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Sir Benjamin F. Howard (1835–1908): Soldier, Police Officer, Mason

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Abstract

This work represents a biography of Benjamin F. Howard (1835–1908) as a soldier, police officer, and Mason. It reveals little-known aspects of his life.

The work leaned on five groups of historical sources – (1) archival documents, (2) museum items, (3) collections of published documents, (4) sources of private origin, and (5) periodical press materials. Of particular importance in the context of this research is the second group – a selection of items from the American Civil War Museum and the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University. Methodologically, the study relied on a set of methods commonly used in biographical research.

The study's findings revealed that Benjamin Franklin Howard (1835–1908) started out working as a stonecutter (initially in Washington, DC, and later in Richmond, VA); but it was the American Civil War that truly revealed him to be an organizer and leader, someone whose direction people would follow in the challenging climate of military confrontation. He finished the Civil War in the rank of Captain in command of Company I of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment. Subsequently, he served for many years in the police, where he was promoted to the rank of Major and was appointed Chief of Police for the city of Richmond. At the same time, starting in 1871 he was active as a Mason, progressing in that hierarchy from a candidate for Masonry to a member of the York Rite Knights Templar. In 1900, he filled the post of Eminent Commander of Richmond Commandery No. 2. Throughout his life, Benjamin F. Howard was the kind of person who would not back down from a challenge and would stay true to his duty to the very end.

Keywords: Benjamin Franklin Howard (1835–1908), 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment, Chief of Police, Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19, Richmond Commandery No. 2.

1. Introduction

Benjamin Franklin Howard was born on December 17, 1835, in Washington, DC ([ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152](#)). His father, J.F. Howard, was a native of Virginia. That is where he got married. In the late 1820s, he moved to Washington, DC. He would have a large family. Benjamin F. Howard lived his childhood and youth in Washington, DC. That is where his working life started as a stonecutter ([ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152](#)). And that is where he married Annie Elizabeth Howard on February 3, 1860 ([USFC. Year: 1900; Census Place: Richmond, Marshall Ward, Richmond City, Virginia; Roll: 1739; Page: 21; Enumeration District: 0096](#)). The young married couple settled in the house of her parents. That same year, 1860, the couple moved to Richmond, VA, where Benjamin F. Howard would continue working as a stonecutter. He most likely would have remained a craftsman had it not been for the commencement in 1861 of his history as a soldier, police officer, and Mason.

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2. Materials and methods

The work leaned on five groups of historical sources – (1) archival documents, (2) museum items, (3) collections of published documents, (4) sources of private origin, and (5) periodical press materials.

The first group was represented by the United States Federal Census record for Benjamin F. Howard as a resident of Richmond, VA (USFC).

The second group comprised a selection of museum items from the American Civil War Museum (ACWM) and the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University (Houston, USA). The ones from the American Civil War Museum are a photograph of Captain Benjamin F. Howard taken during the Civil War (ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152) and his Richmond Chief of Police badge (ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.13.01865), which he received on assuming the post in 1865. The one from the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar at Cherkas Global University is a sword that used to belong to Benjamin F. Howard (Figure 1) (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068), which was presented to him by members of Richmond Commandery No. 2 on January 1, 1879.



Fig. 1. Benjamin F. Howard's sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068)

The sword is a rare presentation sword. This one has no scabbard. As a side note, knights from the Masonic order of Knights Templar typically obtained their swords on their own, with swords presented in recognition of one's achievements accounting for just around 1 %. B.F. Howard's presentation sword has an ebony hilt with a cross on it; it has a helmet-shaped pommel (Figure 2). One side of its blade is inscribed with 'Richmond Commandery No. 2' (Figure 3), which indicates that its owner served in the city of Richmond, VA.



Fig. 2. Hilt of the sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068)



Fig. 3. Inscription on one side of the sword blade (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068)

The other side of the sword blade is inscribed with 'Presented to Sgt B.F. Howard by the officers and men of the 1st Police District, as a token of esteem. Jan. 1st, 1879' (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. Inscription on the other side of the blade (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068)

That information enables us to identify the owner of the presentation sword – Sergeant of Police B.F. Howard, whom a group of officer Masons presented with it as a token of esteem, and establish the date that happened – January 1, 1879. The sword was made by Ames Manufacturing Company (Chicopee, MA) (Figure 5).



Fig. 5. Maker's mark on the sword (MHAKT CGU. Collection 1st. Catalog no. 075/KT068)

The third group of sources was represented by a set of collections of published documents related to Masonic organizations – namely the following reports: *Proceedings of the Annual Communication of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of the State of Virginia* (1874–1882), *Proceedings of an Annual Convocation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of Virginia* (1875–1905), and *Proceedings of the Annual Assembly of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the State of Virginia* (1879–1908).

The fourth group included B.F. Howard's own reminiscences, with use made of 'Record of Captain B.F. Howard's Company 'T' 1st VA Infantry Regiment', held at the American Civil War Museum (ACWM. [Record of Captain B.F. Howard...](#)), which offers some insight into his service during the Civil War.

The fifth group incorporated a brief obituary published in *The Times Dispatch* on May 2, 1908, which announced the passing of Major Benjamin F. Howard ([Deaths, 1908: 2 May](#)).

In terms of methodology, the study relied on a set of methods commonly used in biographical research – namely the historical-biographical, deductive, chronological, and content analysis methods.

3. Discussion

The historiography on this subject comprises publications focused on the following two major topics: 1) history of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment; 2) biographical research on members of the Masonic order of Knights Templar.

The first group incorporates one of the earliest works on the history of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment – C.T. Loehr's 'War History of the Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia' (Loehr, 1884), which, similar to many other early works, contains a few historical inaccuracies but nevertheless is an essential source for the history of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment.

Next, there is '1st Virginia Infantry' by L.A. Wallace, Jr., published in 1984. The book is primarily focused on the history of the regiment as a whole, with relatively little consideration given to the role of the individual in that civil conflict (Wallace, 1984).

The history of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment continues to be researched to this day. Specifically, there is A. Powell's 'The Bloody First. A History of the 1st Regiment of Virginia Volunteers in the American Civil War', published in 2018. The book provides a comprehensive account of the regiment's history based on extensive archival and historiographical material (Powell, 2018).

As regards the second group of publications, it is to be noted that the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries was characterized in the United States by the popularity of books with biographical information about residents of a single county or city (The United States..., 1883; Oakes, 1905), and such books often mentioned members of the order of the Knights Templar. In addition, biographical works (registers) were produced focusing on prominent Masons in specific cities and even states (Richardson, 1883; Masonic..., 1902). Lastly, works were, and still are to this day, published representing biographical accounts of the lives of prominent Masons. Here mention needs to be made of the articles 'Eugene F. Falconnet, Soldier, Engineer, Inventor' (Swint, Mohler, 1962), which talks about a prominent Mason in the state of Tennessee, 'Sir Frederick S. Rogers (1847–1908) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University' (Cherkas, 2024), and 'Sir Albert E. Worthington (1849–1915) in the Museum Collection of Cherkas Global University: Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of His Birth' (Cherkas, 2024a). The last two were produced based on items in the museum collection of Cherkas Global University, with that collection itself becoming a subject of research in 2025 (Cherkasova, 2025).

4. Results

Benjamin F. Howard's presentation sword provided a clue to the fact that he served as a sergeant in the 1st Police District and was a member of Richmond Commandery No. 2. Furthermore, the data from the United States Federal Census helped establish his full name and obtain biographical information respecting his service during the Civil War and in the police. The items from the American Civil War Museum helped gain an insight into his service in the Confederate army and the early stages of his service in the police. The portrait of Benjamin F. Howard was supplemented by the works covering the history of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment, while a detailed insight into his activity as a Mason was gained from the collections of published documents. Outlined below are the sketches for a historical portrait of Benjamin F. Howard (1835–1908).

Soldier. The 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment was the first volunteer regiment raised in the state of Virginia. Its organization was completed on April 21, 1861. Benjamin F. Howard was mustered into its Company H as a sergeant that same day. Typically, a company was to have a captain (its commander), three lieutenants, and four sergeants (Loehr, 1884: 13). At the outbreak of the war, the regiment comprised 10 companies from Richmond, but in April three were detached. In mid-July, a company from Washington, DC, was added¹. As a result, the regiment reached a strength of 570 men. It was mustered into Confederate service on June 30, 1861. In July 1861, the regiment saw action twice – first in the Battle of Blackburn's Ford, VA (July 18, 1861), and then in the Battle of First Manassas, VA (July 21, 1861). As early as the following month, Company H, where Sergeant Benjamin F. Howard was serving, had an opening for a lieutenant (Loehr, 1884: 13). On September 28, 1861, Sergeant Benjamin F. Howard was made First Lieutenant (ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152).

In late November 1861, First Lieutenant Benjamin F. Howard was transferred from Company H to Company I. On December 13, 1861, he was in the lineup of Company I, led at the time by Captain J.W. Tabb (Powell, 2018: 48).

In April 1862, when the regiment was reorganized, it contained only six companies. The 1st Virginia Infantry was assigned to A.P. Hill's, J.L. Kemper's, and W.R. Terry's Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia.

¹ In April 1862, that company was transferred to a different regiment.

Between April and May 1862, the regiment that First Lieutenant Benjamin F. Howard served in participated in two battles – the Battle of Yorktown, VA (April–May, 1862), and the Battle of Williamsburg, VA (May 5, 1862).

From May 31 to June 1, 1862, the regiment took part in the Battle of Seven Pines, VA ([Figure 6](#)). During that battle, First Lieutenant Benjamin F. Howard was seriously wounded ([Loehr, 1884: 25](#)). In all, in that battle the regiment lost 14 men killed and 44 wounded, with Company I, which Benjamin F. Howard served in, suffering the most deaths (4) ([Loehr, 1884: 25](#)).

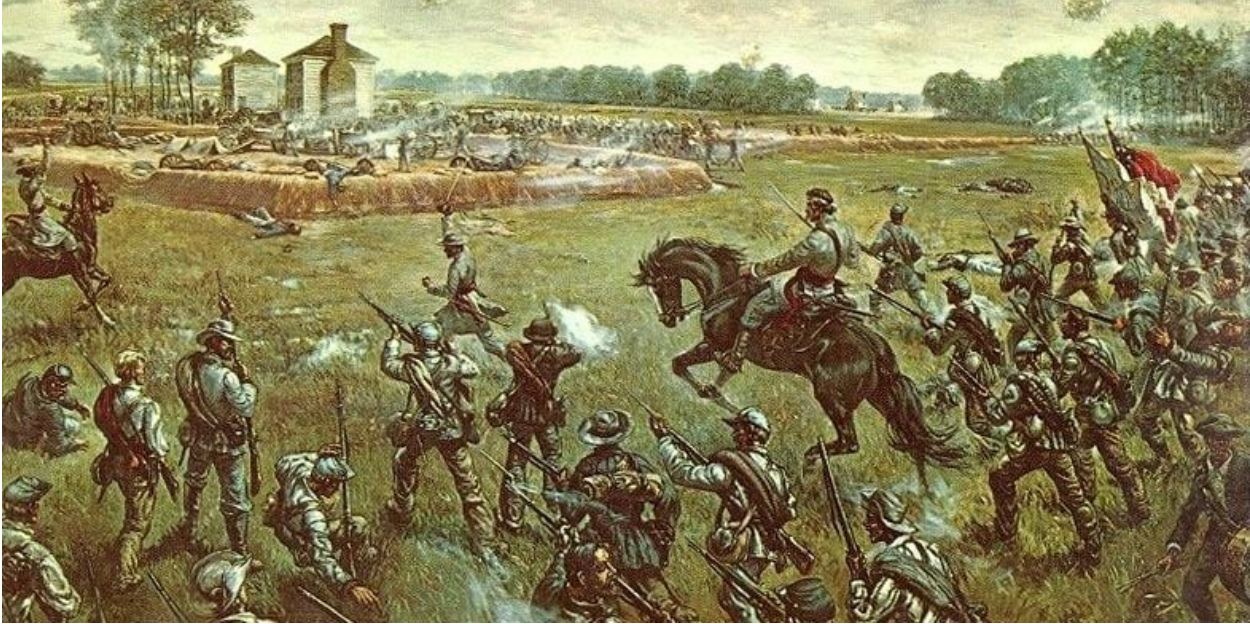


Fig. 6. *The Charge on Casey's Redoubt* (painted by Sidney E. King)

On August 30, 1862, Captain J.W. Tabb, in command of Company I, was killed in the Battle of Second Manassas, VA. Consequently, Benjamin F. Howard, who at the time was out of action due to a wound, was advanced to the rank of Captain in his regiment. However, he was able to actually start performing the duties of the company's commander only in February 1863 ([Figure 7](#)), when he was fit enough to return to duty ([Powell, 2018: 157](#)).



Fig. 7. Captain Benjamin F. Howard, commander of Company I of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment (1863) ([ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152](#))

Following his convalescence, Benjamin F. Howard took part in the Battle of Suffolk, VA (April–May, 1863).

In the summer of 1863, the regiment suffered heavy losses during the Battle of Gettysburg, PA (July 1–3, 1863). It lost about 120 men out of about 160 who went into the charge in that battle, with 23 killed and nearly 100 more left on the field wounded and missing (Loehr, 1884: 25).

On the morning of the 4th of July, the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment mustered about 30 soldiers and officers under the command of Captain Benjamin F. Howard (Loehr, 1884: 25). It is to be noted that B.F. Howard had not taken part in the charge for medical reasons, becoming the regiment's only officer to have passed through that battle unhurt (Powell, 2018: 202).

After the regiment was reinforced and recovered its combat capability, it continued to engage in combat.

Subsequently, the regiment took part in the Battle of Plymouth, NC (April 17–20, 1864), and the Battle of Proctor's Creek, VA (May 16, 1864).

On May 18, 1864, when placed in a fort at the Hewlett House, VA, the regiment came under the fire of the enemy's gunboats and had to withstand it for about 11 hours. With no artillery to defend its exposed position, the regiment was unable to respond with a single shot. The losses were two killed and seven wounded from the regiment, with Company I hit the heaviest with four wounded, including Captain Benjamin F. Howard (Loehr, 1884: 49).

Subsequently, the regiment took part in the Battle of North Anna, VA (May 23–26, 1864), and the Battle of Cold Harbor, VA (June 1–June 3, 1864).

On February 20, 1865, the regiment met and vowed to continue its resistance (Loehr, 1884: 55), rejecting the propositions for peace made by President Lincoln (Loehr, 1884: 55). However, despite its strong fighting spirit, the Confederate army was facing a critical situation overall.

The 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment's last engagements were the Battle of Dinwiddie Court House, VA (March 31, 1865), the Battle of Five Forks, VA (April 1, 1865), the Battle of Sailor's Creek, VA (April 6, 1865), and the Battle of Appomattox Court House, VA (April 9, 1865).

On April 9, 1865, the regiment's remaining men and officers surrendered alongside General Lee (commander of the Army of Northern Virginia) at Appomattox Courthouse. The Civil War was now over for Captain Benjamin F. Howard.

On April 17, 1865, B.F. Howard was released from captivity in Richmond (ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.14.00152).

Following the war, Benjamin F. Howard became a member of the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment Veterans Association (Powell, 2018: 289).

Police officer. A combat officer with leadership abilities, Benjamin F. Howard joined the police force subsequent to his release from captivity. As early as December 8, 1865, he was appointed Chief of Police to head the police force in Richmond during the martial law period. As a side note, with the end of the Civil War, the federal government established martial law in Richmond and the Police Department there was abolished.

On assuming the post, Benjamin F. Howard received a badge of the Chief of Police of Richmond, VA (Figure 8).



Fig. 8. Richmond Chief of Police badge received by Benjamin F. Howard on assuming the post in December 1865 (ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.13.01865)

His first badge was later replaced by a gold badge made especially for him, which was presented to him by the men of the First Police Station ([ACWM. Catalog no. 0985.13.01865](#)).

In 1870, President Ulysses S. Grant allowed Virginia back into the Union. The Richmond Police Department was re-established under Major John Poe, and Benjamin F. Howard continued service as a sergeant in the 1st Police District. The records show him still employed in the police force as a sergeant in 1874. He remained in this role at least until 1891.

Around 1892, he was granted the rank of Lieutenant, and right before 1895's beginning – that of Captain.

In 1895, Major Benjamin F. Howard replaced Major John Poe as Chief of Police for Richmond following the latter's passing.

According to census data, Benjamin F. Howard was at the head of the police in Richmond in 1900 ([USFC. Year: 1900; Census Place: Richmond, Marshall Ward, Richmond City, Virginia; Roll: 1739; Page: 21; Enumeration District: 0096](#)).

Major Benjamin F. Howard stepped down as Chief of Police in 1904. He was replaced by Captain E.P. Hulce.

Mason. It is known that in 1873 Benjamin F. Howard became a Master Mason in Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19¹, his name figuring in the list of members of that lodge ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1874: 174](#)). If we take into account that from joining as an Entered Apprentice it typically took about two years to become a Master Mason, Benjamin F. Howard is much likely to have joined the lodge around 1871.

As early as 1874, he became Junior Deacon ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1875: 79](#)). In 1875, he was made Senior Deacon ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1876: 113](#)). In 1876, he continued to serve in the capacity of Senior Deacon ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1877: 103](#)). Typically, the lodge's Masons held their posts for a term of 2 years.

In 1877–1878, he was appointed to his next post – Junior Warden ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1877a: 97; Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1878: 125](#)).

In 1879–1880, he rose to the position of Senior Warden, i.e. the second officer of the lodge in terms of seniority ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1879: 123; Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1880: 136](#)). In 1881–1882, he became the lodge's Master ([Proceedings of the Special Communication..., 1881: 222; Proceedings of the 105th Annual Communication..., 1882: 121](#)), attaining the highest office within Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19. In 1883, he became the lodge's Past Master ([Proceedings of the 106th Annual Communication..., 1883: 115](#)).

His initiation as a Master Mason in 1873 got Benjamin F. Howard started on the path through the Masonic hierarchy. As early as 1874, he became a Companion of Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3² ([Proceedings of an Annual Convocation..., 1875: 58](#)). In 1875, he was serving as the chapter's Principal Sojourner ([Proceedings of an Annual Convocation..., 1876: 81](#)). In 1876, he became the chapter's King, i.e. its second-in-command ([Proceedings of an Annual Convocation..., 1877: 29](#)). In 1877, he became the chapter's High Priest, the highest officer in Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3 ([Proceedings of an Annual Convocation..., 1878: 27](#)). In 1878, he continued in the same capacity ([Proceedings of an Annual Convocation..., 1879: 31](#)). In 1879, he became the chapter's Past High Priest ([Proceedings of the Seventy-Second Annual Convocation..., 1879: 34](#)).

His outstanding progress up the Masonic hierarchy opened another door for him – that of the Masonic order of Knights Templar. As a side note, Benjamin F. Howard would keep his ties to Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3 Benjamin F. Howard for the rest of his life³.

¹ Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19 was chartered on October 29, 1787 ([Proceedings of the Annual Communication..., 1878: 125](#)).

² Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3 was chartered on March 12, 1792 ([Proceedings of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Convocation..., 1881: 29](#)).

³ In 1881, he became 3rd Master of the Veil ([Proceedings of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Convocation..., 1881: 29](#)). In 1885–1887, he served as Steward ([Proceedings of the Seventy-Eighth Annual Convocation..., 1885: 36; Proceedings of the Seventy-Ninth Annual Convocation..., 1886: 32; Proceedings of the Eightieth Annual Convocation..., 1887: 30](#)). In 1889 and in 1891–1893, he served in the same capacity – Steward ([Proceedings of the Eighty-Second Annual Convocation..., 1889: 34; Proceedings of the Eighty-Fourth Annual Convocation..., 1891: 42; Proceedings of the Eighty-Fifth Annual Convocation..., 1892: 48; Proceedings of the Eighty-Sixth Annual Convocation..., 1893: 46](#)). After a 3-year hiatus, he resumed service in the same capacity and would serve in it from 1896 to 1905 ([Proceedings of the Eighty-Ninth Annual Convocation..., 1896: 64; Proceedings of the Ninetieth Annual Convocation..., 1897: 102; Proceedings of the Ninety-First Annual Convocation..., 1898: 68; Proceedings of the Ninety-Second Annual Convocation..., 1899: 70; Proceedings of the Ninety-Third Annual Convocation..., 1900: 76; Proceedings of the Ninety-Fourth Annual Convocation..., 1901: 94; Proceedings of the Ninety-Fifth Annual Convocation..., 1902: 82; Proceedings of the Ninety-Sixth Annual Convocation..., 1904: 85; Proceedings of the Ninety-Seventh Annual Convocation..., 1904: 93](#)).

In the fall of 1878, Benjamin F. Howard joined the Masonic order of Knights Templar by way of Richmond Commandery No. 2¹ ([Proceedings..., 1879: 53](#)). The commandery honored his past achievements as a Mason by presenting him with a Masonic sword on January 1, 1879, as a token of esteem ([Figure 1](#)).

As early as 1880, he became the commandery's Warder ([Proceedings..., 1880: 23](#)). In 1881, Benjamin F. Howard attended the 59th Annual Assembly, held in Yorktown, where he was part of a group of Richmond Commandery No. 2 knights acting as escort to the Grand Commander ([Proceedings..., 1881: 4](#)). That same year, he became the commandery's Sword Bearer ([Proceedings..., 1881: 26](#)).

In 1882, he rose to a higher role in the commandery – Standard Bearer ([Proceedings..., 1882: 28](#)).

In 1883, he became the commandery's Junior Warden ([Proceedings..., 1883: 22](#)), and in 1884 – its Senior Warden ([Proceedings..., 1884: 22](#)).

In 1885, Benjamin F. Howard attended an Annual Assembly held in Richmond. From 1885, most likely due to his service with the police, Benjamin F. Howard did not serve in any officer role in the commandery ([Proceedings..., 1885: 43](#)). This state of affairs lasted until 1897 ([Proceedings..., 1886: 31](#); [Proceedings..., 1887: 39](#); [Proceedings..., 1888: 41](#); [Proceedings..., 1889: 33](#); [Proceedings..., 1890: 23](#); [Proceedings..., 1891: 19](#); [Proceedings..., 1892: 23](#); [Proceedings..., 1893: 28](#); [Proceedings..., 1894: 33](#); [Proceedings..., 1895: 44](#); [Proceedings..., 1896: 60](#); [Proceedings..., 1897: 69](#)).

In 1898, Benjamin F. Howard became Captain General ([Proceedings..., 1898: 70](#)).

In 1899, he rose to the commandery's second highest role – Generalissimo. As a consequence, he became its official Representative ([Proceedings..., 1899: 4, 68](#)).

In 1900, Benjamin F. Howard became Eminent Commander of Richmond Commandery No. 2 ([Figure 9](#)) and was its official Representative ([Proceedings..., 1900: 4, 68](#)). As at that year, Richmond Commandery No. 2 had 144 members ([Proceedings..., 1900: 74](#)).

RICHMOND COMMANDERY, NO. 2.

Chartered April 23, 1823.

Meets at Masonic Temple, Richmond, on the fourth Tuesday of every month, except June, then on the 17th.

POST-OFFICE—RICHMOND.

LIST OF OFFICERS.

E. Sir	B. F. Howard	Commander.
Sir	George J. Hooper	Generalissimo.
"	Jones A. Otey	Captain-General.
"	A. S. Lee	Prelate.
"	J. C. Bowman	Senior Warden.
"	A. McA. Parker	Junior Warden.
"	J. B. Welsh	Treasurer.
E. "	W. M. Williams	Recorder.
"	A. I. Schleicher	Standard-Bearer.
"	R. T. Lacy	Sword-Bearer.
"	E. W. Thomas	Warder.
"	W. C. Wilkison	Captain of Guard.
"	W. Krause	Armorer.

PAST COMMANDERS.

A. S. Lee,	Charles A. West,	B. A. Jacob,
J. Thompson Brown,	W. M. Williams,	F. J. Craigie,
John F. Mayer,	F. W. Cunningham,	B. C. Lewis,
Jas. H. Capers, P. G. C.,	D. C. Richardson,	Alex. W. Archer, No. 6.
	A. R. Courtney.	

Fig. 9. Richmond Commandery No. 2 leadership roster in 1900 ([Proceedings..., 1900: 78](#))

In 1901, Benjamin F. Howard became Past Commander of Richmond Commandery No. 2 ([Proceedings..., 1901: 102](#)). In the 1902–1907 Proceedings reports, he is listed as its Past Commander ([Proceedings..., 1902: 93](#); [Proceedings..., 1903: 96](#); [Proceedings..., 1904: xxii](#); [Proceedings..., 1905: 76](#); [Proceedings..., 1906: 83](#); [Proceedings..., 1908: 3](#)). Benjamin F. Howard is not mentioned in the 1908 Proceedings report ([Proceedings..., 1908a](#)).

[Proceedings of the Ninety-Eighth Annual Convocation..., 1905: 86](#)). From 1906, Benjamin F. Howard did not serve in any capacity in Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3 ([Proceedings of the Ninety-Ninth Annual Convocation..., 1906: 101](#)).

¹ Richmond Commandery No. 2 was chartered on April 10, 1823 ([Proceedings..., 1889: 32](#)). From 1893, the commandery gave its foundation date as April 23 ([Proceedings..., 1893: 27](#)). Based in the city of Richmond, it was one of the largest commanderies in the state of Virginia.

On April 28, 1908, the major of police, Civil War veteran, and Mason Benjamin Franklin Howard passed away at the age of 74.

On May 2, 1908, *The Times Dispatch* newspaper announced that Major Benjamin Franklin Howard had been buried earlier that day ([Deaths, 1908: 2 May](#)). The organization honored the memory of Benjamin F. Howard, alongside other deceased Masons, with kind words of remembrance in its annual literature in 1908 and 1909 ([Proceedings of the One Hundred and First Annual Convocation..., 1908: 63](#); [Proceedings of the 131th Grand Annual Communication..., 1909: 376](#)).

5. Conclusion

Benjamin Franklin Howard (1835–1908) started out working as a stonecutter (initially in Washington, DC, and later in Richmond, VA); but it was the American Civil War that truly revealed him to be an organizer and leader, someone whose direction people would follow in the challenging climate of military confrontation. With the start of the Civil War in 1861, he joined the 1st Virginia Infantry Regiment as a sergeant. His prowess and exceptional administrative ability earned him the rank of First Lieutenant, which he attained as early as late 1861, bypassing the rank of Second Lieutenant, and in 1862 he rose to the rank of Captain, assuming command of Company I – a position he would hold until the end of the war. During the Civil War, Benjamin F. Howard was wounded twice, but he pursued that path to the very end, being one of the fighters in the Confederate army who shared the bitterness of defeat.

With the end of the Civil War, Benjamin F. Howard joined the police force of the city of Richmond, VA. He must have been known around town, for on December 8, 1865, he was appointed Chief of Police to head the police force in Richmond during the martial law period. From 1870, he served as a Sergeant of Police. In 1892, he received the rank of Lieutenant of Police. In 1895, he became Captain of Police and was re-appointed Chief of Police for the city of Richmond. Around that time, he received the rank of Major as the person in charge of the city's police force. He served in that capacity until 1904, when he stepped down.

Benjamin F. Howard was also well known as a Mason. In 1871, he joined Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19. Two years later, in 1873, he became a Master Mason in the York Rite. That allowed him to continue his Masonic journey in Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3, which he joined as early as 1874. A few years later, having served in several officer roles, he took on the highest one – High Priest – as early as 1877. That would open another door for him – that of the Masonic order of Knights Templar, which he joined in the fall of 1878. While with Richmond Commandery No. 2, Benjamin F. Howard would likewise serve in a number of officer roles and in 1900 he would become its Eminent Commander, and from 1901 he would be its Past Commander.

In conclusion, it can be stated that it is during the Civil War that Benjamin F. Howard truly came of age. His credo was 'never back down from a challenge and always stay true to your duty to the very end' – such was Benjamin F. Howard, a soldier, police officer, and Mason.

6. Acknowledgments

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