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Abstract:

The French architect Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, best known for his plan for Washington, D.C., also produced several important decorative works in the 1780s. Focusing on these works, the author explores L'Enfant's invention of an iconography that signified the establishment of a new nation and its revolutionary claim of independence.

Pierre-Charles L'Enfant and the Iconography of Independence*

by Sally Webster

Several years ago, while I was rummaging in the files of Trinity Church for information on Jean-Jacques Caffiéri's Monument to General Richard Montgomery, 1777, located on the porch of Trinity's parish church, St. Paul's Chapel, the archivist handed me a photograph taken in the mid-1920s of a wooden frame (fig. 1) that Pierre-Charles L'Enfant (1754–1825) had designed for the monument. Barely visible (fig. 2), it can be seen behind the monument and the chapel's mullioned window which makes it impossible to make out what, if anything, was inscribed on the frame. Fortunately, at the time it was installed in 1787 a reporter wrote a description of the monument and its frame which included mention of a rising sun with thirteen rays and a bald eagle.^[1] This suggested that L'Enfant was employing post-Independence, post-Revolutionary symbols, or what I have come to call the iconography of independence. Searching for the origins of L'Enfant's imagery, I discovered that while it was new, it was not without precedent, and can be traced to the Great Seal of the United States. Substantiating this assertion are several little-known designs by L'Enfant that include eagles and references to the thirteen states. These include a large open-air pavilion to celebrate the birth of the French Dauphin, a certificate of membership or diploma, a badge, and sketches for a medal for the newly established Society of the Cincinnati.



Fig. 1, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, wooden casing for *Monument to General Richard Montgomery*, 1787. St. Paul's Chapel, New York City. New York Trinity Church Archives. Photo Wurtz Bros. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 2. St. Paul's Chapel, exterior, 1764. With Jean-Jacques Caffiéri's *Monument to General Richard Montgomery*, 1777. Behind window, wooden casing by Pierre L'Enfant, 1787, New York City. [\[larger image\]](#)

Before 1776, independence and liberty were not synonymous in the minds of the colonists. The former was a radical idea that implied separation from the mother country, Great Britain. The latter, a concept with an ancient pedigree, was invoked by Englishmen and colonists when freedoms were endangered and is often symbolized by a Phrygian cap atop a liberty pole. Other symbols abounded including, most famously today, Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, which was commissioned and cast long before the political cartoons and prints generated by the Stamp Act crisis of the mid-1760s when colonial liberties were further threatened.^[2]

In contrast, independence was a new idea and one that even Benjamin Franklin was loath to accept. As late as 1774, Franklin, then living in London, "continued for a year or more to try to save the empire. At one point he even offered to pay out of his own pocket the cost of the tea thrown into the Boston harbor."^[3] It was Thomas Paine's pamphlet, "Common Sense," published January 1776, that articulated for a wide, popular audience the case for independence, an idea that became enshrined six months later in the Declaration of Independence. The new, independent nation it created needed recognition by other countries to legitimize its status, and a great deal of effort was expended to win that acknowledgment, principally from France. International agreements and treaties needed to be ratified by an official seal, but it was not until 1782, when the peace negotiations with England were underway, that the design of the Great Seal was approved. As Kenneth Silverman has pointed out, the delay in the design of the Great Seal, from the time of its being first proposed in July 1776 until 1782, was due to the differing visual interpretations of what this declaration of independence meant. Even the initial impact of the Declaration itself took several years to absorb—what did it mean to be independent of the mother country? How was the United States to define, let alone govern, itself, apart from Great Britain? And what symbols could convey independence? The Continental Congress understood that the country's official seal needed to embody this new idea and, over a six year period, three different committees worked to arrive at an acceptable design.^[4] Once approved, L'Enfant used it as the basis of several subsequent projects that helped disseminate and enshrine a new visual vocabulary for independence.^[5]

The symbolic meaning of the Great Seal, with eagle displayed silhouetted against a vertical wreath with thirteen stars on its obverse and a pyramid with an all-seeing eye on its reverse, has been exhaustively studied and decoded, but its primacy as establishing the nation's official iconography has been lost.[6] In post-Revolutionary America, it was L'Enfant who laid visual claim to its significance as establishing the iconographic parameters of independence.

Pierre-Charles L'Enfant

L'Enfant was born in Paris and was one of the many upper-class Frenchmen who came to North America to fight on the side of the Americans and the cause of independence. Prior to his enlistment, L'Enfant had been enrolled in the painting and sculpture department at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where he had studied since 1771. His father, Pierre L'Enfant, was an artist and designer with the Gobelins, the royal tapestry manufacturer, and also an academician at the Ecole. [7] The genesis of L'Enfant's personal enthusiasm for going to America to fight for its independence is not known, but he was among the first volunteers who applied to Silas Deane, one of the Parisian-based members the American of Committee of Correspondence, (a forerunner of the Department of State), for assignment with the Continental Army.[8] His first rank was as Lieutenant of Infantry in the French colonial army and, when his ship finally reached America in February 1777, he served under the command of Phillippe-Charles-Jean-Baptiste-Tronson Du Coudray.[9] A year later, after Du Coudray's death, he was appointed to the staff of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who was stationed outside Boston, and then Valley Forge where L'Enfant first met General George Washington. Here, L'Enfant was employed to illustrate training manuals for the newly formed American Army. These were the first training manuals used by the American army and were part of Von Steuben's efforts to reorganize the Continental Army, to aid it in becoming a more professional and efficient fighting force.[10]

Later that year, after the British left Philadelphia, von Steuben and his aides traveled to that city when it once again became the capital of the United States. It was here in April 1779 that L'Enfant was appointed captain in the newly formed Army Corps of Engineers. Not content with a desk job, L'Enfant volunteered for active service under General Kazimierz Pulaski (called the father of the American cavalry) and saw action during the siege of Savannah, Georgia in the fall of 1779 where he was wounded. He was later captured by the British in Charleston, South Carolina and held prisoner for fourteen months. Following the Battle of Yorktown and the surrender of the British in 1781, L'Enfant was released and spent the next few years in Philadelphia where he was invited by the French ambassador, Anne-César, Chevalier de la Luzerne, to design a large pavilion to honor the birth of the French Dauphin, the short-lived Louis-Joseph (1781–1789).[11]

The Philadelphia celebration of the birth of the Dauphin was just one of a number, although the most elaborate, of American fêtes to honor the occasion. As several commentators have noted, it was a way that the Americans could demonstrate their gratitude for French support in their victory over British forces at the decisive battle of Yorktown.[12] There were also contemporary descriptions of the design of L'Enfant's pavilion and of paintings that were on its walls. Built in what must have been the large courtyard of Luzerne's house, the pavilion was surrounded by gardens in which illuminations and fireworks were displayed. There is no printed illustration of the building

but its dimensions, 75 by 45 feet, are known from written descriptions.^[13] One writer described at length the different classical orders included in its design, evidence of L'Enfant's French training and knowledge of European models: "the Doric order, which is the most used in this building, is no where neglected, unless in those particular parts where its plainness and simplicity, would disagree with the elegance of the pillars, which are decorated with the bases and proportions of the Ionic." The writer then went on to describe the installation of the "arms of France" on one wall facing the "arms of the United States" on the other.

At the farthest extremity of the hall, and opposite to the principal entrance are the arms of

France upon a globe; suspended in the midst of a glory whose rays break upon the square of the ceiling, all whose parts it seems to enlighten, at the same time slightly obscured by thin clouds. At the other extremity the arms of the United States (whole escutcheons are charged with thirteen pieces of argent [silver or white] and gules [red], having at the top thirteen stars upon an azure ground) are supported by the American bald eagle, having in his right talons an olive branch, and thirteen arrows in his left. In his bill a legend with these words *E pluribus Unum*.^[14]

This "arms of the United States," described as a bald eagle holding an olive branch and thirteen arrows, is the Great Seal (fig. 3), which had been approved only a month earlier. While the eagle had been employed as a symbol of imperial power from ancient times, the American bald eagle was chosen because it was thought to be unique to the North American continent and in that way "emblematical of the Sovereignty of the Government of the United States."^[15]



Fig. 3, *The Great Seal*, 1782. First die. [\[larger image\]](#)

The Great Seal

On the same day that the Declaration of Independence was adopted, Congress passed a resolution establishing a committee comprised of Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams to "bring in a device for a seal of the United States of America."^[16] Initially they sought the help of Pierre Eugène Du Simitière, a Swiss born artist then living in Philadelphia, to prepare drawings in accordance with their ideas.^[17] Congress tabled most of the committee's

suggestions, although it retained the Latin motto, "*E pluribus Unum*," which was probably contributed by Franklin, and the "Eye of Providence in a radiant Triangle."^[18] The first committee was disbanded and the distractions of war prevented Congress from appointing a new one until 1780. But, according to Frank Sommer, the Great Seal design submitted by this new committee, chaired by James Lovell, delegate from Massachusetts, "again failed to live up to the [historical] rules for the device." Like "its predecessor, the Lovell committee too made a contribution to the final *impresa* [seal]. It introduced the symbols of war and peace in the form of the olive branch and a sword...the crest composed of a 'radiant constellation of 13 stars,' and a shield with thirteen stripes 'alternate rouge and argent.'"^[19] It wasn't until a third committee, appointed two years later in May 1782, that expert advice in the design specifically of emblems was sought. They invited the naturalist William Barton, who was a self-described authority on emblems, to "build on the designs of the preceding committee. In his first proposal he kept the idea of a red-and-white-striped shield and the thirteen stars...And he introduced the 'spread' or, more technically, 'displayed' eagle as the symbol of supreme power and authority."^[20] The Congress was still dissatisfied and by default the seal's final configuration was an amalgam created by the Secretary of Congress, Charles Thomson, from the fragments contributed by all three committees, including a reverse patterned after Barton.^[21] Thomson's design for the obverse contained an eagle "rising" with a shield of thirteen stripes displayed on its chest, holding "in its talons an olive branch and a bundle of arrows and in its beak a scroll reading, '*E pluribus Unum*.'"^[22] Before submitting his design to Congress, Thompson had Barton look at his drawing and description, and Barton suggested that the position of the eagle's wings be changed from rising to displayed. Congress accepted their final design on June 20, 1782 and the die, literally, was cast sometime before the end of the year.^[23]

But how was independence interpreted visually on the Great Seal? The best way to answer that question is to consult the explanation given by Thomson to Congress at the time he submitted his final design. Using the language of emblems, he explained:

The Escutcheon [the shield on the eagle's breast] is composed of the chief [upper third of a shield] & pale [a vertical third of the field], the two most honorable ordinaries [major devices used in heraldry]. The Pieces, paly [vertical fields of alternating color], represent the several states all joined in one solid compact entire, supporting a Chief [upper third of the shield], which unites the whole & represents Congress. The Motto alludes to this union. The pales in the arms are kept closely united by the chief and the Chief depends on the union & the strength resulting from it for its support, to denote the Confederacy of the United States of America & the preservation of their union through Congress.

The colors of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America; White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue the colour of the Chief signifies vigilance perseverance & justice. The olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace & war which is exclusively vested in Congress. The Constellation denotes a new State taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers. The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American eagle without any other supporters [literally, figures that support the central image] to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue.^[24]

Before the Constitution—which established the division of government into three branches—was written, Congress was vested with powers which would later be shared with the president. Thus, in the Great Seal's design the Chief, (the topmost horizontal structure of the shield) which "unites the whole," at that time symbolized the Congress, and not the president. In turn the Chief, or Congress, "depends on the union and the strength" of the Pieces, or states. Thus, the preservation of the union of the United States, and the maintenance of independence, i.e., the power to declare war and make peace, were vested in Congress, with the consent of the governed. The Great Seal with its powerful symbolic message was immediately employed by L'Enfant in his decorations for the Dauphin celebration, which was probably the first time a representation of the Great Seal was publicly displayed. Furthering his belief in this patriotic iconography's importance, he reemployed it a year later for his designs for the badges and diploma for the Society of the Cincinnati; symbols that would later reappear in the Montgomery frame.

Society of the Cincinnati

Following the success of his pavilion for the celebration for the French Dauphin, and while he was still living in Philadelphia, L'Enfant was invited by his former commanding officer, von Steuben, to design a badge or medal for the newly formed military organization, the Society of the Cincinnati. The Society's immediate purpose was to ensure that the military, particularly its officers, were paid and their pensions secured following the end of hostilities. Although the surrender of the British at Yorktown took place October 19, 1781, it took three years to ratify the Treaty of Paris, which formally terminated the war. During this period many in the military had not been paid on a regular basis and troops were restive. The great fear was of mutiny; that the army, frustrated because the Congress would not support their demands for payment, would rebel and oust the country's civilian leaders. Several prominent officers, writing from Newburgh, New York, Washington's winter headquarters, warned Congress in December 1782 that "the uneasiness of the soldiers for want of pay, is great and dangerous; any further experiments on their patience may have fatal effects."[\[25\]](#) The officers' frustration came to a head in March 1783 with the circulation of several anonymous letters. The author spoke of injustices and asked his comrades if they were willing to "consent to be the only sufferers by this revolution, and retiring from the field grow old in poverty, wretchedness and contempt?"[\[26\]](#) He then exhorted them to warn Congress that "though despair itself can never drive you into dishonor, it may drive you from the field...that in any political event, the army has its alternative."[\[27\]](#) This was indeed seditious talk and Washington, who had obtained copies of these letters, moved quickly to check an incipient revolt. He called a meeting of officers, held March 15th, to respond to the anonymous letters which he characterized as being written "to insinuate the darkest suspicion and to effect the blackest design."[\[28\]](#) He then went on with great force and eloquence to condemn the spirit of the letters and to call upon the honor of the military: "Let me conjure you, in the name of our common country, as you value your own sacred honor, as you respect the rights of humanity, and as you regard the military and national character of America, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the man, who wishes, under any specious pretences, to overturn the liberties of our country; and who wickedly attempts to open the flood-gates of civil discord, and deluge our rising empire in blood."[\[29\]](#)

Washington was revered by his troops, and his appeal to their honor and patriotism turned the tide. At the same time, he was mindful of the army's complaints and, sympathetic to their cause, he subsequently entreated Congress to act on what he regarded as reasonable demands. The controversy also prompted Washington to ask General Henry Knox, chief artillery officer of the Continental Army and later Washington's Secretary of War, to find ways to reassure and assuage the officers. Such a request coincided with Knox's own desire to create a fraternal society of officers and in April 1783 he drafted an eight-page memorandum that became the basis of the constitution, or "Institution," for the Society of the Cincinnati. It was revised at meeting of officers in May to include an invitation to French officers who had served in the American Revolution, including several of them by name, although some had already returned to France.^[30] At the Society's first general meeting, the entire "Institution" was approved and Washington was elected the Society's first president.^[31]

Von Steuben, knowing of L'Enfant's drafting skills, invited him to design a medal or badge for the Society, to be based on a description that Knox included at the end of his "Institution." Knox called the medal an Order "by which its members shall be known and distinguished, which shall be a medal of gold, of a proper size to receive the emblems, and suspended by a deep blue riband two inches wide, edged with white, descriptive of the union of France and America."^[32] Knox then went on to describe the order in detail:

The principal figure, Cincinnatus: Three Senators presenting him with a sword and other military ensigns—on a field in the background, his wife standing at the door of their Cottage—near it a plough and instruments of husbandry. Round the whole, *Omnia Relinquit Servare Rempublicam* [he relinquished everything to serve the state]. On the reverse, Sun rising—a city with open gates, and vessels entering the port—Fame crowning Cincinnatus with a wreath inscribed *Virtutis Praemium* [honor is the reward of virtue]. Below, hands joined, supporting a heart. With the motto *Esto Perpetua* [let it be forever]. Round the whole, *Societas Cincinnatorum Instituta. A.D. 1783.*^[33]

This was more narrative detail than a small medal could accommodate so L'Enfant incorporated only one of the Latin texts, *Omnia Relinquit Servare Rempublicam*, and a synopsis of Knox's elaborate visual program (fig. 4). For a second design, one for a silver medal (figs. 5 and 6) intended as a keepsake and not to be worn, L'Enfant included more aspects of Knox's description along with much of the Latin text. These latter medals, not cast until the twentieth century, were included as part of L'Enfant's elaborate plan for the Society's diploma (fig. 7).



Fig. 4, Duval and Francastel, Paris, after sketches by Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Society of the Cincinnati eagle worn by Tench Tilghman. 1784. Gold, enamel, silk. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 5, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Sketch for the design of the obverse of a medal for the Society of the Cincinnati, 1783. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 6, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Sketch for the design of the reverse of a medal for the Society of the Cincinnati, 1783. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Diploma indicating membership of Lt. Matthew Gregory in the Society of the Cincinnati. Issued September 1, 1789 and signed by George Washington, president, and Henry Knox, secretary. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[larger image\]](#)

All three of these items, the badge, the silver medal, and the diploma, L'Enfant completed in Paris where he was sent by the Society in late November 1783. Washington also him asked to deliver these emblems of membership to those French officers listed in the "Institution."[\[34\]](#)

Knox, in a letter to Washington before L'Enfant's departure, referred to these three items, what materials they should be made from, and who would pay for them: "in addition to the *medal*, which was finally determined to be of *Silver*, instead of *gold*, it was resolved that there should be a *diploma*, which, with the *Silver medal* should be given to each member. The bald eagle of *gold*. *The Order of the Society* to be procured at the private expense of each member."[\[35\]](#) Washington, although criticized for his support of the organization, approved of the Society's formation and saw to it, through proper documentation and financial support, that L'Enfant made his way to France on the Society's behalf.[\[36\]](#) He also took time to sign L'Enfant's membership certificate.[\[37\]](#)

L'Enfant spent five months in France where he worked closely with the jewelers Duval and Francastel to fabricate the order, and with the engraver Jean-Jacques-André Le Veau to incise the diploma on copper plate.[38] L'Enfant was not the only Frenchman creating medals for Americans. The medal engraver, Augustin Dupré and others were hired by American officials in Paris, including Jefferson, to create fourteen medals between 1783 and 1789 to "commemorate outstanding services to the American cause in the Revolutionary War." [39] At the time, there were no fine medalists in the United States and, of necessity, L'Enfant and later the Federal government had to turn to France for the fabrication of the items. As noted by McClung Fleming in an article on the American image in the early Federal period:

The men who were establishing precedents for the new Federal Republic were intensely alive to the importance of presentation medals to honor national heroes and to commemorate great events. 'Having,' as Jefferson put it, 'but little confidence in our own ideas in an art not familiar here,' he and his associates were determined to seek the best advice possible for medallic traditions, procedures and practitioners. They turned to France and asked assistance of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in Paris.[40]

L'Enfant, similarly noting the lack of American artisans who could do the work, wrote to von Steuben:

A medal is a monument to be transmitted to posterity; and, consequently, it is necessary that it be executed to the highest degree of perfection possible in the age in which it is struck. Now, to strike a medal well, is a matter that requires practice and a good die; and as there is not here either a press proper for this work, nor people who can make a good die [so much for the Great Seal], I would willingly undertake to recommend the execution of the Medal, the Eagle, or the Order, to such persons in Paris as are capable of executing it to perfection.[41]

In this letter, L'Enfant also submitted descriptions of two designs for the medal, both of which alluded to the description Knox had included in his original draft of the Society of the Cincinnati's Institution.

In one, I make the eagle supporting a star with thirteen points in the centre of which is the figure of the medal, with its inscription, as well in front as on the reverse. A legend might be added in the claws and go round the neck of the eagle, with a particular inscription, or the contour of the medal transferred there. In the other, I have made simply the eagle, supporting on its breast the figure of the medal, with a legend in his claws and about the neck, which passes behind and sustains the reverse. I would prefer the latter, as it does not resemble any other Order, and bears a distinct character; nor will it be expensive to execute.[42]

In its final version, the badge of the society is suspended from a light blue, not dark blue, satin ribbon bordered by white stripes. In subsequent versions, at the bottom of the short ribbon the material is scrunched into a large rosette, while others have the ribbon terminate in a simple fold. Suspended from the ribbon is a gold clasp that connects the ribbon to the gold and painted enamel medal. The medal itself takes the form of an eagle that is a close

approximation of the one represented on the recently adopted Great Seal except in L'Enfant's design the eagle's wings are closed and its legs brought underneath the body; the talons carry only laurel. Above its head is a two-tiered wreath of laurel that connects the medal to the ribbon. On the eagle's breast is a cameo-type image of Cincinnatus with his wife on the right greeting a "senator" who enters on the left; the whole being a condensation of Knox's description. The border surrounding this central image is the Latin inscription supplied by Knox: *Omnia Relinquit Servare Rempublicam*. The cameo on the breast of the eagle is a counterpart to the shield on the Great Seal.

L'Enfant also produced drawings for the obverse and reverse of a silver medal, (figs. 5 and 6) and for the Society's diploma or certificate (fig. 7). The sketches of the two sides of the medal, which if struck at the time would have been about the size of a silver dollar, contain images that are more fully narrative of Knox's account. On the obverse there is an elaboration of the visitation of the three senators who, in entreaty, hold forth a sword. Behind them is a sketchy rendering of the city with townspeople stretching forth their hands in supplication. Cincinnatus greets his visitors in front of his log cabin. Behind him are a scythe, what appears to be a spinning wheel, and his wife who sits with an infant in her arms; a slightly older child hugs her skirts. The entire scene is surrounded with the Latin inscription found on the badge.

The reverse also follows Knox's description. On it, Cincinnatus occupies the center ground; behind him is a field and to the left a harbor with "vessels entering the port," to the right, "a city with open gates." The hero, as in the obverse, is surrounded by "a plough and instruments of husbandry." Above him is Fame who crowns him "with a wreath inscribed *Virtutis Praemium* [virtue's reward]." Further embellishing the design is an inscription included at the bottom: "hands joined, supporting a heart. With the motto, *Esto Perpetua* [let it be perpetual]." The final ornamentation completes Knox's instructions: "Round the whole, [should be the words] *Societas Cincinnatorum Instituta, A.D. 1783.*"^[43]

While the silver medal was never struck in the eighteenth century, these sketches are found in L'Enfant's design for the diploma. In this way, he was able to reference Knox's patriotic morality play within a larger tableau of his own invention.^[44] L'Enfant's design for the Society of the Cincinnati's diploma can also be seen as part of a larger attempt following the Revolution to create new allegories for independence. In its format and polemical content, the diploma's imagery imitates the composition of such contemporary political prints as "America Triumphant and Britannia in Distress" published in New England in 1782 in Weatherwise's *Town and Country Almanack* (fig. 8). The print's caption reads:



Fig. 8, America Triumphant and Britannia in Distress, 1782. Frontispiece, *Weatherwise's Town and Country Almanack*. [\[larger image\]](#)

- I. America sitting on that quarter of the globe with the Flag of the United States displayed over her head holding in one hand the Olive branch, inviting the ships of all nations to partake of her commerce, and in the other hand supporting the Cap of Liberty.
- II. Fame proclaiming the joyful news to all the world.
- III. Britannia weeping at the loss of trade of America, attended with an evil genius.
- IV. The British flag struck on her strong Fortresses.
- V. French, Spanish, Dutch shipping in the harbours of America.
- VI. A view of New York, wherein is exhibited the Trator [*sic*] Arnold, taken with remorse for selling his country and Judas like hanging himself.

L'Enfant's composition mimics the harbor found in "America Triumphant," but on its left, instead of a distressed Britannia, is the assertive figure of a knight in armor holding the American flag with the seal of the United States on its uppermost canton. Behind him is the American eagle from whose talons jagged bolts of lightning harry Britannia and her lion. On the right, Fame blows a trumpet of victory to which is attached a scroll with the Latin words: "*Palam nuntiata libertatis A.D. 1776. Foedus sociale cum Gallia, An. D. 1778. Pax: libertas parta, An. D. 1783*" meaning "Independence declared, A.D. 1776. Treaty of Alliance with France declared A.D. 1778. Peace: independence obtained, A.D. 1783," a direct references to France's contribution to America's defeat of England.^[45]

Controversy continued to surround the Society even though eminent citizens such as Washington and Hamilton were known to be supportive members. To allay fears that the Society might sow sedition through its foreign alliances, Washington, its president, called for changes in the Society's constitution at its May 1784 meeting. Among the modifications he recommended were: the discontinuance of the provision that membership could be inherited, the prohibition of donations from foreigners, the separation of the French society from the American, and that future meetings should be held on the state, and not the national, level.^[46]

One basis for concern was that the Society was a national organization—the only one besides the Confederation Congress—and some feared that its country-wide structure could be mobilized to effect a military coup. At the same time, its objectives dovetailed with the ambitions of the Federalists and, a few short years later, with the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. As Minor Myers, a historian of the Society has noted: "the Federalists and the Cincinnati were natural allies."[\[47\]](#) Over a third of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were members of the Society of the Cincinnati.[\[48\]](#)

It is not surprising then, given the Society's national profile, that L'Enfant, in his designs for the Society's medal, incorporated the eagle of the Great Seal, and in the Society's diploma included the American flag. Furthermore through his involvement in the Society, and through his close association with Washington, he received important architectural commissions that included the redesign New York's City Hall as Federal Hall in 1789 and, two years later, a plan for the new federal city, Washington, D.C.

When L'Enfant returned to America in 1784, his role in the establishment of the Society assured him access to men who enthusiastically supported the ideals of the Society, and no city was more receptive to the Society's mission than New York.[\[49\]](#)

New York City

The first and most daunting task of New York's re-formed Common Council, which resumed its deliberations in February 1784 after a nine-year hiatus, was to rebuild the city. It is difficult to imagine the physical state of New York City 1784. British troops, when they evacuated the City five months earlier, had left it in shambles; its infrastructure was destroyed, along with shops, homes, and churches (fig. 9). Surveyors, builders, and carters petitioned the Council to assess property lines, to construct new buildings, to repair old ones, and to clear debris and haul off rubble. The talents that L'Enfant exhibited during the years he served in the Continental Army as a surveyor, draftsman, and member of the Army Corps of Engineers were much in demand. Professionally, L'Enfant could not have made a better choice as a place to begin his career as an engineer/architect/designer. The city was soon to become the home of the Confederation Congress and, by the end of the decade, the first capital of the United States.[\[50\]](#) Before being hired by the Common Council in 1789 to renovate New York's City Hall as Federal Hall, he was employed by the wardens of Trinity Church in June 1787 to rehabilitate its parish chapel, St. Paul's, and to properly install a monument recently arrived in New York, to the slain hero General Richard Montgomery, that the Continental Congress had commissioned in January 1776.[\[51\]](#) The wardens of Trinity Church included New York's new, and first mayor, James Duane, and New York's Chancellor Robert Livingston. Duane and Livingston were related by marriage and Livingston was Montgomery's brother-in-law. Both men were enthusiastic members of the Society of the Cincinnati; Duane was made an honorary member in 1784, Livingston in 1786. Livingston was also called upon to give the Fourth of July address before the Society in 1787 at St. Paul's Chapel about two weeks before L'Enfant was hired to install the Montgomery monument.[\[52\]](#)



Fig. 9, *Ruins of Trinity Church*, ca. 1780. Colored lithograph. [\[larger image\]](#)

Duane had served the Revolutionary cause as a delegate to the Continental Congress for ten years from 1774 until February 1784 when he was appointed mayor of New York by Governor George Clinton. Among the problems that absorbed Clinton, and subsequently Duane and the Common Council, were, as described by Edward Countryman, author of a history of New York City in the Revolutionary period, "the treatment of the royalists" and "the reconstruction of the southern district" which included New York City.[53] One of the knottiest problems was Trinity Church, which had been associated with the Tories and the old elite and which, since its founding in 1697, had been deeded a great deal of land on Manhattan's lower west side encompassing King's Farm and King's Garden, or what is today known as Tribeca.[54] What would be its new status in an independent America? The first step was taken by Clinton and the state legislature which, because the Trinity Church was no longer overseen by the Anglican Bishop in England, appointed Duane and Livingston vestrymen or wardens in April 1784. Duane, in his dual role as mayor and warden, worked tirelessly on the church's behalf, turning his attention to several urgent problems: who owned the church lands which had formerly belonged to the Church of England; how quickly could Trinity be rebuilt; and how best to ensure that the church be thought of as a patriot, not a loyalist, institution?[55] For the latter problem, what better solution than to offer itself as a home for the monument to America's fallen hero that had originally been commissioned for placement in Philadelphia?

The Monument to General Richard Montgomery

Richard Montgomery (1738–1775) fought in North America as a member of the British army during the French and Indian War, and immigrated in 1772 to New York City where he married Janet Livingston, Chancellor Robert Livingston's sister. Montgomery was awarded the rank of brigadier general by the Continental Congress June 22, 1775 and was one of the leaders of the invasion of Canada, where he was killed December 31, 1775.[56] As he was the first officer of the Continental Army to die for the patriots' cause, the Continental Congress authorized a monument to him just one month later, on January 25, 1776. Commissioned five months before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the monument was to "express the veneration of the United Colonies for their late general Richard Montgomery...

who, after a series of successes, amidst the most discouraging difficulties, fell at length in a gallant attack upon Quebec, the capital of Canada; and for transmitting to future ages, as examples truly worthy of imitation, his patriotism, conduct, boldness of enterprize, insuperable perseverance and contempt of danger and death." Congress further authorized that such "monument be procured from Paris or any other part of France, with an inscription, sacred to his memory and expressive of his amiable character and heroic achievements: And that the continental treasurers be directed to advance a sum to not exceed (300 pounds) sterling to Dr. Benjamin Franklin."[\[57\]](#)

With martial images of helmets, spears, and banners, the monument is largely a tribute to Montgomery's valor and heroism. But it also includes the Latin words *libertas* and *restituta*, inscribed by the sculptor French Jean-Jacques Caffiéri on a ribbon encircling a down-turned club. Since it was Franklin who hired Caffiéri, in Paris, it was he who no doubt suggested the inclusion of these two words. The exigencies of war and efforts both locally and nationally to establish new forms of governance must have affected the progress of the Montgomery project for it would take ten years before the monument found a home. It was brought to New York City in 1787 where its installation on the porch of St. Paul's Chapel was supervised by L'Enfant.

After the victory at Yorktown few people—among them were Franklin, John Jay and Livingston—knew the whereabouts of the monument. Franklin had written to Livingston, who was then secretary of state, in August 1782 about the Montgomery monument. Interestingly, his mention of the monument was part of a longer communication that included references to their mutual interest in having a medal struck "to perpetuate the Memory of York & Saratoga Victories" that would be affixed to an obelisk or column. Franklin's letter referred to instructions for installing the Montgomery Monument and to the print, which it is assumed was the one engraved by Augustine de Saint-Aubin and published in 1779.

This puts me in mind of a Monument I got made here and sent to America by order of Congress 5 Years since. I have heard of its Arrival and nothing more. It was admired here [Paris] for its Simplicity of Design, and the various beautiful Marbles used in its Composition. It was intended to be fix'd against a Wall in the State house at Philadelphia. I know not why it has been so long neglected. It would me thinks, be well to inquire after it, and get it put up some where. Directions for fixing it were sent with it. I enclose a Print of it. The Inscription in the Engraving is not on the monument: It was surely the Fancy of the Engraver. There is a white Plate of Marble left smooth to receive such Inscription as the Congress should think proper.[\[58\]](#)

What is curious about Franklin's letter is that he neither names the monument nor acknowledges Livingston's relationship to it. Be that as it may, it is safe to assume that Livingston had knowledge of the monument from its initial commission in 1776 and, through Franklin's letter six years later, that it was in the United States. Yet it would take five more years before the monument was installed in St. Paul's. It is a fair assumption that, following Franklin's letter, Livingston and his sister Janet, Montgomery's widow, began a campaign to have the monument moved to New York.[\[59\]](#) One reason for the delay may well be that at the time the new government had no fixed home. In 1782 it was meeting

temporarily in Philadelphia but would soon move to Annapolis before moving to New York City in 1785.[60]

On June 1, 1784, Charles De Witt, a New York State delegate to the Confederation Congress, introduced a resolution proposing that the monument, which was in Edenton, North Carolina at the time, be delivered "to the order of the Superintendent of finance, to be transported to the City of New York, to be erected in such part of the State of New York, as the legislature thereof may judge proper; and that the expense accruing thereon, be paid by the United States of America." [61]

Five months went by, however, before the New York State legislature formally requested that Colonel Timothy Pickering, Quarter Master General, who was charged with Superintendence of the monument, send the monument to New York and it was not until a year later that Pickering acted.[62] In a letter to David Wolfe, he noted the date of its arrival and the name of the ship that would deliver it, and asked that Wolfe "consult" with the Livingstons on the "subject" of the monument.

Yesterday I rec'd advice from William Bennet of Edenton that he should receive Genl Montgomery's monument, & in 10 days (from Oct. 3?) ship the same in the brig Rochahock, Frances Marchaulth, commander, bound to New-York. I presume there will be time to erect it this fall if no time be lost after its arrival. Be so good as to speak to Capt. Niven and urge dispatch. I think it will be best to consult some of the Livingston family on the subject—the Chancellor, is in New York. I will pay the expense of the work on demand.[63]

As Pickering's letter attests, the monument was shipped from North Carolina to New York in early October, and then stored by one James Watson for another eighteen months for the sum of "5 pounds, 2 pence." [64] Franklin, frustrated by the on-going delay in getting the monument installed, wrote in irritation to John Jay, Secretary of Foreign Affairs: "The Monument of General Montgomery, may I ask what is become of it? It has formerly been said, that Republicks are naturally ungrateful. The immediate Resolution of Congress for erecting that Monument, contradicts that Opinion: But the letting the Monument lie eight years un-pack'd, if true, seems rather a Confirmation of it." [65]

It may well have been that the state legislature and the city's Common Council were so preoccupied with the need to establish new democratic governance that installation of the Montgomery monument was not high on their list of priorities, for it is not until March 1787 that the Common Council acknowledged that the Montgomery was in the city and proposed that "measures proper... [should] be taken with a Statue of Gen'l Montgomery." [66] Two weeks later, Duane notified the Council of the Senate's and Assembly's 1784 "concurrent Resolution." Why the resolution took three years to reach Duane and the Council is anyone's guess, but the resolution was finally placed in the minutes of the Common Council, with St. Paul's designated as the monument's home:

The Respect due to the Memory of that great Soldier and Patriot demanded the first attention of the Board to the fixing on a suitable Place in this City for the erecting of the said Monument and that the same should be put up without delay.

The Board thereupon proceeded to the Consideration of a Place for erecting the Monument, and the front of St. Paul's Church in this City was unanimously agreed to be the most proper place.

And thereupon it was Ordered that a Committee be appointed to consult with the Church Wardens and Vestrymen of the Episcopal Church on the subject and if approved by them, that the Committee take Order and direct the said Monument to be properly erected accordingly—Ordered that Aldn Gilbert, Bayard and Hazard, and Messrs Van Zandt and Van Dyck be the Committee, And that Mr. May be requested to advise and assist the Committee in the Business.[67]

Duane then proceeded to officially communicate this same information to the Trinity Vestry.[68]

St. Paul's Chapel

The Montgomery Monument, of Pyrenees marble, is formed of two squat piers and a mantel upon which rests a broken column. A pedestaled urn sits upon the column, flanked by carved flags and trophies, backed by a flat obelisk. Beneath the monument are two inscribed plaques. The upper one briefly details Montgomery's life and deeds: "This monument is erected by the order of Congress 25th January 1776 to transmit to posterity a grateful remembrance of the patriotism conduct enterprise & perseverance of Major General Richard Montgomery who after a series of successes amidst the most discouraging difficulties Fell in the attack on Quebec, 31st December, 1775, Aged 37 years." The lower one, installed at the behest of Montgomery's widow, Janet, documents the 1818 re-interment of Montgomery's remains at St. Paul's.[69]

St. Paul's, built ca. 1765, with its four-columned porch, elegant Palladian window and graceful steeple, is the oldest religious building in New York.[70] Its tall, fluted columns support a deep entablature which together form an entrance porch. Above the porch is a pediment in the center of which a small statue of St. Paul is enclosed in a framed niche; to the right and left are oriel windows. The columns, capped by Ionic capitals, serve as bold, two-story frames for the north and south entrances, for the central window, and for the Montgomery Monument.

Such was the appearance of St. Paul's façade when L'Enfant was asked to install the monument in front of the central window: "Mr. Duane...reported that at the request of the Corporation of the City, the Committee had given permission for the Monument of Gen'l Montgomery to be erected under the Portico of St. Paul's Chapel in front of the great Window." [71] Why L'Enfant was chosen cannot be firmly established, but his relationship with George Washington and his involvement with the Society of the Cincinnati were likely contributing factors. It was also a reality of New York's history, shortly after the evacuation of British troops, that there were few professional designer/engineers in the city, and certainly none with L'Enfant's French artistic training and valorous participation in the Revolution.[72]

L'Enfant worked quickly on his plans and in a matter of weeks made it known that the unsightly back of the monument could be seen within the chapel. After bringing the problem to the vestrymen's attention, L'Enfant was asked "to ornament that part of the great

Window of the Parish Chapel which will be obscured by the Monument of General Montgomery."^[73] He began by constructing a great Shekinah, or Glory (fig. 10), an elaborate plaster and wood construction of white painted clouds and golden rays that support and extend from a Hebrew inscription.^[74] This baroque ensemble surmounts and envelopes two black marble tablets with inscribed biblical text. These in turn are affixed to a bracketed shelf upon which is a two-foot high crucifix. Margaret Henry writing about the monument for the *Trinity Bulletin* in 1947 described the Glory as follows:



Fig. 10, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, alter, 1787. Interior St. Paul's Chapel, New York City. [\[larger image\]](#)

The result of L'Enfant's work was the carving of the great Shekinah, or Glory which focuses all eyes on the altar. The design is inspired by Old Testament symbolism, Mount Sinai and the Tables of the Law, Jehovah (in Hebrew), in a Triangle surrounded by rays, representing the Deity, and a background of clouds and lightning, suggesting the power and majesty of God. There are several such "Glories" in French churches....It fulfills the purpose indicated in Didron's "Christian Iconography," emphasizing the supreme holiness of the altar, the Throne of God's Presence in the Great Sacrifice.... It is a symbol of the Church of the Ancient Law, leading to the Altar of the Incarnate Christ, the Church of the New Dispensation, the Law of Love.^[75]

This buoyant structure, in turn, created the opposite problem—now the back of the altarpiece could be seen, from outside, above the Montgomery Monument. L'Enfant could have simply painted a frame on the back of the Glory, or altarpiece, but a photograph taken at the time the Chapel was restored in the 1920s shows a tall, wooden frame (fig. 2) behind the monument and the glass of the window. It is a triangular-shaped, coffin-like object (fig. 1) constructed within the back of the altarpiece and it appears to have been designed so that the monument would fit inside it exactly. What is puzzling is that while the object seems ready to accept and to be a frame for the monument, the glass window between them is a barrier that prevents them from even touching. The frame, barely visible today, was visible enough when it was installed in 1787 for a writer for New York's *Daily Advertiser* to describe its imagery. That raises the question: was the frame at some point in time moved inside?^[76] It is known that in the mid-nineteenth century the clear eighteenth-century glass windows were replaced by stained glass. Seventy years later, in the mid nineteen twenties when the chapel was restored to its original colonial design, the frame was rediscovered and,

according to observers, left inside the chapel behind the windows where it remains, hidden in plain sight.[77] "After being obscured nearly three-quarters of a century, the beautiful symbol surmounting the monument to General Richard Montgomery, in the portico of St. John's [sic] Chapel, again looks out on Broadway. The majestic stained glass altar windows, which hid it from view at the peak of the triangular top of the memorial, have been restored to the old style of plain panes of glass, white and light green, through which the monument design may be seen." [78] It is not clear from this description how well the images on "the beautiful symbol surmounting the monument," i.e., L'Enfant's frame, could be seen in the 1920s. Today they appear vague and ghost-like and if it were not for an eighteenth-century description published the day after the monument was installed they would be impossible to decipher: "Hymen, extinguishing his torch mourns over his tomb. From behind the pyramid rises a Sun with thirteen rays, which enlightens the quarter of a terrestrial globe, emblematical of America. Above the whole is the American eagle flying from East to West, carrying in his talons a starry curtain, in which the globe appears to have been wrapped." [79] These symbols that L'Enfant painted on the Montgomery frame are those of a new independent republic and have as their genesis the Great Seal of the United States and L'Enfant's design for badges and diplomas for the Society of the Cincinnati. That they have their origin in the Great Seal is reinforced by the presence of a painting of the Great Seal, reputedly by L'Enfant and dating from 1785, inside St. Paul's above George Washington's pew where it can be seen today.[80]

At the first level of meaning, L'Enfant's program for the Montgomery frame can be divided in two: those symbols that reference Montgomery—the figure of a mourning Hymen with his down turned torch—and those that represent the birth of a new nation—the rising sun with thirteen rays, the globe, the eagle, and the starry curtain. The image of the cherub on the bottom left is Hymen, the god of marriage ceremonies, and his placement as a decoration for a monument commemorating Montgomery's death seems ambiguous. It may be that L'Enfant's representation of Hymen signifies the death not only of a hero, but also of a bridegroom, for Montgomery had, in fact, been married for only two years before his death in Quebec. At the left, above Hymen, is a sun with thirteen rays that rises above the globe; the rays being an obvious allusion to the original thirteen states. Simultaneously, this sun, "enlightens," North America or "the quarter of the terrestrial globe, emblematical of America." The last and uppermost figure is the eagle that carries in "his talons a starry curtain, in which the globe appears to have been wrapped."

While there may be other sources for the imagery of the frame, particularly French ones, given L'Enfant's training and nationality, the one that I believe has the greatest bearing on the Montgomery frame and his work for the Society of the Cincinnati, is found in the iconography of the Great Seal of the United States. In all three is the consistent presence of the eagle. In the Montgomery frame, the eagle is not a static figure but a flying one, holding the stars in a curtain. While it is not clear how many stars are caught up in this curtain, the new thirteen states are represented on the frame as thirteen rays emanating from a rising sun. While these alterations of the eagle, stars, and sky may or may not have been made to accommodate the shape of the top of the Montgomery frame, the important point is that there was, in the 1780s, a limited repertoire of symbols to denote independence and sovereignty. Given L'Enfant's enthusiasm for his new country, his friendship with Washington, and his comradeship with the men involved with the Society of Cincinnati, it is not surprising that L'Enfant would allude to one of two official symbols of the United States,

its Great Seal.[81] Additionally, by referencing this emblem in his painted frame, L'Enfant expanded the meaning of the Montgomery Monument to include the formation of a new nation, a historic development that could not have been imagined ten years earlier when Franklin and Caffiéri first discussed the monument whose original purpose was to serve as a tribute to heroic sacrifice. Through the addition of his painted casing following the successful outcome of the Revolution, L'Enfant effectively expands Caffiéri's heroic tribute to America's historic victory to include the establishment of a new nation.

George Washington, regarded by many as the personification of Cincinnatus, was inaugurated as the first president of the United States, on April 30, 1789, on the balcony of L'Enfant's newly refurbished Federal Hall. The swearing in was performed by the Chancellor of New York, Robert Livingston. Following the inauguration, Washington and his party attended religious services down the street at St. Paul's.[82] How fitting then, given his support of L'Enfant's career and his acclaim as a military hero, that greeting the new president at the church's Broadway entrance was the Montgomery Memorial, enclosed by L'Enfant's frame.

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Notes

* While completing the editing of this article, I came across Michael Driskel's article "By the Light of Providence: The Glory Altarpiece at St. Paul's Chapel, New York City," in the *Art Bulletin* of December 2007. Dr. Driskel and I independently consulted the archives at Trinity Church, New York and looked at the same material. In some cases, we even came to similar conclusions. However, Dr. Driskel's article is a careful analysis of the iconography of L'Enfant's altarpiece for the inside of St. Paul's, whereas my focus is on L'Enfant's role in the development of a new iconography of independence. I, too, discuss the altarpiece in St. Paul's but I focus primarily on its back that was designed as a frame by L'Enfant for the *Monument to General Richard Montgomery (1777)* which is situated on the exterior of the church and is America's first monument. The two articles, therefore, are not in competition but complement one another.

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article are a part of a larger study of America's first monument, Jean-Jacques Cafféri's Monument to General Richard Montgomery, 1777, St. Paul's Chapel, New York City.

[1] New York Daily Advertiser, November 22, 1787. Reprinted in I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498–1909*, (New York: R.H. Dodd, 1915–1928), 5:1222.

[2] For information on the representation of liberty in the colonies during the 1760s see David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 19–49, and Lester C. Olsen, *Emblems of American Community in the Revolutionary Era* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

[3] Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 147–48.

[4] Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution, Painting Music, Literature, and the Theatre in the Colonies and the United States from the Treaty of Paris to the Inauguration of George Washington, 1763–1789* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1927), 320–23.

[5] The Philadelphia artist, Charles Willson Peale, made a reference to independence in one of the allegorical transparencies that he displayed in the windows of his house in honor of Washington's visit in November, 1781, following Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. The design included a Temple of Independence "around whose base ran the words Stamp Act, Duties on Tea, Boston Port Bill, Lexington and Bunker Hill, and the motto BY THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE." *Ibid.*, 413.

[6] See Richard S. Patterson and Richardson Dougall, *The Eagle and the Shield: A History of the Great Seal of the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978). For an analysis of its roots in a European tradition of emblems and devices see Frank H. Sommer, "Emblem and Device: The Origin of the Great Seal of the United States," *The Art Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1961): 33–56.

[7] Traditionally, the younger L'Enfant is referred to as Pierre-Charles to differentiate him from his father. Some recent historians also refer to him as Peter, the name he used in his correspondence as a sign of allegiance to his adopted country.

[8] H. Paul Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant* (Washington, DC: National Republic Publishing, 1950; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 25. The most recent biography of L'Enfant is Scott Berg, *Grand Avenue, the Story of the French Visionary who Designed Washington, D.C.* (New York: Pantheon, 2007). Also see Kenneth R. Bowling, *Peter Charles L'Enfant, Vision, Honor and Male Friendship in the Early American Republic* (Washington, DC: Friends of the George Washington University Libraries, 2002); Elizabeth S. Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington, 1791–1792* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1929); and J. J. Jusserand, "Major L'Enfant and the Federal City," in his *With Americans of Past and Present Days* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 137–95.

[9] Berg, *Grand Avenue*, 47–48.

[10] *Ibid.*, 43–44.

[11] Bowling, *Peter Charles L'Enfant*, 5. Luzerne wrote to Washington asking permission for L'Enfant's services. George Washington, Newburgh, N.Y. to Anne Cesar, Chevalier de la Luzerne, Philadelphia, April 27, 1782, *The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799*, [Series 3d Varick Transcripts, Letterbook 2, Images 19–20](#), (accessed January 24, 2008).

[12] The most thorough-going discussion of these celebrations is William C. Stinchcombe's "Americans Celebrate the Birth of the Dauphin," in *Diplomacy and Revolution, The Franco-American Alliance of 1778*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 39–72. Also see Beverly Orlove Held, "'To Instruct and Improve...to Entertain and Please': American Civic Pageants, 1765–1784" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1987).

[13] *Philadelphia Freeman's Journal*, vol. 67, July 31, 1782, 1.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Patterson and Dougall, *Eagle and the Shield*, 61. Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, who worked on the third design for the Great Seal noted in his "Remarks and Explanations," which he submitted to Congress June 20, 1782, that "'The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American Eagle.'" *Ibid.*, 85.

[16] *Ibid.*, 6.

[17] *Ibid.*, 10–13.

[18] Sommer, "Emblem and Device," 68.

- [19] Ibid.
- [20] Ibid., 68 and 71.
- [21] Ibid., 71.
- [22] Ibid.
- [23] Patterson and Dougall, *Eagle and Shield*, 85.
- [24] Ibid., 84–85.
- [25] "Memorial from the officers of the army," December 1782, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, vol. 24 (April 1783), 290–93.
- [26] "To the Officers of the Army," paper No. 2, Ibid, 296.
- [27] Ibid., 297.
- [28] George Washington, "Address," March 15, 1783, Cantonment (Newburgh, N.Y.), paper No. 5, Ibid., 306–7.
- [29] Ibid., 309.
- [30] Edgar Erskine Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence concerning The Society of the Cincinnati* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 6–8.
- [31] Ibid. 8.
- [32] Ibid., 5–6.
- [33] Ibid., 6.
- [34] George Washington to Major-General Henry Knox, Rocky Hill, October 16, 1783, Ibid., 22–23.
- [35] Major-General Henry Knox to George Washington, West Point, October 1783, Ibid., 28.
- [36] George Washington to Major-General Henry Knox, Rocky Hill, October 16, 1783, Ibid., 22–23.
- [37] Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence*, 20–21.
- [38] The diploma was drawn by Augustin-Louis La Belle and its copperplate engraved by Jean-Jacques-André Le Veau. Ibid., xv.
- [39] E. McClung Fleming, "From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: The American Image, 1783–1815," *Winterthur Portfolio* 3 (1967): 39
- [40] Ibid.
- [41] Quoted in Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence*, 12.
- [42] Ibid.
- [43] Ibid., 6.
- [44] See Ellen McCallister Clark, "The Diploma of the Society of the Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Fourteen, Newsletter of the Society of the Cincinnati* 37, no. 1, Fall 2000, 8–14.
- [45] Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence*, xiv–xv.
- [46] Washington's changes to the Society's constitution or "Institution" were unanimously approved; they are detailed in Hume, *General Washington's Correspondence*, 157–58.
- [47] Minor Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983; paperback edition, 2004), xiv.
- [48] Ibid., 98.
- [49] Ibid., 74–75.
- [50] Four years earlier, even before the city was designated the nation's capital, L'Enfant had been nominated by Congress to erect "federal buildings," along with Philip Schuyler, Hamilton's father-in-law, who "declined the appointment." *JCC* 28:37, n. 2.
- [51] "Minutes of the Vestry, Corporation of Trinity Church," vol. 1 (June 18, 1787), 492, Archives of Trinity Church. What else L'Enfant did while a resident of New York during the 1780s is little known and his career there has been overshadowed by his renown as the designer of the plan for the new capital city on the banks of the Potomac. Caemmerer makes claims for a number of New York City projects credited to the French engineer and architect, but the information is anecdotal and not much of it can be proven. Caemmerer, *Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*, 103–7.
- [52] Robert R. Livingston, "An Oration Delivered Before the Society of the Cincinnati of the State of New-York; in Commemoration of the Fourth Day of July," printed New York: Francis

Childs. Before the text of the oration it is stated that the oration was delivered in City Hall. Livingston's chief biographer, George Dangerfield, however, stated that the Society met at City Hall but then repaired to St. Paul's to hear Livingston's oration. *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746–1813* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), 210. This is a minor point but one that underscores the importance of St. Paul's at this time in New York City's history.

[53] Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760–1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 221.

[54] *Ibid.*, 239–42.

[55] *Ibid.* 241.

[56] Michael Gabriel, *Major General Richard Montgomery The Making of an American Hero* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 76, 83–104.

[57] *JCC* 4:89–90.

[58] Franklin to Livingston, August 12, 1782, in Claude A. Lopez, ed., *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 37 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 730. Instructions for installing the monument, written by Caffiéri, were included, along with a translation; they were filed with the *Papers of the Continental Congress* (Washington, DC: National Archives, 1958–59), text-fiche, M247, roll 72, item 59, p. 25ff.

[59] Henry Kent writing about the monument in 1929 noted that Mrs. Montgomery had contacted the former Collector of Customs in Edenton, N.C. regarding the whereabouts of the monument. Henry W. Kent, "The Monument of General Richard Montgomery," *Trinity Church Year-Book and Register* (1929), 301.

[60] Kenneth R. Bowling, "New York City, Capital of the United States, 1785–1790," in *World of the Founders: New Communities in the Federal Period*, ed. Stephen T. Schechter and Wendell Tripp (Albany: New York State Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 1990), 1–24.

[61] *JCC* 27:504–5. DeWitt's resolution read in full: "Whereas on the 25 day of January, 1776, Congress did resolve, that a monument be procured in Paris, or any other place in France, with an inscription sacred to the Memory of General Montgomery; which, in consequence thereof, was procured and sent to the care of Mr. Hewes, in North Carolina, and is now supposed to be in the care of his executors: That the executors of Joseph Hewes, esq. [or the person in whose hands the Monument is, be requested to deliver the same to the order of Superintendent of finance, to be transported to the City of New York,] to be erected in such part of the State of New York, as the Legislature thereof may judge proper; and that the expense accruing thereon, be paid by the United States of America."

[62] The joint resolution which passed the Assembly November 26, 1784 and the Senate, November 28th reads as follows: "That the monument by the United States, in Congress assembled, ordered to be erected to the memory of Major-General Montgomery, be erected in the city of New-York, and as such particular place as the Mayor, Aldermen and Commonality of said city, in Common Council convened shall appoint; and that his Excellency the Governor, be requested to transmit to Timothy Pickering, Esquire, who is charged with the Superintendence thereof." *Journal of the Senate of the State of New-York*, November 28, 1784 (New York: Elizabeth Holt, 1784), 38.

[63] Timothy Pickering to David Wolfe, October 18, 1785, Trinity Church Archives, Box 579 Cong. 1, "Gifts."

[64] *Minutes of the Common Council*, May 16, 1787, vol. 1, (New York: City of New York, 1917), 296

[65] Franklin to Jay, August 24, 1786 *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, unpublished but available online at <http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedVolumes.jsp>.

[66] *Minutes of the Common Council*, March 21, 1787, 1:285.

[67] *Ibid.*, April 3, 1787, 1:290.

[68] The wording of the announcement to the Vestry of Trinity Church is virtually the same as what was given to the Common Council: "Mr. Duane further reported that at the request of the Corporation of the City, the Committee had given permission for the Monument of Gen'l Montgomery to be erected under the Portico of St. Paul's Chapel in front of the great Window. Resolved that this board so approve of the Proceedings of the Committee and hereby ratify the same. "Minutes of the Vestry," vol. 1 (May 23, 1787), 489.

[69] Katherine M. Babbitt, *Janet Montgomery, Hudson River Squire* (Monroe, NY: Library Research Associates, 1974), 37–38. For further information on the fate of Montgomery's body after his death in Quebec, and his re-interment in New York, see "General Richard

Montgomery and His Monument in New York," *Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society to the legislature of the State of New York*, (1916), 641–51.

[70] It has been speculated that the architect may have been Thomas McBean, a Scottish architect, builder, and student of James Gibbs, but this attribution cannot be documented.

[71] "Minutes of the Vestry," June 18, 1787, 492.

[72] Scott Berg, makes much the same point; *Grand Avenue*, 63.

[73] "Minutes of the Vestry," 492.

[74] Michael Driskel has recently published a highly detailed and convincing analysis of L'Enfant's Glory altarpiece. Michael Driskel, "By the Light of Providence: The Glory Altarpiece at St. Paul's Chapel, New York City," *Art Bulletin* 89 (December 2007), 715–37.

[75] Margaret Elliman Henry, "L'Enfant and St. Paul's Chapel," *Trinity Parish Herald*, October/November 1947. Reprinted in Caemmerer, *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*, 464.

[76] *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787.

[77] Thomas Nash, the architect in charge of the 1920s restoration, in his "Preliminary Report in Connection with the Restoration of St. Paul's Chapel, wrote on March 11, 1925: "The altar piece back of the Montgomery Monument should be most carefully examined for the original coloring, and would be placed back, of course, in its original position and condition. This is a most valuable piece of design, having been made by General L'Enfant... The Secretary of the Metropolitan Museum [Henry W. Kent] tells me that it is the most important restoration that could be made in New York. With this I heartily agree." "St. Paul's Chapel—Repairs and Improvements," *Trinity Archives*, Box 545, File 545–5

[78] Robert E. Livingston, "Montgomery Monument Design, Long Hidden, Seen Again," *Gas-Logic* 39, March 1926, 3.

[79] *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787.

[80] Caemmerer, in his *The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant*, at page 100 notes: "Mrs. Henry [a member of St. Paul's congregation in the 1960s] related to this writer that it is believed that L'Enfant designed the [painting of the] Great Seal of the United States." Also see Patterson and Dougall, *Eagle and the Shield*, 386–88.

[81] As far as is known, the only other official symbol of the United States is the American flag, which was approved by the Second Continental Congress, July 14, 1777.

[82] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 297.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, wooden casing for *Monument to General Richard Montgomery*, 1787. St. Paul's Chapel, New York City. New York Trinity Church Archives. Photo Wurtz Bros. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, St. Paul's Chapel, exterior, 1764. With Jean-Jacques Cafféri's *Monument to General Richard Montgomery*, 1777. Behind window, wooden casing by Pierre L'Enfant, 1787, New York City.

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Fig. 3, *The Great Seal*, 1782. First die. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Duval and Francastel, Paris, after sketches by Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Society of the Cincinnati eagle worn by Tench Tilghman. 1784. Gold, enamel, silk. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Sketch for the design of the obverse of a medal for the Society of the Cincinnati, 1783. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Sketch for the design of the reverse of a medal for the Society of the Cincinnati, 1783. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Diploma indicating membership of Lt. Matthew Gregory in the Society of the Cincinnati. Issued September 1, 1789 and signed by George Washington, president, and Henry Knox, secretary. Ink on paper. Reproduced by permission of The Society of the Cincinnati, Washington, D.C. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, America Triumphant and Britannia in Distress, 1782. Frontispiece, *Weatherwise's Town and Country Almanack*. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, *Ruins of Trinity Church*, ca. 1780. Colored lithograph. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, alter, 1787. Interior St. Paul's Chapel, New York City. [\[return to text\]](#)