

Welcome to Freemasonry Preparation for the Degrees

Introduction

You have decided to become a Freemason and have been elected by unanimous ballot to receive the Three Symbolic Degrees of Masonry. We congratulate you on your acceptance and welcome you as one about to enter our ranks. We hope that you are earnestly seeking the truths our Fraternity has to offer.

You have taken an important step, one which we are sure you will value not only now, but also for many years to come. Masonry is a unique institution that has been a major part of community life in America for nearly 300 years. Masonry, or more properly, Freemasonry, is America's largest, oldest, and most respected fraternity ... and one that continues to be an important part of many men's personal lives and growth. Your decision to enter the ranks of Freemasonry had to be your own without the undue influence of others. That makes your membership in Masonry one of your own choices, which is significant. Men join Masonry for a variety of reasons, each valid and important.

Millions of men have traveled this path before you, nearly all receiving a benefit from their efforts. A large majority of these men had little knowledge or concept of the Fraternity, or what it could mean to them. For this reason, we wish to share certain thoughts and information, which we feel you are entitled to receive before the conferral of the degrees.

To begin with, you should thoroughly understand that Freemasonry is entirely serious in character. Contrary to what you may have heard, there is no horseplay or frivolity permitted in our degrees; their primary purpose is to teach, to convey to you knowledge of the principles of our institution. You should, therefore, prepare yourself to approach the degrees with an open mind, determined to absorb as much as possible, without fear of ridicule or indignity.

The Degrees and accompanying lectures are the primary teaching tools of the fraternity. Whether you participate in the three degrees in a single day or over several days, pass rudimentary proficiencies of the work and in fact be "made a Mason", the in depth knowledge comes in time as you reflect upon the nature of the information learned and have the opportunity to see the degrees performed again from time to time as a member of your Lodge.

WHO ARE MASONS?

Masons are men who have joined together to improve themselves. As the saying goes "Freemasonry takes good men, and makes them better" This is accomplished by applying the Masonic principles, which are learned, remembered and handed down through the generations through the ceremonies of the fraternity. Masons endeavor to extend those Masonic lessons into their daily lives in order to become positive influences in their homes, communities, nation, and throughout the world. They base their efforts on morality, justice, charity, truth and the laws of God. Worldwide, membership encompasses millions of men who believe and support the same fundamental principles.

WHAT IS MASONRY?

What is modern Freemasonry? Masonry is many things to many people. Many years ago in England, it was defined as "a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols." It is a course of moral instruction using both allegories and symbols to teach its lessons. The legends and myths of the old stonecutters and masons, many of them involved in building the great cathedrals of Europe, have been woven into an interesting and effective way to portray moral truths.

In Masonry, the *old tools and ways* of the ancient craftsmen are used today to help dramatically portray those moral truths. For example, take the 24-inch *gauge* (type of ruler) and the *common gavel*: Just as the gauge is used to measure distance, the modern Mason uses the gauge as a symbolic reminder to manage one of his most precious resources: *time*. As the stone mason uses the *gavel* to smooth and shape stones, chip by chip, in order to make them square and useful for constructing a building, so it is a modern Mason's reminder for the necessity of improving ourselves over time, chipping away bad habits and unnecessary distractions that hold us back from achieving our full potentials. Somewhere inside that rough stone lies the perfect ashlar or statue of beauty, we need only use our tools to discard the "unnecessary" fragments to reveal it.

One modern definition is "Freemasonry is an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principle of Operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building." In other words, Masonry uses ageless methods and lessons to make each of us a better person.

Thus, Masonry:

1. Has a basic philosophy of life that places the individual worth of each man high on a pedestal, and incorporates the great teachings of many ages to provide a way for individual study and thought.
2. Has great respect for religion and promotes toleration and equal esteem for the religious opinions and beliefs of others.
3. Provides a working plan for making good men even better.
4. Is a social organization.
5. Has many important charitable projects.
6. Has a rich worldwide history.
7. Offers a proven way to develop both public speaking and dramatic abilities, and it provides an effective avenue for developing leadership.

WHAT MASONRY STANDS FOR

Masonry stands for certain important principles and beliefs.

The primary doctrines of Freemasonry are **Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth**. Its cardinal virtues are **Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice**. These principles or beliefs cover a broad field, actually supplying the pattern to meet every experience in human life.

In the United States Masonry is a strong supporter of constitutional government...of quality public education ... of the freedom of religion and expression ... of the equality of all men and women ... of the need for strong moral character... and of meaningful charity.

Masonry, and the organizations that are within the Masonic family, contribute millions of dollars every day to charity including helping those with sight problems or aphasia, physically disabled children, those with severe burns, and Dyslexia Children's Learning Centers. Local Lodges also work to help their communities and individuals within those communities.

Masonry's charity is given without regard to race, sex, creed, or national origin.

THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY

"The mission of Freemasonry is to promote a way of life that binds like minded men in a worldwide brotherhood that transcends all religious, ethnic, cultural, social and educational differences; by teaching the great principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth: and, by the outward expression of these principles, through its fellowship, its compassion and its concern, to find ways in which to serve God, family, country, neighbors and self."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY?

Simply put, the overall purpose of Masonry is to provide a way to help each member become a better person. We do not propose to take a bad man and make him good; rather, our aim is to take the good man and make him better.

We try to place emphasis on the individual man by:

1. Strengthening his character.
2. Improving his moral and spiritual outlook.
3. Broadening his mental horizons.

We try to impress upon the minds of our members the principles of personal responsibility and morality; to give each member an understanding of and feeling for Freemasonry's character; and to have every member put these lessons into practice in his daily life.

We try to build a better world by building better men to work in their own way in their own communities. Freemasonry believes in universal peace made possible by teaching its doctrine through the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

WHAT ARE LODGES?

The word "Lodge" has two meanings:

- 1) A Lodge building is a meeting place for Masons. Masons may use this place for regular business meetings, degrees, social activities, other Masonic groups, or even community activities. Lodge buildings are prominently marked, and are often recognized as special landmarks in the cities, towns, and states.

2) The local “Lodge of Freemasons” is a group of Masons granted a charter by a Grand Lodge. To a great extent, each local Lodge operates autonomously, but within specific guidelines set forth by the Grand Lodge as to how this local Lodge may function and what it can and cannot do. These guidelines are set forth in books of constitutions and ritual. The leaders of the Lodge are elected by the Lodge membership each year. One of the primary objectives of Lodges is to make Master Masons. Beyond that there are several affiliated organizations members may consider for their Masonic advancement or enjoyment.

What about all those ancient terms and words?

Freemasonry would not be the same without its timeless traditions and archaic terminology. A little strange at first it does appear you are stepping back in time when entering a Masonic Lodge. This distinction between Freemasonry and other modern organizations is just one more element that sets it apart and lends an air of dignity and formality to the institution. Terms like “Worshipful Master” and Senior and Junior Wardens” seem bizarre until it is explained that the “Master” is the president of the Lodge and “Master” means leader and “Worshipful” is from the English traditional phraseology and it means “respected”. Thus we have the old English term for “respected leader”. (Till this day the Mayor of London England is still called the “Worshipful Lord Mayor”.) Our Senior and Junior Wardens are the first and second vice-presidents.

What about that “Ritual” thing?

Ritual simply means ceremony or a routinized way of doing something. The opening and closing ceremonies of a Lodge and the degrees of Masonry are performed by rote and it is important not to allow for deviations, as even the slightest changes, over time, could have a diminishing effect. Therefore, everything is done the same way every time. Grand Lodges actually inspect local Lodges for their level of Masonic proficiency to insure high standards.

Why it never gets boring?

As for the ritual or ceremonies that’s one of the beauties of Freemasonry, and one we hope you come to enjoy. For those that contemplate their meanings, ever-expanding facets of understanding continue to unfold. And besides, the ceremonies are just one part of Masonry. Brotherhood, comradeship, social events, charitable works, self-improvement, community involvement, etc., are all part of the overall Masonic experience, and you determine the extent and blend of your involvement.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

We are not sure at what point in time that our craft was born. Hundreds of Masons have investigated this question, but no conclusive answer has been found, and perhaps never will be. We do know that the earliest written record of the term "Master Mason" appears in the Regius manuscript, written about 1390 and now kept in the British Museum. Its mention of the "Master Mason" refers to the stonemasons of the Middle Ages. The tools of the stonemason date back, of course, to the earliest periods of history and are lost in the midst of time. This is also true of the geometry and geometric symbols used in the craft of building. Some scholars hold the theory that Freemasonry descended from the Knights Templars – aka - Knight of the Temple. They refer King Solomon’s temple, which plays a significant role in the Masonic Degrees. Some scholars believe both theories are true and the craft evolved from several roots and now stands as the fraternal organization we see today.

Over the ages Freemasonry, as we now know it, slowly took form. It has evolved into a comprehensive and effective form of fraternal teaching of basic morals, truths and personal fulfillment. It ranks the development of the individual's reasoning capabilities highly and encourages the questioning mind.

THE TWO TYPES OF MASONRY

There are actually two kinds of Masonry. One we call "Operative" and the other "Speculative."

Operative Masonry can be traced back to the Middle Ages and beyond. Operative Masons formed groups with Lodge structures similar to ours today. We have officers similar to theirs. Men were admitted only after they had served a number of years of apprenticeship. This is the origin of the first or Entered Apprentice degree. In Operative Masonry, Masons actually did the physical labor of building. They were the best at their craft, and they kept secret their methods of building. These secrets were so crucial that oaths and obligations were taken by the Masons receiving them not to reveal them to non-Masons under any circumstances whatsoever. The breach of these obligations carried such significant penalties they would rather die than violate their obligations. Today modern Freemasons recite these penalties "symbolically" during the degree ceremonies strictly in terms of a tradition and as symbolic reminders that a man's worth is in direct proportion to his living a trustworthy and honorable life, similar to oaths of conduct sworn to by knights of an ancient code.

When the organization became **Speculative Masonry**, men were accepted into the Craft without being actual builders, that is, they were spiritual builders. Speculative Masonry adopts the terms and concepts of the actual builders, but substitutes men for stone and mortar, and works toward self-improvement rather than the actual construction of buildings. Again, the ancient codes of conduct are used in today's Freemasonry to build strong character and the penalties are a vivid symbolic reminder that honor and good conduct are vitally important building and maintaining a man's character and reputation.

"FREE" AND "ACCEPTED" MASONS

How did the words "Free" and "Accepted" originate?

The ancient craftsmen were very skilled and their craft was considered to be indispensable to the welfare of both church and state. They were the men who built castles, fortifications and cathedrals. They held certain secrets that enabled them to build what others could not and were extremely cautious in allowing anyone into the craft. When they did, it was by degrees, for the purpose of training, assuring proficiency and to assure trustworthiness. They were indeed the indispensable craftsmen of their time. For this reason, they were not placed under the same restrictions, as were other workers. They were actually "free" to do their work, travel, and live their lives in a manner that was in line with their duties.

The Masons organized into "guilds," something akin to a trade union, and individual companies or groups of Masons contracted for specific construction projects. In the England of that time, various crafts (carpenters, distillers, pewterers, ironworkers, etc.) also organized into guilds, but most of the population worked under bond to the owners of the land on which they lived.

The word "Accepted" also goes back to the time of the Operative Mason. During the later years of the Middle Ages, there were few educated outside the monasteries of the church.

The "accepted" mason was originally a man who, in a lodge operative in origin or still partly so in character, was for all practical purposes of membership accepted as a mason. From this practice grew in course of time the use of the words for "accepted" and "adopted" to indicate a man who had been admitted into the inner fellowship of symbolic masons. Candidates were "accepted" into freemasonry no earlier than the mid-seventeenth century. We first meet the phrase "free and accepted" in 1722.

By the late 1600's the demand for the type of architecture that lent itself to the guild type of operation was declining. Architecture itself was changing; and the numbers of men, as well as the number of operative lodges, were declining. Increasingly, Masonry adopted the legends and habits of the old operative lodges, for spiritual and moral purposes. As time went on, there became many more "Accepted" members than there were "Operative" members. Sometime in the eighteenth century, the "Accepted Masons" outnumbered the "Operative Masons" and Masonry became exclusively a speculative organization rather than an operative one.

ORIGIN OF THE GRAND LODGE

In 1717, four Lodges in London met and decided to form a Grand Lodge, possibly for no other reason than to strengthen and preserve themselves. In 1723, they adopted a Constitution. Their success led to the establishment of still other Grand Lodges. In 1725, some of the Lodges in Ireland formed a Grand Lodge and a similar body was instituted in Scotland in 1736. Moreover, the original Grand Lodge in England did not remain without rivals, and at one time in the eighteenth century three Grand Lodges existed in England in addition to the one organized in 1717. Two of these died out without influencing the history of Masonry in general, but the third had a great part in the spread and popularizing of Masonry throughout the world. It called itself the "Ancients Grand Lodge". The two surviving Grand Lodges were long and vigorous rivals, but they finally united in 1813 into the present United Grand Lodge of England. Thus, from one of these two Grand Bodies in England, or from those of Ireland or Scotland are descended all other Grand Lodges in the world today.

Titles of Grand Lodges in the United States also vary. Some Grand Lodges are called A. F. & A. M., which means Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. Another common title is F. & A. M., or Free and Accepted Masons. Here in New Jersey we use F.& A.M.

Masonry was established in France sometime between 1718 and 1725. The first lodge in Spain was established in 1728. A lodge was established in Prague in 1729, in Calcutta in 1728 and in Naples in 1731. Masonry came to Poland in 1734 and Sweden in 1735.

The growth of Freemasonry and its ideals and beliefs came not without opposition. Masons are taught that all men are equal – we meet upon the level. Individual freedom of thought and action, as well as morality and ethics, are the concepts and ideals upon which our order is founded. The teachings are a condemnation of autocratic government, who in turn condemns Freemasonry.

MASONIC HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

It was inevitable that Freemasonry should follow the colonists to America and play a most important role in the establishment of the thirteen colonies. Freemasonry was formally recognized for the first time in America with the appointment by the Grand Lodge of England of a Provincial Grand Master in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1730. American Masons worked under foreign jurisdiction until 1731, when the first American Grand Lodge was established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The first recorded Mason in New Jersey was in 1682 with the early history in New Jersey being obscure due to the lack of local records or reference. The first Lodge in New Jersey organized in 1761. The New Jersey Grand Lodge organized in 1786 and the Honorable David Brearley Jr. (NJ Supreme Court Justice) was selected as the first Grand Master of Masons In the State of New Jersey.

One of the most romantic portions of all Masonic history lies in the story of the part played by Freemasons in the formation of our country. Without exaggeration, we can say that Freemasonry and Masonic thinking contributed most significantly to the founding of this great Republic. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the drafters of the Constitution, were members of the Fraternity. George Washington was a staunch Freemason. He was the first of fourteen Masonic Presidents and the only one to serve as Worshipful Master of a Lodge and President at the same time. The others after Washington are Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Andrew Jackson, Garfield, McKinley, both Teddy and F.D. Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Truman and Ford – of whom Truman and Andrew Jackson served also as Grand Masters.

In the struggle for independence many well-known patriots, such as Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Marquis de Lafayette, and Baron von Steuben were members of the Craft. No doubt Freemasonry was responsible for and shared much of their thinking and opinions. Much has been written about the participation of the Fraternity in the Revolution and the founding of America, and it is an episode of which we can be proud. Ever since that period, Freemasonry has grown and flourished, following closely the growth and expansion of the United States.

A list of famous Freemasons will reveal a remarkable number of men who have made incredible contributions to the United States and to mankind. Their biographies are inspiring and well worth the reading.

HISTORY – Grand Lodges

The modern Craft cannot function without the actions of that superior level interposed on top of the actions of the subordinate lodge. The fact that the Grand Lodge of New Jersey has now entered its' third century of operation, having been organized in 1786, asserts the need for consolidated leadership.

Each Grand Lodge throughout the World has been founded for one purpose, to bring prosperity and order to the Craft in its respective jurisdiction. The Craft has grown and prospered as a result of that order. Today, Grand Lodges throughout the United States combine their efforts to address the recent declines in membership, enthusiasm, interest and leadership and to concentrate their efforts on the improvement of the Craft.

The first Grand Lodge was formed by four lodges meeting on St. John the Baptist's Day, June 24, 1717, in London, England, by the simple expedient of placing the oldest Master Mason who was then serving as Master of his Lodge in the chair. The newly appointed Grand Master issued the simplest of commands; he ordered the Masters and Wardens of all lodges to meet with the Grand Officers in quarterly communication. In reality, however, the Grand Lodge only met once annually for several years following. The four founding lodges did not initially intend to establish an authoritarian body that would supersede their government of the Craft, but inevitably, the new Grand Lodge came to be regarded as the dominant leader of the newly organized Craft. The first demonstration of that authority occurred with the formation or recognition of other lodges, and the appointment of Provincial Grand Masters and Provincial Grand Lodges throughout England, the Continent, and the Colonies.

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History of Freemasonry in New Jersey

The Grand Lodge of New Jersey was founded on December 18, 1786 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Twenty-six Freemasons attended that convention, and seven others arrived late in the day. The oldest Master Mason present then sitting, as Master of a lodge was Doctor William McKissack of Bound Brook. He was invited to assume the chair and the conduct the meeting. Doctor McKissack was 31 years of age! Those attending Freemasons represented lodges previously founded in New Jersey by the Provincial Grand Lodges or Provincial Grand Masters of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York during the pre-Revolutionary period 1761 through 1781.

The thirty-three Freemasons attending that first convention in New Jersey Freemasons unanimously agreed to form a Grand Lodge of New Jersey by means of a written document called "the Association"; to nominate and elect a "Right" Worshipful Grand Master and other Grand Lodge Officers, and to again meet on January 30, 1787 at New Brunswick to install those officers and to constitute the Grand Lodge of New Jersey.

The person selected, as the first Grand Master was Lt. Col. David Brearley of Allentown, New Jersey, then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. A Revolutionary Soldier and Patriot, it is presumed that Col. Brearley received his degrees in Military Lodge No. 19 (PA) while serving in the "The Wilderness" of Western Pennsylvania in 1776.

The first recorded action of the new Grand Lodge was to form other lodges. It resolved to meet twice yearly, near St. John the Baptist's Day in June and near St. John the Evangelist's Day in December.

By 1790, a membership of 18 Freemasons was spread among eight lodges. Grand Master Brearley died that year.

Fifty-eight lodges were founded by 1832. The anti-Masonic period commenced in America in 1826 following the mysterious disappearance of Mr. William Morgan of Batavia, N.Y., who was about to publish an expose of Freemasonry. New York Freemasons were accused of his murder although it has never been proven if members of the Craft did, or did not, participate in his murder or disappearance. A tide of anti-Masonic sentiment swept the Eastern seaboard, commencing in New Jersey about 1830 and cresting about

1836. Anti-Masonic acts were especially virulent. Lodges ceased to operate and Freemasons recanted their obligations. By 1841 there were only eight New Jersey lodges left on the rolls determined to be "working" lodges.

The eight lodges were re-numbered in 1842 and the task of re-building commenced. By 1852 there were 20 lodges and, about, 600 members, by 1862 there were 60 lodges and, about, 3,400 members.

A unusually large surge in membership after WWII pushed membership to an all-time high on January 1, 1959 with a recorded regular membership of 107,469. Lodge No. 198 was warranted on April 23, 1964, and was to remain the last regular lodge numbered until the warranting of Sons of Liberty Lodge No. 301 in 2001.

During the 70s, 80s, and 90s membership had adjusted significantly with the attrition of large numbers of post WWII members, and some Lodges naturally consolidated back again. The decline in membership since stabilized and an increase in membership is now again being noticed.

Operation and Organization

The primary purpose of a modern Grand Lodge is to guarantee the regularity of the lodges under its control. Diplomatic recognition is accorded many Grand Lodges in amity to assure the regularity of the Craft and the acceptance of all regular Freemasons throughout the World.

The Grand Lodge determines customs and Landmarks, adopts a Constitution and passes laws that insure good order throughout its jurisdiction. It warrants new lodges. It determines disputes over Masonic matters and disciplines members who transgress its rules. It prevents groups from inappropriately assuming the conduct of a lodge, and assures that its constituent lodges remain regulated and acceptable to other Grand Lodges.

WHAT WE ARE NOT

We are not a secret society.

A secret society is generally one that wraps itself in a cloak of absolute secrecy. That means no one knows who the members are, where they meet, what they do or what they stand for.

That is not Masonry at all! Masonry may have secrets, but it is not a secret society. Masonic secrets are few in number, and deal with the general method of initiation, the ways we recognize each other, and very little else. These parts of the ritual, the esoteric side of Masonry, were handed down for centuries by word of mouth..

Masonry's purposes, ideals, and principles may be learned by anyone who inquires. There are numerous books on these subjects, which are available to the public. Masonry often has public notices in the newspapers, and our members are usually numbered among the more prominent citizens in the community.

We are not a Religion

Masonry, as an organization, is understanding and tolerant of all religious thoughts.

Masonry has no specific creed, no dogma, no priesthood. There are no requirements as to religious preference in becoming a Mason.

Masonry does ask you to state your belief and trust in a Supreme Being. Non- sectarian Prayers are a common part of all our ceremonies, but are not offered to a specific deity.

Masonic ritual does incorporate lessons and examples from the Bible, but they are given as representative illustrations. Masonry does not require you belong to a church, synagogue or mosque although many Masons are very active in their religious organizations, and among our members are leaders of many denominations.

Freemasonry accepts your right to belong to any church or religious organization of your choice and does not infringe on that right. Neither does Masonry try to be a substitute for your church. Masonry wants to unite men for the purpose of brotherhood; not as an organized religion.

WHAT WE DON'T DO

Sectarian religion and partisan politics are not discussed in Lodge, and there are very good reasons. When we meet in a Lodge, we are all on a common level, and are not subject to the classes and distinctions of the outside world. Each Brother is entitled to his own beliefs and may follow his own convictions. Our objective is to unite men, not to divide them. These two subjects, politics and religion, can cause honest differences of opinion, which might well cause friction among Brothers. No member running for political office has any right to expect the support of any other member because of Lodge affiliation. This does not mean, however, that matters that concern themselves with the nature of government or individual freedoms are not proper concerns of Masons as good citizens.

There will be subjects concerning the Lodge's business that have to be discussed. These are made within the bounds of propriety, and everyone should show tolerance for the opinions of others. Every Master wants harmony in his Lodge; and, once a matter has been put to vote in the Lodge, and a decision made, the decision should be accepted by all members regardless of how they voted.

Masonry teaches every Mason to be a good citizen and to perform his civic duties. We do not try to keep anyone from expressing his opinion, or from serving his city, county, state, or nation in an honorable manner. Anyone who serves in political office should not act politically as a Freemason; nor, in the name of Freemasonry in exercising his rights.

To sum up: As a Mason you will never introduce into the Craft any controversial sectarian or political question; you will pay no heed to those, from without, who attack the Fraternity; and in your life as a member of the state you will ever be loyal to the demands of good citizenship.

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QUALIFICATIONS OF A PETITIONER

Most Grand Lodges have decreed, "A petitioner for the degrees of Masonry must be a man, of legal age, a believer in a Supreme Being, and of moral conduct. They normally decree that no one who belongs to any organization subversive to the government of the United States is eligible for membership.

In addition, it is generally understood that there are internal and external qualifications necessary to become a Mason. The internal qualifications refer to those not apparent to the world and include his attitude toward the Fraternity and his motives and design in seeking entrance into it.

The outward qualifications refer to his physical fitness to participate in the degrees and perform the duties of a member, his reputation in the community and his financial ability to conform to the requirements of membership. The applicant must act of his own free will; he must first be prepared in his heart and must act uninfluenced by friends or unbiased by mercenary motives.

The petitioner must be recommended by someone in the Fraternity and his character and reputation investigated.

He must be a free man in the fullest sense. He must be a peaceable citizen, loyal to his country and its laws.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE DEGREES

First of all, relax.

All of the ceremonies of Masonry are serious and performed in a dignified manner. There is no horseplay, no hazing.

Enter the lodge with an attitude that will help you appreciate the serious and solemn ceremonies that you will experience.

The degrees, or teaching lessons, are done in the form of short plays, in which you play a part, prompted by a guide. The language is beautiful, and the content both meaningful and interesting.

When you receive each degree, it is suggested that you dress respectfully, as in a business setting. When you arrive at the Lodge for your degree, you will be asked to wait a short time in an outer room while the Lodge prepares to conduct the degree. A small committee will meet with you formally. You will be asked a series of questions to ascertain your motives and confirm your free choice in joining our Fraternity. You will then be prepared to receive the degree by temporarily exchanging your street clothes for the plain garment of a candidate.

The degree itself will be recited to you, always from memory, by a team of Masons. Listen to the content of what is being said. These are spiritual lessons given with great dignity.

You should have no worries about entering a Masonic Lodge. The degrees are simply lessons and you will be treated as the friend and brother that you are becoming.

DEMONSTRATING PROFICIENCY

As you take the degrees, you will be asked to show that you understand what has been said and portrayed. This proficiency is evidence that a candidate is qualified for advancement, just as in the days of operative masonry, when the worker had to show that he was qualified to do more complicated tasks.

In today's modern Freemasonry a candidate is often asked to memorize a portion of the lectures that accompanies the degrees and also demonstrate an understanding of Masonic principals, symbols and traditions. A coach will be assigned to you to help you learn the material, answer any questions that you may have, and see that you pass smoothly through the process of becoming an informed Mason and an active Lodge member. You are expected to meet with your coach as often as necessary in order to acquire a basic knowledge of Masonry.

Material will be given to you covering each degree. It will contain an explanation of the degrees and will explain the symbols and actions in each part of the degrees.

In addition, you will be required to memorize a portion of each degree, so that you will be able to prove yourself a Mason and visit other Lodges. It will be written in a brief memory-aid form.

When you pass the proficiencies, you will be issued your blue card and considered a Master Mason.

YOUR DUTIES AS A MASON

You will become a member of the fraternity when you have received the three degrees, proved your proficiency in each of them, and signed the by-laws of your lodge. In assuming the obligations of the degrees and signing the by-laws, you enter into an agreement with the Lodge, wherein you bind yourself to perform certain duties, and the Lodge binds itself to protect you in certain rights and privileges.

Always your duties will be loyalty to Masonry, faithfulness to your superior officers, and obedience to Masonic laws. These are fundamental conditions of membership.

As a Mason, it will be your duty to hold membership in some Lodge. If necessary or expedient, you may transfer your membership to another Lodge.

Membership in a Lodge necessarily requires some monetary obligation. Dues should be paid promptly as an imperative condition of membership. While the Lodge is not an organized charity, it teaches love and charity for all mankind and especially for Brother Masons, their widows and orphans. It will, therefore, be your duty to stand ready to lend a helping hand to a Brother Mason in sickness or distress, and to aid in the charities of the Lodge so far as your conscience will guide and your means permit.

If you are present at your Lodge when a ballot is taken on a petition for degree, you must vote. Voting on a petition for membership is not a right or privilege to be exercised at your choice, but an obligation and a duty. This is only another way of saying that the responsibility for deciding who shall be Masons rests on every member.

You may be summoned by the Worshipful Master to attend a meeting of your Lodge for some special purpose, or to discharge some duty required of you as a Mason and, unless circumstances at the time make it impossible, it will be your duty to obey.

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A Lodge differs from any other organization in many fundamental respects; duties and obligations may not be laid down or taken up at pleasure and membership is not a mere gesture of honor or an idle privilege. A member may not stand aside until an opportunity occurs to secure something from it for his own selfish purpose, nor may he evade his responsibilities by shifting his burdens to more willing shoulders. When among strangers you will have certain means of recognition by which to prove yourself to another Mason and to prove him to you, to enable you to establish Fraternal relations with men whom you might never have met. To know that wherever you go in the world and whatever your financial or social position, you will find Brothers ready to extend to you the hand of fellowship, is one of the greatest of all the privileges of membership.

YOUR REWARDS AS A MASON

If you go through the degrees, receive the work, decide that Freemasonry is a fine institution and then do nothing about the teachings presented to you, then you are wasting our time as well as your time and money. If you recognize the opportunity which is yours, take the various doctrines and truths presented to you, study them, analyze them, contemplate their meanings, and apply them to your own life, then your investment of time and money will be richly rewarded.

Do not adopt a double standard of conduct, whereby you apply Freemasonry to a part of your life, but feel that it doesn't apply to other phases. The thoughtful Freemason will apply the teaching of our Institution to each and every phase of his life, and we sincerely hope that you will see fit to follow such a practice. This great opportunity for self-improvement is one that you should grasp to such an extent that the principles of Freemasonry will eventually spread through every facet of your life; when you do you will have allowed Freemasonry to become one of the greatest of your personal experiences.

As a member of a Lodge, you will be eligible for any office in it. It will be your right to visit other Lodges in this or other Grand Jurisdiction, provided always the Worshipful Master is willing to admit you after you have been properly identified. In case of sickness or distress, you have the right to apply for relief.

These statements are not exhaustive. We have just touched the fringe of a great theme, but it is our hope, with such light as may have been given you, that you will go forward with a livelier understanding of what Masonry is and what it will mean to you and also of what you mean to Masonry.

Questions for Introduction to Freemasonry

- 1) What 3 answers best describe the purpose of Freemasonry?
 - A) Strengthening a mans character
 - B) Improving moral and spiritual outlook
 - C) Business or career networking
 - D) Broadening mental horizons

- 2) What two topics cannot be discussed in Lodge?
 - A) Religion
 - B) Cosmology
 - C) Sociology
 - D) Politics

- 3) What is the main purpose of Freemasonry?
 - a) Social outings
 - b) Building character
 - c) Charitable fundraising
 - d) Trade association

- 4) Choose two likely origins are Freemasonry
 - a) College fraternal organizations of the late 1500s
 - b) Knights Templars
 - c) Moose and Elks Lodges before they split
 - d) Stone Mason guilds of the middle ages

- 5) What is Masonic "Ritual"?
 - a) The proven means of alchemy
 - b) Standardized ceremonies that provide instruction using symbols and allegory.

- 6) What are the two types of Masonry?
 - a) secular Masonry
 - b) non-secular masonry
 - c) Operative Masonry
 - d) Speculative Masonry

- 7) What are the two Masonic meanings of the word "Lodge"?
 - a) Building owned by the fraternity used for various events including fraternal meetings
 - b) An organization of Freemasons operating as a Lodge by virtue of a Charter from a Grand Lodge
 - c) A clubhouse for collations.
 - d) An Inn or Tavern used for "lodgings"

