanny Wright between

65. Eric R. Schlereth, “Fits of Political Religion: Stalking Infidelity and the Politics of Moral Reform in Antebellum America,” *Early American Studies* 5 (Fall 2007): 288–323.

66. *Cleveland Liberalist*, 8 October 1836.

67. Lee Benson, “The Locofoco Conception of ‘Equal Rights,’” *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1961), 43.

68. Post, *Popular Freethought in America*, 160–162.

69. *Cleveland Liberalist*, 15 July 1837.

1828 and 1832 in New York. During this time, Robert Dale Owen sought to introduce the philosophic skepticism of the freethought movement into the Working Men's Party in New York City. The Working Men split, as did many Owenite communities, over these attacks on revealed religion. It was the Owenite faction of the "Workies" that went on to form the Equal Rights Party (or Locofocos) in 1836 in New York.<sup>70</sup> The freethought wing of Owenite socialism was moved by a particular vision of civil society and citizenship that set their political agenda. The freethought movement was imbued with the secular civic republicanism of Thomas Paine: "Free enquirers viewed their opposition to political religion as an extension of the American Revolution and the political ideas it sustained.... [They] viewed the Revolution as an ultimately successful challenge to the idea that civil society and political power required any foundation in revealed religion."<sup>71</sup>

Drawing on the works of Paine, the free enquirers – and hence the Equal Rights Party – "believed that full citizenship required what they variously termed 'mental freedom,' 'mental liberty,' or 'mental emancipation.' Free enquirers argued that one could possess the full rights and meet the full obligations of citizenship only if one was mentally emancipated, which could come about solely through free enquiry."<sup>72</sup> The critical elements of free enquiry were thus its opposition to organized Christian reform, on the one hand, and its dedication to Paineite civic republicanism, on the other. By their very choice of name – a Society for the General Diffusion of Useful Knowledge – the free-thinkers were associating themselves with the British Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, a working-class educational publishing initiative connected with the Mechanics' Institute movement and its American imitator, the lyceum movement.<sup>73</sup> As Nichols would later write, the lyceum movement made "courses of lectures ... a national and pervading institution. Never, probably, had the lecturing system such a development; nowhere has the platform such a powerful influence."<sup>74</sup> These initiatives were the major means by which the freethinkers sought to popularize the "sciences" of phrenology and animal

70. Hugins, *Jacksonian Democracy*, 36–48.

71. Schlereth, "Fits of Political Religion," 321.

72. Schlereth, "Fits of Political Religion," 306.

73. On the lyceum movement, see Stephen Tomlinson, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and Nineteenth-Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 125–126; Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 3–5. It is also important to underscore the Upper Canadian versions of these institutions, which drew on both American and British examples and shared the same early socialist orientation. The Toronto Mechanics Institute was intimately associated with the radical reformers and met in the same Market Building hall with them. See Schrauwers, *Union Is Strength*, 147–149.

74. Thomas Low Nichols, *Forty Years of American Life*, vol. 1 (London, 1864), 64–65.

magnetism (hypnotism) and their secular rationalist methodologies for the working class.

As the lyceum movement spread throughout New England, New York, and Ohio in the decade 1826–36, it helped forge a sense of a mass public as speakers moved along a well-developed circuit following the Erie Canal. It not only “expressed a national culture; it was one of the central institutions within and by which the public had its existence.”<sup>75</sup> The institutionalized debate with the rule-governed rational consideration of controversial subjects was one of the ways that the lyceum successfully evoked this public, “suggesting that to be ‘American’ was to be engaged in public debate.” Lyceum debates were patterned on those of the ubiquitous collegiate literary societies that many Patriot leaders, as doctors and lawyers, no doubt attended. Such debates were not without their constraints, hence formal controversy (the carefully selected question for debate) was enacted in a controlled agonistic setting that allowed for formal adjudication but not compromise.<sup>76</sup>

Crucially, these formalized debates granted freethought reformers a platform for attacks on organized religion; for example, the highly publicized debate between Robert Owen and prominent evangelical clergyman Alexander Campbell in 1829 in Cincinnati, in the midst of the Second Great Awakening, forced revivalists to reframe their arguments from revelation to rationalist criteria.<sup>77</sup> The terms of the debate were clearly on Owen’s side: “The focus of the debate was on religion, with Owen out to demonstrate the superiority of rational unbelief and Campbell taking equally rationalist grounds to argue the merits of biblical Christianity.”<sup>78</sup> As early-19th-century Protestantism was transformed, beliefs (of which there were many) were newly “conceived of as a choice rather than an obligation, the cause of practice rather than the effect.”<sup>79</sup> This emphasis on Enlightenment rationalism became a critical element of Protestant theology as it dropped Calvinist notions of predestination in favour

75. Donald M. Scott, “The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of American History* 66 (March 1980): 808–809.

76. Angela G. Ray, “Pupils, Spectators, Citizens: Representations of US Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century Lyceum,” PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2005, 14, 28.

77. This debate was repeated in 1837, between Campbell and Underhill in Cleveland. “The Discussion with Mr. Campbell in Cleveland,” *Cleveland Liberalist* 1, nos. 1–3, 5–6, 8–10, 17 (10 September–1 October 1836, 15–22 October 1836, 5–19 November 1836, 7 January 1837): 2, 13–14, 17–18, 34–35, 42, 64, 66, 72, 131; “Campbell Refuted: Being a Correspondence between the Rev. Alex. Campbell, of Va. and Dr. Sam’l Underhill of Ohio,” *Cleveland Liberalist* 2, nos. 39–42, 44–47 (30 June–21 July 1838, 4–22 August 1838): 306–307, 318–319, 321–322, 329–331, 345–346, 356–357, 365–366, 375.

78. Calhoun, “New Social Movements,” 409.

79. John L. Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America: With Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines and their Metaphors; Featuring Discussions of Mass Media, Moby-Dick, Spirituality, Phrenology, Anthropology, Sing Sing State Penitentiary, and Sex with the New Motive Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5.

of free-will evangelicalism predicated upon conversion experiences. Hence, in these debates, "Owen was pushed to defend his doctrine of environmental determination against attacks by Campbell, who saw free will as essential to Christianity."<sup>80</sup>

Participation of the Hunters' Lodge leadership in the lyceum movement is not itself unusual given the movement's widespread popularity and secular rationalist biases. However, their utilization of that didactic forum to introduce what are now widely regarded as pseudosciences – phrenology and animal magnetism – is idiosyncratic.<sup>81</sup> Many of the Patriot leaders were physicians, and many were also leading phrenologists.<sup>82</sup> Demonstrations of phrenological head reading and hypnotic trance ("animal magnetism") through lyceum lectures and debates provided visceral and highly public proofs of materialist forms of explanation of human nature. A.D. Smith was a lecturer in phrenology in 1837 and helped form the Cleveland Phrenological Society. Duncombe attested to the truths he had witnessed in a series of public lectures and hypnotism experiments in Rochester in 1843; the committee of which he was

80. Calhoun, "New Social Movements," 409.

81. The Patriot leaders who led in the lyceum lectures included Dr. A. D. Smith, president of the Republic of Canada, who gave a course of lectures on phrenology in 1837 to the Cleveland lyceum. Although not doctors, Thomas Jefferson Sutherland and Oliver Beale Pierce also lectured on phrenology. See *Bald Eagle*, 21 December 1838. Thomas Low Nichols dropped out of Dartmouth College's medical school after being introduced to phrenology by its founder, Dr. Johan Spurzheim, in 1832. Nichols spent a year and a half on the lyceum circuit lecturing on the subject before Charles Poyen introduced him – and America – to animal magnetism in 1834. See Eric T. Carlson, "Charles Poyen Brings Mesmerism to America," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 15 (April 1960): 125. Dr. Samuel Underhill published the first journal on animal magnetism in America, in 1838, having experimented with the science since 1830. See Underhill, *Samuel Underhill on Mesmerism* (Chicago, 1868), 8, 50. The United States Moral and Philosophical Society for the General Diffusion of Useful Knowledge also promoted the science in its publications.

82. The fact was recognized at the time. See *Bald Eagle*, 3 December 1838; Kinchen, *Rise and Fall*, 29; Eugene Perry Link, *The Social Ideas of American Physicians, 1776–1976: Studies of the Humanitarian Tradition in Medicine* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1992). Duncombe "taught school and then studied medicine at the college of the One Hundred and One Members of the Medical Society of the City of New York"; see *DCB*, s.v. "Duncombe, Charles." Underhill became a schoolmaster just before his 18th birthday and attended the Medical College of Albany, graduating in 1814; see Richard J. Cherok, *Debating for God: Alexander Campbell's Challenge to Skepticism in Antebellum America* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008), 92–93. Theller became an assistant surgeon on a British Navy ship and then studied medicine with Dr. Tracey, radical editor of the *Vindicator* in Montréal; see *DCB*, s.v. "Theller, Edward Alexander," accessed 18 November 2016, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/>. A. D. Smith attended Castleton Medical School, Vermont, graduating in 1831 before becoming a lecturer in phrenology; see Zadock Thompson, *History of Vermont, Natural, Civil, and Statistical, in Three Parts* (Burlington, VT: Chauncey Goodrich, 1842), 164. Birge was a graduate of Geneva Medical College; see *History of Litchfield County, Connecticut* (n.p., 1881), 146. Dr. Franklin Blackmer studied medicine in Stockton, New York; see *Minnesota Medicine* 31 (1948): 1225.



a part found that “to those, however, who have *seen* experiments in Animal Magnetism, it will appear as it is, *true*; for to them, the fact is by no means new that the power of both the muscles and phrenological organs, is vastly augmented by being magnetized.”<sup>83</sup> Public demonstrations of the hypnotic “magnetizing” of a phrenological “faculty” on a participant’s head, and the intensified performance of the behaviors associated with that faculty, were persuasive materialistic evidence of phrenology’s truth.<sup>84</sup> These vivid public demonstrations served as a potent substitute for religious revivalism.

These highly charged public demonstrations and the conversion to a materialist outlook they induced were matched by more individualized disciplinary measures. “It took no great effort to read into phrenology a social philosophy that would appeal to progressives: men are not born corrupted by original sin; they inherited varying sets of characteristics which could be individually determined and altered. The role to be played by education in such a philosophy was, of course, crucial. It was for this reason that pedagogues such as Horace Mann and Robert Owen were attracted to the doctrine.”<sup>85</sup> The standard of this social philosophy was the Scottish phrenologist George Combe’s 1828 *Constitution of Man* (which he referred to as his “bible of secularism”), one of the most popular books of the late 1830s; it transformed phrenology from a physiological science to a program of moral reform that could serve as a challenge to evangelical moral campaigns. Patients who had been examined phrenologically would be given a record of the size of their individual faculties and instruction on how to cultivate or curb them in relation to their overall harmonious development.<sup>86</sup> Phrenology’s craft sought to reach a person’s moral centre, now defined as “inner character,” rather than outward self-presentation – much like the “new view of human psychology” imbuing the ritual discipline of the higher degrees of Freemasonry.

Phrenology was, in other words, increasingly viewed as a scientific, non-religious method for instilling moral values, much like Freemasonry’s “sublime science,” in what an increasingly fearful urban middle class viewed as a depraved working class.<sup>87</sup> The scientific cachet of phrenology was such that this program of self-discipline as vehicle of moral development was ultimately deployed in the treatment of criminality at Sing Sing prison in New York in 1846.<sup>88</sup> The most important element of this reform was a system of

83. “Article VI: Phreno Magnetism,” *American Phrenological Journal* 5, 1 (1843): 39.

84. Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 150.

85. Tomlinson, *Head Masters*, 115–136; Angus McLaren, “Phrenology: Medium and Message,” *Journal of Modern History* 46 (March 1974): 88.

86. Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America*, 170.

87. Cooter, *Cultural Meaning of Popular Science*, 138–145.

88. Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America*, 244–245.



public schooling that would provide child-centred teaching methods geared towards maturing minds, training their developing “faculties” and providing them with the knowledge of the scientific principles that governed their physical and social beings. Phrenology – and Coombe’s moral philosophy, in particular – was adopted by the founder of the common school revival movement, Horace Mann, in 1837 as the basis for this extension and renewal of the lyceum movement.<sup>89</sup>

## Free Banking

*I look to national and state conventions, elected by an awakened people, as the best means of averting wars. Once I would have risked war to free Canada – now I would not risk it to gain territory anywhere.*

William Lyon Mackenzie, *The Life and Times of Martin van Buren*, p. 3

SEVENTY DELEGATES FROM the Hunters’ Lodge attended the secret, week-long Patriot Congress in Cleveland in September 1838 and appointed a provisional Canadian republican government. As the freethought movement indicates, the Hunters’ Lodge borrowed heavily from the long revolutionary genealogy of Painite civic republicanism. This political convention drew on an American and British tradition of anti-parliaments, including that organized by Mackenzie in preparation for the Upper Canadian Rebellion.<sup>90</sup> Such anti-parliaments rooted political authority in the right of association and popular representation and lay behind the Atlantic Revolutions, which spanned the American, Haitian, French, and a host of other revolutions and of which the Canadian Rebellions have been adjudged the last.<sup>91</sup> While the Patriot Congress clearly invoked the American Revolution, its more immediate precursor was the Locofoco (or Equal Rights Party) convention of 1837 for rewriting the New York Constitution, equally said to have inspired Mackenzie’s republican Upper Canadian constitution.

The Locofocos were a radical offshoot of the Jacksonian Democrats. They have been described as “urban agrarians” who exhibited extreme distrust of speculative finance capital and sought an end to the “moneyed aristocracy” and their “legislated monopolies” (the chartered banks) through “free banking.”<sup>92</sup> They championed “equal rights for all” and a leveling republicanism. A short-lived political party in New York State, the Locofocos have their roots in the

89. Tomlinson, *Head Masters*, 98–99, 239–264.

90. Schrauwers, *Union Is Strength*, 176–210.

91. Michel Ducharme, “Closing the Last Chapter of the Atlantic Revolution: The 1837–38 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 116 (June 2007): 413–423.

92. Carl Degler, “The Locofocos: Urban ‘Agrarians,’” *Journal of Economic History* 16 (September 1956): 322–333.

similarly short-lived Working Men's Party of the early 1830s; in Ohio they formed the left wing of the Jacksonian Democrats during the Rebellion period. As noted earlier, the Hunters' Lodge has been described as "Locofocoism with a gun," and many of its leadership cohort are identified with this movement.<sup>93</sup>

The president of the Republic of Canada, A. D. Smith was known to give "speeches of the ultra Locofoco kind" that attacked the "bank aristocracy" and argued that "the present banking system is unjust, unconstitutional and has a tendency to prostrate the liberties of our country."<sup>94</sup> Recognition of the different meanings of money in the period is thus critical to understanding the Locofoco free banking movement.<sup>95</sup> Banknotes were not state-issued storehouses of value, but negotiable notes loaned (circulated) by banks *promising* to pay in specie on application to the bank (although few banks had a sufficient supply of specie to redeem even a portion of the notes they circulated). The right to issue these unbacked banknotes was tightly restricted to the few legislatively chartered banks, which thereby acquired exclusive wealth and power. It was their unbacked banknotes that most endangered the independence of producers when they radically devalued in the credit crunch beginning in 1836; hence, the *Cleveland Liberalist*, backing Smith, argued that "dazzling pictures of [the] promise to pay [have] proved a chain equal, and more than equal, in enabling the strong to compel the weak to give of their substance than the superstition & slavery of ancient times.... Patented picture promises to pay, drawing usury, sucks the life blood of the laboring classes, chokes the fountains of benevolence, and exempts a large portion of able bodied men from the duty of living on the product of their own labor."<sup>96</sup> The language is startlingly similar to that used by Mackenzie in describing the Bank of Upper Canada, which he claimed "serves the double purpose of keeping the merchants in chains of debt and bonds to the bank manager, and the Farmer's acres under the harrow of the storekeeper."<sup>97</sup>

The Locofocos adhered to more traditional notions of the role of joint-stock bodies such as banks. The right to association assumed a very different meaning in the era before modern definitions of citizenship that presume a uniform allocation of universal rights to a unified legal subject of a modern nation-state.<sup>98</sup> As a result, "early American common law continued to dole out

93. Bonthius, "Patriot War of 1837–1838."

94. *Annals of Cleveland, 1818–1935*, vol. 20, part 1 (Cleveland: Works Progress Administration in Ohio, District 4, 1837), 3, 5 August 1837, p. 150 (abstract 947, 948, 950).

95. Schrauwers, "Meaning of Money in Upper Canada."

96. Samuel Underhill, "Hard Times – Usury – Money," part 4 of 12-article series on banknotes, *Cleveland Liberalist*, 10 June 1837.

97. *Correspondent & Advocate*, 30 July 1835.

98. William J. Novak, "The Legal Transformation of Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century America," in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak & Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *The Democratic*

legal privileges and immunities in accordance with a person's membership in a vast array of supplementary associations and affiliations," including a broad array of joint-stock companies that operated bridges, canals, banks, churches, schools, and toll roads, among other things. Associations were a political strategy that delegated governmental tasks to subsidiary jurisdictions that, in the twentieth century, would fall under the purview of the nation-state and hence should serve public ends. "Membership in and exclusion from a range of differentiated self-governing associations determined one's bundle of privileges, obligations, and immunities much more than the abstract and underdeveloped constitutional category of national citizenship."<sup>99</sup> Eric Schlereth adds that "understandings of citizenship in the antebellum United States adapted old concerns about the necessity of a moral republican citizenry to a new political context defined by a civil society that rested on voluntary associations."<sup>100</sup> These associations were granted legal standing through incorporation by state legislatures on a case-by-case basis, with each association defined by its public rather than private (economic) character.

It is in this context that the Locofoco constitution abolishing "chartered monopolies" and alternately favoring "free" banking without the need for legislated incorporation should be interpreted.<sup>101</sup> As early-19th-century republicans, they rooted their citizenship rights in free associations and turned to local associations, including unincorporated joint-stock banks, to guarantee those locally asserted rights; they objected to their right of association being limited by chartered banks whose ownership lay in the hands of a Whiggish "moneyed aristocracy." Those economic reforms that had emboldened Jacksonian democracy and promised the elimination of this moneyed aristocracy were to be achieved, they reasoned, through the protection of liberty in local associational ("states' rights") economies, and not through national politics. These local associational economies, in their most extreme form, took the form of joint-stock utopian communities like those of the Owenites and the Fourierist associations that many of the Patriot leaders joined; "Endless sterile debates over the tariff and internal improvements convinced most Associationists that the communitarian method of sidestepping politics was a far better alternative than pressing for social legislation."<sup>102</sup>

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*Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 86.

99. Novak, "Legal Transformation of Citizenship," 98.

100. Schlereth, "Fits of Political Religion," 306.

101. Howard Bodenhorn, "Bank Chartering and Political Corruption in Antebellum New York: Free Banking as Reform," in E. L. Glaeser & C. Goldin, eds., *Corruption and Reform: Lessons from America's Economic History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 231–257.

102. Carl J. Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 103. I include those engaging with Owenism, the Working Men's Party, or its successor, the Equal Rights Party. Interestingly, many others went

The Locofoco convention for state constitutional reform that met in Utica, New York, in September 1837 to prepare a draft constitution is said to have inspired a version prepared by Mackenzie during the planning of the Upper Canada Rebellion. Both constitutions prohibited the chartering of corporations, adhered to hard-money policies, and opposed the moneyed aristocracy who controlled the chartered banks.<sup>103</sup> In Upper Canada, the legality of joint-stock banking (without legislated incorporation or limited liability) was established in 1835 – predating that in New York – by the special commission of the provincial legislature led by Rebellion leader Duncombe.<sup>104</sup> Duncombe, like the Locofocos, championed a free banking movement that would level the financial playing field by sanctioning unchartered joint-stock banking associations. Duncombe was to later publish *An address to the different lodges upon the subject of a joint stock banking company bank* (undated), which resulted in the creation of the Republican Bank of Canada in 1838 by the Patriot Congress. He also published a substantial volume, *Duncombe's free banking: an essay on banking, currency, finance, exchanges, and political economy*, in Cleveland in 1841, explicitly linking free banking with republican government. The Upper Canadian Rebellion's leadership shared long-standing ties of overlapping codirectorship in a number of joint-stock banking companies, such as the Farmers' Storehouse Company and the Bank of the People founded on the free banking principle, by which they hoped to break the hold of the chartered Bank of Upper Canada controlled by the Family Compact.<sup>105</sup> It is no surprise that the Upper Canadian reformers focused on the banking sector, given the general international economic collapse of the finance system in 1836 that resulted from President Jackson's war on the Second Bank of the United States. Such policies reflected the antibanking stance of artisans and farmers caught in this collapse. During this period the chartered bank credit system contracted immensely, leading to bankruptcies on a scale not previously known.

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on shortly after the Patriot War to join secular socialist Fourier phalanxes. Roberts was an early advocate of the Working Men's Party. Underhill and A. D. Smith were both Cleveland justices elected as Locofocos. Cleveland councillors St. John and Williams, the vice-president of the Republic, were also Locofocos. See Bonthius, "Patriot War of 1837–1838," 30. I would argue that John Grant Jr. and Samuel Moulson, as officers of the Patriot Bank of Canada, were free bankers as well.

103. Lillian F. Gates, "The Decided Policy of William Lyon Mackenzie," *Canadian Historical Review* 40 (September 1959): 185–208.

104. Schrauwers, *Union Is Strength*, 172–174. Upper Canada thus temporarily led the United States in the development of free banks, until the Rebellion, after which joint-stock banks were banned.

105. Schrauwers, "Meaning of Money in Upper Canada." To this network of Upper Canadians including Truax, the Kingston agent of the Bank of the People, we can add his shipping partner in Oswego, Grant, who became president of the Patriot Bank of the Republic of Canada.

## Freemasons, Freethought, and Free Banking

THIS ARTICLE HAS DECENTRED the military narratives of the Patriot War to refocus debate on the underlying discursive network of networks that tied the Patriot Hunter leadership together. How, I asked, did they establish trust in building an illegal clandestine organization that spanned five states? This collective biography of the conventioners who met in Cleveland in September 1838, with its emphasis on shared cultural and organizational ties rather than on individual motivations, has demonstrated their shared experience in the organization of the freethought, free banking, and Freemasonry movements. The Patriot War was, in other words, drawn into what Calhoun calls the “new social movements” of the early 19th century: just another windmill against which to tilt.<sup>106</sup> As my initial sketch of Isaac S. Smith’s transportation empire hinted, westward economic expansion not only enabled traditional republican institutions represented by the freedoms of Freemasonry, freethought, and free banking, but also ensnared them in a capitalist transformation, a financial revolution that threatened their producers’ ethic of equality of opportunity and equal rights. These leaders’ utopian vision of a secular Republic of Canada was born of their shared perception of the failures of their own republic, as demonstrated by the political resurgence of the antimasonic-evangelical-Whig alliance that played out against the backdrop of the collapse of the international financial system.

A series of overlapping themes drew these three movements together, situated them politically in a “theatrics of discontent” in opposition to the Whig alliance, and distanced them from mainstream Jacksonian Democrats. The Owenite free enquirers and the Locofocos shared a common Painite civic republicanism predicated on the separation of church and state that set them at loggerheads with evangelical Whigs. Although many Locofocos had little stomach for the free enquirers’ attacks on revealed religion, they shared a Painite conception of citizenship based on “equal rights for all,” realized and protected through the right of association. Their vision of the republic was predicated upon a producers’ ethic of equality of opportunity, and hence they were suspicious when that right of association – particularly in banks – was circumscribed by the granting of “legislated monopolies” to the “moneyed aristocracy.” The association of that moneyed aristocracy with evangelicalism in the Whig Party was a shared threat to their conception of constitutional order.

Similarly, Freemasonry’s religious neutrality and frequently unchurched membership were like-minded with freethought’s call for secular “mental emancipation” from revealed religion and its dedication to free rational enquiry. Freemasonry’s “sublime science” was, like phrenology, a “nonsectarian school of virtue” that exercised moral discipline on its members in ways

106. Calhoun, “New Social Movements.”

that mimicked revivalistic techniques, with a reworked conception of morality that shifted the emphasis from mere self-presentation and outer conformity to inner character and its progressive development. Both Freemasonry and freethought viewed this moral education as critical to the development of the “virtuous citizenry” demanded by civic republicanism; only reason and virtue prevented the republic from being torn apart by the kind of sectarianism and partyism evidenced by Finneyite revivals and antimasonic harassment.

The economic egalitarianism of a producers’ economy was considered by the Locofocos to be essential to the preservation of a “virtuous” republic of independent, self-subsistent farmers; westward economic expansion anticipated, for them, equality of opportunity and not a concentration of wealth in the hands of a “moneyed aristocracy,” as appeared to be happening. This became even clearer after the demise of the Locofoco Party and the subsequent formation of the National Reform Association by some of its leaders, including Mackenzie, with its demand for “free soil.”<sup>107</sup> The Locofocos’ political program sought to protect this alternative “associational economy” predicated on the multiply intertwined networks of mutual debt and credit that fostered trust and built a “harmony of interests” organized in joint-stock corporate communities; they would defend equally the right of economic association of either Owenite socialism (from which they derived their program) or the earlier Masonic friendly societies that provided mutual self-help and support in times of tragedy. Freemasonry’s charitable ethic was a critical means by which individual producers could maintain their livelihoods – and hence their property-dependent political rights in difficult times.

Most of the leaders of the Hunters’ Lodge had leadership roles in these other institutional and cultural streams, and their vision of the illusory Republic of Canada should be viewed as a “radicalization” of these traditions.<sup>108</sup> Such radicalization takes place when the everyday practices of social reproduction that they enable are threatened by crisis, such as the rapid concentration of land, wealth, and power in the Great Lakes basin subsequent to the 1836 depression. Calhoun argues that radical movements such as the Hunters’ Lodge depend upon these kinds of antecedent traditions and communal relations precisely because they provide sufficient social organization for collective action and because, as traditions, they are radically incompatible with

107. It is interesting to compare the political program and settlement plans for corporate townships owned by free farmers proposed by the American National Reform Association in 1845 with those of the Mississippi Emigration Society formed by radical Upper Canadian reformers, to foster their resettlement in the United States after the Rebellion, and the Chartist Co-operative Land Company in the UK. It is also worth comparing these with earlier and contemporary utopian socialist experiments such as the Owenite colonies, the Associationist phalanxes, and the Mormon commune at Kirtland, Ohio. See Schrauwers, *Union Is Strength*, 202–205; Gates, *After the Rebellion*, 111–113; Jonathan Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824–1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

108. Calhoun, *Roots of Radicalism*, 82–120.

modern capitalist-dominated social formations. Men such as Dr. A. D. Smith and Gen. E. J. Roberts were prominent Masons, free enquirers, and Locofoco politicians who seemed to face little cognitive dissonance among their multiple enthusiasms, highlighting the degree to which these apparently disparate movements actually shared their membership, forms of organization, and political ideology.