

William Gilmore Simms:
Author, Poet, and South Carolina Freemason
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I. Simms, Freemasonry, and the Sack & Destruction of Columbia, South Carolina

In March of 1865, William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) set about the tasks of publishing the horrific events surrounding the capture, sack, and destruction of the city of Columbia, South Carolina during the final days of the *War for Southern Independence* (1860-1865).

In the 06 April 1865 edition of the *Columbia Phoenix*, Simms devotes an entire section of his first hand serial account to the losses suffered by the Freemasons and other fraternal orders of the city. In this section he also recounts his encounter with some Masons in Sherman's Army during the invasion. We will begin our exploration here:

In a conversation with one of the Western Masons, he responded to the signs and behaved courteously, but said: "We are told that all fraternization with your Masonic bodies of the South, has been cut off, in consequence of your Masons renouncing all connection or tie between them and the Masons of the North." We replied to him that the story was absurd, and evidently set afloat in order to prevent the *Northern* Masons from affording succor to a Southern brother in the hour of his distress—that Masonry overrides the boundaries of States, allows of no political or religious differences, and that its very nature and constitution are averse to the idea of any such renunciations of the paramount duties of the craft, in all countries and under all circumstances.¹

Simms was correct. Although a recent Mason, he understood the position adopted by the American Grand Lodges with regards to the war, *viz.*, that the recognition of and fraternization with other Masons could not be based on which side of the conflict any brother Mason might take.² One's obligation as a Freemason, in fact, is assumed with the express assurance that one's religious or political opinions would not be infringed upon by the fraternity – something that would have been attractive to Simms during the travails of war. Simms's participation in Masonry, then, is a neglected but significant facet of his post-war attempts to initiate healing not only within the South but also between the North and the South. He showed his leadership once again by joining in a delegation to the North to appeal for relief and by writing in his poem "Epistle to a Brother Mason in Affliction" about the duty and self-imposed responsibility of Masons to help their brethren in distress.

II. Brief Biographical Sketch³

¹ William Gilmore Simms. *A City Laid Waste: The Capture, Sack, and Destruction of the City of Columbia*. Edited with Introduction by David Aiken. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. p. 104.

² Allen E. Roberts. *House Undivided: The Story of Freemasonry and the Civil War* by Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Supply Co., Inc., 1961. pp. 55-77.

³ All of the information in this section was extracted from David Aiken's *Fire in the Cradle: Charleston's Literary Heritage*. Charleston, SC: Charleston Press, 1999. pp. 15-32.

Brother Simms was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on 17 April 1806 to William Gilmore Simms, Sr., a Scots-Irish immigrant, and Harriet Ann Augustus Singleton, whose family originally hailed from Virginia. After the death of his mother in 1808 and the failure of his father's business, he was placed in the care of his grandparents, John Singleton and Jane Miller Singleton, both of whom were patriots during the American War of Independence from Great Britain. It was through his grandparents and their first hand accounts of what he called the "Seven Years War" that he discovered what would become his life-long passion for story-telling and his desire to pass on the history and drama of that conflict – particularly as it related to the South Carolina, in his poetry, novels, and other writings.

After completing his formal education at age 12, Simms began an apprenticeship at an apothecary shop as a step towards a career in medicine. He soon discovered that such a career did not suit his tastes and the study was aborted. In 1825 he began to study law and was admitted to the Charleston bar the following year. During that time he had married Anna Malcom Giles and became the contributing editor of the *Album*, a small Charleston magazine – the first Southern magazine devoted entirely to literature. During his tenure at the *Album*, Simms contributed no less than sixty poems to the magazine as well as several reviews, letters, and pieces of fiction – including two novelettes. He had also by this time published two small volumes of poetry.

Simms and his wife welcomed a little girl into their family in 1827 and the future seemed bright. Then tragedy struck. His father, with whom he had become close, and his maternal grandmother who had raised him both died in 1830. Two years later, his young bride died and he became a twenty-six year old widower with a young daughter in his sole care.

Despite these personal trials, his literary career began to blossom. His first novel, *Martin Faber*, was published in 1833, followed by *Guy Rivers* in 1834. These preceded an additional eight novels and two collections of short stories. As his career began to bear fruit, he met and married his second wife, Cheville Eliza Roach, in 1836. By 1840, Simms had established himself as the leading literary figure of the South and his works gained popularity throughout the country and abroad. Edgar Allan Poe declared Simms's collection of short stories, *The Wigwam and the Cabin*, to be the best American book yet published. Between the years 1840 and 1860, he published forty-seven more books, not counting dozens of uncollected volumes of essays and reviews.

War then came and changed Simms' life in dramatic ways.

Simms stood squarely with South Carolina in her bid for independence and supported her admission into the Confederate States of America. He never wavered from his belief of self determination and government by the consent of the governed. He saw the conflict in the same terms as those espoused in the American Revolution, only it was not King George this time, the new enemy was Lincoln and Yankee imperialism. Simms was in Charleston during much of the 587 day siege. He was also in Columbia when Sherman and his troops sacked and destroyed the surrendered capital city of the State. Although too old to serve in the armed forces, Simms wielded his pen in the defense of his native home. One of his greatest contributions to American literature was his first hand account of the sack and destruction of Columbia, which was

referenced earlier – an account which until recently (2005) was unavailable in its original serial form.

By the end of the war and the collapse of the Confederacy, his second wife was dead and he had a toddler, a war-wounded son, a nine year old son, and two adolescent daughters to support. His homes in Charleston and Barnwell County were in ruins; his majestic library of over ten thousand volumes and art collection were destroyed. Food was scarce and his health was declining, yet he still managed to finish another five books, several short stories, numerous poems, and he continued to contribute to the Charleston press. These were difficult times, but he was determined to move forward after the fortunes of war had decided the fate of his country.

The canon of American literature has, for the most part, neglected this celebrated author, primarily for political reasons. His state, and more especially his beloved city by the sea, Charleston, never forgot him. As a tribute to her celebrated son, a statue was erected to him at White Point Gardens at the Battery nine years following his death. The statue is standing there today as a fitting memorial to the man who almost singlehandedly created Southern literature and left a canon of work that is slowly but surely regaining its rightful place in the world of literature and literary criticism.

South Carolina Freemasons are also proud to confidently claim him as one of their own.

III. Simms's Masonic Membership

Most of the details of Simms's membership in the Masonic fraternity were lost in the flames of war in Columbia. The details that we do have are based on fragmentary and circumstantial evidence.

In a letter dated 09 September 1865, Simms told his friend James Lawson that he had been “persuaded to join the Masons” since they last saw one another.⁴ Lawson last visited Simms in 1859.⁵ In 1860, the last full listing of all Masons in South Carolina previous to the war was published by the Grand Lodge of South Carolina. Simms's name does not appear. This being the case, Simms could not have been a Mason any earlier than 1860.

The latest possible date for Simms's Masonic membership is February 1865, where Simms makes it clear in his writings that he was a Mason during the invasion of Columbia. All references to the Masons in his published letters appear after this date.

Together, these facts provide a five year window – sometime between 1860 and 1865 – as to when Simms could have joined the Masonic fraternity. The actual date however, was probably closer to 1865. This position is arrived at because we now know where Simms joined the Masonic fraternity.

⁴ Simms, William Gilmore. *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, Ed. Mary C. Simms, et al. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1956, 1983. Vol. IV, p. 517.

⁵ Trent, William P. *William Gilmore Simms*. Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895. p. 243.

William Gilmore Simms became a Mason at Richland Lodge No. 39, A.F.M. of Columbia, South Carolina sometime during the war.

According to a 1939 history of Orange Lodge No. 14 of Charleston – the lodge that Simms would later join after the war on 12 February 1866 – Simms was “raised in Richland Lodge, No. 56.”⁶ This would have been very useful information except for one small detail – the lodge number in this account was wrong! Richland Lodge of Columbia’s number was 39. While I assumed this to be a typographical error based on my research, I had to have confirmation from another source if it was to stand on its own.

The confirmation came in May 2008 when I was doing some research on the internet. I came across, quite by accident, a listing on eBay described as “Rare Confederate Letter asking for North Mason Help.” It turned out to be, as I thought it might, a letter sent from the Masons of Columbia to the Masons of the North. This document is one of the original circulars sent throughout New York by their Grand Master containing the letter of appeal sent by the Masons of Columbia – a letter that was likely written by Simms. Thankfully, I was able to acquire this most important document, thus making it available for the first time to Masons and Simms scholars alike.

The significance of this letter, as it related to the question at hand, is that it signed by Simms and six others Columbia Masons. Simms is designated as being both the chairman of the commission and a member of Richland Lodge. Because three other members of the commission were also from Richland Lodge and their membership can be verified independently, then we may be certain that Simms was, indeed, a member of Richland Lodge No. 39.⁷

Not only did this letter confirm my suspicions regarding Simms’s mother lodge, but it also provided me with further insight into Simms important trip to solicit aid from the Masons of the North in November of 1865 which will be addressed further on in this article.

Because it is fairly well documented that Simms’s travels between Woodlands and Columbia were somewhat regular beginning in May of 1864 and that he was a full-time resident of Columbia by January of 1865⁸ and given the fact that Simms was made a Mason in Columbia at Richland Lodge No. 39, it may be reasonably assumed that Simms became a Mason sometime between May 1864 and January 1865.

IV. Southern Distress and Northern Succor

On 28 October 1865 a notice was published in the *New York Times* announcing the visit of Brothers William Gilmore Simms and Robert S. Bruns to the Masons of the North.

⁶ *150 Years of Orange Lodge No. 14 A.F.M.: Its By-Laws, Its Masters, Its Members*. Charleston, SC: Orange Lodge No. 14, 1939

⁷ Simms, William Gilmore, et. al. *To the Fraternity of Free Masons Throughout the State of New York*. October 1865. This document was recently donated by the author to the William Gilmore Simms Collection at the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. A full transcription can be found in appendix “A” of this paper.

⁸ Trent. *William Gilmore Simms*. pp. 276-280.

The Masons of the North are about to receive a distinguished committee from the capital of South Carolina... to represent to their Northern brethren the distressed and prostrate condition of the Masonic lodges of Columbia, where they were once so numerous, strong, powerful and active...

The Brotherhood in the Northern states, it is hoped, will extend the hand of welcome to these two eminent members of the fraternity.

They will make their departure for the City of New York in the steamer on Thursday.

They have obtained the freedom of the cars from various Presidents of the railroads, and messrs. Willis & Chisholm, of the People's line, have invited them to take passage in the *Moneka*, free of all charge.⁹

Simms' traveling companion, Robert Bruns, was also a Charlestonian exile in Columbia during its invasion. He was a well known and respected Mason throughout the state and was a Past Master of Orange Lodge No. 14 in Charleston, the Lodge which Simms would later join in February of 1866. Bruns would later become Grand Secretary and then Grand Master of Masons in South Carolina in the years following the war.

Previous to their departure, a letter had been sent – as previously noted – to the Grand Lodges of the North describing their circumstance and making their case for aid.

The respectful and affectionate Memorial of your distressed Brethren, of the city of Columbia, S.C., sheweth that, by the events of war, they have been deprived of all their possessions, whether as individuals or Masons; that as individuals, they are, many of them, without the means of comfortable subsistence for themselves and families; that their city has been mostly laid in ashes, to the total destruction of houses, furniture, and chattels of all descriptions with the loss besides, in thousands of instances, of their plate, jewels, money, and resources of every kind; that as Masons, their Lodges have been destroyed entirely; their paraphernalia; the jewel of several Orders, and every tool and insignia, which have been so precious to the Brotherhood, and which are so essential to their rituals and ceremonies; that we have now no places, save by favor of friends, where we can assemble for the usual working of Lodges; that we have no ability to replace our sacred things, and maintain those solemn rites, which all true Masons so tenaciously insist upon, as necessary duties, in the promotion towards perfection of those sacred essentials of Fraternity, Charity, Truth, Light, and Justice, which are held to be the vital objects of the Brotherhood...

The destitution of our Masons is such... that our poor can no longer be succored by our alms; the widow and the orphan can no longer be befriended by substantial service; and we can no longer educate their children. In this, then, our state of utter helplessness, denial, privation and distress; solicitous of the re-establishment of our shrines, of the resumption of our rituals and labors, and the rebuilding of our Temples; we appeal to you, the well-beloved Brethren of our Ancient Order; to you who have felt none of the ravages of war, and whose alters yet sent up their unpolled incense from shrines of peace; for that succor which we need, and which, it is a pleasure to us to believe, you have equally the will and the ability to bestow. You can help us to repair our ruined Lodges in this the Capital city of our State, where our Grand Master abides, and from which, as from a common centre, the Fraternity sends forth the inspiration which kindles the hearts of the Brotherhood in the remotest sections.¹⁰

Their appeal was made, not just on the grounds of fraternal obligations, but also on the fact that the Masons of Columbia had been faithful and true to the Northern Masons who had been in their city and under their care when they were in distress during the late war:

⁹ *The New York Times*, October 28, 1865,

¹⁰ *To the Fraternity of Free Masons Throughout the State of New York*.

The Freemasons of the city of Columbia claim to have been always true to the Brethren, even when war raged like a demon through the land; they have sought out their Northern Brethren in the prisons where they lay captive; have supplied them with money, clothes, comforts and even luxuries; have obtained their temporary release from prison that they might join with us in the rites of Masonry, and, in so doing, have incurred the severe censure of those, not of the Craft, who regarded these prisoners only as enemies and invaders of the country. The Masons of Columbia confidently appeal to the testimony of hundreds of these captive, to speak of no other guests, to show that they have been faithful to their Brethren, and to all those principles and laws of our sacred Order, which are paramount in the minds and souls of all the Brotherhood.¹¹

A copy of this letter, signed by Simms and other committee members, along with the recommendation of the Grand Master of Masons in New York, Robert D. Holmes, was distributed to the various lodges throughout New York¹² and all reports were that they were warmly received.

They were also received in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC.

In New Jersey, Edward Ellis, a member of Trenton Lodge No. 5, was present at his Lodge the evening Simms visited. Of this event Ellis says,

William Gilmore Simms, the distinguished novelist of South Carolina, came north directly after the close of the Civil War to ask for Masonic Help in rebuilding the lodges that had been destroyed during General Sherman's march to the sea. Funds were showered upon him to that extent that the moisture filled his eyes and his voice broke when he tried to express his thanks...¹³

According to the report submitted by Simms and Bruns to the Board of Trustees of Masonic Funds in Columbia upon their return, this scene of generosity and kindness was replicated in lodge after lodge that they visited:

In all, we have met, the most fraternal kindness, such as becomes the sacred character of our brotherhood. We have reported to them the sad mischances and misfortunes of our fraternity at home, and, we believe, that so far as their resources have allowed them, they have generously responded to our wishes and necessities...

Your Commissioners beg to report that they were received every where with the sympathetic & affectionate welcome which should become a fraternity whose mission is Charity – An institution which precludes prejudices & politics and ignores the passions of Vanity, Cupidity & War, which it is our especial mission to subdue & modify, So that peace & good will shall prevail among all men...¹⁴

Bruns and Simms returned to Columbia with \$ 2,006.40¹⁵ in relief after the expenses of \$449.00 accrued by and paid to the travelers upon their return. Other donations would follow.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Ellis, Edward S., A.M. *High Twelve: By Their Deeds ye shall Know Them*. New York: Macoy Publishing & Supply Company, 1920. Ch. XIX, pp. 230-231 (See Appendix B)

¹⁴ *Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Masonic Funds, January 1866 – March 1875*. Columbia, South Carolina. Archives, South Carolina Grand York Right of Freemasonry.

¹⁵ Approximately \$26.3K in 2007 dollars. See Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Purchasing Power of Money in the United States from 1774 to 2007", *MeasuringWorth* (<http://www.measuringworth.com>), 2008.

By April 1867, the Board of Trustees of Masonic Funds would have almost \$6,000.00¹⁶ on hand in the form of cash and notes.¹⁷ These funds were used to provide relief to the sick and distressed of the State, to provide a source of credit for those trying to rebuild their business and personal lives, and to rebuild a Masonic Lodge in the capitol city.

After his initial visit to the North, Simms maintained close relations with some of the Masons he met in his travels – even making arrangement for obtaining aid for his destitute friends after the war. When he returned to New York in June of 1867, he made it a point to make time for the Masons of that state and was successful in procuring even more aid for many suffering souls in South Carolina.¹⁸

Simms was to become a beloved member of the fraternity, both at home and abroad.

In the history of Orange Lodge cited above, Simms is described as “a highly useful member” of the fraternity who “delivered a series of lectures on Masonry.”¹⁹

Robert Gould (1835-1915), the English Historian of Freemasonry took special notice of Simms in his comprehensive, six volume work, *Gould's History of Freemasonry Throughout the World*. In his section on Freemasonry in South Carolina, Gould says

William Gilmore Simms, an ardent and devoted Mason, achieved a place of distinction in the field of American literature. His books have been widely read. Bro. Simms's history of South Carolina is perhaps the most faithful in detail of any that has ever been written; on that account it was for many years used as a textbook in the schools of the State. William Gilmore Simms lived a long and useful life and was ever an honour to the Fraternity that he loved so well.²⁰

It is currently unknown if he requested or received Masonic rites at his death, but his lodge certainly mourned his loss. The Masons of South Carolina, especially those of Columbia, would be ever grateful to Simms and his efforts to afford succor and relief to the suffering people of his war-torn state.

V. Conclusion

Among the more notable individuals with whom Simms met on his initial journey North were Brothers Robert Macoy and Daniel Sickles of the Masonic Publishing and Manufacturing

¹⁶ Approximately \$86.7K in 2007 Dollars. *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Masonic Funds, January 1869 – March 1875*. Columbia, South Carolina. Archives, South Carolina Grand York Rite of Freemasonry. (See Appendix C)

¹⁸ *Ibid*. p. 304

¹⁹ *Orange Lodge No. 14*, p. 24. I have not been able to locate a copy of these lectures in my research thus far. The search is ongoing and I am optimistic. Arrangements are currently being made with the lodge descended from Orange Lodge, Orange-Charles Towne Lodge No. 14, A.F.M., to search their archives for further clues. There is reason to believe that the 1866 minute book, containing information on Simms's membership and the lectures, is still available.

²⁰ Gould, Robert Freke. *Gould's History of Freemasonry Throughout the World*. Revised by Dudley Wright. New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1936. Vol. VI, p. 206. Considering the number of famous Freemasons from South Carolina that were omitted by Gould in his history, this complementary sketch of Simms should be viewed as *very* high praise by a very respected and influential Mason.

Company of New York. In their 1866 publication of *The Masonic Eclectic*, Simms published two explicitly Masonic poems – the only known poems written by Simms as a Mason for a specifically Masonic audience.

One of these, “Epistle to a Brother Mason in Affliction,” provides us with the best possible summation to the aforementioned Masonic experiences of Brother Simms and affords a deep qualitative insight – more than any rehearsal of mere historical facts could possibly provide – into his love for and understanding of the Craft.

The poem consists of seven, 7-line stanzas rhyming *ababcdcd* and describes an exchange between two Masons, one in distress and the other trying to console him. The speaker reminds the distressed brother that, as Masons, they took the same sacred obligation. That oath meant that succor and relief could be counted upon, that there was reason to be hopeful, and that the sufferer could and should pick himself up and carry on – an theme obviously informed by his experiences with Northern war prisoners in the South during the war and his travels North after the war.

In addition to the poem’s obvious relation to Simms’ experiences, it shows him to be a well informed Mason – masterfully employing familiar Masonic legends, symbols, and characters that would be readily accessible to any true and trusty brother of the Craft. “Epistle to a Brother Mason in Affliction” crafts – in poetic language – the subtleties and depth of the human spirit as informed by Masonic traditions, teachings, and practice. It was born from the experience of a real, immediate adversity along with all that would have made Freemasonry an important part of Simms life – a life who’s influence literally set into motion a series of events that may have quite literally insured that Freemasonry in South Carolina – like a phoenix – rose from the ashes of war.

**EPISTLE
TO A BROTHER MASON IN AFFLICTION²¹**

Dear Brother of the Mystic Tie,
 With brethren ever on the Square,
Why creeps the sadness to thine eye,
 Why now the sigh, and now the tear?
Doth sorrow brood beside thy hearth?
 Is fortune to thy hope adverse?
These are the Fates of that sadden earth,
 From ADAM down to us, the curse!

But, with the bitter comes the sweet;
 There’s love and friendship giv’n to man;

²¹ *The Masonic Eclectic; or Gleanings from the Harvest Field of Masonic Literature and the Kindred Sciences: Ancient and Modern—Original and Selected*, Vol. II. Eds. John W. Simons and Robt. Macoy. New York: Masonic Publishing and Manufacturing Co., 1866. pp. 398-399

And ties more sacred round thee meet,
 To give thee succor if they can!
Our Brotherhood of holiest ties
 Commends thy sorry to *my* care;
A Mason's love shall dry thine eyes,
 And lift thy spirit from despair!

Ay, but thou griev'st o'er fortune's fall,
 Thy wife and children are at need;
My purse is thine—I give thee all;
 Go, make them happy—see them feed!
Here's more; begin the world anew,
 Strike bravely out for fortune's boon,
A thousand brothers, fond and true,
 Will join me to succor soon?

Could'st thou distrust the pledges given
 By thee, and me, and others, where,
On that bright night, the blest of Heaven,
 We all, together, sought the square?
On the same goodly level stood,
 Shared in the ancient rites that made
Of all a glorious Brotherhood,
 The same in sunshine as in shade?

Our Masters, from old Moses down,
 Had made the self-same pledge of old;
'Twas sacred held by SOLOMON,
 Even when he sate on throne of gold:
'Twas precious with the MACCABEES,
 A law to bind HIRAM's heart;
And, crossing lands, and spanning seas,
 It won new links in growth of art.

The bond is sacred now as then,
 Our hearts as true as their's have proved;
We weep, with tears of brother men,
 With all who suffer and have loved;
Though dim may grow our lesser lights,
 Though all our sacred pillars fall,
A brother's grief, each lamp relights,
 And what is one's belongs to all.

Then cheer thee, brother, for the strife;
 New fountains shall around thee spring,
And, honoring God, and succoring life,

A thousand brothers to thee cling.
The gavel and the trowel thine,
With Masters at hand to guide,
Go build thy home, go plant thy vine,
And, in thy brethren find thy pride.

Appendix A

To the fraternity of free Masons Throughout the State of New York

The respectful and affectionate Memorial of your distressed Brethren, of the city of Columbia, S.C., showeth that, by the events of war, they have been deprived of all their possessions, whether as individuals or Masons; that as individuals, they are, many of them, without the means of comfortable subsistence for themselves and families; that their city has been mostly laid in ashes, to the total destruction of houses, furniture, and chattels of all descriptions with the loss besides, in thousands of instances, of their plate, jewels, money, and resources of every kind; that as Masons, their Lodges have been destroyed entirely; their paraphernalia; the jewel of several Orders, and every tool and insignia, which have been so precious to the Brotherhood, and which are so essential to their rituals and ceremonies; that we have now no places, save by favor of friends, where we can assemble for the usual working of Lodges; that we have no ability to replace our sacred things, and maintain those solemn rites, which all true Masons so tenaciously insist upon, as necessary duties, in the promotion towards perfection of those sacred essentials of Fraternity, Charity, Truth, Light, and Justice, which are held to be the vital objects of the Brotherhood.

Our objects of pride and interest, of sentiment and affection, approaching to worship, are lost to us; the books in which we were taught; the lights which burned at our alters; the consecrated banners with which we strove to adorn the triumphs of society, and with which we accompanied the form of the departed Brother to his last repose; all these are gone. Our lesser lights though unextinguished, are dim; our alters bare; and when we now assemble, it is maimed rites and mournful aspects- like those of a people in captivity or exile. Were the Grand Lodge of the State now to assemble for any purpose, it would not be possible to obtain for the Most Worshipful Grand Master, an apron such as would properly belong to, and represent, his office.

The destitution of our Masons is such, in brief, that our poor can no longer be succored by our alms; the widow and the orphan can no longer be befriended by substantial service; and we can no longer educate their children. In this, then, our state of utter helplessness, denial, privation and distress; solicitous of the re-establishment of our shrines, of the resumption of our rituals and labors, and the rebuilding of our Temples; we appeal to you, the well-beloved Brethren of our Ancient Order; to you who have felt none of the ravages of war, and whose alters yet sent up their unpolluted incense from shrines of peace; for that succor which we need, and which, it is a pleasure to us to believe, you have equally the will and the ability to bestow. You can help us to repair our ruined Lodges in this the Capital city of our State, where our Grand Master abides, and from which, as from a common centre, the Fraternity sends forth the inspiration which kindles the hearts of the Brotherhood in the remotest sections.

Nor do we plead to you on the simple score of Brotherhood alone. The Freemasons of the city of Columbia claim to have been always true to the Brethren, even when war raged like a diamond through the land; they have sought out their Northern Brethren in the prisons where they lay captive; have supplied them with money, clothes, comforts and even luxuries; have

obtained their temporary release from prison that they might join with us in the rites of Masonry, and, in so doing, have incurred the severe censure of those, not of the Craft, who regarded these prisoners only as enemies and invaders of the country. The Masons of Columbia confidently appeal to the testimony of hundreds of these captive, to speak of no other guests, to show that they have been faithful to their Brethren, and to all those principles and laws of our sacred Order, which are paramount in the minds and souls of all the Brotherhood.

The following are the Lodges of Columbia:

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| 1. Richland Lodge No. 39, A.F.M. | 5. Columbia Chapter No. 5, R.A.M. |
| 2. True Brotherhood Lodge No. 84, A.F.M. | 6. Union Council No. 5, R. & S.M. |
| 3. Acacia Lodge No. 94, A.F.M. | 7. Enoch Lodge of Perfection, A. & A. R. |
| 4. Boatwright Lodge U.D., A.F.M. | 8. Knights of Kadosh, A. & A.R. |

They were all well-filled and well-constituted bodies, working unanimously together for the common weal of the Fraternity. It will constitute an additional claim of our Lodges upon the favor of the Brethren, to whom we now appeal, when we state, that, to the period that our city was destroyed, all these Lodges were in a state of high working usefulness; the Brethren were zealous, and daily growing wiser in the offices of the Craft; they were sending their light and saving influence abroad to other and obscurer regions, and exercising upon society a large a wholesome moral influence, tending at once to the dignity and elevation of the Fraternity, and to the great good of the people.

It is for you, dear Brethren, to say whether this progress shall be paralyzed at the moment of its greatest utility- Whether our work in the Temple shall be arrested- Whether our lights, instead of shining out, in glorious rays, for the blessing of all eyes, shall grow dim, and wane into insignificance- Whether, in short, we shall learn to despair of the success of this Ancient Institution, which has been your pride and our own, and which, properly sustained by mutual sympathies, will assert, everywhere, its high station, as one of the greatest blessings of civilization in every age; and whether our poor and needy, the widows and the orphans of our care, shall be left without a shelter, food, clothing and education. With this simple statement, and sad plea, we leave the subject in your hands, with the prayer that you will bring to its consideration all those virtues and charities, those lights and that wisdom, which should characterize the Craft in every land.

And we are, dearly beloved Brethren, your Brothers in equal love and affliction.

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| W. GILMORE SIMMS (Chairman) Richland Lodge) | |
| R.S. BRUNS, W.M., Boatwright Lodge |) |
| JOHN McKENZIE, W.M., Richland |) |
| W.T. WALTER, P.M., Richland Lodge | > Committee |
| JACOB LEVIN, P.M., Richland Lodge |) |
| R. McDOUGAL, W.M., Acacia Lodge |) |
| JOHN HARRISON, W.M., True Brotherhood Lodge) | |

OFFICE OF THE GRAND MASTER OF MASONS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK)

New York, October 30, A.L. 5865)

To all ☐ of Free and Accepted Masons in the State of New York, Greetings.

The Lodges located at Columbia, South Carolina, having appointed a Committee which is represented by Bros. W. Gilmore Simms and R.S. Bruns, for the purpose of soliciting aid for them in view of their miseries and distresses, which are the result of the late disastrous war, and having full confidence in the brethren named, do hereby most fraternally commend them and their sacred mission to you and each of you, and hope that you will give to them all the aid and assistance in your power.

Done under my private seal, at the said City of New York, on the day and year first above written.

ROBT.D. HOLMES, *Gr. Master.*

New York, Nov. 1st, A.L., 5865

With the respect of the Commissioners—Donations can be sent to New York to R.W. W. Jas. Austin, Grand Sect'y.

W. GILMORE SIMMS
R.S. BRUNS

Appendix B

A Southern Gentleman and Brother

William Gilmore Simms, the distinguished novelist of South Carolina, came north directly after the close of the Civil War to ask for Masonic Help in rebuilding the lodges that had been destroyed during General Sherman's march to the sea. Funds were showered upon him to that extent that the moisture filled his eyes and his voice broke when he tried to express his thanks. His library,—the largest in the South,—and his magnificent home had gone up in fire and smoke. But he was not embittered and accepted the fortunes of war philosophically, as did all real Southerners, seeing the Hand of Heaven in the sweep of events, whose issue was the best for the whole country.

I became quite intimate with Simms, when he spent a few days in Trenton, N.J. Before his departure for the South, he notified me that I must make him a visit in his South Carolina home, or rather what was left of it. I accepted conditionally, impressing upon him that my visit would have to be brief. I had in mind two or three days, or at the most a week.

“What is the shortest time with which you will be satisfied I asked. The gray-haired “old Roman” meditatively chewed and smoked his cigar. (He always chewed one-half to a frazzle.) Finishing his mental calculations, he replied:

“Well, if you are really pressed for time, I shall try to cut it down to six weeks, but not a single day less. That will not be a visit but simply a call, for my neighbors will be insulted if they are neglected.”²²

²² Ellis, Edward S., A.M. *High Twelve: By Their Deeds ye shall Know Them*. New York: Macoy Publishing & Supply Company, 1920. Ch. XIX, pp. 230-231

Appendix C

To the Fraternity of Ancient Free Masons of the City of Columbia

Brethren,

This report sheweth that we, your Commissioners, have, so far as lay within our power fulfilled your commission.²³ We have visited the Cities of New York and Philadelphia, and, exercising our discretion, have communicated with the Grand Officers in both Cities, and have visited numerous lodges. In all, we have met, the most fraternal kindness, such as becomes the sacred character of our brotherhood. We have reported to them the sad mischances and misfortunes of our fraternity at home, and, we believe, that so far as their resources have allowed them, they have generously responded to our wishes and necessities. In New York we have met with nothing but generosity & brotherhood. In particular, we have to acknowledge the Sympathetic response of the Grand Master, Most Worshipful R.G. [?] Holmes, of the Grand Secretary Right Worshipful Jas. M. Austin, to whose peculiar attention & earnest activity, in our behalf, we are especially indebted. He accompanied us to most of the Lodges and introduced us to the fraternity. We must also acknowledge the fraternal kindness of P.G.M. Jno. W Simons and P.M. W. J. Woodruff [?] of Manhattan Lodge No [undecipherable] who took especial care of our objects and of your interests.

To Bros. Macoy & Sickles, well known to all of you, as great publishers of Masonic literature, we are greatly obliged for their good counsels & valuable assistance. It was also our pleasure to meet with the Ill. Grand Commander Albert Pike of the Consistory of the 33d Degree, who gave us the grateful Countenance of one of the highest in authority, and greatly esteemed, among the whole body of Free Masons, throughout the United States.

Altogether, we enjoyed the most acceptable fraternization of all the lodges in New York City. At Philadelphia, we were acceptably and generally welcomed by all the Grand Officers of the grand Lodge of Penn, who almost instantly declared their sympathies with their Suffering brethren of So. Ca, and have contributed One thousand Dollars, for the benefit of the Grand Lodge of So. Ca.

We must not omit to acknowledge that [in] Trenton we were especially invited, and [t]here received a donation fully proportionate [to] the resources of the Masons in that place. We beg here to acknowledge the special kindness and attention of Bros. T.J. Corson [?] [blank] P.M. & W. Ellis – our personal cares & domestic duties prevented us from visiting the several Cities of Baltimore, Washington, & Boston [...] purpose which we had originally designed, and it is quite probably that had we succeeded in doing so, we should have been well welcomed & liberally requited by the Brotherhood, so far as our experience went, we have no doubt that could we have

²³ I have transcribed the words “Commipioners” and “commipion” to “Commissioners” and “commission” respectively. The former are not found in any dictionary and appear to be the product of a writing devise designed to represent the double-s (ss).

According to a web site entitled *How to Read 18th Century British-American Writing*, “The elongated *s* can be mistaken for an *f*, and *ss* can look something like a *p*.” (http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/writing.html, accessed 01/23/2008)

The first “s” is actually written like a backwards “f” which when placed next to the second “s” gives the appearance of a “p.” This pattern holds true with other words with a double-s such as “mission” and “passion” which are found in this document. See <http://amberskyline.com/treasuremaps/x-name.html> for handwriting samples.

Although written in the 19th Century, the writer appears to prefer the more primitive way of writing.

visited the fraternity in these places, their sympathies for our suffering brethren in So. Ca, would have resulted in valuable benefits for the Masons of this region. In pecuniary respects, the fruit [?] of our [com]mission may be reported, taking from it the costs & expenses of your Commissioners in the attainment of a liberal appropriation for which we beg to refer to in the appendix of this report lettered A.

Your Commissioners beg to report that they were received every where with the sympathetic & affectionate welcome which should become a fraternity whose mission is Charity – An institution which precludes prejudices & politics and ignores the passions of Vanity, Cupidity & War, which it is our especial mission to subdue & modify, So that peace & good will shall prevail among all men. We commend to your acceptance the donations of our brotherhood in New York and take leave to remind that your Lodges shall make prompt & adequate acknowledgment of the good will[,] fraternal feelings, & liberal appropriations, which your Commissioners, [...] your behalf have received at their hands.

All of which is respectfully submitted by your respectful & service brothers

W Gilmore Simms
R.S. Bruns 32 ° PM

Dated at Charleston this 1stst day of Jan A.: L.: 5866²⁴

²⁴ *Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Masonic Funds, January 1869 – March 1875*. Private collection. Columbia, South Carolina.