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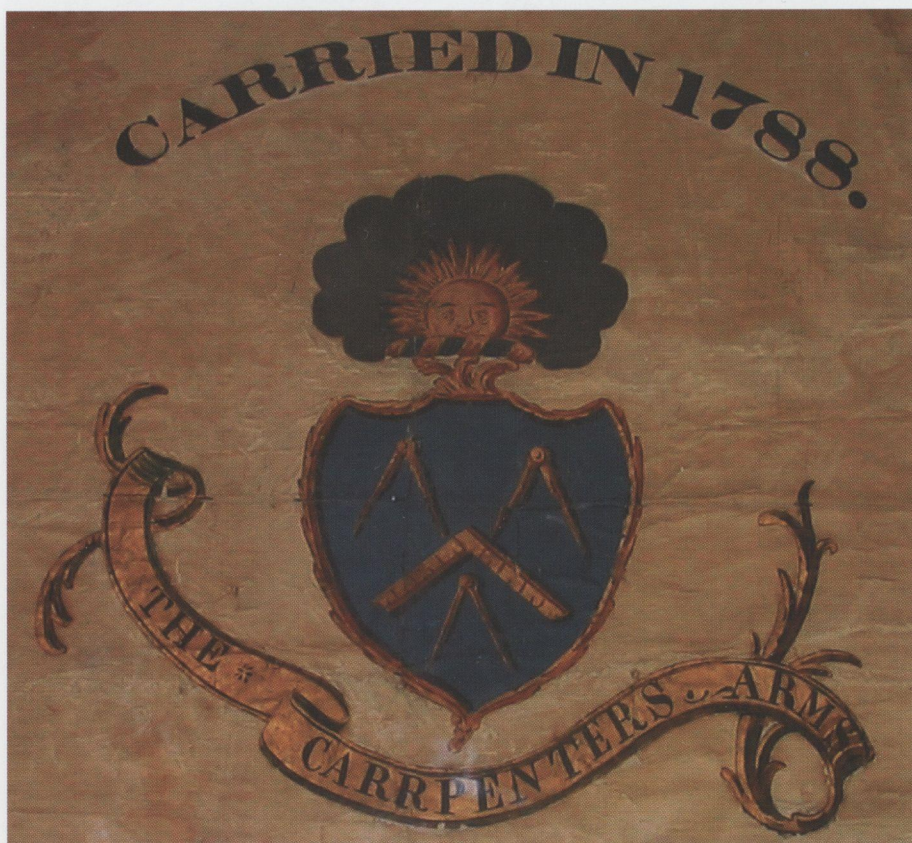
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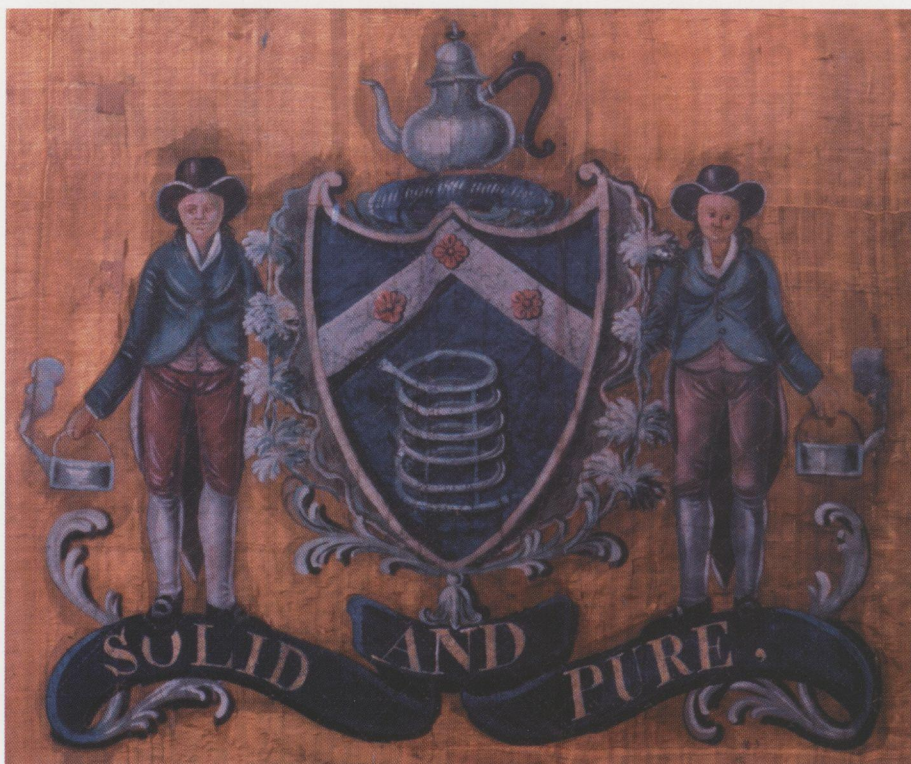
PLATE 3



Photograph by Joseph McMillan

Detail from the flag of the Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia, 1788.
See page 68.

PLATE 4



Detail from the flag of the Society of Pewterers of New York, 1788.
Collection of The New-York Historical Society, inventory no. 1903.12.
See page 73.

AMERICAN GUILD ARMS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSIONS OF 1788

Joseph McMillan

Throughout the first half of 1788, the major cities of the United States witnessed a series of civic festivities without precedent in North America. Beginning in Boston on February 8 and concluding in Albany, New York, six months later, throngs of people paraded through the streets of one city after another, celebrating the state-by-state ratification of the new federal Constitution that had been drafted the previous September and urging its approval by the remaining states.¹

What was novel was not that civic processions took place; processions had often been organized during the colonial period to celebrate royal birthdays or welcome new governors.² But the events that took place in 1788 were different from the previous type of procession in four important ways. In the first place, they were on a much grander scale. Colonial processions had typically involved several hundred people at most: a militia company or two, the mayor and council, the judges and other officials, perhaps some leading merchants and landowners, but not much more. By contrast, the Constitutional celebrations of 1788 ran into thousands of participants, those in Philadelphia and New York with as many as 5,000 marchers apiece.

Secondly, unlike the colonial processions, those celebrating the new Constitution consciously represented all the elements of each city's citizenry, not merely the official elite. In particular, the class of skilled artisans comprising the traditional trades – carpenters, founders, butchers, coopers, and so on – comprised a majority of the participants. Indeed, it was this class of craftsmen that initiated and organized the first of the processions, in Boston, and they in concert with the leading merchants were the driving force behind many of the others, including the event of 23 July in New York. In all the events, artisans made up 'the heart of the parade',³ one company of craftsmen after another marching on foot or riding on horse-drawn floats, dressed in their traditional smocks, aprons, or similar attire, and carrying with them the tools of their trades.

¹ Major processions took place in Boston (8 February); Baltimore (1 May); Charleston, South Carolina (27 May); Portsmouth, New Hampshire (3 July); Philadelphia (4 July); New Haven, Connecticut (4 July); New York city (23 July); and Albany, New York (8 August).

² Paul A. Gilje, 'The Common People and the Constitution: popular culture in New York City in the late eighteenth century', in *New York in the Age of the Constitution, 1775-1800*, edd. Paul A. Gilje and William Pencash (Rutherford, NJ, 1992), p. 51.

³ Jürgen Heideking, 'Celebrating the Constitution: the Federal Processions of 1788 and the emergence of a Republican festive culture in the United States', in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American festive culture from the Revolution to the early twentieth century*, edd. Jürgen Heideking, Geneviève Fabre and Kai Dreisbach (New York 2001), p. 26.

THE COAT OF ARMS

Thirdly, the 1788 parades were in an entirely different style from that of the staid formal ceremonies that had taken place in the past. They were filled with metaphor. Indeed, they were organized in the form of allegorical histories of the United States, with foresters bearing axes leading the way (symbolizing the clearing of the wilderness for settlement), typically followed by a team of oxen pulling a plough and men dressed and equipped as sowers, reapers, haymakers and the like, symbolizing agriculture. Only after this symbolic representation of the settlement of the land do we find the elements representing the urban arts and industries. Some of the guilds demonstrated their crafts using mobile workshops, producing bread, cloth, metal tools, and other items as the floats rolled through the streets, references to the contemporary workaday world that seldom if ever appeared in English guild processions of the time.⁴ Several of the parades included small ships, built for the purpose and hauled through the streets on wheels, symbolizing the new Constitution as a ship of state; the one in Philadelphia also featured a temple-like structure built by the Carpenter's Company signifying the Constitution as a 'new roof' sheltering the thirteen states.

Finally, and of the greatest interest to heraldic scholars, armorial display played a major role. Not only did the parades include such elements as banners of the United States and its ally France – and, in Philadelphia, a float in the form of a 13-foot-high eagle bearing the arms adopted by Congress six years before – but the trades themselves made prominent use of heraldic devices on items ranging from flags to ceremonial workmen's aprons. In Boston, according to a contemporary observer, 'each profession or art on this occasion was headed by appropriate flags and banners, bearing its respective coat of arms and emblems.'⁵ The implication that every single trade in the Boston procession displayed a coat of arms may be an exaggeration, but the detailed accounts of other processions reveal that at least half of the craft organizations in both Philadelphia and New York did so, and the frequency of their display is also mentioned in accounts of the processions in most other cities.⁶

⁴ Dietmar Schloss, 'The nation as spectacle: the Grand Federal Procession in Philadelphia, 1788', in *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation*, pp. 55-7, states that by the late 17th century the Lord Mayor's Show in the City of London had ceased to include any overt reference to or portrayal of the actual contemporary world of work.

⁵ Ebenezer Fox, *The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox of Roxbury, Massachusetts* (Boston 1838), p. 95.

⁶ A possible exception was Baltimore, where the most complete contemporary account (in the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* for 6 May 1788) expressly notes arms as having been displayed by the butchers but does not use that term with respect to symbols carried by the other thirty-five trade groups present. It appears, however, that arms were also displayed by at least a few other trades, from later statements that the armorial flags carried by their successors in an 1809 Independence Day procession were replicas of flags carried in 1788; cf. Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore. Workers and politics in the age of revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana 1984), p. 242. In Portsmouth, we are told that 'every profession was distinguished by some insignia or badge peculiar to it'; Nathaniel Adams, *Annals of Portsmouth* (Portsmouth, NH, 1825), p. 293.

Historians of social structures and the labour movement have made passing reference to the use of heraldic iconography in these events, but, as Dietmar Schloss observes, it has not been seriously studied in any depth.⁷ To the extent that they do discuss it, different scholars assess the use of arms in startlingly contradictory ways. One describes the craft symbols as 'self-created' and thus concludes that the display constituted an assertion of a new republican identity.⁸ Another asserts that the arms were simply adapted from those of the English trade guilds, and therefore reflected not revolutionary change but rather a sense of continuity in American artisans' self-image as 'the proud upholders of the "mystery" of goldsmithing or coopering or woodworking'.⁹

Examining the arms used by these organizations from a heraldic point of view reveals that neither of these positions is entirely right, nor entirely wrong. Seventy-six coats of arms are mentioned in contemporary descriptions of six of the nine major Constitutional processions of 1788.¹⁰ Most of these are found in the two largest processions, in Philadelphia and New York, not because armorial display at these events was necessarily the most extensive but because the leaders of the organizing committees – Francis Hopkinson in Philadelphia and Colonel Richard Platt in New York – left detailed accounts of the processions including, in many cases, descriptions of the bearings used. Altogether, sufficient contemporary evidence exists to place thirty of these seventy-six coats of arms into one of three categories: sixteen are entirely original; three are derived but heraldically differenced from English models; and eleven are practically the same as the arms of the corresponding London livery companies.

Of the remaining forty-six coats of arms, seven belong to trades for which no London counterpart seems to have existed, but the arms are not described in enough detail to categorize them with certainty. The other thirty-nine are described in the accounts as, for example, 'the bakers' arms' or 'the arms of the company'. Such phrases probably refer to the undifferentiated arms of the London companies; this was not always so, however, given that the arms borne by the Philadelphia carpenters and the New York pewterers were described in exactly such terms, and yet, as will be seen, were both heraldically distinct designs.¹¹

⁷ Schloss, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁸ Gilje, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁹ Howard B. Rock, 'Artisans and paradigms', *Labor History* 40 (1999), p. 43.

¹⁰ Those in Boston, Baltimore, Portsmouth, Philadelphia, New York and Albany.

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, the following descriptions of the arms are taken from contemporary accounts of the Philadelphia and New York processions prepared by the organizing officials, Francis Hopkinson in Philadelphia and Colonel Richard Platt in New York. Three slightly different versions of Hopkinson's account exist: 'An Account of the Grand Federal Procession, Performed at Philadelphia on Friday the 4th of July', in *The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq.*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia 1792), pp. 349-401; 'Report by Francis Hopkinson, Chairman of the Committee of Arrangement', reprinted in J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia 1884), pp. 447-52; and 'Account of the Grand Federal Procession', in Sarah Alcock, *A Brief History of the Revolution* (Philadelphia 1843), pp. 66-93. The last, which is the most complete and detailed, is the source of all quoted descriptions of arms of the

Original Arms

Among the trade organizations that bore arms during the early decades of the American republic, the *Carpenters' Company of the City and County of Philadelphia* is distinguished in several ways. First, it was the oldest and probably the most important of the groups involved in the processions, having been founded in 1724. The company, which comprised master builders and architects, was a significant force in the economic and civic life of the city before the Revolution. In fact, for a time in 1774 the Continental Congress met in Carpenters' Hall, the company's headquarters, which stands a few hundred yards from the building now known as Independence Hall (at the time, the Pennsylvania State House). It is also the only one of the 1788 organizations in existence today, still serving as the principal trade association for leaders of the Philadelphia construction industry. Finally, the Carpenters' Company is one of only three organizations whose original 1788 flag is known to have survived (see **Plate 3**).

The arms of the Carpenters' Company are *Azure a carpenter's square chevronwise between three compasses expanded or*. The crest is a rising sun and the motto 'Justice and benevolence.' These arms appear not only on the white silk flags carried in the 4 July 1788, Grand Federal Procession and the subsequent procession for the 1832 centennial of George Washington's birth – both on display in Carpenters' Hall – but also carved in stone on the building as well as on the company's bookplates, membership certificates, and elsewhere (see **Figure 1**). While there is a family resemblance with the arms of London's Worshipful Company of Carpenters (*Argent a chevron engrailed between three compasses expanded sable*), the two are totally distinct in heraldic terms.

The hairdressing trades of *barber-surgeons* and *peruke-makers* marched as a combined body in Philadelphia and carried a device combining the arms of the two professions. Neither of them is heraldically related to the arms of the barber-surgeons of London, and there seems never to have been a formal organization of peruke-makers in London with arms that could have served as a model. Francis Hopkinson described the arms as they appeared on the company's flag:

The standard, a white field with the arms of the company and other devices suited to the occasion, namely a pillar, the emblem of strength, with a cap of liberty, supported by twelve hands, in gules, representing the twelve concurring states that called the grand convention; a pelican and her young, in a field, azure, the arms of the barber surgeons; a goat rampant, in full coat, argent, in a field, sable, the arms of the peruke-makers; with two arms extended at top, hand in hand, the emblem of union and friendship; supporters to the arms, a land and river horse, with ornaments. Motto, 'United we stand'.

[Sarah Alcock, *Brief History of the Revolution*, Philadelphia 1843, p. 91]

Unfortunately, it is not clear from the description where the pillar with the liberty cap should be placed or exactly how the pelican and goat should be marshalled.

[*Note 11 continued*]

Philadelphia companies. For the New York event, I have used the version of Platt's report, 'Federal Procession in Honor of the Constitution of the United States', printed in Frank Moss, *The American Metropolis: from Knickerbocker days to the present time*, vol. 1 (New York 1897), pp. 258-93.

Figure 1: Bookplate,
Carpenters' Company
of Philadelphia.

Library of Congress, Prints and
Photographic Division, Historic
American Buildings Survey.



A few weeks later, New York's *Amicable Society of Peruke-Makers and Hair Dressers* used an entirely different coat from that of its Philadelphia brethren, but equally original in its design. Platt described the arms as 'a wig in quarters with three razors on top of the arms for a crest'. His account does not include the tinctures of these arms.

The *Windsor and rush-chair makers* marched with the cabinet-makers in New York in 1788, but once again Platt's description of the arms on their banner is too scanty to reconstruct the design, other than to ascertain that it did not duplicate the arms of any known London guild: 'A turning lathe and two Windsor chairs properly emblazoned.'

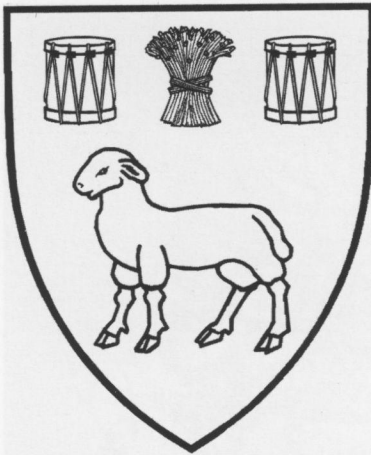


Figure 2: Arms of the Drum-Makers of New York, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

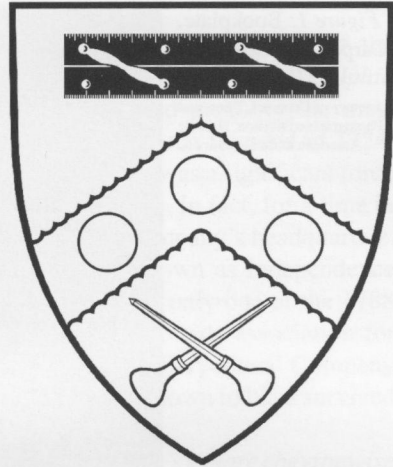


Figure 3: Arms of the Engravers of Philadelphia, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

The *drum-makers* of New York bore 'two drums in the corners; a sheaf of flax in the center at top; a lamb underneath; on the left of the arms, an oak tree; on the right, a man leaning on the arms, representing the drum maker.' In this case, while Platt's report does not provide the tinctures, the arrangement of the charges is sufficient to permit reconstruction of the design (see **Figure 2**). The choice of the flax and lamb are nicely allusive to the materials used in the making of drums: flax to make the linen ropes used to tune the drum, lambskin for the drumheads.

The Philadelphia *engravers* adopted an original armorial design expressly for the Grand Federal Procession: 'Or, on a chevron engrailed, gules (between a parallel ruler, sable, barred and studded of the first, and two gravers saltier ways, azure, handle of the third) three plates' (see **Figure 3**). The crest was 'a copper-plate on a sand-bag proper.'¹²

In the New York procession, the *carvers and engravers* marched as a single unit carrying impaled arms, also of original design. The dexter field was 'Argent, a chevron, or, between two gravers in chief, proper, a copper-plate on a sand bag in base, proper, for engravers,' and the sinister 'Argent, a mallet and gouge, proper, for carvers' (see **Figure 4**). The motto was *Arte et labore*.

A shield with three smaller shields – usually blank – is a common design for the arms of painters' guilds all across Europe,¹³ including London's Company of Painter-Stainers. The *painters and glaziers* of New York carried arms loosely based on this traditional pattern, yet entirely different from those of either the painter-stainers

¹² The three plates on the chevron may have been an allusion to the arms of Penn, former proprietors of Pennsylvania (*Ar. on a fess sa. three roundels ar.*).

¹³ Carl Alexander von Volborth, *Heraldry: rules, customs and styles* (Poole 1981), p. 186.

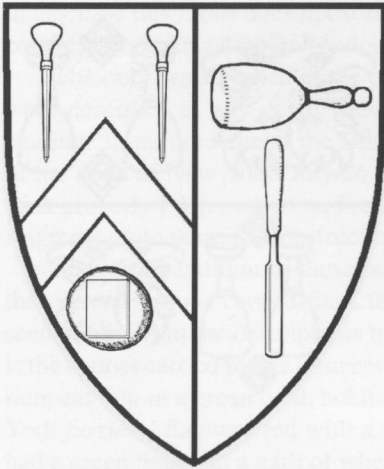


Figure 4: Arms of the Carvers and Engravers of New York, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

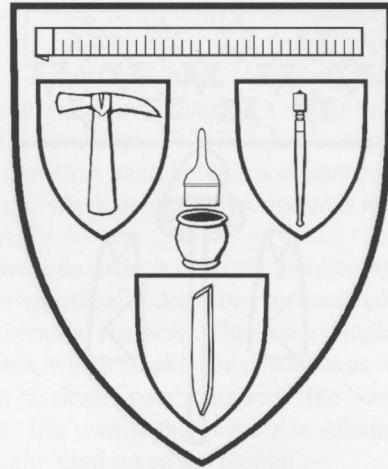


Figure 5: Arms of the Painters and Glaziers of New York, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

or the glaziers of London. Instead, the New York society took the classic painters' shield and compounded it with devices representing the glaziers' trade: 'Or three shields gule[s]; on the first a hammer, proper; in the second a diamond; in the third a lederkin; on the two upper shields a rule; in the center of the field a paint-pot and brush' (see **Figure 5**). If we keep in mind that these arms belonged to an organization partly composed of glaziers, it is obvious that 'diamond' does not refer to either a lozenge or a jewel but to the diamond-tipped implement used for cutting panes of glass. 'Lederkin' is somewhat more obscure. More usually spelled 'lathekin,' this was a pointed wooden implement used to create the groove into which the pane was inserted in a leaded window. For a crest, the New York society bore a glass cap, and its supporters were two men, one holding a pillar and pencil and the other a sash frame. The motto was 'May we succeed'.

The *sugar refiners* of Philadelphia bore 'or, on a staff, erect in pale, proper, a cap of liberty, azure, turned up ermine; placed between two sugar loaves in fess, covered with blue paper: on a chief of the third, thirteen stars argent' (see **Figure 6**, over). The crest was a lighted candle in a candlestick with the words 'American Manufactures' and 'Proof' inscribed on its base. The motto was 'Double refined,' and the arms were adorned with sugar canes. As there was no corresponding trade among the London livery companies, this was clearly an original composition, a point emphasized by the obviously American azure chief with stars representing the thirteen states.

Curriers and tanners were usually combined in American processions as a single organization. Only the New York society, however, seems to have had an original coat of arms, 'Azure, a flesher, and a currying-knife,' the placement and tincture of the implements being unspecified. The crest was 'a bull's head, horned', and the supporters were a tanner on the dexter side and a currier on the sinister, both dressed in working clothes and carrying the distinctive tools of their respective trades.

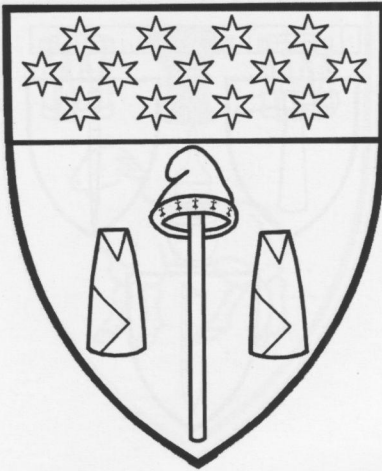


Figure 6: Arms of the Sugar Refiners of Philadelphia, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

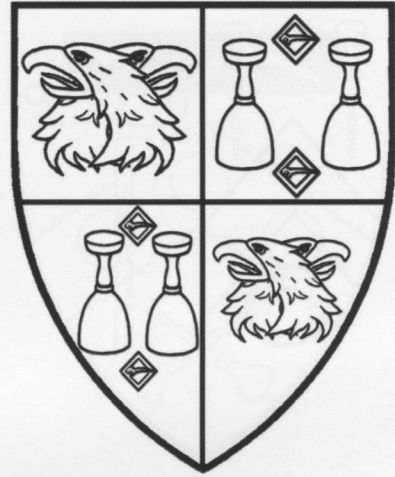


Figure 7: Arms of the Goldsmiths, Silversmiths and Jewellers of New York, 1788.

Drawing by the author.

The *ship joiners* of both Philadelphia and New York carried banners with coats of arms displaying 'various instruments of the craft.' Platt's description of the New York banner says nothing more about the shield, although he does note the use of a ship as the crest. Hopkinson gives a somewhat more complete description of the Philadelphia ship joiners' arms, but not enough to permit reconstruction of them: 'a binnacle and hen coop, crooked planes and other tools of that profession, proper; thirteen stripes and thirteen stars, ten in full splendour. Motto, "By these we support our families"'. Whatever these arms specifically looked like, however, it is clear that they did not resemble the arms used by (and subsequently granted to) London's nearest counterpart body, the Shipwrights' Company.

The *skinners, breeches-makers, and glovers* of New York carried a flag with a coat of arms showing 'a pair of breeches and three gloves.' The crest was a buck's head and the supporters two bucks rampant. In addition, the flag showed 'a green field, with a ewe and two lambs, one lying down, the other standing.' The last was presumably in the form of a compartment. These arms are completely unlike those of either the Skinners' or Glovers' Company of London and therefore seem to be an original composition. Again, we do not know enough to be able to reconstruct the design.

Platt recorded the New York *whitesmiths* as having carried a flag with the 'arms of the trade, Vulcan's arm and hand with hammer'. The device, of course, is a familiar one. In New York, it had already been adopted as the insignia of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, an umbrella charitable association uniting thirty-one artisan trades, founded three years earlier. It is not clear whether the whitesmiths' arms were simply the arm and hammer on a shield or something more elaborate, but

in any case this motif does not seem to appear anywhere in the arms of any relevant counterpart organization in London.

The only arms carried in the procession of 8 August in Albany, New York, that were described in any detail were those of the *printers*, who carried a white flag bearing 'in an escutcheon the Bible, the Constitution, Sept. 17, 1787, Ratification of the State of New York, July 26, 1788 – on a wreath, a hand holding a composing stick properly [*sic*]; motto Our Freedom is secured.' Obviously this description is too fragmentary to permit reconstruction of the arms.¹⁴

Finally, in addition to these references to arms as such, it is worth mentioning that several groups carried flags that, while not specifically described as armorial, seem likely from the descriptions to have had a heraldic character. The best example is the banner carried by the *weavers* of Philadelphia, which Hopkinson describes as 'a rampant lion in a green field, holding a shuttle in his dexter paw'. Similarly, the New York *furriers*' flag was red with a tiger, 'large as life', while the *farmers* in Albany had a green flag with a garb of wheat and the motto 'God speed the plough'.

Arms adapted from London models

As has already been noted, three flags carried in the 1788 Constitutional processions are known to have survived. Of these, two are of an armorial character, one belonging to the Philadelphia carpenters and the other to New York's *Society of Pewterers*. The latter, now in the collection of the New York Historical Society, is orange with the U.S. national flag in the canton, a perspective painting of a pewterer's workshop in the fly, and the arms of the society in full colour in the lower hoist: *Azure a coil still proper, on a chevron enhanced argent three rosettes gules*. The crest is a pewter coffee pot while the supporters are two miners holding burning lamps in their hands. The motto is 'Solid and pure' (see **Plate 4**).

As with the Philadelphia carpenters, these arms also resemble those borne by the corresponding London livery company. In the case of the New York pewterers, the resemblance is close enough that they should be categorized as differenced rather than an original design, but the differencing is clearly substantial enough for the two to be considered heraldically distinct. The arms of London's Pewterers' Company are *Azure on a chevron or between three strikes [or limbecks] argent three roses gules slipped and leaved proper*. In the American version, the English roses have become lozenge-shaped, four-petalled flowers and the chevron has changed from *or* to *argent*. Moreover, the three limbecks, an old type of still, have been modernized and reduced to one, the old grid-like type shown on the London arms being replaced by an eighteenth-century model with the distinctive coil.

The *Gold and Silver Smiths' Society* of New York bore arms (see **Figure 7**) that are similarly derivative of those of London's Goldsmiths Company, but also in a distinctive fashion. The London company's arms are *Quarterly 1 and 4 Gules a lion's face or, 2 and 3 Azure a covered cup with two buckles in chief or*. The New York organization replaced the English lion's face with an American emblem, making their

¹⁴ From the account of the Baltimore procession in the *Independent Journal* (New York), 14 May 1788, p. 2.

first and fourth quarters 'Or two eagles heads cross'd azure.' The second and third quarters were similar to the London company's, but with the addition of a second cup: 'two cups inverted between two gold buckles.' The crests were also quite similar, that of the New York society blazoned as 'Justice seated, holding in one hand a balance and in the other the touchstone,' while the London crest has the woman (not described as Justice) holding the same implements issuant from the crest-wreath rather than seated. The New York supporters were two savages resting on a globe, while those of the London company are two unicorns. The New York motto was 'Justice is the queen of virtues,' a translation of the Londoners' *Justitia virtutum regina*.

In adapting the London arms by changing the national emblem in the first and fourth quarters and making a minor change to the second and third, the New Yorkers may have consciously been following the precedent of the goldsmiths of Dublin, whose arms substitute Irish harps for the Londoners' lion's faces and move the buckles from above to below the covered cups.¹⁵

The Philadelphia *printers, bookbinders, and stationers* provide another interesting example of arms that were obviously based on those of the London counterpart organization, but with just enough alteration to difference and Americanize them:

[A]zure, a chevron argent, charged with an American bald-eagle volant, and two reams of paper, (corded, over blue covers), between three books closed; and in chief, perched on the point of the chevron, a dove with an olive-branch; all proper. Supporters, two Fames, blowing their trumpets, clothed with sky-blue flowing robes, spangled with stars, argent. Crest, a Bible displayed, proper, on a wreath azure and argent. Under the escutcheon, two pens placed saltier ways, proper. Motto—We protect and are supported by Liberty.

[Alcock, *Brief History of the Revolution*, p. 86]

As can be seen, the red eagle on the arms of the London Stationers' Company has become an American bald eagle on those of the Philadelphia company. The roses of England have been replaced by reams of paper, and the dove of the Holy Spirit has given way to a simple dove of peace, perched and presumably close rather than descending from the chief. The motto has been secularized and made to refer directly to the role of the free press in the young American republic.

London arms used with minor or no differences

As already mentioned, the majority of the trade societies displaying craft arms in the processions of 1788 used the arms of their London counterparts without significant difference, if any at all. The London arms are sufficiently well known that it is not necessary to describe their designs in any detail, other than to note a few cases to illustrate the nature of the minor distinctions adopted in the American setting.

In several cases, whatever differences may have existed between the English and American designs would seem to have been inadvertent, if indeed there were any differences at all. For example, several of the descriptions of the arms borne by American societies omit one of the charges that appear in the arms of the London counterpart, most often a chevron. The arms of the New York *blacksmiths and nailors*

¹⁵ A. C. Fox-Davies, *Book of Public Arms* (London 1915).

are described by Platt as 'three hammers crowned,' which, with the addition of a gold chevron, exactly describes the arms of London's Blacksmiths' Company. The same applies to the arms used by the Philadelphia and New York *coachmakers*, both of which are described as bearing three coaches on a blue field, but with no mention of the gold chevron in the arms of the London company. Again, we find the *dyers* of New York bearing 'three madder bags' with no mention of the chevron engrailed argent that appears in the arms of the London dyers. In each of these cases, it seems probable that the arms used actually had the chevrons and that the descriptions are merely incomplete.

Other changes, while not heraldically sufficient to constitute properly differentiated arms, were clearly intentional. The Philadelphia *house-, ship-, and sign-painters* used only the principal quartering of the arms of the Painter-Stainers of London – *Azure three escutcheons argent* – omitting the quartering referring to the staining portion of the trade.

The Philadelphia painters also replaced the phoenix in the crest of the London painters with a hand holding a brush. Such alterations to the crest were used by a number of groups as a means of distinguishing their arms from the English models. The *hatmakers* of Philadelphia, for instance, substituted a beaver for the London felt makers' hat-in-hand, while the tallow chandlers of New York substituted thirteen candles (representing the thirteen states) for the head of John the Baptist.¹⁶ New York's *blacksmiths*, *brewers*, and *coachmakers* all replaced the phoenix, demi-maiden, and chariot of Phoebus in the arms of their respective London counterparts with eagles, that of the brewers carrying a thermometer in its beak. This was a clear reference to the supporter in the U.S. national arms, but perhaps also to the crest of the State of New York, 'an American eagle proper, rising to the dexter from a two-thirds of a globe terrestrial, showing the North Atlantic Ocean with outlines of its shores.'¹⁷ The *stone cutters* of Baltimore also used an eagle as their crest, replacing the castle in the arms of the London masons.¹⁸

Changing supporters was another obvious approach to distinguishing the appearance of the arms from those of the British counterparts without obscuring the continuity of the craft identity expressed in the shield. In some cases the choice of supporters had no apparent political significance; New York's *butchers*, for instance, replaced the winged bulls in the arms of the London company with an ox and a lamb. In others, the American craftsmen clearly sought to express the political ideals of the new nation. New York's coachmakers expressed their hopes for life under the proposed Constitution with figures representing Liberty and Peace in place of the horses supporting the London arms.

Changing the motto offered another mode of expressing support for the new political dispensation, whether in the form of hope for greater protection of domestic

¹⁶ Ten of the thirteen candles were lit, signifying the ten states that had ratified the Constitution at the time of the procession.

¹⁷ As blazoned in New York State Consolidated Laws, cap. 57, art. 6, § 70.

¹⁸ Steffen (note 6 above), p. 242.

products ('Home brew'd is best' for Philadelphia's brewers and 'May our country never want bread' for the same city's *bakers*) or more general democratic sentiments ('Both buildings and rulers are the works of our hands' for Philadelphia's *bricklayers* and 'Virtue alone is true nobility,' for New York's *painters*). Finally, a number of the societies used the traditional English arms but with mottoes seemingly adopted specifically for the occasion, such as the New York butchers' 'Skin me well, dress me neat, and send me aboard the Federal fleet,' and the same city's coachmakers' 'The Federal star shall guide our car'.

Interpreting American guild heraldry

The first important conclusion that can be drawn from this survey of the use of heraldry by craft societies at this critical juncture of American history is the simple fact that heraldry was used extensively. This may seem a trivial point, a simple logical consequence of the survey itself. However the fact that the majority of artisan groups in the two largest parades of the 1788 celebrations turned to the traditional idiom of heraldry as an expression of corporate identity belies the widely held misimpression that arms were in political disrepute as relics of monarchism in the post-Revolutionary United States.¹⁹ Other iconographic styles were readily available, ranging from the biblical to the classical to the realistic depiction of contemporary workers. Indeed, some of the trades used such models, either instead of or alongside heraldic forms. The survival of heraldry as a living form after the Revolution should not really be open to dispute given that the national government, eight of the thirteen states, the two largest cities, and the three oldest colleges all either adopted arms during this period or continued the use of previously existing arms. Nevertheless, the enthusiastic use of arms by working craftsmen – scarcely part of the social elite – in the context of ratification of the new Constitution serves to underline that they saw nothing contradictory between heraldry and republicanism.

At the same time, the degree of heraldic knowledge and sophistication reflected in the arms used varied widely. Some of the companies and societies were clearly prepared to exercise the full extent of their freedom from the control of the English heralds by designing and adopting original arms, while others showed a surprising degree of heraldic literacy in their ability to introduce appropriate differences to distinguish their emblems from those of their English counterparts. Most of them, of course, simply appropriated the arms of the corresponding livery companies of London, although, as we have seen, sometimes with changes in the crest or supporters as a way of Americanizing the arms. Nor were the 1788 parades the first appearance of English guild arms in the American context. Four or more commercial establishments in Philadelphia had names like the Founders Arms, Saddlers Arms, etc., before the Revolution and presumably displayed shop signs with the corresponding arms on them. A painter in Boston displayed the arms of the London

¹⁹ As held by Dom William Wilfrid Bayne, O.S.B., 'Heraldry in democratic America', *CoA* 7 (1962-3), no. 55, p. 283. Such reports are also belied by the fact that 'heraldry books' were among the tools of the trade carried by the painters in the Baltimore parade.

Painter-Stainers' Company as a shop sign as early as 1701 on a house that was still known as 'the Painters' Arms' long after it ceased to be used for that purpose.²⁰ And the Friendly Society of Tradesmen, House Carpenters in the City of New York, printed the undifferenced arms of London's Carpenter's Company at the head of its published work rules in 1767.²¹

In this misappropriation of the London companies' arms, the American guilds were doing nothing but what similar craft organizations in provincial English cities had done before and since: using the arms granted specifically to the London livery companies as their own.²² Other than the belief, evidently shared by English-speaking artisans everywhere, that the London arms belonged to each 'mystery' collectively, regardless of where it was practiced, one factor that might have encouraged American tradesmen to copy the arms of the London companies was that most of the American trade groups had no permanent corporate existence. A full-blown guild structure comparable to that of England never really developed in America, for a variety of reasons having to do with the relatively small markets, shortages of skilled labor, the lack of a single dominant urban area comparable to London, and the long distances between towns. Even in places like Boston and New York, where laws theoretically restricted the practice of certain crafts to officially recognized members of the trade, the more powerful laws of supply and demand made it impossible to prevent anyone who chose to do so from setting up shop as a master tailor, carpenter, or whatever the case may be, or from selling his goods and services at whatever price he saw fit.²³

In consequence, American artisans up to the late 18th century organized themselves less formally than their English brethren. All the coopers or bakers of a particular city might have a common sense of identity and interest, but they only came together in a formal sense when there was a pressing need for collective action. Thus we find statements pursuing particular political and economic objectives issued by the Ship Carpenters' and Caulkers' Club of Boston in 1728 and by the Tanners, Curriers and Cordwainers of Philadelphia in 1779. However, all of these functioned more as political interest groups than as guilds in the traditional sense, as when a wide range of trades from sugar boilers to rope makers petitioned the Massachusetts

²⁰ Scharf and Westcott, op. cit., pp. 875f.; Edward G. Porter, *Rambles in Old Boston* (Boston 1887), pp. 45-7.

²¹ 'Articles and regulations of the Friendly Society of Tradesmen, House Carpenters, in the City of New York' (New York 1767): available on-line at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/rbc/rbpe.1020440a> (Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, 'An American Time Capsule', 12 Sep. 2008).

²² Nick Mansfield, 'Radical rhymes and Union Jacks: a search for evidence of ideologies in 19th c. banners': Working Paper in Economic and Social History no 45, Dept of History, University of Manchester, available on-line at www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/arts/history/workingpapers/wp_45.pdf (accessed 25 May 2008).

²³ W. J. Rorabaugh, *Craft Apprentice: from Franklin to the machine age in America* (Oxford 1988), p. 4; Tina H. Shiller, 'Freemen, servants and slaves: artisans and the craft structure of revolutionary Baltimore town', in *American Artisans: crafting social identity 1750-1850*, edd. Howard B. Rock, Paul A. Gilje and Robert Asher (Baltimore 1995), p. 19.

General Court (legislature) for the institution of protective tariffs during the nine months from June 1784 to February 1785.²⁴

But permanently and formally organized companies and societies were quite rare and, for the most part, transient. Thus one might hypothesize that the members of a particular trade would have had no requirement for a coat of arms, banner, or seal until the need suddenly arose for flags to be carried in the great civic pageants of 1788. Given the shortage of time, it would then be almost inevitable that they would simply borrow whatever pattern was at hand – namely the arms of the great London livery companies, known from widely available heraldic texts – making the minimal adjustments necessary to eliminate unacceptably monarchical references. Only the trades with no clear London equivalents – such as the sugar refiners of Philadelphia, the drum-makers of New York, and the mast-makers of Boston – would need to design original devices for the parades.

Unfortunately, as attractive as this hypothesis is, it cannot be supported with the facts at hand. The clearest refutation can be found in contrasting two groups that were among the most formally organized trade societies in the United States at the time, the Philadelphia and New York carpenters. As we have seen, the Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia, with more than six decades of history behind it, did indeed have a coat of arms of original design, similar to but not pilfered from London's Worshipful Company of Carpenters. On the other hand, the House Carpenters of New York, just as formally established as their Philadelphia counterparts, simply used the undifferentiated arms of the London company. Similarly, the Society of Cordwainers in the City of New York had existed since at least 1769 and the Tailors' Company of Philadelphia since 1771, yet both marched under what were almost certainly the arms of their respective London counterparts, while New York's more recently formed Gold and Silver Smiths' Society and its Society of Peruke Makers and Hair Dressers adopted arms unique to themselves. Meanwhile, such New York trades as the pewterers and skimmers were able to devise either completely new arms or substantially differenced versions of the London originals in time for the procession, even though there is little record of their having any formal corporate existence before then, and even though there were obvious English models that could have been pirated. Further research would be required to discern a clear pattern.

The ratification of the Constitution coincided with the beginning of a shift in the nature of craft organization in the United States. A wave of incorporations of trade societies began around 1790 and continued through the first decades of the nineteenth century, but although these groups still carried the names of the traditional mysteries, their nature was fundamentally changed. Unlike traditional guilds, the new organizations increasingly represented either ownership (the master craftsmen) or labour (the journeymen), but not both. Nevertheless, masters and journeymen put aside their economic differences and marched according to trade, still carrying traditional guild heraldry, when it came to major civic festivities. In addition to the

²⁴ Lawrence A. Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution: the intellectual origins of early American history* (Baltimore 2003), p. 72.

yearly observance of Independence Day, major processions organized on the basis of the artisan trades were held to honour distinguished visitors (the visit of President Washington to Boston in 1789, already mentioned, and of the Marquis de Lafayette to New York in 1824), important anniversaries such as the centenary of Washington's birth (Philadelphia, 1832), the commencement or completion of major infrastructure projects such as the Erie Canal (New York, 1825) and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (Baltimore, 1828), and even momentous current events overseas, like the July Revolution in France (New York and Baltimore, 1830). The heraldry displayed continued to be the same mix of original designs, altered versions of English models, and, still the majority, the undifferentiated arms of the London livery companies.

Gradually, however, craft society membership ceased to be seen by most urban Americans as the defining framework of their civic identity. Fraternal lodges like the Freemasons and Odd Fellows, political organizations like New York's Tammany Society, temperance groups, ethnic and civic societies, and commercial firms began to join and then supplant the traditional craft societies in civic festivities.²⁵ As a result, banners with the arms and insignia of the historic trades started disappearing from the scene. The last time they were carried in New York was for the 1842 opening of the Croton Aqueduct and they seem to have fallen into disuse elsewhere at about the same time.²⁶ Today only the Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia remains as a living reminder of this once flourishing heraldic tradition.

²⁵ Mary P. Ryan, *Civil Wars: democracy and public life in the American city during the nineteenth century* (Berkeley 1997), p. 60

²⁶ David Henkin, *City Reading. Written words and public spaces in antebellum New York* (New York 1998), pp. 93-6.