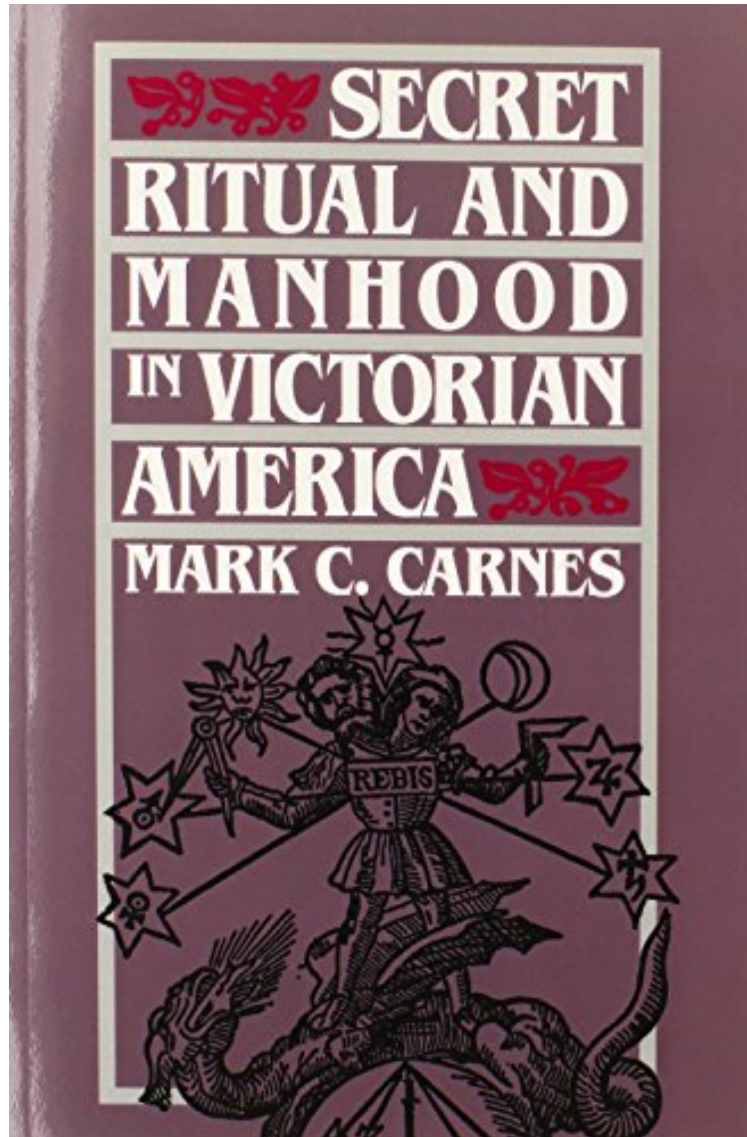


[Download] Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America

## Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America

Mark C. Carnes

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**Mark C. Carnes : Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America:

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful. The Flowering - and Wilting - of FraternalismBy Michael S. Swisher"Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America" tells the story of the burgeoning nineteenth-century growth of "secret societies." These were clubs, the existence of which was far from secret, but which involved their members, mainly middle-class men, in secret ritualistic activities. By the end of the century, according to one source cited by

Carnes, as many as 40% of American males belonged to one or another such society. What accounted for this popularity? From the "sodalities in taverns" they were the eighteenth century, as the nineteenth century progressed, Freemasonry and Oddfellowship became more and more formal and ritualistic, the emphasis changing from the festive board to somber, quasi-religious ceremony. Entirely new orders were created, imitating the older ones. Many adopted a policy of teetotalism. Some of this was in reaction to the Anti-masonic movement that arose in the 1820s after the disappearance and alleged murder of "Captain" William Morgan by Freemasons. Carnes correctly ties the Anti-masonic movement to the influence of women. The connection between teetotalism and early feminism is well-documented. Maurice Healey quite perceptively suggests that prohibitionism was a popular feminine cause because women believed it would force their husbands to spend their time at home attending to domestic duties, rather than at taverns, and their money on fineries for their wives, rather than on strong drink. Yet while making the connection between Anti-masonry and female influence, and pointing out that lodge affiliation amongst males was in many ways both cause and consequence of the feminization of religion, Carnes attributes teetotalism in the lodges to rising "middle-class values." He neglects the obvious connection between female influence and low Protestantism's elevation of teetotal abstinence to a Christian virtue - though completely foreign to Him who made water into wine at Cana. Finally, how much religious antipathy to the orders was simply a consequence of their successful charitable fundraising, which some critics may have felt diverted money from its appropriate channel through the churches? Carnes relies heavily on nineteenth century ritual expositors of the various fraternities, while neglecting, or perhaps avoiding, much excellent historical work that has been done by such bodies as Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, E.C., the American Lodge of Research, and the Scottish Rite Research Society. He falls into errors that someone familiar with fraternal orders from personal experience would not have done. For example, he states (p. 178) that "...the crucial story concerning Hiram Abiff in the Master Mason degree was introduced into Masonic ritual in 1825." The Hiram legend in Masonry is at least a century older than this, being found in such early expositors as Pritchard's "Masonry Dissected" (1730). Carnes's explanation of the Ancient/Modern division in Freemasonry is equally ill-informed. Another area in which Carnes's coverage is faulty concerns supposed drastic revisions in ritual during the mid-nineteenth century. It is true that American masonic ritual differs substantially from that in use in England. American ritual is derived from William Preston, whose late eighteenth-century recensions were used only by his splinter Grand Lodge in the north of England. They little resembled the work of London lodges except in the essential obligations, words, and grips. Preston's work was adapted by the American Thomas Smith Webb in the early nineteenth century, widely spread by the masonic lecturer Jeremy Cross, and has remained essentially unchanged since then. English ritual changed dramatically with the union of the Ancients and Moderns under the Grand Mastership of the Duke of Sussex in 1814. The one major American masonic ritual change of the nineteenth century was that of conducting lodge business on the Third rather than the First Degree. Otherwise, American ritual more resembles Scottish than English practice. Far from having been radically revised, it represents the survival of archaic usage amongst an immigrant population - a phenomenon well-known to linguists and anthropologists. Albert Pike's career is discussed more factually in Carnes's book than in most sources. However, the claim that Pike completely re-wrote the degrees of the Scottish rite is repeated here uncritically. The Francken manuscript, one of the eighteenth-century source documents for Scottish rite ritual, shows that in most cases Pike elaborated on established themes. He seldom created anything completely original. Carnes, despite his emphasis on fraternalism as a northern, urban phenomenon, sets little importance on the distinction between the Northern and Southern Jurisdictions of the Scottish Rite (Pike's authority was over the Southern Jurisdiction). He pays no attention to the intense jurisdictional conflicts, including that over Cerneauism, which raged in the northeast during the middle nineteenth century. Carnes is confused about York rite ritual. For example, the the Past Master degree as a prerequisite for the Royal Arch was not an American innovation, but a survival of the requirement that the candidate have "passed the chair." In England, this archaism was completely abolished. In American Royal Arch work the High Priest is not a chaplain, but the presiding officer. This is a real departure from English work, where the First Principal represents the King. Carnes often conflates and confuses Freemasonry with Oddfellowship, Pythianism, and other orders. At the same time he misses some obvious points, such as that Oliver Kelley, founder of the Grange, was the first man made a mason in the first masonic lodge in Minnesota (today's Saint Paul Lodge No. 3). Oddfellowship's First Degree borrows from the masonic Order of the Secret Monitor, and the Knights of Pythias borrow a part of their Third Degree from another masonic side-degree. Freemasonry never involved an insurance scheme, whereas most of the other fraternal orders did. The Woodmen, for example, even now have a sizable insurance operation headquartered in Omaha. This difference was reflected in the different class of people from which Freemasonry derived its membership as compared to the insurance-based orders. Carnes does not emphasize this contrast, yet it seems more significant than his treatment implies. The decline of many orders may be traced to the Great Depression, which led to the introduction of unemployment compensation, Social Security, pension plans and employer-funded benefits. These rendered fraternal insurance much less important. The foregoing may seem a litany of fault-finding. Still, Carnes's book is worthwhile, and blazes a trail for further investigation. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Male "Status Anxiety" and the Rise of the Lodges By Roger D. Launius "Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America" is an important book that explores the role of

masculinity in the creation and popularity of fraternal societies in the nineteenth century. Freemasonry, the Odd Fellows, the Grange, and a host of other "secret societies" emerged as powerful forces in American society and politics during this period. Of course, the first to do so were the Freemasons, which extended back at least to early modern Europe and numbered among its membership leaders of the American Revolution and a wide range of U.S. Presidents. It even sparked an anti-Masonic political party in the 1820s that argued that a massive conspiracy of Masons was underway to destroy the Republic. This story is well known and has long been a part of the master narrative of the early Republic. Mark C. Carnes does not repeat this in detail, but concentrates on why Masonry, and other ritualistic fraternal organizations, was so popular. Indeed, most adult males seemed to be affiliated with one of another of them during the Victorian era. No doubt they served valuable social functions, as well as provided contacts for business, politics, and other tangible objectives. But Carnes argues in this uniquely convincing book that the popularity of fraternal lodges in the Victorian era were motivated at a rudimentary level by the desire to restore order and to resecure the patriarchal authority lost in the Industrial Revolution and its attendant social upheavals. Status anxiety about the loss of traditional male roles fostered the rise of this organization, and initiation ceremonies helped recapture the male's place in a fast changing society. He asserts that the centrality of women in the home, and their encroachment into a variety of male social and political concerns, prompted the creation of lodges as a haven from women. "Fraternal members built temples from which women were excluded," Carnes wrote, "devised myriad secrets and threatened members with fearful punishments if they should tell their wife the concerns of the order," and created rituals which reclaimed for themselves the religious authority that formerly reposed in the hands of Biblical patriarchs" (p. 79). Carnes finds that efforts to secure traditional gender roles in a society in flux in Jacksonian America resonated with the male population of the nation and led to the attractiveness of these secret fraternities. This was in no small part because of the accelerated change resulting from the Industrial Revolution, as virtually all of the cherished ideals about life and home and family were altered in fundamental ways. This is an important study in gender history and a must read for all who want to understand the rise of fraternal orders in the nineteenth century. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A No-B.S. Historical Work By E. Davis There is a lot of garbage out there on the topic of Secret Societies. This book is a refreshing change from all that, and a delight for the serious student of fraternal orders. The author is an academic, and the book is exhaustively researched. This is no mean feat given the lack of public information on fraternal rituals. However, through what was undoubtedly a painstaking data-triangularization process and a good modicum of common sense, he seem to have cut through a lot of the hype. The book focuses on what drove the huge growth in the membership of fraternal orders in the US in the latter half of the 19th Century. Particularly, it takes a look at how mid-century revisions in the rituals of the American Freemasons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias and Order of the Red Men fulfilled a need among young men for clear symbols of manhood in a society that eschewed such symbols. In examining the rituals, he culls from the work of historians, cultural anthropologists and psychologists in order to view them in societal context. The veracity of the claims made by the orders is not the issue, although one gets the sense that he does, in fact, reject them. It's not hard to see why he might do so, when you look at the astounding changes the rituals underwent in the 1840s-60s. It becomes rapidly apparent that the ritualists were more focused on providing compelling experiences for their members than on passing on ancient secrets about the bloodline of Christ or the fate of the Druids or whatever the newest ridiculous theory is. Add to that the fact that the book is extremely readable, and you have a work that should be the starting point for anyone studying the rise of fraternal orders in America.

Freemasons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias why did millions of nineteenth-century American men belong to these and other secret orders? In this engrossing study, Mark C. Carnes argues that fraternal rituals created a fantasy world antithetical to prevailing religious practices, gender roles, and institutional structures, offering a male religious counterculture that opposed an increasingly liberal and feminized Protestantism.

From Library Journal Carnes (history, Barnard Coll., Columbia) has examined the appeal of "secret organizations" (Freemasons, etc.) and their initiation rituals to Victorian men and has discovered some very interesting things about the role they played in Victorian society. As he points out, the major activity of these groups was their initiation rituals. Carnes sees these fraternal orders as fostering a fantasy world that was in direct opposition to the religious, social, and institutional demands of Victorian society. This sort of male "counterculture" helped many men make the transition from boyhood to manhood. The book is a unique and important addition to collections on American social and cultural history. - Gordon Stein, Univ. of Rhode Island Lib., Kingston Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.