



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Grand Lodge Committee on Leadership Services F. & A. M. New York

HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry is the oldest and largest fraternity in the world. There are 6 million members worldwide, just under 3 million in the U.S.. It has symbolic and mythic origin at the building of King Solomon's Temple. Historical roots of the Craft are unknown. Henry W. Coil, in his "Freemasonry Through Six Centuries", states that there are over 24 theories relating to the origin of Freemasonry. These theories range from the beginning of time to the Middle Ages when operative masons began accepting what we would refer to today as honorary members.

The oldest document associated with Freemasonry is the "Regius Poem" or Hallwell Manuscript. It was written about 1390 and is said to have been copied from an older document. The Regius poem outlines the first "convention" of the Craft held in York in 926 A.D. under the leadership of Prince Edwin. The Regius Poem is followed by The Cooke Manuscript of circa 1410 and a host of younger documents known as The Old Charges.

A significant change in the Craft occurred when four (4) existing Lodges in London formed the Grand Lodge of England on June 24, 1717. The Grand Lodge of England chartered many Military or Traveling Lodges. These Military lodges served with regiments in The American Colonies and helped bring Freemasonry to this continent. It followed that Provincial Grand Lodges were formed in the Colonies. Military, Traveling, and Provincial Lodges all existed during the same period. One of the first Provincial Lodges formed in the Colonies was St. Johns Lodge in Boston July 30, 1733. The charter for this Lodge was issued by Lord Viscount Montague, Grand Master of England.

PROVINCIAL PERIOD

The first Provincial Grand Master, Daniel Coxe, was appointed to oversee New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. He formed one of the oldest Lodges in the New World still in existence, St. John's #1 in New York City December 27, 1757. Lodge #139 of Savannah, Georgia (1735) has retained its original identity. It was renamed Solomon #1 in 1776. The Lodge kept English registry till 1813 even though it was on the Grand Lodge of Georgia rolls.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

The History of Freemasonry in America is almost synonymous with the history of our country. Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, and John Hancock were among the early Patriots who were Masons. One of the most famous Lodges in the New World was St. Andrew's Lodge which met at the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston. Many historians are convinced that the participants in the Boston Tea Party were members of that Lodge. Dr.



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Joseph Warren received his degrees in this Lodge. It is believed that he and other brothers were involved in the Boston Tea Party.

Warren County was named for Dr. & General Joseph Warren, hero of the American Revolution and the first Provincial Grand Master of Masons in the Colony of Massachusetts (December 27, 1769). He served as such until he was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775). The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts assumed its independence on March 8, 1777 becoming the first independent Grand Lodge in the United States.

Peyton Randolph, the first President of the Continental Congress was Provincial Grand Master of Masons in the Virginia Colony. He died on the floor of the Second Congress in 1775.

Benjamin Franklin was Grand Master of Masons in Pennsylvania. It is believed that through his influence and strong Masonic ties in France and the rest of Europe, Masonic stalwarts such as Lafayette and Baron Von Steuben came to the aid of the Colonies.

At the Battle of Saratoga October 17, 1777, General Burgoyne surrendered to General Horatio Gates. On October 17, 1877, Grand Master J.J. Couch laid the cornerstone of the monument in Schuylerville commemorating that battle. The monument has four carved niches; three of which are filled with groups of bronze figures representing the three famous colonial generals who participated in the battle: Schuyler, Gates, & Daniel Morgan. The fourth niche is vacant with a solitary word "ARNOLD" to remind us that the glory Benedict Arnold won at Saratoga would be later lost in his treason at West Point. Had Arnold died in that battle instead of just losing his leg, he would have been remembered as a great American Hero. All four men were Masons. Another Freemason at the battle was General Kosciusko.

EARLY FREEMASONRY IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

After the Revolution, the American Grand Lodges became sovereign and independent. Eventually a Grand Lodge was created in every State and the District of Columbia. The Grand Lodge of New York was formed in 1781 under the Atholl Charter. Lesson #7 details the Structure of The Grand Lodge of the State of New York.

Among the early Governors of New York who also served as Grand Master of Masons in the State include: Daniel D. Tompkins (later Vice President of the United States), DeWitt Clinton, and Morgan Lewis.

Attending the first inauguration of George Washington on April 30, 1789 was a Who's Who of Freemasonry in New York State. The altar Bible of St. John's Lodge was used by Chancellor Robert L. Livingston to administer the oath of office. The Bible has been used to swear in a number of Presidents, including George Bush on Jan. 20, 1989.



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At the first inauguration the President-elect was escorted by selected military units commanded by General William Malcolm (a Freemason). His aides were Morgan Lewis (later Grand Master of New York), Jacob Morton and Leonard Bleecker (all prominent Freemasons).

Jacob Morton was the Grand Secretary of Grand Lodge and Master of St. John's Lodge #1 (the owner of the Washington Bible). He later became Grand Master of New York. Surrounding Washington at the inauguration were: Richard Henry Lee, Henry Knox, Arthur St. Clair, Baron Von Steuben, House Speaker Frederick A.C. Mulenberg, and New York Governor George Clinton -- all Freemasons. George Clinton was later to become the Vice-President of the United States. He was also the uncle of the future Governor and Grand Master DeWitt Clinton who was present at the inaugural.

On September 18, 1793 Washington laid the cornerstone for the Capitol in full Masonic ritual. The trowel he used was later utilized by the Grand Master of Virginia to lay the cornerstone of the Washington Monument on July 4, 1848. Both the trowel and the apron used by Washington are kept at the Washington Masonic National Monument in Alexandria, Virginia.

Between 1822-1827, a schism developed between upstate and New York City Freemasons. Freemasons from "Upstate" felt that Grand Lodge should be held in Albany and not in New York City, since Albany was more centrally located. In 1825, Stephen Van Rensselaer was elected Grand Master to heal the wounds. The pact of June 7, 1827 resolved these differences. Van Rensselaer was a prominent public servant. Early that year it was his vote in the U.S. House of Representatives which gave John Quincy Adams a sufficient majority to win election to the Presidency.

THE MORGAN AFFAIR

The disappearance of William Morgan in September of 1826 set the stage for the influence of Freemasonry in government to be greatly diminished.

An individual by the name of William Morgan, had joined a Royal Arch Chapter in LeRoy, New York. He moved to Batavia and petitioned to join a Chapter there. Characterized as an undesirable, he was rejected. He then conspired with David Miller, a publisher whose habits were in harmony with Morgan, to print the "secrets" of Freemasonry. This disturbing news upset some over-zealous Freemasons who "allegedly" abducted Morgan from jail. He was not heard from since.

A body was found at Oak Orchard Harbor near Niagara. A claim was made that it was that of Morgan. Although the claim later proved to be false, detractors of Freemasonry used the claim to build suspicion and hatred against the Craft. The Anti-Masonic political party was formed. Churches expelled from their congregations any member who would not



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renounce Freemasonry. Most Masonic lodges were dissolved. A few remained in operation by meeting in secret.

In 1827, there were 800 Lodges in New York State with over 20,000 members. By 1830 only 82 Lodges were left with 3,000 members. It was not until 1857 that New York membership would be back to the 1827 level. The Morgan affair caused a decline in Masonic membership, especially in North East America, for a period of about 20 years.

A NEW ERA

The cornerstone for a new Masonic Hall for Grand Lodge was laid June 8, 1870. The dedication of the completed structure took place June , 1875. In 1891 the cornerstone for the first building for the Masonic Home in Utica was laid. By 1893 the first guests at the home were received.

In 1947 the Masonic Foundation for Medical Research and Human Welfare was established. The cornerstone was laid in 1956 for the Masonic Medical Research Lab building. The building was completed in 1958.

Freemasonry gradually grew back in numbers until, in New York State, membership peaked to 343,700 in 1929. It declined during the depression years and peaked again in 1956 to 308,459 members. The full history of Freemasonry, and particularly in New York State, has been glorious and impressive. It continues to grow. We have merely touched on some of the highlights.

U.S. MASONIC PRESIDENTS

George Washington (1732-1799) 1st 1789-1796
James Monroe (1758-1831) 5th 1817-1825
Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) 7th 1829-1837 GM in TN 1822-24
James Polk (1795-1849) 11th 1845-1849
James Buchanan (1791-1868) 15th 1857-1861 Dep.GM in PA
Andrew Johnson (1767-1845) 17th 1865-1869
James Garfield (1831-1881) 20th 1881
William McKinley (1843-1901) 25th 1897-1901
Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) 26th 1901-1909
William Taft (1857-1930) 27th 1909-1913
Warren Harding (1865-1923) 29th 1921-1923 (1st Shriner Pres.)
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) 32nd 1933-1945
Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) 33rd 1945-1953 GM of MO
Lyndon Johnson (1908-1973) 36th 1963-1969 (Entered Apprentice only)
Gerald Ford (1913) 38th 1974-1977



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Notes:



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEMASONRY

What do you say when people ask, "What is Freemasonry?" "Masonry is more than social good fellowship, more than ritual, more than organized charity. It is a way of living; a philosophy of life." Another definition says: "Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational, and religious society." What do these definitions infer?

Some have claimed that Freemasonry is a secret organization. But, in fact, its only secrets are in its methods of recognition and of symbolic instruction. We maintain secrecy but purely as a means of mutual identification. We take an oath but only after assurance that it "will not improperly affect any duty we owe to God, our country, our neighbor and our selves." We have forms and symbols and ceremonies but these are all external.

Actually, the entire ritual is a symbolic representation of the course of man through his life, leading him step by step from birth, through manhood, to old age, and leaving him with the hope of immortality. The first degree, called the Entered Apprentice, represents man as he comes into life; helpless, ignorant and dependent. It carries his education through the period of his youth. The second, or Fellowcraft Degree, represents man in his middle age; and the third, or Master Mason degree, takes him through old age and ends with a beautiful lesson in the unconquerable hope of immortality. Through the three Degrees, the candidate is taught increasing wisdom in the art of upright living.

Freemasonry is the friend of every religious faith but is not itself a religion. Essentially, it is the practical applications of a philosophy of life or way of living.

Not being the product of any one race or system of government, or economics or philosophy or religion, Freemasonry welcomes men of every race and creed if they have sufficient integrity of character to become good Masons and if they believe in a Supreme Being. Instead of trying to be a religion, Freemasonry deliberately seeks to provide a common meeting place where men of every monotheistic religion can remain true to their own religions and yet, submerging their differences, can work together in harmony to manifest the finest fruits of all religions.

The emphasis of religion is often on intercession for forgiveness of a person's shortcomings. Masonic emphasis is on a more positive aspect. It teaches a Mason to measure up to his obligations rather than to deal with theological doctrines of forgiveness. Similarly, Masonry stresses a person's duties rather than his rights. Just as Freemasonry exhorts each member to be a true and loyal citizen of whatever country is entitled to his allegiance, so, likewise, Freemasonry expects each of its members to be a true and loyal supporter of his chosen religion and of the church, synagogue, or other unit of its organizational worship.



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Freemasonry is a social organization only so far as it furnishes inducement and a setting for men to gather in numbers. Thus they can promote its primary work of education and charity.

Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the individual man, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community. Thus, it impresses upon its members the principles of personal integrity and personal responsibility. It enlightens them as to those things which make for human welfare, and inspires them with that feeling of charity, or good will, toward all mankind which will move them to translate principle and conviction into action.

We believe that the Masonic life should be an orderly life, and that it should be a public spirited life. Furthermore, we believe it should be an industrious life in the pursuit of one's vocation and a physically sane life with due regard to bodily health. A sound body, orderly industry, public spirit, but primarily the building of character--to us these emerge as major laws of successful living.

What, then, does Freemasonry say about man's relationship with God and with his fellowman?

- * In a world of greed and force, it teaches self-restraint and reason.
- * In a world permeated with the spirit of selfish rivalry, it teaches Universal Brotherhood.
- * In a world of intolerance and bigotry it teaches tolerance and kindness.
- * In a world of cynical disbelief it teaches reverence for Deity.
- * In a world floundering in the depths of a great moral and spiritual depression it teaches industry, self-reliance, temperance and integrity.
- * It aids and comforts and reassures and inspires individuals.
- * It leaps the barriers of race and space to draw together the finest aspirations of all men and to unite them in a Universal Brotherhood.

And finally, we can say that purity of heart, sincerity, truthfulness, fidelity to duty and similar qualities are emphasized over and over as necessary internal qualifications. The attainment of wisdom, prudence, temperance, justice, reason, self-reliance, strength and beauty are practical objectives. Self-restraint, upright conduct, and morality are worthy means toward the accomplishment of these objectives.



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Yes, Masonry is more than social good fellowship, more than ritual, more than organized charity. It is a way of living; a Philosophy of Life.

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