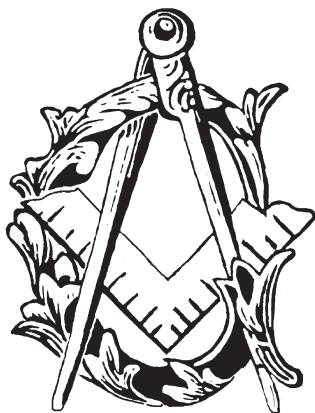


# Freemasonry Revealed



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## Foreword

Freemasonry is the oldest and largest fraternity known. As is customary with any concept of thought, it has enjoyed times of great renown and prestige, and it has experienced times of adversity. Today, in the early twenty-first century, it remains a vibrant organization that is attracting adherents over all the civilized world. Over the years, a great deal has been written and said concerning the Masonic Fraternity, much of it fact and much of it fiction. The fraternity is so old, and so many of its records have been lost or destroyed, or never written, that a vast amount of Masonic lore is admittedly legend. Although so many of the legends of Freemasonry tie in so perfectly with authenticated records that many accord the legends the status of fact, most Masonic historians take pains to distinguish between that which can be proven and that which cannot. It is perhaps inevitable that myths have arisen with respect to Freemasonry, some of them advanced by its supporters and others of them promoted by its detractors, and that the dissemination of these myths has produced confused conceptions of Freemasonry in the minds of those who have not troubled to avail themselves of the facts. This narrative deals only with the bare essentials of Masonic history, concerning itself primarily with providing a simple and factual account of the fraternity as it has revealed itself to a member of some forty-five years' standing. It is the author's hope that this account will dispel some of the existing confusion and that it will prove interesting and revealing to Masons and non-Masons alike.

## How It Began

The actual beginning of Freemasonry is itself the cause of much confusion, even among its members, for there is disagreement concerning the fraternity's earliest origins. There are those who find evidences of Freemasonry dating back to the Roman Empire. Others mark its beginning in ancient Egypt. You can find almost as many theories as there are Masonic researchers. This account will not concern itself with conflicting viewpoints, dealing only with that with which all are in general agreement.

The name Freemason appeared as early as 1212 in connection with the master builders who traveled about Europe erecting the wonderful churches and cathedrals, many of which still stand and which attest to the truly amazing building arts of the craftsmen in that early age. These builders were called Freemasons because they were a privileged class, not subject to servitude or taxes, and free to travel about when many were in bondage.

The Freemasons were jealous of their art, guarding against any proliferation which could cheapen it or could cause them to be in less demand. They knew that so long as their art was practiced only by relatively few craftsmen, the demand for their services would continue and the particular freedoms they enjoyed would persist. But, they were also aware of the necessity that their work should continue, that the secrets of their craft must be passed on to future generations.

So the Freemasons formed themselves into lodges in which their secrets might be taught and preserved. They were naturally most selective of those making application to join their lodges, determined that the secrets of their art

should be handed down only to those morally and otherwise fit to receive and perpetuate them. To qualify, an applicant had to be of good reputation, he could have no physical impairment, he had to be recommended by members of the craft, and he could be neither too old nor too young to learn and perform the tasks he sought to undertake.

When an applicant had been properly investigated and found to be in all particulars suitable for admission, he was elected and entered upon the rolls as an apprentice. (Remember entered as an apprentice, you will read more of it later.) The new apprentice was set to work under the supervision of the master masons (another term to remember) and had seven years in which to prove his skill and his worth. Having successfully completed his seven-year apprenticeship, he was permitted to submit his “master’s piece” to the master and wardens of the lodge for their inspection and judgment. If it did not receive favorable judgment, he was assigned to further instruction; if the judgment were favorable, he became a fellow of the craft and was made privy to certain secrets not previously revealed to him. (The designations fellow of the craft, master, and wardens are additional terms that will be referred to later in this account.)

The old practicing Freemasons, popularly called operative Masons, were highly regarded not only for their great building achievements, but also for their circumspect behavior and their loyalty to their fellows. Many sought admission to their lodges, few were chosen.

Master masons, the most skilled of the craftsmen, adopted individual marks. As they built, they inscribed their marks upon certain stones to distinguish their work. Modern evidence of this practice came to light when the White

House was rebuilt during the presidency of Harry S. Truman. Many of the old stones removed from the walls bore masons' marks. President Truman arranged for each Masonic grand lodge in the United States to receive one of the marked stones which had been originally set in place during the 1790s.

The reader interested in finding more detailed accounts of Freemasonry's beginnings may do so in any good public library or the Internet.

## **The Transition**

As years rolled by and as conditions changed in Europe—fewer edifices to be erected and more craftsmen available to erect them—the lodges of Freemasons received fewer and fewer applications for apprenticeship. The old operative masons had begun their lodges primarily as a matter of business but had come to love the fellowship and teachings and rituals that developed in them, and they were fearful that a gradually dwindling membership could cause their lodges eventually to sink into oblivion.

Meanwhile, many men had become interested in the Freemasons, greatly admiring their moral rectitude and their steadiness of purpose. So it was perhaps inevitable, considering the declining circumstances of the masonic lodges and considering the interest being displayed in them by non-masons that the old builders would eventually accept other than builders into their lodges. There began an influx of artists, teachers, poets, mathematicians—the leaders of that time. It was this acceptance of non-operative masons into the order that led to the present day title of Free and Accepted Masons, or Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons.

These non-operative members, of course, had no desire

to learn the building art or to serve a long apprenticeship in it, nor was it any longer necessary that new members do so. However, these new non-operative members were taught the same old rituals of conferring degrees and they were obligated in the same manner as were their operative brothers. The non-operative members came to be known as speculative masons and their ranks grew steadily while those of the operative members continued to shrink. In time, the membership of the Freemasons came to be almost totally speculative and remains so today.

Through all those years and through all the changes the old rituals, bearing direct relationship to the operative character of the originators, were and are retained. The man who receives his first degree is still called an entered apprentice, in the second degree he becomes a fellow craft, and in the third and final degree, he is made a master mason. Masonic lodges are still governed by masters and wardens.

Freemasonry continues to teach its members through the use of allegory and symbols, and these still have their base in the old operative art. Prominent symbols used in Masonry then and today are such implements as the square, the level, the plumb, the trowel, and other tools essential to the old builders in masonry. Over the years the Freemasons' use of these symbolic implements have given our language such terms as square shooter, on the square, etc., each devolving from Masonry's application of the square as an emblem of morality and virtue. The term "on the level" stems from Freemasonry's level being an emblem of equality. When a Mason stands morally erect, he is said to be acting by the plumb.

So Freemasonry has indeed changed over the centuries,

yet it can be said that the more it changes, the more it remains the same.

## **Freemasonry Crosses The Atlantic**

As previously noted, Freemasonry had its documented origins in Europe and traces its history there across a span of almost eight centuries. Freemasonry in the United States had its beginnings in colonial times, the American lodges of that period usually receiving their charters from the grand lodges of England or Scotland. The early American lodges, located primarily along the Atlantic seaboard, worked under the European authorities until the Revolution, following which Masonic grand lodges were formed in the original colonies. The American lodges received new charters from their respective grand lodges and Freemasonry in this country has grown steadily from that base, there being over one million members in the lodges existing all over the United States. In 2009 the Grand Lodge of North Carolina A. F. & A. M. had more than 46,000 members in 376 lodges.

## **Structure**

Masonic lodges come in all sizes, ranging in membership from twenty or so Masons to more than a thousand. Each lodge is presided over by a master, assisted by a senior and a junior warden, just as in ancient times. The master of a Masonic lodge is vested with much greater authority than that given the presiding officer of almost any other democratic organization. There are several lodge officers below the ranks of master and wardens and in most instances a Mason progresses through this line of officers until eventually becoming master. In some lodges all officers are elected; in others only the high officers are elected, the master ap-



pointing the lesser officers. The membership, by its votes, determines who will fill offices, and it transacts the general affairs of the lodge.

All over the world individual lodges have come together to form grand lodges, this to ensure harmony, unity, and conformity. There is at least one grand lodge in each of the United States. Many recognize as regular other grand lodges in their own geographic territory.

The organizational structure of a grand lodge is basically the same as that of a lodge, its officers usually being called grand master, grand warden, etc. The business of a grand lodge is transacted during annual meetings, delegates from the member lodges usually constituting a majority of those entitled to vote therein. The grand lodge exercises complete authority over each and every one of its member lodges but, as can be noted from the foregoing, the lodges, through their delegates, have the say about who will govern them, and how.

There is no central or supreme Masonic authority in the United States, each grand lodge exercises complete control of its own destiny and total Masonic authority over its lodges, recognizing and respecting the right of each other grand lodge to do likewise. Top officers of the grand lodges meet together periodically, nationally and regionally, to maintain fraternal harmony and to share information and ideas.

The grand lodges maintain ongoing fraternal relations and correspondence with each other and with most grand lodges in other countries. If a grand lodge should adopt policies or engage in activities contrary to those held to be properly Masonic by another grand lodge, it is probable the fraternal relations between the two will be severed. Several

grand lodges in Europe, for example, have over a period of time dropped the requirement that each member believe in a Supreme Being, or the requirement that the Holy Bible be always present and open upon the altar while a lodge is meeting, and this has resulted in the grand lodges here and most of those abroad withdrawing fraternal recognition of the offenders. When fraternal recognition is withdrawn, it means the withdrawing grand lodge no longer recognizes the other grand lodge or its members as being Masonic.

## **Freemasonry And Religion**

Mention was made in the preceding chapter of the Masonic requirement respecting belief in a Supreme Being, and the requirement that the Holy Bible be present and open during lodge meetings. A discussion of Freemasonry and religion rather naturally follows.

Freemasonry, while religious in nature, is not, does not profess to be, and does not wish to be, a religion. Nor does it promote any particular religion. So long as they meet the qualifications for membership, Masonry accepts men from every religious faith—Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and others. It does not bar any man because of his religious leanings, so long as he believes in a Supreme Being and so long as his beliefs are not characterized by that which is generally deemed morally unacceptable.

Many ministers of many denominations are members of and ardent supporters of the Masonic Fraternity, and many ministers of the same denominations vehemently oppose Freemasonry. This division of opinion also exists among lay members of the various religions. It has been found that religious opposition to Masonry almost always stems from

a failure to properly inform oneself, such opposition usually arising from a mistaken belief that Masonry seeks to supplant religion. Members of the various religions who have become Masons almost never make religious objection to the fraternity, or to its teachings and practices. In fact, it is usually found that men become even stronger supporters of their churches after becoming Masons.

To become and remain a Freemason, a man must believe in a Supreme Being. His method of worshipping his Deity is none of Masonry's business. He will not, in a Masonic lodge, be permitted to urge his religious beliefs upon any other member, nor will any other member be allowed to promote his particular faith while in lodge. Even the discussion of various religions, or of any other topic liable to excite arguments or animosities, is forbidden in a Masonic lodge.

Masonry openly urges each member to be faithful to and to participate in the religion of his choice. It studiously avoids any teaching or practice which could be remotely construed as supplanting any religion or which would conflict with the activities of any church. Members of a lodge frequently attend worship services as a group, as evidence of their support of religion, and these attendances are not restricted to any particular denominations.

Finally, Freemasonry makes no attempt to save men's souls, or even to reform them; these functions it properly leaves to churches and religions. Masonry does not even want men whose souls need saving, or who are in need of reformation. It wants as members only those men who are already good, hoping and believing their Masonic association will further enrich their lives. It expects its members to conduct themselves in accordance with a strict moral code,

and it feels the requirements of that moral code are not repugnant to the teachings of any religion or to the beliefs of any good man.

## **The Secrets of Freemasonry**

In the discussion of Masonry's secrets it is probably well, as was the case in the preceding chapter, to point out there are many mistaken assumptions arising from a lack of knowledge—a failure to inform oneself.

The fraternity is often called a secret society. This, of course, implies that Masons conceal the fact of their membership, that they meet in secret, that their purposes are secret.

Nothing could be more remote from the truth.

Masonry is definitely not a secret society. Its members make no attempt to conceal their Masonic affiliation, often proudly wearing rings or other jewelry marking them as Masons. Meeting places are prominently located and clearly marked. Dates and times of meetings are often advertised in newspapers or posted on bulletin boards. The history, the teachings, and many records of the order are available in any good public library. The rules and regulations of Masonry are in print, and no effort is made to lock them away from interested persons. Minutes are made of its meetings and are often studied by those who are not members. These practices are clearly not those of a secret society.

Someone many years ago made the following statement: "Masonry is not a secret society, it is a society with secrets." Freemasonry does have some secrets it attempts to preserve.

It has secret modes of recognition, which enable its members to quickly recognize each other as Masons upon their first meeting. The value of these secrets to members away

from home is fairly obvious and it does not seem unnatural that the fraternity should wish to preserve them.

And Masonry has its secret ritual, its mode of instructing new members in the three symbolic degrees. This ritual originated, in large part, with the old cathedral builders earlier mentioned and has been handed down over the centuries. Most of the secret rituals are based upon writings in the Holy Bible and the writings of other great philosophers, so they are secret only in their unique adaptation and presentation. This ritualistic mode of instruction has proven remarkably effective over the centuries and its use, being peculiar to Freemasonry, has kept the fraternity apart from those that would imitate it. The lessons taught in the Masonic ritual are in no way secret, they may be obtained from many and various Masonic writings, available to all.

These secrets, the modes of recognition and the modes of instruction, are the only secrets Masonry has. The man who might be thinking of making application for Masonic membership solely out of curiosity concerning the secrets of Masonry will be well advised to let his curiosity lead him down other and less demanding paths.

## **To Become a Mason**

One of the ancient landmarks of the fraternity is that it does not solicit new members. Many good men over the years have had their feelings hurt because close friends whom they knew to be Masons never invited them to join Freemasonry. They did not know, of course, that these close friends were prohibited by Masonic law from issuing such invitations. A man must seek Masonic membership of his own free will and accord.

This circumstance has, as noted, caused some hurt feel-

ings and, in some instances, even hard feelings. It can cause difficulty for Mason and non-Mason alike. It is naturally hard for a man to understand why his father, or his brother, or his very best friend, has never asked him to become a Freemason. On the other hand, a Mason can ache to urge Masonic membership upon someone particularly close to him, someone he knows would be a credit to the fraternity, but he is hemmed in by the Masonic law. So it could be reasonably asked why Freemasonry imposes this prohibition, why it will not permit its members to invite others to join them in Masonic membership.

The fraternity has always taken the stand that it would be impossible to draw the line if invitations to membership were permitted. Admittedly, with invitations it would gain some good members. Most members would invite only those men who would be good Masons. But, some members would be ruled by their hearts and not their heads, often inviting men out of affectionate regard without properly considering their moral worth from a Masonic standpoint. Besides, the resourceful Mason can always find an opening in casual conversation to let certain individuals know that Masonry does not seek, it must be sought. Further bolstering the fraternity's position is the indisputable fact that the man who becomes a Mason of his own free will and desire is much more likely to become a strong and useful member than is one who comes by invitation.

Once a man begins thinking of applying for Masonic membership, there are a number of factors he should seriously consider.

He should make certain he has a general idea of what Masonry is all about. That is one of the prime purposes of

this booklet, the man who reads it in its entirety should be able to determine if the fraternity is really what he thought it was, if it is really something he wishes to become a part of. Freemasonry is not for everyone, if a man is not going to be an interested member he will do himself and the fraternity a service if he never applies. (In later chapters we will discuss some of the attractions that draw men to and keep them in Freemasonry, this should aid the average individual in making his own determination.)

A man interested in applying for Masonic membership should inquire into the financial obligations membership in his particular area would entail. The initiation fees and annual dues can and do vary from state to state, and within states. With rare exception, though, the cost of Masonic membership is well within the means of the average man.

He should ascertain when and where the local lodge meets. While there are no attendance requirements of a Mason, he will not obtain the full benefits of membership if he has not time to attend and participate in a reasonable number of meetings and other activities without neglecting his family and other duties.

He should examine his own life style and determine if it will suit him to be a Mason.

From much that has already been said in this booklet it could be assumed that Freemasons are prudes and will accept none but prudes into their ranks, but this is not the case. The fraternity recognizes the inevitability of human frailty and harbors no illusions about finding or creating perfect men. It only hopes to make good men better men.

A man is seldom rejected for Masonic membership simply because he is known to take an occasional drink, but he

is virtually certain of rejection if it is known he is addicted to the bottle or that his occasional drink is cause for unseemly behavior.

The fact that a man is divorced is, in itself, not cause for rejection, but if he has abused his wife or their children he can forget about any likelihood of being accepted into Masonry.

If a man has at some time, despite his best efforts, gotten behind in his financial or other obligations, that fact likely will not be held against him; if he has failed to meet his obligations when capable of doing so he will probably be rejected by Masonry.

In summary, Freemasons will not knowingly elect bad apples into their order, they wish new members to be better men than themselves—at least as good. Masons do not claim to be or wish to be reformers, but they do believe a good man coming into the fraternity will become a better man as a result of his membership.

Once a man decides to seek Masonic membership he must be recommended by members of the lodge, and he must submit to a background investigation. Following a prescribed waiting period, his petition will be balloted upon during a regular meeting of the lodge. The vote is by secret ballot, and election of a petitioner requires a unanimously favorable ballot.

The man who has decided to seek Masonic membership needs only to convey his desire to someone close to him who is a Mason. That Mason will take it from there.

## **Masonry's Secret Ballot**

After a man has applied for Masonic membership, and after his background has been thoroughly investigated, the



lodge members vote by secret ballot to accept or to reject him for membership.

Masonry's secret ballot is another of its ancient landmarks. It has been rather aptly said that when a petitioner is voted upon for Masonic membership he undergoes the "Ordeal of the Secret Ballot." While there are minor variations on unanimity, to be elected he must receive an affirmative vote from each and every member present at that meeting. Just one member out of all present—there could be twenty, or fifty, or a hundred members in attendance—can drop the black ball and deny him membership. When you consider the moral yardstick by which Masons measure membership applicants, and when you consider that only one member voting negatively can reject a petitioner, it would seem reasonable to assume that a large proportion of petitioners would be rejected for membership. But that is not the case. Many, many more are elected than are rejected. That fact is testimony to the generally good judgment of those who recommend applicants, and it also indicates the fraternity, by and large, attracts more good men than otherwise.

Much has been said and written, pro and con, concerning the unanimously favorable secret ballot. Some argue, not without logic, that it is not fair for just one member out of all those who may be present for a meeting to be able to deny a petitioner membership. Others argue, also logically, that if even one member knows something about a petitioner that convinces him the man's election would not be in the best interest of Freemasonry, then that one member should have the right and the opportunity to prevent the entrance into Freemasonry of one he feels would bring discredit to it.

It goes without saying that the secret ballot is occasionally abused by a member who rejects a petitioner for mere petty reasons having nothing to do with moral fitness, but such instances are rare and in almost every election the good man is elected to membership.

It is also undeniable that despite the requirements as to recommendation, as to background investigation, and as to unanimous secret ballot, an occasional undesirable person attains Masonic membership. Again, though, these instances are relatively rare. Further, election to Masonic membership is not for perpetuity. Should a member ever act contrary to the requirements of Freemasonry, he can be suspended or expelled from membership.

In summary, it can be said the secret ballot has served the fraternity well over the centuries and liberalization of this requirement is not probable. The man who has been rejected for Masonic membership is not thereby forever barred. He can reappear after the passage of a stipulated waiting period which varies from state to state. Some of the most prominent Masons in the history of the fraternity were rejected one or more times before finally gaining acceptance.

## **The Three Symbolic Degrees**

Having been elected to receive the degrees of Masonry, the candidate proceeds to do just that. (In a few states, a candidate is balloted upon between each of the degrees, in all other states one election is for all three degrees.)

The first degree is that of entered apprentice and during it the candidate is introduced to the basic principles of Freemasonry. As noted in an earlier chapter, symbolic use of various building tools is employed to impress upon him moral truths and doctrines. The degree is serious throughout and,

contrary to some wild tales occasionally circulated, there is never any horseplay or frivolity involved (this is true of all three symbolic degrees). Upon completion of the degree, the candidate begins learning a catechism in which he must become proficient before he may receive the next degree.

In the second degree he becomes a fellow craft, learning still more of the principles and teachings of Freemasonry, especially of its close alliance with the arts and sciences. Again, he must commit a catechism to memory before proceeding to the next degree.

The third and final degree is that of master mason, teaching still more of the moral truths of the fraternity, culminating with an impressive lesson concerning the rich rewards awaiting all good men. In most states the candidate must also memorize a catechism on this degree, in others it must be learned only if the new Mason desires to take additional steps, and in others it is not required at all. Some jurisdictions have shortened memorization requirements.

The catechisms a Mason is required to learn as he progresses through the degrees are often, at the outset, regarded as considerable chores and candidates sometimes wonder why they are required at all. But, they serve useful purposes for the fraternity and—although he may not realize it at the time—they are particularly useful to the Mason all through his life. It would be an extremely rare thing to ever hear a Mason regret having to learn the catechisms.

In committing the catechisms to memory the candidate is of necessity further impressed by the lessons and instructions he received in the degrees, for this is what the catechisms are all about. He thus begins his Masonic career a much more knowledgeable Mason than would otherwise be

the case. He learns to memorize, an ability that will serve him and Masonry well through the years. When he visits a lodge in which he is not known to be a Mason, the knowledge he gained in learning his catechisms will enable him to prove his eligibility to visit. He will, as a good and active Mason, have many occasions to feel thankful for the lessons he learned in his catechisms.

Sometimes, despite their professions of good intent, men seek Masonic membership out of mere curiosity, or for other piddling reasons. The requirement that candidates learn the catechisms will often weed these out at an early stage, their motivations will not lend themselves to the effort required.

The catechisms pose no problem for men of reasonable intelligence and energy. It is rare to hear of anyone failing to learn a catechism if they really wanted to.

## **The New Member: What He May Expect**

Upon becoming a master mason and paying his annual dues, the new member is issued a dues receipt card, the possession of which is one of the requirements for admission as a visitor to a lodge other than his own.

The new member is at this point entitled to all the rights and privileges of Freemasonry, and he is fully obligated to conform to the teachings of the fraternity. He is also obligated to discharge the duties of a master mason.

The rights and privileges of a master mason are often one and the same, but are often also distinguishable. A Mason, for example, has the right to participate in the affairs of his lodge; he has the privilege of visiting other lodges. The former cannot be denied him, the latter can—but rarely is.

A new mason discovers he has entered into a highly pro-

tective organization. Members will rally to his support in time of his need, even though he may be among strangers. It does not matter what the nature of his need, the worthy Mason can always depend upon the support of his brethren, collectively and individually, at home or abroad.

Although help in time of need is most often thought of as financial aid, and frequently is, Masons also come to a brother's aid in time of emotional crisis, they assume another's duties when he is unable for good cause to perform them, they see to the needed care and safety of a brother's loved ones, and in many additional ways faithfully support and sustain each other.

Such support is not guaranteed by the fraternity, it is instead the consequence of the obligations Masons assume. It will be more readily forthcoming in some areas than in others, and the kind of Mason a man is and has been will often affect the extent of the assistance he receives in time of need. A Mason is not obligated to assist an unworthy brother.

Masons are very supportive of the widows and children of deceased members.

The foregoing benefits, however important they may be in time of need, are not the chief or most often enjoyed benefits of Masonic membership.

Perhaps the greatest single benefit of Masonic membership is the sheer joy of participation. To be a part of Freemasonry's fellowship, to be active in all Masonic activities—particularly in helping confer the degrees, and to merit the approbation of his brethren, are benefits the practicing Mason would not trade for any material gains. An integral part of participating in Freemasonry is helping provide assistance to deserving members, as earlier described. In Ma-

sonry, as everywhere, it is infinitely more blessed and more satisfying to give than to receive.

But, full participation includes so much more.

The Mason who regularly attends lodge meetings soon discovers this is at least one place where he can temporarily escape the controversies and pressures of today's living. In a lodge he meets with men from every walk of life, with men of every religious and political persuasion, and who come together in a Masonic lodge with one common purpose—true fellowship.

In a Masonic lodge, he will not hear one religion advanced as being superior to any other. This is forbidden, as noted in an earlier chapter.

He will not hear a political party or candidate promoted. This, too, is forbidden.

He will not hear a business or a product extolled. Also forbidden.

Simply put, he will not hear any non-Masonic position or argument advanced in a Masonic lodge. He and his fellow members will sit in complete harmony, because they share a unity of purpose.

The new Mason may be the richest or the poorest member present, or he may be the most or the least prominent citizen in his community, but none of this will work to his advantage or disadvantage in a Masonic lodge. Each and every member has one voice, one vote, and identical rights.

A sergeant in the army can be master of and preside over a lodge which includes generals and other high ranking officers among its membership, and this has happened on numerous occasions. The only significant rank in a Masonic lodge is Masonic rank, and that is conferred by vote of the members.

It has been reported that when Theodore Roosevelt became a Mason he discovered his gardener was serving as master of the lodge—the presiding officer. No resentment is evidenced by men of high station outside Masonry when men of lower outside station occupy positions of greater Masonic authority. Somehow, Masonic lodges are able to function without snobbery. Members meet on the level, a phrase explained in an earlier chapter.

Another great benefit of Masonic membership is Masonry's universality. No matter where a Mason goes in the United States, or in most other countries, he is never far from a Masonic lodge. The lodge is a home away from home for countless Masons who would otherwise on many occasions be extremely lonely. An American member can feel at home, for example, in a French or a German lodge, although he may not understand a word that is spoken. The ritual will differ in some respects from nation to nation, even from state to state, but the teachings and the basics will be the same. And the all-important fellowship is ever present. Lodges go to great lengths in making welcome a visitor from far away.

Few things can be more valuable to a Mason than the friendships he establishes in Freemasonry. It is said of the fraternity that it “conciliates true friendship among those who otherwise might have remained at a perpetual distance,” and few truer statements were ever made. Extremely shy individuals, men that previously found it difficult to mix with others, have been known to establish friendships by the score upon becoming Masons. Time after time, Freemasonry has demonstrated its ability to bring together and unite men who would have otherwise been forever sepa-

rated. The unique bonds of the fraternity are invaluable to its members.

Many lodges regularly schedule functions enabling members to involve their wives and families, thus providing family outings at which a member can be assured his family will be exposed only to that which is wholesome and uplifting. Such assurance in most modern activities is becoming ever more rare and ever more precious.

Such are some of the benefits of Masonic membership, full appreciation of which can be realized only in attainment.

As earlier noted, at the same time a Master Mason becomes entitled to the rights and privileges of Freemasonry, he also obligates himself to many and various Masonic duties. These duties are not onerous. In fact, the performance of Masonic duties is the most rewarding facet of Masonic membership.

To begin with, the new Mason is obligated to live by a strict moral code, the requirements of which will not be unfamiliar to any good man accustomed to living according to the teachings of his religion and according to the laws of the land.

And the new Mason assumes unique new obligations to his fellow members and their families, and to all mankind.

Masonry's success probably stems in large part from the fact that wherever a member turns he is reminded of the fraternity's teachings and of his obligations to be true to them. These reminders come in such beautiful form, or in such unobtrusive manner, that the Mason never has the feeling he is being hounded or badgered.

So Freemasonry expects its members to be good men and



true; true to their church, their nation, their family, their friends.

Masonry encourages each member to be active in the affairs of his community and state and nation, but always as an individual citizen and never attempting to represent Freemasonry in these matters. Masonry will not lend its name or permit its members to use its name in any political, commercial, or religious activity, but urges each member to be individually active in these areas, so long as their activities are morally correct.

## **Appendant Orders**

There are many Masonic and Masonic-related orders or organizations in which membership is predicated, to varying extent, upon membership in a Masonic lodge. Included are such well-known bodies as the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, the Shrine, the Eastern Star, and many others.

The blue lodge, as it has been referred to and described in the preceding chapters, is recognized as the root and foundation of all Freemasonry. Once a man has received the three symbolic degrees in a blue lodge, thus becoming a Master Mason, he is often invited to become a member in one or more of the appendant orders. Many Master Masons accept these invitations and eventually become quite active in various areas of Freemasonry, being constantly reminded all along the way that they must remain faithful to their blue lodges.

Masonic lodges, in cooperation with other Masonic and Masonic-related orders, often sponsor various youth organizations in which the teachings are much like those a Mason receives during the three degrees. It is not the purpose of this booklet, though, to go beyond the blue lodge. For

the reader, Mason or non-Mason, who seeks information concerning Masonic and Masonic-related organizations other than the blue lodge, there are many fine publications available. In fact, this booklet has only scratched the surface of symbolic (blue lodge) Masonry, being aimed at the individual wishing to receive a summary of Freemasonry. The serious researcher should contact local libraries and various Masonic headquarters for information on procurement of the many Masonic histories available.

## **Famous Masons**

The membership of Freemasonry, by and large, is made up of average men. Its ranks include laborers, clerks, merchants, tradesmen, lawyers, enlisted and commissioned members of the armed forces, doctors, statesmen, farmers, salesmen... the whole spectrum.

In all ages, though, its ranks have included the great and the near great, including a sizeable number of Presidents of the United States, as follows:

**George Washington:** The only president to serve as master of his lodge during his incumbency, Washington laid the cornerstone of the United States Capitol, acting as grand master pro tem for the Grand Lodge of Maryland. He was buried with Masonic honors. Masons of the United States have erected a granite monument in his memory on Shooter's Hill, at Alexandria, Va.

**James Monroe:** Except for records of his membership, little is known of Monroe's Masonic life.

**Andrew Jackson:** Grand master of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, Jackson was the first of two presidents to have so served Freemasonry.

**James K. Polk:** Known to have served as junior warden of

his lodge, there is no record of Polk ever serving as master. During his presidency, he assisted in laying the cornerstone of the Smithsonian Institution with Masonic ceremonies.

**James Buchanan:** Master of his lodge in 1823, Buchanan also served as a district deputy grand master in Pennsylvania. He delivered the address at the Masonic dedication of the statue of Washington, Washington Circle, Washington, DC. He was buried with Masonic honors.

**Andrew Johnson:** During his presidency, Johnson participated in five Masonic cornerstone ceremonies... in Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, Antietam (MD), and Washington. He was buried with Masonic honors.

**James A. Garfield:** Eventually holding membership in three different lodges (Masons may move membership from one lodge to another or, in some states, become dual or plural members), Garfield was chaplain in the second of these. Many Masonic groups attended his funeral.

**William McKinley:** Our twenty-fifth president was prompted to seek Masonic membership when he observed the fraternal kindnesses being exchanged among Masons in the Union and Confederate Armies during the Civil War.

**Theodore Roosevelt:** Often expressing his interest in Freemasonry, Roosevelt visited lodges at home and abroad. He participated in Masonic ceremonies on several occasions while president, delivering the principal address on one occasion and wearing Masonic regalia on another.

**William H. Taft:** Taft was another of the presidents that took part in various Masonic activities while in office. On one occasion, he posed for a picture while wearing Washington's Masonic regalia at the White House.

**Warren G. Harding:** Becoming a Mason only three years

before his death, Harding nevertheless became very active Masonically and joined a number of the appendant orders.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Mason for thirty-four years, Roosevelt participated in numerous Masonic activities, including “raising” his son Elliott as a Master Mason in 1933.

Harry S. Truman: Becoming a Mason in 1909, Truman was the second president to have served as a grand master, being elected grand master of Missouri in 1940. He was probably the most active Mason of any president since Washington. Millions of Americans witnessed his Masonic funeral service on national television

Gerald R. Ford: President Ford was a member of Malta Lodge in Michigan.

The foregoing summarizations have been very brief and do not even include the memberships and activities of some of the presidents in appendant orders. Truman and Ford, for example, were each honored by the Scottish Rite when they were elected to its Thirty-Third Degree.

There have been many other famous Americans that were Masons, and these have included Benjamin Franklin, David Bushnell, George Walton, Haym Salomon, John Hancock, Joseph Hewes, John Marshall, Paul Revere, Duke Ellington, Red Skelton, W. E. B. Dubois, Douglas MacArthur, Thurgood Marshall, and many, many more. Numerous Masons are members of the United States Senate and Congress, while others hold important commands in the armed forces. Several state governors are Masons.

LaFayette, Robert Burns, Goethe, and Rudyard Kipling were among famous Masons abroad. Masonic ranks in Europe have for several centuries included members of royal

families.

Masonry is justly proud of the great names in its history, past and present.

## **Conclusion**

As noted in the preceding chapters, this book does not pretend to provide a detailed account of Freemasonry. Such an account would fill—has filled—many large volumes and would be quite expensive to purchase.

What has been attempted here is a summarization that will provide the inquisitive non-Mason the information he needs to determine if he wishes to explore the matter further.

The evolution of the fraternity in Europe, for example, is fascinating reading and various accounts may be found in most large libraries.

There are many detailed biographies of famous Masons, in America and abroad. It is indeed interesting to read of the effect Freemasonry exerted upon the activities of many of these famous men. And these, too, are available in most good libraries.

If this booklet has dispelled any myths, has answered any questions, or has cleared up any contentions, then it has served its purpose.

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