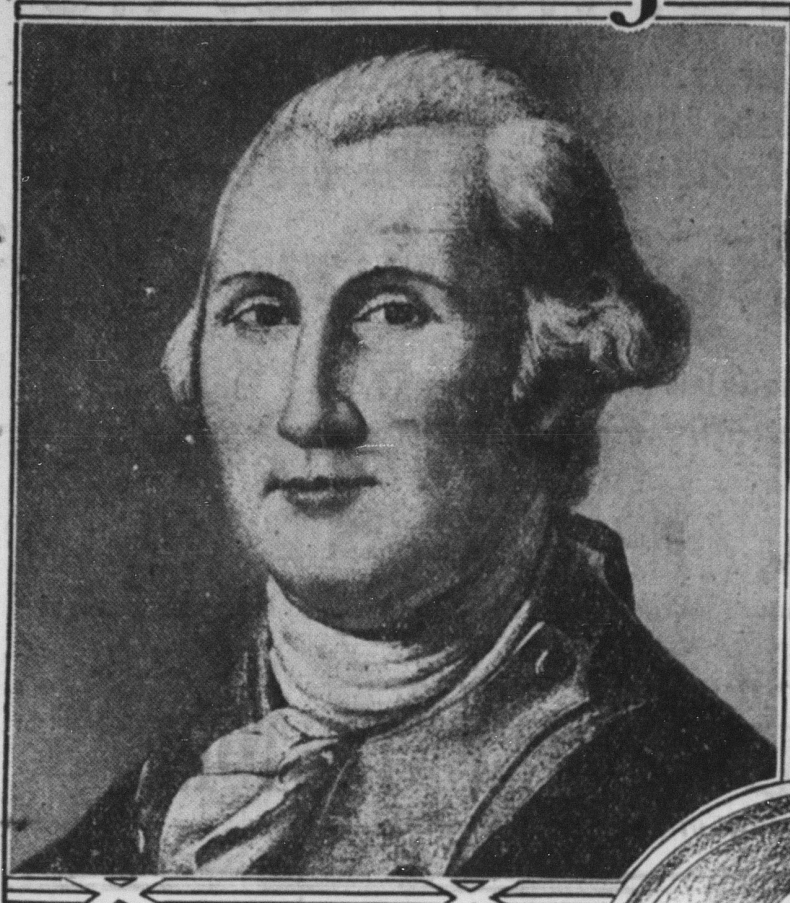
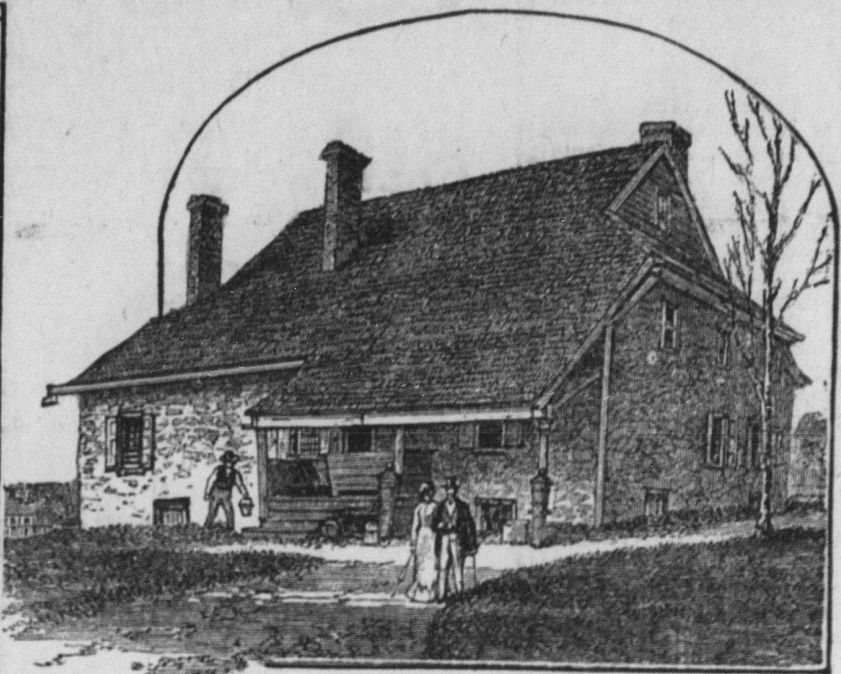


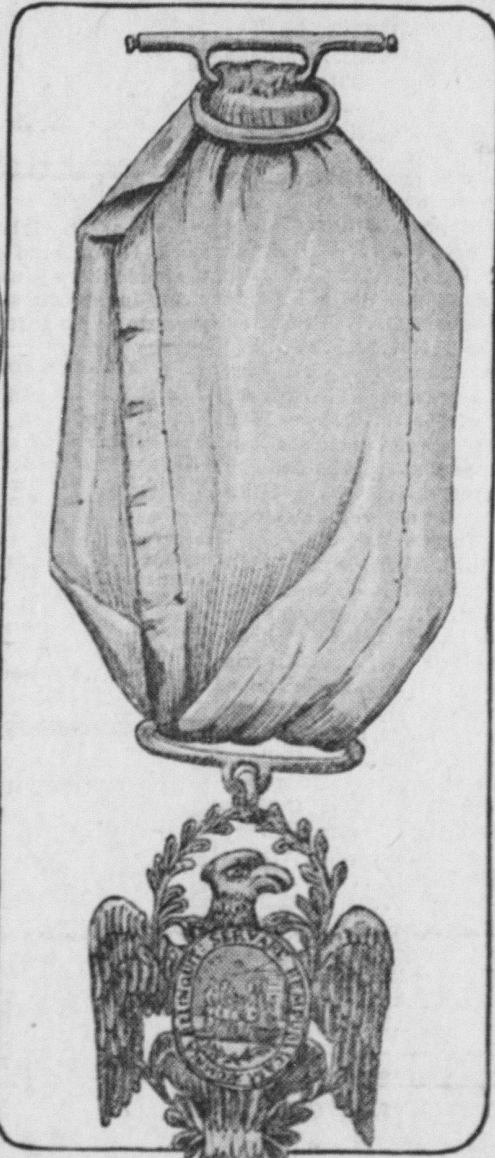
# The Society of the Cincinnati



Gen. George Washington  
(FROM "THE SAVIOR OF THE STATES," COURTESY WM. MORROW COMPANY)



Washington's Headquarters at Newburgh



Order of the Cincinnati



Henry Knox



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

IT WAS just 150 years ago that the curtain was rung down on the last act of the mighty drama known as the American Revolution and, appropriately enough, the stage setting for this act was along the Hudson river, which had been the scene of so many important events during that struggle. More particularly the locale was the town of Newburgh, N. Y.

It was here that Washington and his Continental army, after the victory over Cornwallis at Yorktown, had settled down on their last camp ground of the war. In the Hasbrouck mansion, a small, sloping-roofed stone farmhouse, Washington had established his headquarters and here were living with him Martha Washington and members of his military family, officers who had followed his fortunes faithfully during the war—Col. Tench Tilghman, Col. David Humphries, Maj. Benjamin Walker, Col. William Stevens Smith, Hedjiah Baylies and Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., son of the famous "Brother Jonathan" Trumbull, governor of Connecticut.

The camp of the soldiers was pitched in a semi-circle extending from four miles southwest of Newburgh to the village of New Windsor on the west bank of the Hudson, now a suburb of Newburgh. On the summit of a high, treeless hill overlooking the valley had been erected a big, oblong wooden building, known as the Temple or the New Public building which was used for holding religious services for the Continentals.

On April 19, 1783 (the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington), a courier rode hastily through the streets of Newburgh and drew up before the Hasbrouck mansion. The burden of his despatches was the proclamation of congress for the cessation of hostilities. At noon of the same day the proclamation was read to the officers of the army who were assembled in the Temple for that purpose and in the evening it was read to every regiment in the army. Although the signing of the treaty of peace was still several months in the future (it was not signed until September 3, 1783) the American Revolution was at an end.

Now began the work of demobilization and as the officers prepared to take leave of each other, perhaps forever, it occurred to Gen. Henry Knox, commander at West Point, to whom had been given the delicate task of disbanding the army, that there should be some way of perpetuating the ties that had bound them together during the dark days of their struggle for liberty. Then, too, there was the idea of paying tribute to their fellow officers who had lost their lives in the struggle and of finding some method of support for the widows and orphans of the dead heroes.

The proposal of Knox to found a patriotic and memorial society met with the instant approval of the other officers of the army and it also had "the acquiescence and hearty approbation" of Washington. A meeting to organize such a society was held at Verplanck house, the headquarters of Baron von Steuben near Fishkill, with that doughty German soldier presiding and Knox serving as secretary-general.

The name chosen for the organization was the Society of the Cincinnati and the selection of that name is easily explained. The colonists were mostly agriculturists and many of them had been educated in England where Roman history was ever the inspiration of the scholar. So the name of Society of the Cincinnati was appropriate for them because they, like the Cincinnati of Roman legend, had left the plow for their country's service and like him, now that their service was over, were returning to the plow again.

The order, or medal, of the society was also in keeping with this idea. It is a baldheaded eagle, suspended on a blue ribbon with white borders, typifying the union of France and America. On the eagle's breast is shown Cincinnati receiving a sword and insignia from the Roman senate and in the background is his home, his wife and his plow. Around this scene are displayed the words "Omnia relinquere servare rempublicam"—He left all to serve the republic. On the reverse of the order is Fame crowning Cincinnati with a wreath, inscribed "Virtutis Præmium"—the reward of valor. In the background is a seaport city with open gates and ships entering the harbor and below this are joined hands supporting a heart inscribed "Esto Perpetua"—Be thou Faithful, the command of the society. The design for this medal was the work of Major L'Enfant, destined for future fame as the man who was to plan the new Capital of the Nation, Washington, D. C.

The membership of the society was composed of officers of the Continental army, native or foreign, who had served three years or been honorably discharged and to their direct male descendants by order of birth, through females

in default of males and then by collaterals if judged acceptable by the society. Individuals distinguished for their patriotism were to be admitted as honorary members for life and the state branches were always to meet on the Fourth of July, while the general society was to meet every third year on the anniversary of its founding, May 13, 1783.

It was agreed at the first meeting that in order to secure the fund for the desired relief of the widows and orphans that all the officers should contribute a full month's salary, as soon as congress appropriated an equal amount. This would make a very considerable pension fund, the interest on which alone was to be expended.

Strange as it may seem, the organization of this patriotic and fraternal organization soon became the object of bitter denunciation by a large number of citizens of the new nation. The first mistake on the part of its founders had been in limiting the membership to officers, both native and foreign. Unlike the G. A. R., which followed the Civil war, and the American Legion, which followed the World war, the Society of the Cincinnati did not include in its membership the common soldier.

Then the memberships were made hereditary, to pass down to posterity by the rule of primogeniture, and in this provision the patriots detected a move toward the perpetuation of a "military aristocracy." And then, to cap the climax, there was the golden "decoration" which went with a membership. Were not such decorations of the very essence of the Old world feudal aristocracy?

So, in spite of the fact that the great "Father of Our Country" vouched for the patriotic spirit of the new society and honored it by becoming its first president, the tribunes of the people raged against it and declaimed against it as an insidious influence, to such an extent that the time came when it was as much as a man's political life was worth to appear in public with the insignia of the Cincinnati pinned to his bosom. France, just swinging into its bloody revolutionary period, took a hand in the fight and even the great Mirabeau thundered against the Cincinnati and warned the young Republic against its dangerous tendencies.

The young Republic was quite willing to believe him. It was not only the tavern orators and the political pamphleteers that pitched into it, not merely the rabid republican followers of Jefferson who viewed it as a dangerous menace to the Republic's new institutions—some of the most conservative statesmen and publicists of the time raised their voices and employed their pens against it.

Jefferson was publicly hostile to it. Benjamin Franklin, then representing the republic at the court of France, wrote home ridiculing the purposes of the society as an attempt to form an order of "hereditary knighthood." He expressed the wonder that any set of American gentlemen should, in the face of the provisions of the Articles of Confederation against "ranks of no-

bility," set themselves and their posterity apart from their fellow citizens of the Republic in an exclusive order invested with all the privileges and insignia of aristocracy.

Probably the most influential enemy of the new order was Samuel Adams, the "father of the Revolution." While his views were statesmanlike, they were severe. No man, he said, was more ready to remember gratefully and reward the services of the army in the great struggle, but it was astounding that any set of men should imagine that a people who had freely spent blood and treasure in support of equal rights should, the moment the struggle was over, be "reconciled to the odious hereditary distinction of families." He looked upon the Society of the Cincinnati "as a stride toward a hereditary military nobility as rapid as ever was made in so short a time, and he could not but lament, as a grievous misfortune to the states, that so illustrious a man as Washington sanctioned it."

John Adams added his voice to the general clamor against the Cincinnati. The legislators of Massachusetts, inspired by resolutions from Cambridge, the university center, denounced the society as "dangerous to the peace, liberty and safety of the Union." A flood of pamphleteers joined the chorus of condemnation.

One of these, Aedanus Burke, a Revolutionary veteran and a judge of the Supreme Court of South Carolina, wrote a bitter pamphlet over the signature of "Cassius" denouncing the aristocratic tendencies of the society, which put the capstone on the condemnatory movement. The pamphlet was reprinted in every state and found its way across the Atlantic. A copy fell into the hands of Mirabeau, who translated it into French and published it in England.

Washington tried to stem the tide of opposition to the child of his sponsorship by advocating the repeal of the provision making the memberships hereditary. But it was too late. Public suspicion had been aroused and the patriots of the "rank and file" had placed their taboo on the order.

One of the most interesting results of the feeling against the Cincinnati was the founding of Tammany Hall, a counter movement in New York, nucleating in a society organized on the alleged basis of "pure democracy." So unpopular did the Cincinnati become that candidates for public office curried favor by denouncing "the aristocrats" from the stump and instances are related where men publicly divested themselves of the eagle and the ribbon at the polls, vowing that they had severed their connection with the society. Rhode Island went to the length of disfranchising all members of the hated organization and one by one the state societies in Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, Connecticut and New Hampshire abandoned their charters and the once propitious Society of the Cincinnati was in a fair way to oblivion.

The visit of Lafayette, in 1824, revived a temporary interest in it, but it was many years before popular apprehension had become so appeased that it was safe for a man who asked preferment at the hands of the American public to profess that he was a member of the honorable Society of the Cincinnati, America's first association of war veterans.

(© by Western Newspaper Union.)

## Bible Called King of All Textbooks

That professor at the University of Texas who is requiring students in journalism to practice rewriting stories from the Bible is but applying an old idea in a new environment. The English Bible has long been king of textbooks for him who would know how to write the English language. In addition to its instructional value, the course at Texas ought to serve as a chastener of vanity. Whenever a journalist, old or young, finds himself getting puffed up over his technical skill all that is necessary to bring him back to earth again, to make him know the limitations of his craftsmanship, is to set him to reading St. Luke's report of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

All things considered, there never was a better reporter than Luke. He wasted no words; he never spent time on introductions; he had perfect understanding of color, movement, background. His account of a shipwreck (Acts 27:28) has not been surpassed in nineteen centuries. It begins gently as a zephyr:

"And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive."

The wind did not rise more rapidly than the swell of the narrative nor did it subside more delightfully. Young Journalists should get much profit out of trying to tell the tale better if only by the discovery that it can not be better told. The Old Testament is full of work of first-

rate reporters. It would be interesting to know what the youngsters of Texas would make out of the account of the death of a certain royal tennant who found Nemesis staring her in the eye:

"And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?"

"And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and he trode her under foot."

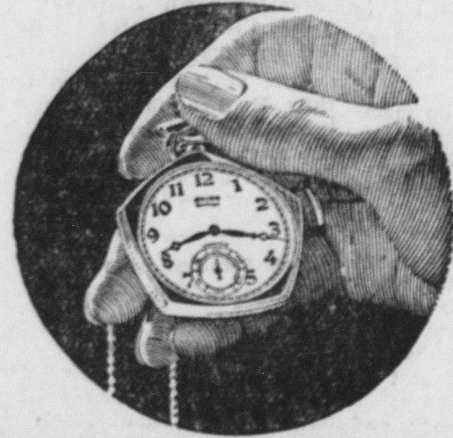
For anybody who wishes to write strong, vivid, incisive English there is no exercise which is more useful than persistent study of the phraseology of the Bible.—New York Sun.



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