



M. Gist

GENERAL MORDECAI GIST,

AN OFFICER OF THE REVOLUTION AND GRAND MASTER OF SOUTH
CAROLINA.

GENERAL MORDECAI GIST was one of the patriots of the Revolution whose name is alike honorably connected with the annals of Masonry and with the history of our country. His ancestors emigrated from England to Maryland at an early day, and settled in Baltimore. He received a mercantile education, and

was employed in that business when the war of the Revolution commenced. It is not known at what age, or in what lodge, he became a Mason. Two lodges of Ancient York Masons were chartered in the city of Baltimore, by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, in 1770, and it is probable he was made in one of these, as he had risen to the rank of Worshipful Master previous to the Revolution.

When the war of the Revolution commenced, the young men of Baltimore formed an independent company, of which they elected MORDECAI GIST as captain. This was the first military organization in Maryland for the defence of American liberty. In 1776, Mr. GIST was appointed major of a battalion of Maryland regulars, and bravely led his men in the terrible conflict on Long Island in that year. For his bravery on that occasion he was commissioned as a colonel in 1777; and in 1778, while in command of his Maryland troops, at Locust Hill, near New York, he was attacked by the combined forces of Generals SIMCOE, EMERICK, and TARLETON, of the British army, but he discovered their approach in time to escape from their hands. He was engaged in the battle of Paoli, where the terrible massacre of American troops took place, and distinguished himself soon after at the battles of Germantown and Whitemarsh.

In January of 1779 he was appointed by Congress a brigadier-general in the Continental army, and was honored with the command of the second Maryland brigade. In the winter of 1779-80 he was encamped with his command at the general headquarters of the American army at Morristown in New Jersey.

While in their winter-quarters here, the Masonic Brethren in the army celebrated the festival of St. John the Evangelist. The meeting was held under the charter of the American Union Lodge, and WASHINGTON and a large number of distinguished officers of the American army, who were Masons, attended on the occasion. The Masonic Lodges of America had formerly all owed their existence to, and been dependent upon, the Grand Lodges of Great Britain; but the misfortunes of war had caused all intercourse to cease between them and their parent head; and although some provincial Grand Lodges still existed in this country, they were regarded but as the subordinates of the Masonic powers in Great Britain by whom they were created.

At this army festival of the Masonic Brethren in 1779, a petition was presented, setting forth the condition of Masonry in the new political state of the country, and expressing a desire that a general union of American Masons might take place under one general Grand Master of America. A committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration, consisting of distinguished Masons from each division of the army.

The Committee met in convention on the 7th of January, 1780, and chose General MORDECAI GIST as their President, and General OTHO HOLLAND WILLIAMS as their Secretary. An address to the different Grand Masters of the United States was drawn, considered, and adopted on the occasion, setting forth the same general views as those embraced in the petition they were called on to consider, and asking that measures

might be taken to secure a union of all the Lodges of the country under one American head. Copies of this address were sent to the different Grand Masters in the United States; and although the Convention had delicately forbore to mention the name of WASHINGTON as their choice for General Grand Master, yet it was well understood that such was their wish.

In the following spring, General GIST was sent with his command to assist General GATES in South Carolina. While at the North, he and the Brethren in his troops had enjoyed Masonic privileges in the different Masonic Lodges in the army. No Military Lodges existed in the Southern army, and he therefore applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for a warrant to hold one in the line under his command, and a warrant was granted, constituting him its Master. This Lodge was numbered 27 on the Pennsylvania Grand Lodge registry. Its warrant bore date, April 4, 1780.

During the same year the battle of Camden, in South Carolina, occurred, in which, although the Americans were defeated by CORNWALLIS, General GIST won for himself an imperishable renown. Even after the battle was irretrievably lost, it is said that he rode from point to point, amidst a storm of fire, and by his own enthusiasm and bravery preserved his broken troops from annihilation. He was afterwards engaged in the conflict at Yorktown, in 1781, and had the proud satisfaction of seeing the haughty CORNWALLIS become a captive to American bravery.

After the capture of CORNWALLIS, General GIST joined the southern division of the army under General

GREENE ; and when the army was remodelled in 1782, General GREENE gave him the command of the "light corps." It was a part of his command, under General LAURENS, that dealt one of the last blows to the enemy in an engagement on the banks of the Combahee. Thus was it the fortune of General GIST to fight gallantly for his country from the commencement to the close of the war. He had heard its first clarion notes and its last battle-shout ; and when it was closed, he retired to a plantation which he had purchased near Charleston, in South Carolina, and, like WASHINGTON, engaged in agricultural pursuits.

The warrant from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania to General GIST, empowering him to hold Lodges in the Maryland line of the army, was, by resolution of that Grand Lodge, vacated at the close of the war ; but in 1786 another was granted to him to hold a Local Lodge, with the same registry number (27), at Charleston, South Carolina, by the same Grand Body. This warrant constituted General MORDECAI GIST, Master, and THOMAS B. BOWEN and EPHRAIM MITCHELL, Wardens. In 1787 the Lodges of Ancient York Masons in South Carolina united to form an Independent Grand Lodge for that State ; and of this Grand Body General GIST became the first Deputy Grand Master.

The Hon. WILLIAM DRAYTON, chief-justice of the State, was at the same time Grand Master. He was the first Grand Master of Ancient York Masons in that jurisdiction. General GIST was his Deputy in 1787-88-89, and succeeded him as Grand Master in 1790, and held the office for two years, when he was succeeded

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by Major THOMAS B. BOWEN, who had been his first Senior Warden under his Pennsylvania local Lodge warrant.

It was while General GIST was Grand Master, in 1791, that WASHINGTON visited, as President, the Southern States, on which occasion the Masonic correspondence between these two distinguished Brothers took place which we have given in our sketch of WASHINGTON. It was the last official act of General GIST which we have seen. He died in the following year, in September (1792), leaving two sons, one of whom he named INDEPENDENT, and the other, STATES. He was, at the time of his death, fifty years of age.