



1. The Secret Origins of Skull & Bones

The story begins at Yale, where three threads of American social history -- espionage, drug smuggling and secret societies -- intertwine into one.

Elihu Yale was born near Boston, educated in London, and served with the British East India Company, eventually becoming governor of Fort Saint George, Madras, in 1687. He amassed a great fortune from trade and returned to England in 1699. Yale became known as quite a philanthropist; upon receiving a request from the Collegiate School in Connecticut, he sent a donation and a gift of books. After subsequent bequests, Cotton Mather suggested the school be named Yale College, in 1718.

A statue of Nathan Hale stands on Old Campus at Yale University. There is a copy of that statue in front of the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Yet another stands in front of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts (where George H.W. Bush ('48) went to prep school and joined a secret society at age twelve).

Nathan Hale, along with three other Yale graduates, was a member of the "Culper Ring," one of America's first intelligence operations. Established by George Washington, it was successful throughout the Revolutionary War. Nathan was the only operative to be ferreted out by the British, and after speaking his famous regrets, he was hanged in 1776. Ever since the founding of the Republic, the relationship between Yale and the "Intelligence Community" has been unique.

In 1823, Samuel Russell established Russell and Company for the purpose of acquiring opium in Turkey and smuggling it to China. Russell and Company merged with the Perkins (Boston) syndicate in 1830 and became the primary American opium smuggler. Many of the great American and European fortunes were built on the "China"(opium) trade.

One of Russell and Company's Chief of Operations in Canton was Warren Delano, Jr., grandfather of Franklin Roosevelt. Other Russell partners included John Cleve Green (who financed Princeton), Abiel Low (who financed construction of Columbia), Joseph Coolidge and the Perkins, Sturgis and Forbes families. (Coolidge's son organized the United Fruit company, and his grandson, Archibald C. Coolidge, was a co-founder of the Council on Foreign Relations.)

William Huntington Russell ('33), Samuel's cousin, studied in Germany from 1831-32. Germany was a hotbed of new ideas. The "scientific method" was being applied to all forms of human endeavor. Prussia, which blamed the defeat of its forces by Napoleon

in 1806 on soldiers only thinking about themselves in the stress of battle, took the principles set forth by John Locke and Jean Rosseau and created a new educational system. Johan Fitch, in his "Address to the German People," declared that the children would be taken over by the State and told what to think and how to think it.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel took over Fitch's chair at the University Of Berlin in 1817, and was a professor there until his death in 1831. Hegel was the culmination of the German idealistic philosophy school of Immanuel Kant.

To Hegel, our world is a world of reason. The state is Absolute Reason and the citizen can only become free by worship and obedience to the state. Hegel called the state the "march of God in the world" and the "final end". This final end, Hegel said, "has supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the state." Both fascism and communism have their philosophical roots in Hegellianism. Hegellian philosophy was very much in vogue during William Russell's time in Germany.

When Russell returned to Yale in 1832, he formed a senior society with Alphonso Taft ('33). According to information acquired from a break-in to the "tomb" (the Skull and Bones meeting hall) in 1876, "Bones is a chapter of a corps in a German University.... General Russell, its founder, was in Germany before his Senior Year and formed a warm friendship with a leading member of a German society. He brought back with him to college, authority to found a chapter here." So class valedictorian William H. Russell, along with fourteen others, became the founding members of "The Order of Scull and Bones," later changed to "The Order of Skull and Bones".

The secretive Order of Skull and Bones exists only at Yale. Fifteen juniors are "tapped" each year by the seniors to be initiated into next year's group. Some say each initiate is given \$15,000 and a grandfather clock. Far from being a campus fun-house, the group is geared more toward the success of its members in the post-collegiate world.

The family names on the Skull and Bones roster roll off the tongue like an elite party list -- Lord, Whitney, Taft, Jay, Bundy, Harriman, Weyerhaeuser, Pinchot, Rockefeller, Goodyear, Sloane, Stimson, Phelps, Perkins, Pillsbury, Kellogg, Vanderbilt, Bush, Lovett and so on.

William Russell went on to become a general and a state legislator in Connecticut. Alphonso Taft was appointed U.S. Attorney General, Secretary of War (a post many "Bonesmen" have held), Ambassador to Austria, and Ambassador to Russia (another post held by many "Bonesmen"). His son, William Howard Taft ('87), is the only man to be both President of the United States and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.