

JOHN PAUL JONES

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John Paul Jones is probably the best known Naval figure of the Revolutionary War He was born John Paul (The Jones was added later in America) in Kirkeudbright Scotland on July 6, 1747. His father, also named John Paul, was a gardener and his mother was Jean MacDuff. There were seven children in his family, John was number five. His oldest brother William Paul migrated to Fredericksburg, Virginia and was an important point of contact on this side of the Atlantic.

John went to sea at the age of twelve after finishing school, and made his first trip to Fredericksburg before he was thirteen years old. In 1768 he was assigned to a British Merchant ship named John and during the voyage back to Scotland had to assume command due to the death of the captain and the first mate. His career as a merchant seaman ended in 1773 at age 26, when he inherited his brother's plantation in Virginia. It was stipulated that in order to inherit the plantation he must assume the name of "Jones" which he did and was thereafter John Paul Jones. It was during this time period that he made application to St. Bernard Lodge 3122 at Kirkcudbright, Scotland and was initiated on November 27, 1770. Masonry played a big part in Jones' life from then on. While in Virginia he met many patriots including Washington, Patrick Henry, and most importantly, Ben Franklin who was to play a large role in Jones' career in later life.

In 1775, shortly after the battle of Lexington and Concord, Jones' offered his services to the American cause. An organized force was available for fighting on land (The Militia), but no organized force existed to fight at sea. America needed a Navy and turned to John Paul Jones. He was invited by John Hancock and the Naval Committee of the Continental Congress to Lay' before the Committee such information and advice as may seem to him useful in assisting the said Committee to discharge its labors. He gave much time and effort in working out plans for a new Navy.

Jones' name was placed on the first National Navy list as number one on the list of Lieutenants and he was the first of the officers on that list to receive his commission. Historical records show that he received his commission from the hand of John Hancock in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Jones went to Newport, Rhode Island and took command of the ship Providence and on June 14, set sail. The records from that voyage show that Jones captured 16 enemy vessels, destroying 8 and sending the rest to America as booty. He returned to port to find that he had been promoted to Captain and the sadder news that his plantation had been burned to the ground by the British. 1777 found Jones in Philadelphia at the Naval board where he argued for a mission to European waters. An interesting note is that on June 14, 1777 Congress passed two separate resolutions.

The first that The flag of the thirteen United States of America be thirteen stripes, alternating red and white; that The Union be thirteen stars in a blue field representing a new constellation. The second resolution passed was that Captain John Paul Jones be appointed to command the ship Ranger. Jones was so moved by this that he wrote "That flag and I are twins; born the same hour from the same womb of destiny. We cannot be parted in life or in death. So long as we can float, we shall float together If we must sink, we shall go down as one."

Jones went to Portsmouth, New Hampshire to outfit the ship Ranger and sailed her to France arriving on December 2, 1777. He arrived in Brest Roads and sailed through the French Fleet, receiving the first national salute to the American flag by a foreign power. During the ensuing months he made several voyages, victorious in all. In September of 1778 he turned the Ranger over to Lt. Simpson and took command of a larger ship, LeDuras which he renamed Le Bon Homme Richard after his friend and fellow Mason Benjamin Franklin who wrote Poor Richard's Almanac. was the ship that would make Jones a legend in the American Navy and American history. Sailing from the Road of Groaix on August 14, 1779 with three other ships the Alliance, the Pallas and the Vengeance he captured five prize ships in 40 days. On September 23 he met with the British ship Serapis, a 44 gun man-of-war The battle between the two started at 7:00 in the evening and lasted until well after 11:00. The fighting was heavy from the beginning with both ships sustaining serious damage. At one point during the fight, after a cannonball had taken away the Richard's flagstaff, Captam Pearson of the Serapis leaned over his rail and cried "Do I understand that you have struck? Jones' reply was "No, I have just begun to fight!" It was this incident that earned Jones everlasting fame in the annals of Naval History. Finally Jones brought his ship close in and lashed both ships together Jones led a boarding party onto the deck of the British ship and engaged in a furious hand to hand fight. Captain Pearson seeing the heavy casualties, struck his flag and surrendered to Jones. The casualty figures showed that the Americans had sustained 67 dead and 106 wounded and the British had 87 dead and 134 wounded. (Thirteen died later in the night.) Another casualty was the Richard. Her back broken, and taking on water, she sank in the early morning hours still flying the flag of the United States. Jones and his crew having transferred to the Serapis made what repairs they could and sailed into the Dutch harbor of Texel on October 3, 1779 It was during the year 1780 that John Paul Jones was invited to join the Lodge of Nine Muses in France. Franklin had been the Master of this Lodge for two years and they welcomed the new American hero with open arms. The noted sculptor Houdon also started on Jones bust having already made the busts of Washington, Franklin and Voltaire who had joined the Lodge at the age of 80. This was a Lodge that numbered philosophers, liberals, and several leaders of the still to be fought French Revolution, among its members.

He left France bound for the United States on December 18, 1780 aboard the ship Ariel and landed in Philadelphia in February of 1781. In May of 1781 he gave up command of the Ariel and with it his active service in the Continental Navy. He was appointed as Special U.S. Agent to France in 1783. Here he was instrumental in collecting prize money that had not been paid to American Seamen during the war In 1787 he received the only gold medal given by congress to a Navy hero of the Revolutionary War. In 1788 he accepted an appointment from Empress Catherine of Russia as a Rear Admiral in the Russian Navy. He commanded a Naval force on the Black Sea fighting the Turks and was instrumental in winning several engagements for the

Russian fleet. It is said that Empress Catherine, herself antimasonic, found that Jones was a proud member of the Craft and for this reason discharged him with full pay. He returned to France and shortly before his death retired from her service. The trip to Russia may have been the undoing of Jones for it surely hastened his death. In the last days of his life Jones lived quietly receiving many visitors. He was ill and suffered from a heart condition. On July 18, 1792, Jones breathed his last. He died from dropsy, pneumonia, and a heart condition in Paris France, at the young age of 45 He was buried with full Masonic honors in a lead coffin, in a cemetery in Paris. You might think that this is the end of the story, but we are not quite finished. Some 113 years later, under orders from the President of the United States, Brother Theodore Roosevelt, the body of John Paul Jones was recovered from the cemetery and made a long slow trip across the Atlantic to be placed in a crypt at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Paul Jones lived a short but very full life. Reading about his life is almost like reading fiction, his lowly birth, his almost meteoric rise in the American Navy, and his attainment of the rank of Rear Admiral in the Russian Navy. His love of the Masonic Craft was second only to his love of Liberty and the United States. He lived his life according to the Masonic principles that he studied. John Paul Jones, Mason, Diplomat, Seaman, a man who was admired by his friends and his enemies.

The original letter written by John Paul Jones to his lodge is on display at the Naval Museum, U.S. Naval Academy. Annapolis, Maryland