

2006

## Francis Lieber

Steven Alan Samson

*Liberty University*, [ssamson@liberty.edu](mailto:ssamson@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs)



Part of the [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Samson, Steven Alan, "Francis Lieber" (2006). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 55.  
[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov\\_fac\\_pubs/55](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs/55)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Helms School of Government at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

# AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

## *An Encyclopedia*



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

Andrew J. Bacevich  
M. E. Bradford  
Richard Brookhiser  
George W. Carey  
Allan Carlson  
Lee Edwards  
M. Stanton Evans

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese  
Timothy Fuller  
Paul Gottfried  
Russell Hittinger  
Russell Kirk  
E. Christian Kopff  
Peter Augustine Lawler

Daniel J. Mahoney  
Wilfred McClay  
Forrest McDonald  
George H. Nash  
Gerhart Niemeyer  
Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr.  
Murray Rothbard

Claes G. Ryn  
James V. Schall  
Peter Stanlis  
Stephen J. Tonsor  
George Weigel  
Gregory Wolfe  
and many others...

to books and conference programming focused on the concept of liberty. A cuneiform inscription serves as the foundation's symbol; this is said to be the earliest known written appearance of the word "freedom" or "liberty" and serves as a design motif for the endpapers of the books published by the organization.

Perhaps the most lasting of Liberty Fund's contributions to the American conservative movement thus far has been its extensive conference programming. The small group conferences—of which almost 200 are held every year—take place in locations across the country (and also outside the country), providing a forum for those interested in in-depth discussions related to the ideas of a free society. From these conferences has developed a rich and extensive network of conservative-leaning intellectuals, many of whom have made significant contributions to the conservative movement.

Supporting this ongoing initiative is a program to republish out-of-print classical liberal texts; many of these books were found in the libraries of our nation's founding fathers. Liberty Fund's ever-increasing number of books range across many disciplines, subscribe to the highest standards of production, and are priced to ensure their availability to all serious readers. Examples of recent releases include the letters of David Ricardo, *Theory and History*, by Ludwig von Mises, and Hugo Grotius's *Truth of the Christian Religion*.

—CRAIG T. COBANE

See also: Goodrich, Pierre F.

## Lieber, Francis (1800–72)

Educator and pioneer in the fields of political science, penology, and military law, Francis Lieber was born into a middle-class business family that suffered financial reversals during the French Revolution. His

intense patriotism was evident even in childhood during the French occupation of Berlin in 1807. In 1820 he surreptitiously earned a doctorate at the University of Jena, then slipped out of the country a year later to fight in the Greek war for independence, an experience that left him disillusioned and destitute. Before his return to Germany he spent a year with the historian Barthold Niebuhr, who was Prussia's ambassador to Italy, and acquired a lifelong interest in the traditions of what he called Anglican liberty.

Because of his youthful political activities, Lieber faced an uncertain future in Germany. In 1826 he emigrated to England and in 1827 to America, where he operated a gymnasium and swimming school in Boston and also became a newspaper correspondent. Lieber founded and began to edit the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1828–33), which brought him into contact with many American political and literary figures. A student of the Lancastrian system in England, he became active in educational circles and wrote an education plan for Girard College in 1834.

Lieber commenced his distinguished teaching career a year later when he was unanimously elected professor of history and political economy at South Carolina College. It was during this period (1835–56) that he wrote his major scholarly works. But from the start he was homesick for the North. Following a long campaign, he secured a teaching position at Columbia College (1857–65), where he held the first political science chair. Conflicts with a new president eventually led to his transfer to Columbia Law School (1865–72).

During the Civil War, Lieber was commissioned by the Lincoln administration to draft the first code of military conduct (known as the Lieber Code) for use in land warfare. It was later incorporated into the Hague and Geneva Conventions.

Lieber's scholarly activities covered a wide range of fields, including linguistics,

higher education, economics, sociology, geography, constitutional law, international law, and penology (a word he coined). He translated and wrote a preface to Beaumont and Tocqueville's *On the Penitentiary System* (1833). He campaigned for an international copyright and urged Congress to create an office of statistics.

Following the Civil War, Lieber was given charge of organizing the Confederate archives and served as umpire on the United States and Mexican Claims Commission. He devoted much of his attention to the subjects of nationalism and internationalism and sought to organize scholarly conferences on international law.

In addition to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, Lieber's published work includes an 1823 account of his experiences in Greece; numerous poems in German and English; a popular travelogue, *Letters to a Gentleman in Germany* (1834), which includes an account of his experiences at the Battle of Waterloo; the *Manual of Political Ethics* (two volumes: 1838, 1839); *Legal and Political Hermeneutics* (1839); *Essays on Property and Labour* (1841); and his chief political science treatise, *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853). A collection of his shorter writings, *Miscellaneous Writings* (two volumes: 1881) and selections from his letters edited by Thomas Sergeant Perry, *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber* (1882), were published posthumously.

Along with the Lieber Code, Francis Lieber is best known for his theory of institutional liberty, which contrasted the organic development of English government with the highly centralized French tradition. A supporter of free trade, Lieber helped introduce the work of Frederic Bastiat to the American public.

—STEVEN ALAN SAMSON

### Further Reading

Brown, Bernard Edward. *American Conservatives: The Political Thought of Francis Lieber and John*

W. Burgess. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

Freidel, Frank. *Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1947.

Hartigan, Richard Shelly. *Lieber's Code and the Law of War*. Chicago: Precedent, 1983.

See also: *Civil War*; *free trade*; *French Revolution*

### Liebman, Marvin (1923–97)

Born and raised in Queens and Brooklyn, New York, Marvin Liebman grew up in a milieu of Jewish radicalism and in 1937 joined the Young Communist League. Liebman attended New York University until 1942, when he was drafted into the Army Air Corps. He served until 1944, when he was discharged because of his homosexuality. Active in efforts to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, Liebman worked for various communist front groups and raised funds in Hollywood for the United Jewish Appeal. He remained a member of the Communist Party until 1952, when he became an apprentice of fundraiser Harold Oram. He became a strident anticommunist in the 1950s and established dozens of "letterhead organizations," most prominently the Committee of One Million (to Keep Red China Out of the United Nations). He participated in the founding and early guidance of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). In 1982 he received a job at the National Endowment for the Arts and worked there until his death.

On July 9, 1990, he publicly revealed his homosexuality in an open letter to William F. Buckley Jr. that was published in *National Review*. In 1992 he published *Coming Out Conservative: An Autobiography*, which documented his long and largely secret homosexual lifestyle.

Liebman was an important fundraiser and organizer of various anticommunist and