

Peter Maroutsos

Hellenic American Academy/ 9th grade
3712 Glenlake Dr
847-372-7618
Maria Tassi / 2243555032

Putting on the Fustanella

In the year 1823, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to Adamantios Koraes: "No people sympathize more feelingly than ours with the sufferings of your countrymen, none offer more sincere and ardent prayers to heaven for their success." The ties between the United States and Greece go far deeper than solely political, they reach deep into philosophies and ideals. These ideals permeate the psyche of both cultures, they include an intense thirst for freedom, a reverence for Democracy, and the conviction to fight for them. Philhellenism is a term that encompasses people who have a love for Greek culture, people and ideals. Philhellenism was born out of a bond, both in the United States and Europe, and continues until today. American philhellenes played an important and inspiring role during the Greek war of independence in 1821, and in the process became Greeks themselves often being depicted wearing the traditional Hellenic military dress, the fustanella. The roles that American Philhellenes served in the war of independence were academic, militaristic, medical, and leadership.

The war of 1821 would not have been won without the help of Philhellenes taking military leadership roles. George Jarvis, a man from New York, joined the war in 1822 and rose to the rank of captain and helped lead the kleftes. Jarvis was a man who leaped fearlessly into battle, but was injured pretty severely. Sadly, on August 11th, 1828, he died of infection and he lay buried in Argos, a permanent testament to his connection with Greece. His efforts had lasting effects by inspiring many others to fulfill his mission of aiding the war of independence and inspired many to distribute much needed medication, clothing and food to Greeks who had suffered during the time. Jarvis was a true Philhellene in that he risked his life for the Greek cause, and he is depicted wearing a fustanella proudly. He both literally and metaphorically put the Greek culture onto his shoulders and had a lasting impact on

Many American Philhellenes joined the fight for Greek Independence including, James Williams, Estwick Evans, John M. Allen William Townsend Washington and many others all fought, some even losing their lives in the process. They served many positions in the Hellenic military from soldiers in the navy to some were even colonels in the army. These proud philhellenes made the battle for independence their own and helped establish the free state of Greece we celebrate today.

Moreover, Jonathan P. Miller took on a leadership role which was important in the liberation of Greece. It started on the battlefield, but ended up influencing other aspects. Miller was able to help greatly with other forms of aid like bringing \$17,500 to Greece from the United States. Those efforts inspired the attention of President John Quincy Adams, General Lafayette and other prominent American politicians. Support also came from providing food, clothing, medical supplies and other necessities which were transported by Miller during his return to Greece on March 5th, 1827. Miller was so intimately tied to the Greek culture he adopted a young Greek boy named Loukas into his family, who eventually grew the first American of Greek origin to be elected to the Congress of the United States of America. Overall, remembering Miller's fearlessness and compassion is essential in remembering the story of the amazing American Philhellenes of 1821.

Phillenistic leadership went further than just militaristic and leadership roles, it also took the role of medical leadership. One of the most prominent Philhellenes was Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, a Bostonian, Harvard-trained physician. Not only was he a skilled soldier, Howe was a very talented surgeon. He was able to establish a medical center in Aegina, a school for the blind in Corinth, collect a substantial amount for the acquisition of food and boots for the Greek troops and he founded a refugee agricultural township near the Corinth Canal. Dr. Howe, like Jarvis, is depicted in a fustanella which represents his reflection of Greek values and his love for Greece. Also, Dr. Howe was an advocate for the blind, the disabled, and he headed prison and anti-slavery reforms back in the United States. Dr. Howe exemplifies using one's unique talents to make a difference in the world, by combining his medical and military expertise he was able to have a profound impact on both Greece and the United States.

All in all, American Philhellenes demonstrated academic, militaristic, medical, and leadership during the war of independence. Those heroes were bonded by the same values of a strong desire for liberty, a love for democracy, and a determination to fight for them which inspired their efforts to fight alongside Greeks for independence. Finally, we must admire and recognize the amazing feats these leaders accomplished. These sacrifices were culminated by their recognition of honor by the 96th general assembly of the House of Representatives of the state of Illinois in March of 2009. This document shows the lasting impact that American philhellenes had in Greece and in the United States as well, stating that "because of the work of these men, thousands of Greeks were saved from starvation, disease and exposure." I cannot help but be inspired by the work of these men, as an American citizen of Hellenic descent, I can understand their dedication to both Greece and the United States. I hope to serve both my countries with the

Peter Maroutsos

talents bestowed upon me to an extent that would make these brave men proud to be a Philhellene. I have many pictures as a child wearing a fustanella, and I now understand that wearing it means holding the Hellenic culture upon my shoulders, just as the American Philhellenes did in the Hellenic fight for independence.