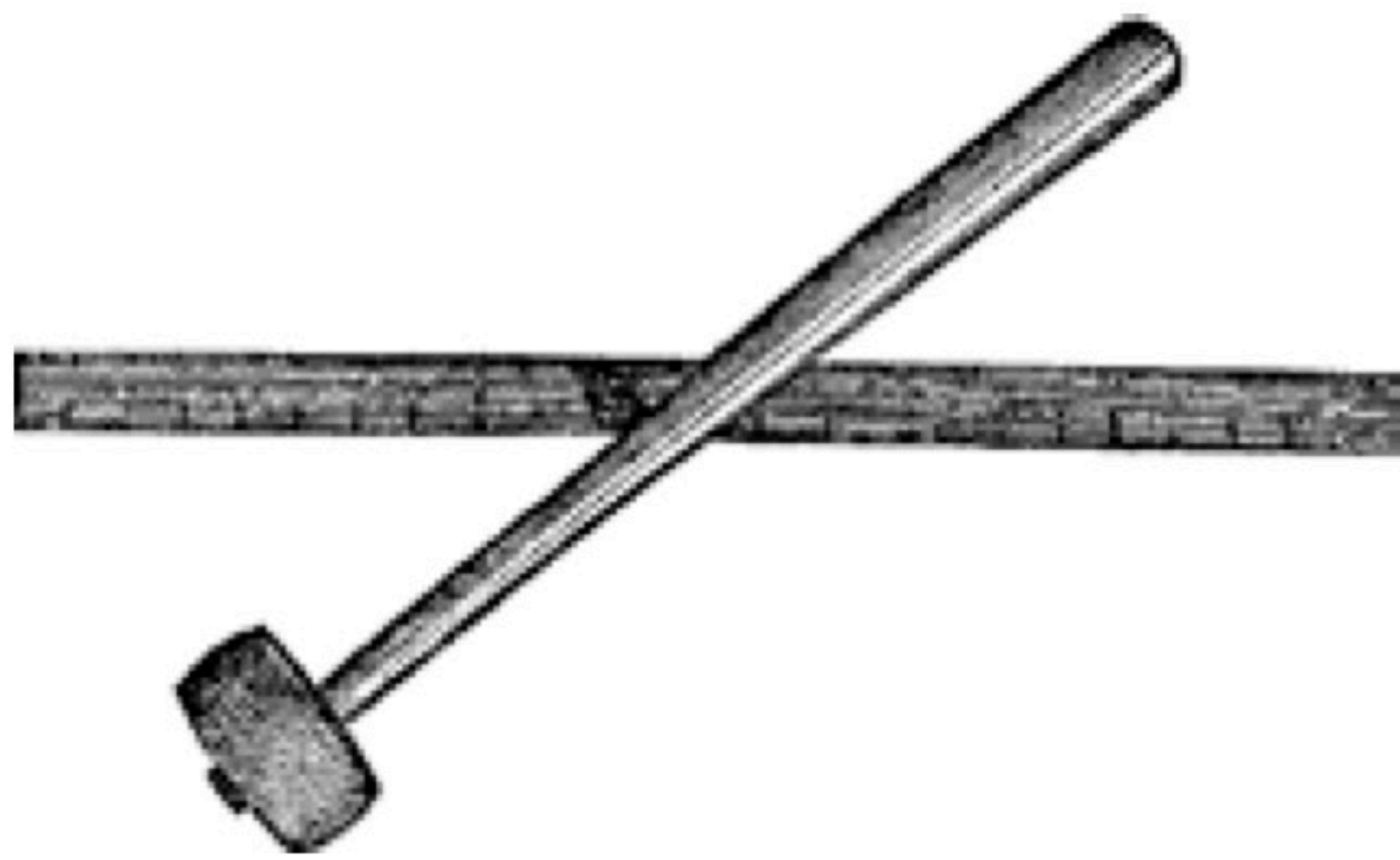


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# The Lyceum

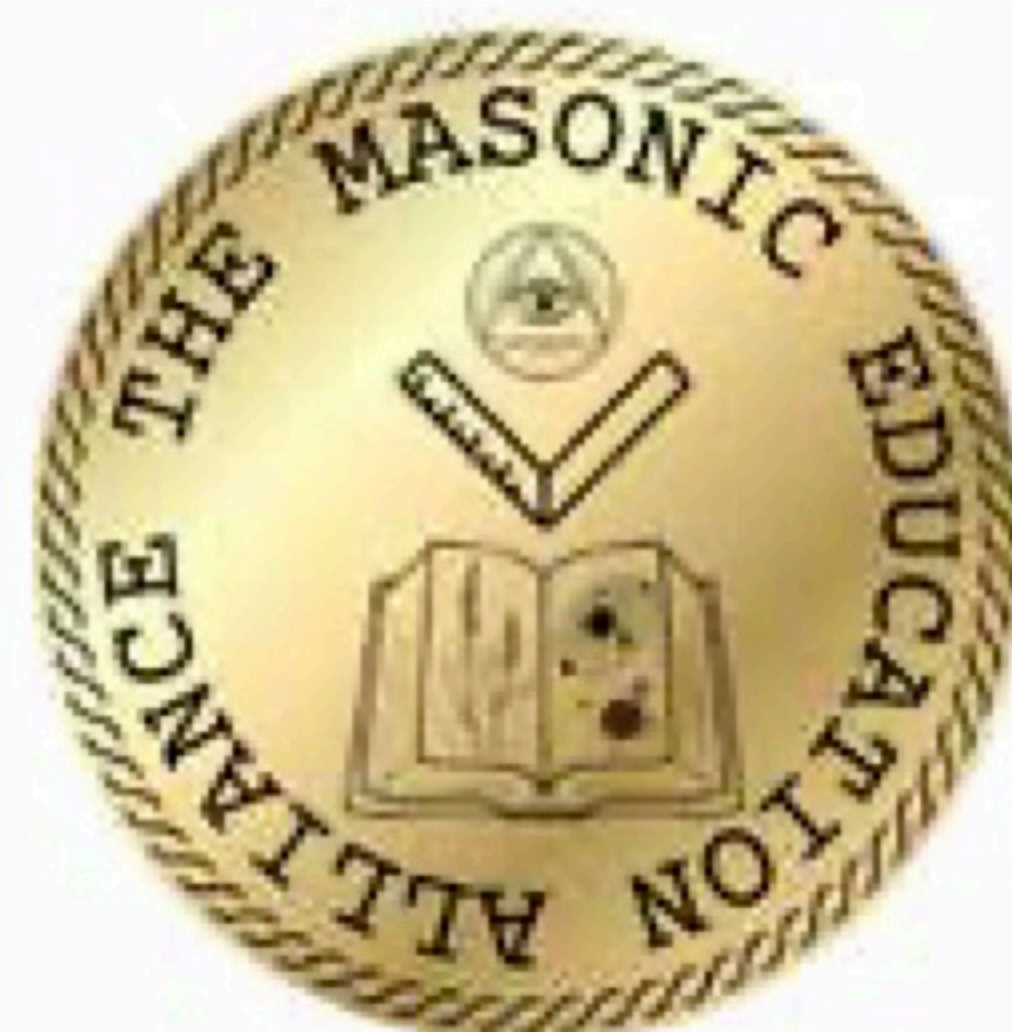
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A Publication of  
The Masonic Education Alliance

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# From the Desk of R.H. Johnson



## History:

Started in xxxx, The Lyceum, an e-magazine dedicated to Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, has undergone a necessary evolution in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Originally a publication of the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand Lodge of Illinois, the magazine was the collaborative effort of two committee members. However, with the departure of one member and the Grand Lodge's change in direction, The Lyceum faced the threat of going defunct. In response, all previous issues have been rebranded, removing any association with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While previous versions may still be available on certain websites, they are no longer offered by the publisher. These changes in branding ensure that The Lyceum can continue as a free and independent publication, focused on promoting Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, regardless of oppositional forces in any Grand Lodge organization. It is important to note that the content, authors, and publisher of The Lyceum do not represent any statements or positions of any Grand Lodge, unless expressly stated.

## About:

The Masonic Education Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative, has emerged as a beacon of Light in the realm of Freemasonry. Born out of the necessity to bridge the gap left by dwindling education committees within various Grand Jurisdictions, this alliance has taken on the responsibility of providing a limitless educational magazine dedicated to all things Freemasonry. Unrestricted by the restraints of any particular jurisdiction, the Alliance unites Masonic scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around the world to create a platform where knowledge can flow freely and uninhibited.

In the past, education committees were the pillars of Masonic educational activities, disseminating knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the Craft within their respective jurisdictions. However, due to various circumstances, these committees have been effectively gutted, leaving a void in the educational landscape of Freemasonry. Recognizing this critical need for a comprehensive educational platform, the Masonic Education Alliance was formed.

Unlike traditional Masonic publications, which are often confined by the limitations of a specific Grand Jurisdiction, the Masonic Education Alliance embraces the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Its mission is to foster a love for learning, share profound insights, and explore all aspects of Freemasonry in an unbiased and global

manner. By removing these boundaries, the Alliance opens doors for Masons and non-Masons alike to delve into the mysteries, history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry from diverse perspectives.

Through the publication of a cutting-edge digital magazine, the Masonic Education Alliance brings forth a wealth of articles, essays, research papers, and creative works that elevate the intellectual understanding of Freemasonry. Drawing upon the expertise of its contributors, the Alliance takes readers on a journey of intellectual expansion, inviting them to explore the depths of Masonic teachings and traditions.

In this rapidly changing world, where traditional modes of education are transforming, the Masonic Education Alliance stands as a beacon of progress and innovation. By harnessing the power of technology, this alliance is able to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience across continents and jurisdictions. As a digital platform, the Alliance ensures that no Mason is left behind and that access to Masonic education is available to all seekers, regardless of geographical boundaries or political constraints.

In essence, the Masonic Education Alliance is more than just a magazine; it is a revolution in Masonic education. With an unwavering commitment to intellectual growth, unlimited collaboration, and global connectivity, the Alliance cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community of Freemasons hungry for knowledge. Together, members of the Alliance strive to preserve the essence of Freemasonry while embracing the transformative power of education in an ever-evolving world.

## The Seal:

The seal of the Masonic Education Alliance embodies the organization's commitment to providing rich and unbiased content to its readers. The golden hue represents the wealth of knowledge and information offered, while the borders ensure the protection of the Alliance from external influences and attacks. The Square symbolizes the Alliance's dedication to staying true to its research and providing accurate information to its readers. The presence of the All-Seeing Eye signifies the recognition of a higher power, while the book represents the Book of Nature, with a stalk of vegetation on one page and an illustration of a germ and the solar system on the other. Absent is the Compass, for the search for knowledge knows no boundaries.

*R.H. Johnson*

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Erik Solomon

# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Brothers all,

With the Midwest Conference on Masonic Education happening at the end of April, there was much prep work for this throughout the month. A side effect was this combined April / May issue. We've curated many articles about this month's overarching theme - Meaningful Masonry.

Our featured article is near and dear to my heart. Many Freemasons within and without our jurisdiction of Illinois have heard the term/abbreviation T.O. or Traditional Observant and wondered what it was. In fact, there are just as many misconceptions about what an "observant" lodge is and does as there are general questions about it. In many jurisdictions, not even the heads of our Fraternity know anything about it. RW Brother Chad Lacek, 33°, dispels and informs in a captivating article, "What's a T.O. Lodge?"

We continue our exploration and edification with a concise article from Brother Justus Fischer--in it, he speaks to the practical or, rather, the application of the lessons in Freemasonry for today. In addition, Todd Creason talks to us in his piece on dressing appropriately for the lodge. Maybe it's a suit, or maybe your best jeans--whatever the case, check out "Why I Dress for Lodge."

Greg Knott writes in this month's issue about something you've seen month after month. That's right, those darn Masonic Education Symposiums! What are they? How do they work? Greg tells all. Then, with the practice of meaningful masonry, we return to the traditional notions of the Festive Board. Brother Randy Sanders inspires us with his article all about this timeless part of the Masonic Life--the Festive Board!

I've also contributed two articles this month. One of which is a reprint from the Midnight Freemasons Blog that was published a few years ago. In this article, I opposed the notion of a shrinking fraternity and instead offered a different perspective of the Fraternity willingly refining itself.

Finally, we offer an original piece that traces the history of the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education--and for the first time since its publishing in 1957/1958, we reprint in full the first official report from the committee.

I hope you all find this issue engaging and fun!

*R.H. Johnson*

R.H. Johnson





# From the Chairman

W.:B.: Michael Overturf, Chairman



Brethren, as winter's gloom fades and nature wakes to new life with the trees budding out and the lawns turning green, the timing of this issue couldn't come at a better time.

In this issue, we explore the different types of Masonry, whether Observance, Traditional Observance, or Craft driven. Numerous books have been written on the subject and are a part of my own and, probably, many of your own libraries.

Andrew Hammer, in his Book "Observing the Craft," has a great quote, and it was explained to me by a much more learned Brother when I was coming to terms with what it said. "*Yet, there are common elements of practice which will indicate observance in any lodge: decorum, excellence in ritual, and reverence for the same are indispensable in an observant lodge.*" Daniel D. Hrinko in The "Craft Driven Lodge" summons it up this way "*The Craft Driven Lodge provides an opportunity for each of us to explore our potential, fulfill our desires, and build relationships of value, and explore the true potential of human relationships within the structure of Speculative Masonry.*" And Finally, Brother Cliff Porter's "A Traditional Observance Lodge" gives us this "*More than anything else, Traditional observance is a philosophical outlook on Masonry.*" While it all sounds scary and intimidating, an observant lodge may have a strict dress code, hold a processional proceeding into a Lodge, and use incense before and during the meetings. The Basics are the same:

- Slowing down our work and delivering excellent rituals
- Improving the overall experience of the Lodge meeting and, finally
- Building a tighter bond with our brethren

Please enjoy and keep an open mind where you could apply these in your Lodge.

Fraternally,

*Michael Overturf*

Michael Overturf, Chairman, Masonic Education Committee

## Next Month's Theme The 7 Liberal Arts & Sciences



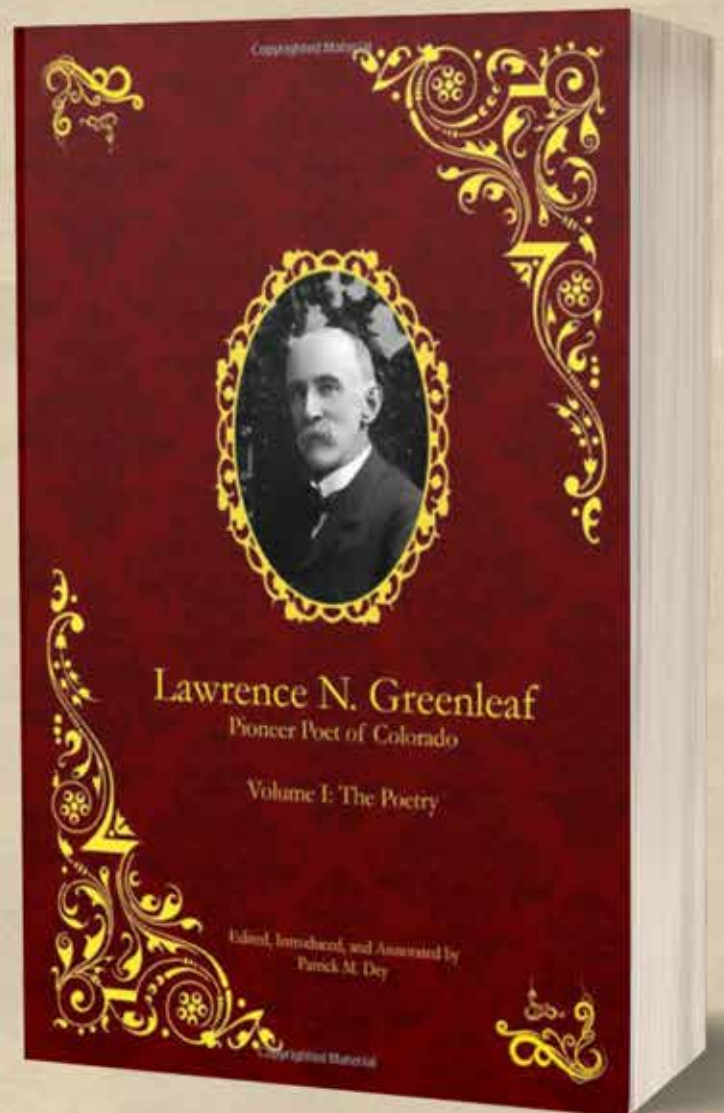
# Hot off the press!

Lawrence N. Greenleaf: Pioneer Poet of Colorado,  
Volume I: The Poetry



Pick it up now  
at [tinyurl.com/greenleafbydey](http://tinyurl.com/greenleafbydey)

Many know his popular poem, "The Lodge over Simpkins' Store, but never before has Greenleaf's poetic works been compiled and annotated in such a caring way as to preserve his words for future generations. Patrick Dey does an incredible job.





## Featured Article

# What's a T.O. Lodge?

by RWB Chad Lacek, 33°, Committee on Education



Have you ever heard the term “T.O. Lodge” or “Traditional Observance Lodge”? What is it? What does that mean? Here to follow is everything you might wish to know about this relatively

new (or is it?) Masonic practice.

The phrase Traditional Observance began circulating in 2010 when Brother Andrew Hammer published his book, *Observing the Craft*. In it, Brother Hammer laments the gradual changes that have been made in our Lodges since the early days of Speculative Freemasonry. According to the author, these changes have, over the course of time, altered the practice of Freemasonry to such an extent that they would be almost unrecognizable to a Mason of old. The term Traditional Observance is chosen to communicate a return to the original intent and purpose of Freemasonry.

This is far from the first time such a claim has been made. Every American Mason is told about the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717. A date that few of us are familiar with is 1813, the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE). I invite you to pay particular attention to the word “United” in that name. It indicates that before that time, there was division--and there certainly was. A sizeable group of Masons decided that Freemasonry in the mid-1700s had lost its way. It had strayed from the original landmarks and was no longer the

Craft they hoped to join. They decided to separate from what they called ‘Modern’ Freemasonry and gave themselves the title of ‘Ancients.’ Although the Ancients were, in fact, 36 years younger than the Moderns, they gave themselves that title to express their adherence to the ancient customs.

It should come as no surprise that 197 years later, a call to return to our time-honored traditions is made once more. Freemasonry, like every other man-made institution, must change along with the society from which its membership is composed. Such changes are normal and cyclical. The Morgan Affair of 1826 did much to reshape Freemasonry into a social and charitable organization. The men returning from the horrors of WWII would have no interest in a detailed contemplation of mortality in the third degree. They had experienced more than enough of that already. What they needed was a place to enjoy the same spirit of comradery they relied on as a soldier. Naturally, our Lodges became less focused on the philosophy and academics of the Enlightenment period and more of a mutual benefit social society.

There is no such thing as a “T.O. Lodge.” There are Lodges whose members like to ride motorcycles, and it’s natural to refer to them as ‘The Motorcycle Lodge,’ but that isn’t true either. We simply have Chartered Blue Lodges, all of which must follow the guidelines set forth by their respective Grand Lodges and hold true to the Ancient Landmarks of Freemasonry. But within

those parameters, there is plenty of room for individual expression. Every Lodge has a culture unique to itself. Our British Brothers have a great name for this. They call them "Affinity Lodges."

Just as the name implies, an Affinity Lodge is a Lodge made up of members that all share a common interest. There are University Lodges that require its members to be students, faculty, or alumni of a particular Institution. Many such Lodges are centered on a particular profession, such as Firefighters or Police. In many cases, these Lodges schedule their meeting times and dates to harmonize with the odd working hours these professionals keep. An Affinity Lodge is tailored to the desires and convenience of its members. The practice of Observant Masonry is simply one of many such affinities.

So what are the hallmarks of Traditional Observance? Brother Hammer suggests the following in his "Eight Steps to Excellence: The Observant Lodge," but he contends that you are to judge for yourself.

*1) Guard the West Gate - Lodges should take time to first get to know the men who knock at their doors and not simply sign any petition just because a man has an interest. Brothers who sign a petition for a man need to know whom they are signing for, and more importantly, need to be willing to serve as his mentor.*

*2) Be Proficient in Masonic Ritual and Law - Proficiency is an essential function of any observant Lodge because we must know both what we are doing and why, if we seek to uphold the highest standards of our respective Grand Lodges. It does no good to claim the mantle of excellence if your Lodge is not well-versed in the ritual and the Masonic law of your jurisdiction.*

*3) A Commitment to Advance Brethren Through the Degrees by Mutual and Genuine Effort - Progress in the degrees requires a mutual commitment of time and effort from candidate and mentor alike. Some form of proficiency, be it the catechisms or papers delivered before the Lodge, should be required before allowing any brother to*

*advance. Otherwise, the brother learns that his advancement has no measurable value other than his mere presence.*

*4) The Selection and Advancement of Officers Should be by Merit Alone - The only way to justify a progressive line is if every officer is carrying his weight to the extent of his office while at the same time preparing himself diligently to advance to the next one. Lodges ignore this step at their own risk.*

*5) Dress Your Best for Lodge - How one appears before the Lodge is a sign of how much you value both the brethren and the Craft. It's what the brethren expect from each other in an observant Lodge, and it certainly adds to the notion that a Masonic meeting is not just another night out, but a special event worthy of being considered as special, as each of us should believe Masonry to be. Additionally, dignity, expressed outwardly through dress, serves as a superstructure, helping to enhance that dignity that can only be created from within.*

*6) Offer Quality Assemblies and Be Willing to Pay For Them - The dues of a Lodge should be set at a level that allows the Lodge to not only support and sustain itself, but enjoy a quality of experience that tells the brethren that their assemblies are opportunities to rise above the ordinary. Good meals served at proper festive boards are essential. The festive board conveys the sense of conviviality that helps build true brotherhood, and it is historically established in the Craft as not merely a simple dinner but, quite honestly, the second half of a Lodge meeting. An observant Lodge cannot forego it.*

*7) The Return of a Sense of Awe to Our Ceremonies - We should bring back those things that once were found in our lodges and which helped create a very unique, contemplative atmosphere for both the candidate and the Lodge. Among these are the use of music, the manipulation of light and darkness, and even the use of incense is ritually alluded to in early exposures of the Craft. The idea is to stimulate and manage the sensory experience of the brethren in the endeavor to create the sense of uniqueness one expects from a Masonic experi-*



ence.

8) *Masonic Education at Every Meeting - The very origin of Freemasonry itself is in education. Whether it be the practical education in stone-cutting found in the operative craft of masonry or the search for inner knowledge and science presented to us by the speculative Craft, the foundation of the art is inexorably based on teaching and learning. Without it, there is simply no Freemasonry taking place in a Lodge. Therefore, every meeting of the Lodge should offer some amount of Masonic education, be it through the degrees or through presentations on the various lessons of the Craft. Even a ten-minute talk focused on the symbolic meaning of a single working tool is far better than a meeting where nothing but donations, dinners, and dues are on the agenda.*

There is no good or bad, or right and wrong, way to add or omit any of these suggestions to your Lodge program. It's completely up to you and your fellow Brothers. A Lodge that has adopted all or most of these practices is commonly called a T.O. Lodge. That's it. There's nothing new or unusual about it. It's just another preference or affinity of the kind of Lodge experience you're looking for.

In the last 19 years, the Grand Lodge of Illinois has issued eight new charters. Interestingly enough, a specific affinity can be attached to each of them. Here is a chronological list:

Name	Chartered	Affinity
DeMolay #1919	2021	Youth Groups
Spes Novem #1183	2019	Observant
Medinah #1182	2018	Shriners
Lux Lunae #1181	2017	Observant
Philipinas #1180	2015	Ethnicity
Cathedral #1179	2012	Daytime
Illumination #5	2011	Observant

Men In Brotherhood #1178 2004 Motorcycles  
I have intimate knowledge of one of the Lodges on that list, as I am a Charter Member of Illumination Lodge #5. We really enjoy our Lodge experience. If you speak to any of our members, they will tell you about a certain 'feeling' they

get when they come to Lodge. Our prospective candidates also mention it--as one of the main reasons they turned in a petition. We dress up in our best clothes, we (try to) do our best ritual, and we have a great Festive Board dinner after every meeting. Some folks call us the "Fancy-Pants Lodge", and we don't mind it one bit.

In stark contrast to the formality of an Observant Lodge, is Men In Brotherhood #1178. I spoke to one of the founding members, and he told me that a casual dress code is very important to their identity. Their usual dress is blue jeans and a leather biker vest with their masonic insignia. They take this casual dress code so seriously that if someone shows up to a meeting wearing a necktie, one of the Brothers will cut it in half. Visitors beware!

In each case, the formation of a new Lodge was prompted by a specific necessity or desire. Two of the last four new Lodges in Illinois value concepts espoused in Observant Masonry. I think this trend will continue. I am meeting with more prospective candidates these days that claim to be searching for a place to learn some of life's larger lessons. They expect a certain amount of formality and ceremony, solemnity, and circumspection. A Lodge that adheres to a more observant format attracts this kind of seeker.

The hope is that we have enough variety in Illinois Freemasonry that every man can find a Lodge that suits his personal tastes. None of our Lodges need a label. Members of an observant-style Lodge could ride motorcycles. Any Lodge can hold a special meeting at noon. The officers of MIB could wear ties <gasp>. The idea is to take whatever you think are the best parts of all of them and make your Lodge your own.



The Illinois Northeastern Area Masonic Education Officers

*-Present-*

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9am – 12pm

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Scan the QR code for the Eventbrite page to RSVP and for more information!



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Illinois  
Northeastern Area



Masonic Education



# Meaningful Masonry: Applying Masonic Lessons to Our Daily Lives

by Brother Justus E. Fischer, Committee on Masonic Education



Freemasonry is a vacuum that has absorbed, over time, the lessons of various cultures, their history, and the ancient teachings of different mystery traditions

If you carefully dissect the lessons contained within the Masonic ritual and sift through the contents, you will be surprised to see an overwhelming amount of information. You are learning the why behind the importance of this information and how we, as members, can helpfully apply this information. This endeavor could take a lifetime to unravel. In addition, we also experience a subjective change in the human psyche. The power of initiation and the impact of a true brotherhood can be profoundly insightful to our labors in the quarry. We may work together for a common cause, meet, act, and part on the square. However, making a good man a better man is a solo journey of personal growth, introspection, and development. Freemasonry gives you all the tools you may need to start chipping and polishing the building blocks for your spiritual temple, but it is not a one-way street of dogmatic philosophy.

You must find a unique approach during your travels. Not every journeyman embarks upon the same mission. We, as brother masons, come from various walks of life, believe in different philosophies, and have a distinct way of connecting with the divine. There is power in the shared egregor of sacred energy space; when we unite for a common cause and build something as a singular unit, the result is a long-

lasting influence on our society. It is no secret why Freemasonry attracted some of the greatest free-thinkers in world history. I often meet people intrigued by our mysteries yet have never met a member in person. They might have read something on the internet about Freemasonry or heard the name mentioned in an online video. Or saw one of our many emblems in public, or drove past a lodge at some point. Despite these vague familiarities, the initiative to take the first step and go beyond the curiosity threshold is another matter entirely. It takes courage to make the first move.

Closed mouths do not get fed. It is akin to riding a bicycle for the first time or asking your “crush” out on a first date. To become a Freemason, one must take that initial first step out of their element. Nothing grows in the comfort zone. In the previous issue of the Lyceum, We’ve discussed the Master Mason degree. The lessons contained within this ritual are deeply profound to the human psyche. The thought of life and death and how we will manage our time while still alive is like a battery charge to keep us going, working hard, and constantly questioning reality. Over time our physical temples will be desecrated. However, we will experience the rebirth of our immortal selves. That spiritual temple not made with hands eternal in the heavens. We can apply our thoughts in various ways, particularly looking to the seven liberal arts and sciences to inspire us.

Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music, Geometry

**Grammar** is learning the proper way to express

our thoughts.

**Logic** is learning the ability to think critically, clearly, and reasonably.

**Rhetoric** is learning to have civil and intellectual discourse with words.

**Arithmetic** is learning the basic science of life in numbers.

**Astronomy** is learning about the celestial realm and how the planets in orbit impact the world around us and ourselves.

**Music** is learning the universal language of the soul and applying arithmetic to create art.

**Geometry** is learning to build glorious edifices for the enjoyment of humankind as well as for the glory of our creator. Architecture is music frozen in time.

In closing, If you take the lessons that Freemasonry teaches us and dive deeper into these ancient lessons. You will learn the true mysteries of our gentle Craft. Philosophically speaking, it will take many years to become a “Master Mason.” In this writing, I hope you will find some contemplative perspectives. Freemasonry is much more than just a dinner or a monthly business meeting. Unfortunately, I have seen many new members get disenchanted quickly and succumb to boredom, only to leave and not return to the lodge. I am afraid that these people; have yet to master the royal art of Freemasonry.

*Nosce Te Ipsum.*





# Why I Dress for Lodge

by Todd E. Creason, 33°

The topic of dressing for Lodge keeps coming up. I made a comment on a discussion our editor Robert Johnson started the other night on social media. I thought I'd expand on that remark a bit.

When I joined the Fraternity I didn't own a jacket. I'd been wearing a shirt and tie to work for years, but I'd never worn a jacket. I was in my late thirties, and I didn't even know my size. I went and bought one days after I was raised. It was the first of many new experiences I had when I became a Master Mason. Part of becoming a Master Mason is learning to see ourselves differently. I've become something different over time as a Mason. Something better than I was. I didn't join the Lodge to stay the same, I joined to change. I didn't join the Lodge to be accepted as I was—I joined the Lodge out of a desire to learn to be something more.

It was the culture of Masons in my Lodge to dress for degree work and special events, and so that's what I do. That's what I've done since the beginning. We dress alike to show we're Brothers. We dress because we're supposed to be leaders and examples in our community. We dress to show respect for the due solemnity and importance of the work that we are doing. We dress to impress upon our new members that what they are becoming a part of is very different from what they've known. We dress so that when others in the community see us coming and going from the Lodge they know we must be doing something important.

I've seen a number of young men dress in that jacket and tie for the first time since then. I've taught a few of them how to tie a tie. In fact that first jacket I bought somehow shrank over time

(probably all the dinners), and I gave it to a new member to wear. I've seen other Masons do the same thing. When I joined the York Rite Chapter, I didn't have a red jacket which is customarily worn in my area—and I didn't really have the cash to lay out at that time to buy one. My good friend Sean McBride was traveling with the Grand Chapter and found a jacket in his travels for me to wear. That meant a lot to me at the time that he'd thought about me. I was able to go to meetings properly dressed like my Brothers in Chapter.

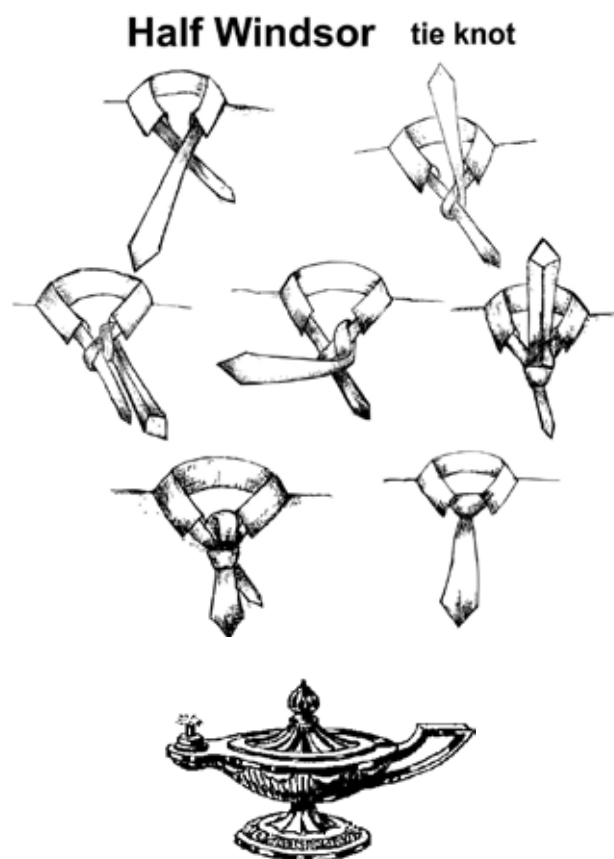
Now a few people in that first discussion said they can't dress for Lodge because they go right from work to Lodge. So do I. So do many more of us in my Lodge. You know how many times I've changed at work before going to Lodge, or changed at the Lodge when I get there? I wish I had a dollar for every time I'd changed into a suit in the bathroom of a funeral home prior to Masonic Funeral Rites. I often leave my jacket and my apron at the Lodge so I don't have to run home for them when I'm pressed for time. And I'm not the only one—you know what you see in cars parked outside my Lodge on a Royal Arch Chapter night? Masons walking in carrying their suit bags. There's a difference between "can't dress" and "don't want to dress" for Lodge.

Now whether or not you dress for Lodge should be up to the culture of your Lodge. We don't dress for regularly stated meetings. Some Lodges do—in fact, I just visited one that wears a full tuxedo and gloves for their stated meetings! I had Midnight Freemasons Greg Knott and Darin Lahners with me that night, and we all felt a little under-dressed in our suits. But they accepted us as we were, and we enjoyed one of the best evenings and festive boards any of us had ever experienced before. Some Lodges wear blue suits. Some wear black suits. My Lodge just wants our members to wear a jacket and tie. I usually wear the best combination of jacket, vest, and pants I can pull together from my closet that are free of stains--those pieces usually wind up belonging to about three different suits.

I think a lot of the conflict over dress is about

Lodges having a tradition to dress in a certain way, and a few new members disregarding it. The established members get upset, and those that have disregarded the traditional standard of dress set by the Lodge get in a huff and say they shouldn't be judged by how they dress, and they don't have time to dress, and it's too expensive, and it's about the internal not the external qualifications of a man, etc. At least that's what I see during these debates almost without exception. I've never really understood that. I knew the members of my Lodge dressed up. I'd seen it before I'd joined. I looked forward to doing the same, and knew I'd have to buy some clothes after I was raised. If I had a problem with dressing up, I certainly wouldn't have joined a Masonic Lodge, because I knew full well that Masons dress up.

Masonry is a tradition. Each Lodge has its own unique identity and culture. By all means, if your Lodge has a custom and a tradition to dress in a certain way either for all their events or certain events . . . respect it! Freemasonry, and your Lodge in particular, shouldn't have to change to accommodate you—the idea is that you're going to change as a result of Freemasonry! Isn't that why we joined?







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# What is a Masonic Symposium?

by WB: Greg Knott, 33°

Reprinted from a Midnight Freemasons entry October, 2014

One of the most exciting developments in Freemasonry of late is the growing amount of lodges, research societies and others that are hosting a Masonic Symposium. But what exactly is a Masonic Symposium?

The Greeks seem to be the origin of the symposium “The Greek symposium was a male aristocratic activity, a tightly choreographed social gathering where men drank together, conversed, and enjoyed themselves in a convivial atmosphere. Bedecked in garlands, participants reclined—one or two to a couch—in a room designed to hold seven to fifteen couches with cushions and low tables.”

I was privileged to recently attend a symposium hosted jointly by The Masonic Society and The Philaethes Society. The event was held at the Valley of Chicago Scottish Rite Cathedral in Bloomingdale, Illinois.

An all-star line-up of presenters was on tap for the day. Leading off was The Midnight Freemasons very own WB Steve Harrison who gave an amazing talk on “The Mystery of Oak Island: Masonic Connections to a Real National Treasure Site”. Brother Harrison was followed by WB Shawn Eyer whose presentation was entitled “The Role of Song and Music in Traditional Freemasonry”. Many of you know may know Brother Eyer with his role as Director of Communications at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial and as Editor of The Philaethes Journal.

Returning after lunch, WB Mark Robbins gave his talk, “Freemasonry and Law Enforcement: Compatible or Conflicting?” that delved into some of the laws that have been passed over the years in the United Kingdom, trying to force members of the judiciary and law enforcement to register if they were Freemasons.

Next was WB Alton Rountree, who is Editor of The Phylaxis Society magazine. Brother Rountree focused his remarks on how to conduct quality masonic research “Masonic Historical Research and

Presentation: Intricate and Acceptance”.

We finished up the evening with a fine dinner and an excellent presentation by WB Andrew Hammer, whose talk “Observing the Craft: The pursuit of excellence in Masonic Labour and Observance”, who has also published a very popular book by the same title.

I believe it is extremely encouraging to see so many of these events popping up across the country. It is starting resurgence of interest in masonic research. Has your lodge considered hosting such an event? You could start simple, by even having just one speaker. Masonic education should be a part of every lodge meeting, even if it is simple as reading the Masonic Short Talk Bulletin that is sent to every lodge by the Masonic Service Association.

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## Editor’s addition:

*Greg Knott was informing the world about what a symposium was back in 2014. Most of Freemasonry who knew what it was, had no idea that Freemasonry could somehow be coupled with a symposium. The fact of the matter is that Freemasonry has been built around these for a hundred years. From the regional conferences on leadership and mentorship to things like “Masonic Week” (the annual gathering of Allied Masonic Degrees and its concordant bodies) each year in Virginia--the longest-running Masonic Education conference in North America. Second to this is the Midwest Conference on Masonic Education. If you want more information on these events and when they happen, check out the website, [www.masonicconferences.com](http://www.masonicconferences.com).*





# LET'S MAKE TIME FOR A FESTIVE BOARD!

by Brother Randy Sanders, MO

When was the last time you truly celebrated something? For many of us, we can raise our hands with an answer of last month or this Spring because of COVID shutdowns and isolation. Let's change that answer of "meh, we celebrated" by maintaining the joy we found in returning to labor. We often make a meeting a little special by way of a congratulatory cake or small celebration for a 50-year pin, or a barbecue, or possibly a breakfast/dinner fundraiser. When was the last time your lodge did a Festive Board for no reason except the Festive Board? When is the last time your lodge put on a party for no reason? I think now's the time.

I recently expressed a similar idea for combining the Festive Board with a Valley Library fundraiser, and I'll work with the St. Louis Valley to follow through on that. However, I'm also pushing to get more festive boards going in local lodges. This tradition seems to be overlooked by many, and how many new brothers were waiting on COVID before receiving the degrees? How many of those new Brothers would benefit from a good social time, honoring Masonic traditions, and learning a bit more about Freemasonry during a Festive Board? It can and should be included in the new Brothers' experiences, and who knows? Maybe those new Brothers decide to pick up the torch and organize the next one?

In some areas, Festive Boards and Table Lodges are close to the same thing. However, In my jurisdiction, (Missouri), they are quite different. I bring this up as you may need Grand Lodge dispensation before putting on a Table Lodge or Festive Board, and it's worth the time to investigate with your own Grand Lodge, your lodge bylaws, and the GL's bylaws what permissions are needed. This investigation may also generate interest from the Grand Lodge, and that's a good thing.

Recommendations for making the Festive Board or Table Lodge a success can be found in old minutes from various lodges, but the biggest initial recommendation is to play up the novelty. That is, focus on the positive of doing something different. Find a speaker. If you are fortunate to know local Brothers

comfortable in presenting educational topics, have them do a short 20-30 minute presentation on a fun topic. Masonic Education may not be the only way to make the evening memorable, but it's a fair bet that a good education topic will start some discussion afterward. Does it have to be Masonic? Check with your Grand Lodge about how open your festive boards might be. Mine are not tiled, but we're still careful in topics and how we phrase certain words and subjects. Inviting the local Mayor or a City Council member to speak may get you closer to the community. Inviting the local officers of the Toastmasters organization to give a speech they wrote for Toastmasters can be an excellent lesson in Rhetoric. I'm sure you get the idea that a good presentation can come from many different sources with a little investigation.

Keep it short. What? Why? The Festive Board, or Table Lodge, itself shouldn't be very long. Multiple long toasts need to be broken up with announcements or quick topics for conversation. I found a couple of hours, including refreshments, to be the limit of my own enjoyment, and then I can retire to the patio or designated area for less formal conversation over a beverage of choice. Many Brethren enjoy an occasional cigar with that beverage, and that can mean another hour or more just hanging out, spreading the cement of Brotherly Love. Oh yeah, and definitely put the word out, you'll all need designated drivers.



# FREEMASONRY ISN'T DYING, IT'S REFINING

by Robert H. Johnson, PDDGM, Committee on Masonic Education

*Refinement - re.fine.ment -*

*The process of removing impurities or unwanted elements from a substance.*

I've been researching Freemasonry for about thirteen years, and there seems to be no shortage of information, ideas, and general complaints about our membership numbers. That is, the number of Freemasons in the United States and its decline over time. The obsession over these membership numbers has been covered ad nauseam.

Fixing things has long been the goal. Yet, I'm not sure that we need to fix anything. It seems as though Freemasonry is correcting itself in that we are reverting to the small, refined group we once were, composed of knowledgeable, carefully selected, and authentic brothers.

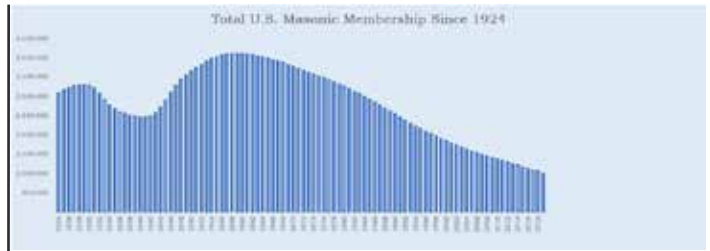
I've run all kinds of surveys over the years, many of which the results are published online in various masonic blogs. I'm not the only one doing this, either. I've analyzed other brothers' work, including Grand Lodge and external agency information. It's been interesting to see the reactions as well. Many of the Grand Lodges out there are stating the elephant in the room is that the Grand Lodge system itself is to blame for the downfall of membership. And in part, it's true, but perhaps not why you think.

I think I will say something here which not many people, possibly no one, have said quite this way before. We aren't losing members, we aren't dying, and we aren't going anywhere. Your respective Grand Lodge, on the other hand, might be.

Let me explain--In 1924, the Masonic Services Association started keeping track of the number of Freemasons in the United States. This number was based on regular lodges under the respective Grand Lodge system of that state. You can look at those numbers by looking at their website at this address.

<https://msana.com/services/u-s-membership-statistics>

Notice the rapid rise and the mega decline. At one point, we had almost 6 million members. Now we



have, likely, less than a million, according to 2020 numbers (not all jurisdictions reported for 2020). I suspect we will have even less when the official numbers come out for the update that will likely come soon. Grand Lodges consistently push membership drives and one-day conferrals, amendments to how Freemasons progress through the degrees, and much more. But none of it is helping.

Bro. Jon Ruark of the Masonic Roundtable podcast has done some excellent research here. His findings, in short, are that non-payment of dues suspensions, and deaths are the culprit of dropping membership, coupled with not many men joining.

According to a recent Pew poll, the percentage of Americans who believe in a supreme being is decreasing. The target audience for Masonry is dwindling. Read about it yourself -

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/americans-faith-in-god-may-be-eroding/>

After all this, though, consider these statements:

- At Masonry's peak, from an educational standpoint (1900), Freemasonry was small.
- The influx of men into the Fraternity during the 50s and 60s was an anomaly.
- The craft built an empire based on an influx of men and treated that high number as the new normal, which for whatever reason, they still measure us against today!
- Now that we are returning to normal numbers, the craft is trying to find ways to sustain the top-heavy elements we built.

What I'm saying, Brothers, is that the membership drives are to sustain what was erroneously built--based on a false presumption about what Masonic membership numbers would be in the future. We are



returning to the smaller group we once were, and that's okay!

Inevitably, this also means we need to get comfortable with scaling back. That means, perhaps, selling our buildings and renting instead--it's not that bad. In fact, it's liberating not to have that overhead. I know from experience. Those massive iconic Masonic temples? It's time to begin the process of getting historical status from your local government, to establish a process and funding (even if it means borrowing from a bank) to fix the building so that you can turn it into a revenue stream for modern rentals, etc. It means getting rid of excess spending. It means smaller charity. It means raising your dues, but not as much as you'd have to if you maintained a massive structure. It means being okay with smaller Grand Lodge charities. It also means more community outreach--fewer checks being handed out and more hands being handed out. It also means that Grand Lodges will need to scale back a bunch--no more million-dollar budgets for the year. We'll need to move to a couple hundred thousand. All this is possible, and adopting now is wise.

When I asked for a peer review of this piece, my Brother said, "I'm left asking myself, what do I do with this information?" I'm not sure you can do anything with this information other than let it comfort you. Comfort in knowing things are just fine. We are returning to our original purpose--our original aim.

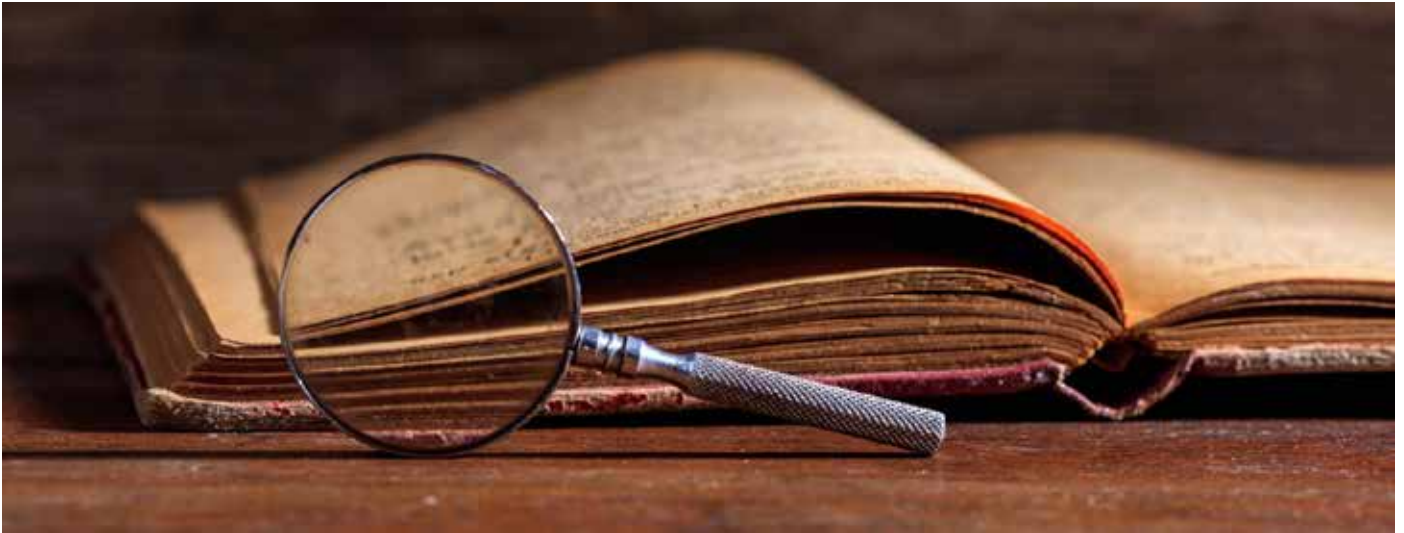
In conclusion, next time someone says, "Masonry is dying," make sure you tell them, "We're not dying; we're refining."





# The Struggle of the Ages The History of the Masonic Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of Illinois

by Robert H. Johnson, PDDGM, Committee on Masonic Education



Within each Grand Jurisdiction in the United States, there is a committee dedicated to Masonic Education. However, this was not always the case. Masonic Education and what it meant has a little bit of history behind it. In this article, I hope to shed some light on this history and inspire you with what we set out in the following pages.

Our source for this information comes directly from the Grand Lodge Proceedings books, which account for the happenings of all kinds related to not just our Grand Lodge of Illinois but to many other Grand Lodges we are in amity with.

While we outline this history, it's important to know and to understand that Masonic Education as a philosophical endeavor has not always been practiced and may still not be in some places, but it certainly was being practiced within lodges all over the world and especially in IL albeit sporadically. Articles in public newspapers abound relating to the educational programming of lodges all around the state. Discussions related to the philosophical meaning of the working tools or the dogma within our system of ritual. It was out there—but it wasn't officially recognized by our Grand Lodge, or others for that matter. Not until grassroots movements forced our administrators to look at this activity and acknowledge its

worth to both membership retention and in fulfilling our mission statement of making good men better--did our administrators pay attention.

The Grand Lodge of Illinois has a wonderful and rich history. In fact, it has two histories. The Grand Lodge of Illinois was chartered in 1822, went "to sleep" in 1827, and was reconstituted in 1840. That's right, we're on Grand Lodge of IL 2.0 When we open the pages of our Grand Lodge Annual Publication--the minutes of the Grand Lodge Sessions in its first years, you might be surprised to find that there was no committee on Masonic Education. There is no mention of the word "Education" in any form until 1844, where it says:

*"That we recommend attention of every brother of the Fraternity, and of the friends of education generally, to the facility which the institution affords for the acquisition of a thorough education."*

In the editions to come, when Masonic Education was mentioned in relation to what our Grand Lodge was doing, it was connected to the Masonic Education and Charity Committee. This committee was essential in bringing relief to widows and orphans and also providing wonderful educational opportunities for orphans who might not be able to afford the costs



of schooling. So committed to the cause of education that we find the following entry:

*“Resolved, That the principal of the educational fund, as may be determined at this communication, shall be an irreducible fund: the interest or income, or as much as may be needed, be annually appropriated for the education of such Masonic wards as the grand lodge may determine.”*

Think about that—we were so committed that we put language in to make the funding of these endeavors irreducible. A commendable act, no doubt.

Through the years, there were many times in which Grand Jurisdictions debated both the functionality and the appropriateness of Freemasons giving money to the profane or to widows and orphans to further their education.

Beginning in the Grand Lodge Proceedings of 1840, again, there is no mention of Masonic Education in the way we might understand it--that is, a sort of lecturing or discussion about what the ritual means and an expanding on the ritual philosophy until the proceedings in the year 1910. Would it surprise you to learn that when the above *\*was\** mentioned, it wasn't actually Illinois who had mentioned it, but rather another Grand Jurisdiction in its general report, which had been reprinted within the Illinois Proceedings?

In the years to come, the word “Education” is almost completely vacant from the Proceedings. And then, out of the blue, the 1st District of Illinois has an entry. Under the heading “REPORTS OF R.W. DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTERS,” and dated September 15th, 1913 District Deputy Grand Master William Wilmartz has, in general, wonderful things to say about the 1st District. Toward the end of his lengthy report, we find the following:

*“It is also gratifying to note that many of the lodges have entered upon a campaign of education and are providing interesting programs, such as addresses and lectures by distinguished Masons on timely masonic subjects, and are also seeking to familiarize the membership with the masonic law which governs us, and with the decisions and edicts of the present and former Grand Masters. One of the most interesting and enjoyable meetings that it was my good fortune to attend during my incumbency of this office was a meeting in my district which was given up to a consideration and*

*a discussion of the masonic law. I believe everyone who was present that evening thoroughly enjoyed this innovation and would share my recommendation that it be repeated by all of the lodges at frequent intervals.”*

There are also portions within this edition of the Proceedings by the Grand Master, under his Report, that speak to this weird new thing... There were two interesting entries. The first was curiously under the title “Beecher’s Knife.”

#### **BEECHER’S KNIFE**

*“Quoting that portion regarding the need of study for better understanding of the teachings of masonry, the reviewer adds--We need education in Masonry. It is very well to know the ritual and its manifold beauties, but what lies [in the] back of the ritual and its symbolism should be known and understood, significance, tradition, and history. Not until this knowledge is back of the ritual can masonry’s lessons be forcibly and intelligently given. It was the great Beecher who said that when it came to education, many men were like knives with many blades; they know how to open one and only one; all the rest are in the handle. Masons should be like a many bladed knife, but all the blades should be in use, and they should be kept sharp by learning daily how to apply them to all practical purposes, for our fellowman and to the glory of God. We as masons should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest our masonry and then show both knowledge and faith by acting, carrying it into our everyday lives, living examples of masons for others to see and profit by.”*

*In this same Proceedings book, we find another from the Report of the Grand Master, under the title, “Broader Masonic Essential.”*

#### **BROADER MASONIC ESSENTIAL.**

*“Among suggestions, the Grand Master enters upon a wide field in the broader education of masons. Grand Master Darrah is also putting emphasis on this line of work. The Nova Scotia Grand Master says that- “We should become students and search for wisdom, for nothing strengthens the craft like education; with the various means and opportunities of gaining knowledge, Masonically speaking, there is no excuse for ignorance.*

*How many of the brethren have the desire to improve the time, when no degree work is on, to peruse the pages of the annual proceedings of our own Grand Lodge, which contains the reports of Grand Lodg-*

*es with which we are in friendly intercourse? These lengthy reports are from the pen of the most scholarly men of the world and are reviewed by our esteemed Grand Secretary. The choicest portions appear in these revisions, which may well be read in our lodges. Thus, knowledge would be gained, and new interest awakened, giving a broader conception of the wonderful institution of masonry. In this way, our members come in touch with the great men who devote so much of their time and talent to masonic research. Ritualism begins the mason, but reading, education, and reflection must finish him, so after all, it depends upon the man."*

Moving forward in time to the year 1921, we find a report in the Proceedings of Illinois, reprinted from the Grand Master of Oklahoma.

*"The most crying need of Freemasonry at the present time, with our rapidly increasing membership, is education in the fundamental principles of Masonry. No matter how far we may eventually go in the cultivation of the educational field, the immediate task is to bring home to all Masons those great fundamental principles which none deny and to which none should be indifferent. "Knowledge is the most real and genuine of all Human treasures, for it is light as ignorance is darkness."*

Another entry is a report from the Illinois delegation speaking about what Iowa had been doing with its Education Committee.

*"Brother Frank S. Moses, Past Grand Master, presented Brother Ralph H. Wheeler, Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, who brought greetings from the brethren of the Illinois jurisdiction, and in a few interesting remarks paid a high tribute to the work of Masonic Education now being developed in Iowa. Brother Wheeler also made a few but pertinent remarks concerning greater economy in our lodge affairs and spoke with interest concerning the great world war."*

In 1924, an explosion of Masonic Education references appears. Not too much in Illinois, but in almost every state of the union where their jurisdiction report appears, each state mentions the importance of ensuring the members understand the philosophy of Freemasonry, its ritual, and symbols.

From the Report of the Grand Master in 1924:

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

*"The proceedings of a number of grand lodges disclose the fact that educational programs have been in vogue and met with general success. In most instances, the whole matter has been placed in the hands of a special committee that has outlined a system of instruction and has placed the same within reach of every Masonic lodge in the jurisdiction. Several of these programs will be found in the reviews which follow, and they are of sufficient interest to merit close examination.*

*The purpose of these educational programs seems to be to present to the craft, facts concerning the fraternity and the work it is doing. In several grand jurisdictions, moving pictures have been used as a part of the program, these pictures dealing with the Masonic Homes of the state and disclosing to the craft the splendid results that are being accomplished in the care of those members of the society who are unable to care for themselves. There is no doubt in the world, but that education is the one thing that Freemasonry needs today more than anything else. The admission of large numbers of members makes it imperative that proper information be conveyed concerning the fraternity of which they are a part. The Masonic Service Association has done good work in outlining these programs. A number of jurisdictions have used them to splendid advantage. One grand lodge organized district meetings at which these educational programs were given, and they were so well received that the lodges applied for them, and they were rendered in many lodges to the great benefit of the brethren. The outcome of this educational movement will be watched with great interest. It is to be hoped that succeeding Grand Masters will realize the value and necessity of educational training and exert their best endeavors toward continuing the work which has already been started."*

Over the continuing years, the subject of Masonic Education comes up in ways that are quite contentious. It appears the idea of having a discourse on the values and philosophy are juxtaposed with ideas of ritual instruction (which is sometimes erroneously called, even to this day, the Esoteric work") and or the roles of administering the craft. Which is it? The general consensus among the larger heads of the Craft, at least in 1927, was sort of typical--that we shouldn't do anything until all the Grand Jurisdictions come together to decide on what it means to have Masonic Education. We all know that this was a poor excuse--and so did the constituents of most of the Grand Lodges. While the Grand Lodg-



es continued to take almost no action in regard to this phenomenon of Masonic Education, grassroots movements simply took hold. They did what they wanted—they organized.

In 1930, the Grand Secretary of Idaho had his remarks printed in the Grand Lodge of Illinois Proceedings, and here is what he said about the subject of Masonic Education: “Certainly, the increase in Masonic books was a pretty good indicator of things to come.” He was making a correct assumption. The more Masonic books that were being printed, the greater the demand for them there must be—and if this is the case, then Masonic Education must be on the rise. What’s more, is that people are paying for these books to supplement what they were not getting within the Masonic Lodge. His note, in full, is as follows:

*“The Committee on Masonic Education submitted a very interesting report and offers valuable suggestions for bringing Freemasonry to a better understanding among the membership. The committee says that during the past year, more Masonic books have appeared than in the last fifteen years, showing that there is a disposition to acquire a better understanding of Freemasonry...”*

*Frank D. Mumford, Caldwell, Grand Master  
Curtis F. Pike, Boise, Grand Secretary.*

Illinois was still not buying into this idea on a Grand Jurisdiction level. But in 1930, aside from Idaho, another gang of states talked about their committee work and fulfilling members’ needs and wants in understanding Masonry’s philosophy.

A solid entry in the Proceedings of 1931 under a short article called “Changing the Process,” was written the following:

#### CHANGING THE PROCESS

*“The Grand Lodge of New York held its annual meeting last May. The proceedings show that there were some very lively topics introduced at that session, and the fraternity was given something to think about. One brother told the grand lodge that the great problem of Masonry today was not to get men into Masonry, but to get Masonry into men. This writer is inclined to think that the brother down in New York has given Educational Committees all over the United States something to think about, and while these committees are devising programs of education, hunting up questionable historical documents, dilating upon various*

*forms of symbolism, they might incidentally adopt a simple course of study which would get a member of a Masonic lodge to understand what it means to be a Mason. In other words, “Try and get some Masonry into the individual.” For a long time lodges have seemed to think that just the moment a man signed the bylaws of the lodge that its obligations to him ceased. The lodge was perfectly satisfied so long as he paid his \$5.00 per year dues, and didn’t come up and ask for a loan of \$10.00 or request a donation to buy some food for his family.”*

Masonic Education in Illinois becomes official in 1932. The Report of the Grand Master addresses Masonic Education and forms the first Special Committee on Masonic Education. Here is the report:

#### MASONIC EDUCATION

*“Masonry has many angles and various phases. We find the historian who has great joy in tracing its course through the centuries and marking the influence it has left upon the people of all times through its leaders. The man of science finds much to study in it, and the student of the Holy Bible becomes greatly interested in the references which it discloses and, above all, the citizen finds in it the rule and guide of his faith. We always find something new in Masonry, and in that fact lies its great attraction to all of us. Yet with all this, and even in the hearts and minds of our most enthusiastic and energetic Masons, misunderstandings arise, and misconceptions are found. Our Ritual is beautiful, and we have a just right to be proud of it, yet it contains much to be studied and explained. This can only be obtained by a real planned out system of study if we would thoroughly appreciate its beauty and its genius. The need of Masonic education is becoming greater and more insistent every day, especially in these times when everything seems to be in confusion. The individual Mason owes it to the fraternity, and I believe that the Grand Lodge of Illinois owes it to the individual member to aid him in every way in his desire to acquire light and seek a better understanding of the truths and principles which are hidden away in our Ritual. With these thoughts in mind and the desire that our Grand Lodge shall fulfill its mission and discharge its responsibilities, I recommend that a special committee of three be appointed to work out an educational program that will be practical and feasible.”*

It is interesting that this particular Grand Master also notes in his report the similarity in which he

views the Craft with the then-current Grand Master of MO, Ray V. Denslow--a Masonic titan in his own right and perhaps the most prolific Freemason to live in the 20th century. In 1933 we have the first three men named to the committee, Norman B. Hickox of Chicago, Harry A. Finney of Chicago, and L. Hubbard Shattuck of Chicago. In this same volume, the Grand Master relates to the reader that the Special Committee will have their report later in the Proceedings, yet nothing appears. Nothing manifests for decades, in fact.

Over the years, mentions of Masonic Education within the Grand Jurisdiction of Illinois became less and less, giving way to a sort of--turning back of the clocks. The Grand Lodge had suffered through many losses and an eventual influx after World War Two, and with this, the emphasis on education drifted away from the Masonic Lodge, and the education that became prevalent was that of charity. A charity and a Benevolent Fund for vocational training for Masons had been established.

Finally, years later, in 1956, under the heading of Masonic Education is printed a report. In it, a brief synopsis of the history of the education committee is laid out. They mentioned that a special committee had been assigned and that while this was the case, nothing had actually been done with the committee until 1948, when the committee's name changed to the Committee on Masonic Information. While the reports on the Committee of Masonic information were rarely printed, they apparently did much work to establish a means and a plan to allow Masonic Education to be officially sanctioned and a part of normal lodge operations in every lodge in the Grand Jurisdiction of Illinois.

It is in this particular entry which you can read below, that a motion is finally made to establish an official standing committee on Masonic Education. Milton T. Sonntag was the Grand Master who made this recommendation.

#### COMMITTEE ON MASONIC EDUCATION

*"The proceedings of Grand Lodge in past years contain many references to the insistent need of Masonic education and information to aid the individual Mason, whether Lodge Officer or not, to acquire further light and a better understanding of the truths and principles which are expounded in our ritual. Although recommendations were made and committees appointed to explore the field, no specific action was taken until*

*1948. At that time, a Committee on Masonic Information was inaugurated. With no precedents or charts or landmarks to direct them, they accepted this difficult assignment. These brethren have since devoted many long and arduous hours to establish a program that would be sound and which would be beneficial to the craft.*

*As the mariner sailed uncharted seas, as the pioneers blazed their paths through the uncharted country, plodding, searching, retracing their steps, starting anew, always pressing on: so these brethren, exploring, venturing, daring, always persevering, have by trial and error, overcome many difficulties and now offer us a sound foundation upon which we may build. During this period, other jurisdictions were employed in a similar activity, and all have worked harmoniously in the interchange of ideas toward the advancement of this project. Because of their diligence, their cooperation, and their contributions, the members of our committee enjoy the universal esteem and approval of Masonic educators throughout the Masonic World. Thus they have brought honor to us. Recognizing the volume of their labors and the value of their contributions and being confident of the worth of this program, I recommend that this Grand Lodge enact the proper legislation to make this a standing committee to be named "The Committee on Masonic Education."*

The next couple of years brought no reports, however in 1958 the first real Masonic Education report for the entire committee was given. The report was written by Brother Chester R Steele, who at that time was the committee's chairman. The committee accomplished much, and for the first time, we see the scope and full gamut of accomplishments that this committee had completed. Perhaps, since the first time this was printed in 1958, we reprint in full the first full Committee on Masonic Education report from 1958.

#### REPORT-COMMITTEE ON MASONIC EDUCATION

*"The report of this committee was presented by Bro. Chester R. Steele, Chairman. The report was adopted and the section referring to finance was referred to the Finance Committee. To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Illinois: In one of the booklets issued by the Iowa Committee on Masonic Education, written many years ago, we find the following: "The quality of our Masonry cannot rise above the level of our thinking, and our thinking is not likely to rise above*



*the level of what we know. Since any study of Masonry must be purely voluntary, the least that can be done for those who display any interest whatever is to make available authentic material, with counsel as to its selection and use.”*

*Under the direction of our Most Worshipful Grand Master, your Committee on Masonic Education has attempted to do more than the foregoing statement; for while it suggests that we should make available authentic material to those who display any interest in Freemasonry, over the years, we have tried to create interest where none existed before. We will now give you a detailed report of our activities during this past year.*

### **Illinois Enlightener**

*As in past years, the Illinois Enlightener was published quarterly. The August issue was mailed to approximately 28,000 members. During the year, many letters were received expressing appreciation to Grand Lodge for making the publication available to the membership. One of the greatest compliments to the Grand Lodge was received from Brother Ernest W Campbell, Past Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of Florida, and representative of the Grand Lodge of Illinois under the Grand Lodge of Florida, in a letter dated May 27th, 1958, in which he requests an additional copy of the May 1958 issue and continues: “We are considering a publication for our Grand Lodge, and I think yours is an ideal one.” You have heard the Grand Master’s report and have accepted the report of the committee by your own actions--therefore, you have approved his recommendation that the Illinois Enlightener be sent to every member belonging to a lodge in our Grand Jurisdiction. This will be done beginning with the February 1959 issue. The November 1958 issue will be mailed to a limited number as before. The expense of sending the Enlightener to every member is considerable, and the members of the committee on Masonic Education pledged themselves to continue to make the Enlightener one of the most outstanding Masonic publications available anywhere. This expanded service to the Craft will ensure keeping in touch with every member at least four times a year. It is also in keeping with the trend throughout the country to have a periodical for the members and to increase the work of educational committees. This trend will pay dividends over the years because it creates more interest in the members. The Enlightener sent to each member will be reaching many Masons who have not communicated with their lodges in many years. Past experiences have shown that an informed Mason is a*

*better Mason, that activity creates interest, and that this makes for a better craft.*

### **Booklets**

*The various booklets distributed since our last Grand Lodge meeting are as follows:*

*Candidate Information Program - 2409 sets*

*Investigation: Duties of Investigation Committee - 2449 copies*

*Colonial Freemasonry - 770 copies*

*The Story of Freemasonry in the United States - 763 copies*

*Masonic Rods: Their Use, History, and Symbolism - 1197 copies*

*Suggested Social and Educational Programs - 1509 copies*

*We would like to quote a portion of a letter received from Brother Edgar H Bingham, Secretary of Humboldt Park Lodge No. 813, Chicago IL, in which he requests that copies of the Candidate Information Booklets and Investigation Booklets be sent to him and continues: “It is our opinion that the Grand Lodge and those responsible for the very thorough and informative manner in which these booklets were written, are to be congratulated and thanked for their efforts in filling a long felt need. There was a time when a newly raised member was often left to his own resources as far as conduct and decorum were concerned when he entered the lodge as a new member, and except for what little he may have learned from the degree ritual, he was entirely in the dark in regard to many things which are thoroughly explained in these booklets, and when placed on an investigating committee, he was on his own so to speak, except for a few words of help from some other member which may or may not have been adequate or helpful to the degree necessary to perform properly the task to which he was assigned.” This persistent observation of a lodge secretary gives the reason why these books were prepared in the first place and certainly should be a forceful argument for the use of this material in those few lodges which are not now using them.*

*The booklet, Suggested Social and Educational Programs, is now being mailed direct to the Junior Warden of each lodge and, if properly studied, will make him a valuable officer and also give him many helpful ideas in preparing an interesting and effective program when he becomes Worshipful Master.*

### **Service Letters**

*During the past year, each lodge was supplied with a*

card on which to furnish the names and addresses of the principal officers of the lodge to our committee.

We now have a mailing list of the Worshipful Masters, Senior and Junior Wardens. Beginning in October, our Service Letters will be mailed to the home addresses of each of these officers. We have had numerous requests for back issues of the Service Letters, and even though some lodges are too busy to have them read at lodge meetings, we know that the officers are making use of them for the valuable information contained in these concise articles.

### **Masonic Speakers Bureau**

Our Masonic Speakers Bureau now consists of 71 brethren throughout the state who are wholeheartedly interested in Freemasonry and are willing to give of their time and talents in this capacity. More interest has been shown by the lodges in this activity. We have had many calls for speakers for Past Master's Night, Washington's birthday talks, and for many other occasions. A few weeks ago, one Master called us at about 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The District Deputy of his district was scheduled to speak at his lodge on the following night and had suddenly become ill. He wanted to know if we could obtain a speaker for him. We did. Speaker engagements are listed in the *Enlightener*. We hope this service will continue to grow. Masonic Speakers can be utilized for both open and closed meetings.

At the request of the Grand Master, at least two members of the committee attended all the Grand Lodge Schools and displayed the materials furnished by the committee. In addition, and again at the suggestion of the Grand Master, we obtained a slide projector and colored slides of various scenes at the Illinois Masonic Home and the Illinois Masonic Children's Home were shown. The Board of Grand Examiners were very helpful at each school, and we expressed appreciation to them. We were again invited to attend the Cook County Master's dinner and the Cook County Secretary's dinner and at all of these meetings, the interest of the brethren, mostly officers of lodges, was very apparent.

When we received letters such as the following from a Brother who is Senior Warden of his lodge, we know that Freemasonry will live on and on:

"At the state school of instruction held last week, I had the opportunity to obtain some wonderful literature pertaining to various lodge activities. The Candidate Information Booklets have been put to use already,

while the others have been of historical interest and of information to the lodge. I was particularly interested in the Service Letter No. 40 and the list of titles of Service Letters seems to round out an education for officers. If it is all possible, I would greatly appreciate having the complete list of service letters to my Masonic library and will gladly pay any cost involved."

### **Midwest Conference on Masonic Education**

The members of our committee not only attended but took an active part in the eighth Midwest Conference on Masonic Education held at Cedar Rapids, IA, on November 8th and 9th, 1957. The conference is held each year to encourage the participating jurisdictions to exchange ideas and to report on various methods being used. Your committee has benefited greatly by becoming acquainted with members of other committees and the interchange of ideas resulting in better programs of Masonic Education in our own Grand Lodge.

The ninth Midwest Conference will be held in Minneapolis, MN, on November 14th and 15th, 1958. Three members of our committee are presenting papers.

### **Miscellaneous**

For the information of the officers of lodges who are not acquainted with our services, we list the following miscellaneous services and materials furnished by the committee:

- Programs and other materials for the guidance of lodges that will be celebrating their centennial anniversaries
- Two suggested programs for the presentations of a 50-year card
- A suggested program for the presentation of the Holy Bible
- A card folder containing information related to "What can I tell my non-Masonic friends?"
- A chart showing the various steps necessary in opening and closing a lodge in various degrees
- A list of stereopticon slides authorized by the Board of Grand Examiners for use in the lectures in various degrees
- A lecture chart which, if followed closely, will assure that every officer will know all of the lectures and the funeral service by the time he becomes Senior Warden



## **Finances**

*In 1957-1958, our expenditure amount amounted to \$16,791.12. Because of the great increase in cost due to sending The Enlightener to every member, we are requesting a split budget for the year 1958-1959 as follows:*

*For general expenses, including office, booklets, service letters, etc. \$11,227.00*

*For the Illinois Enlightener, November 1958 issued to be mailed as heretofore 3 folding issues to be sent to every member \$27,850.00*

*Total 39,077.00*

*A detailed list of our expenses and requested budget are attached.*

*-Committee on Masonic Education”*

In the years since 1958, Chairman of the Masonic Education Committee have come and gone. Many have made their indelible mark on our Craft. The focus of Masonic Education hasn't always been philosophical in nature and, in fact, sometimes made a slight return to materialist views on things. However, this was short-lived. Think about all our committee accomplished in the past; a Speakers Bureau and even a magazine just like this one called The Enlightener was produced and mailed quarterly to over 28 thousand Brothers in the state of Illinois. What an incredible feat. Those budget numbers are no joke. If your committee was to ask for the equivalent money today, it would equate to \$412,400.00 (almost half a million.) Today, your committee operates at less than \$15,000 a year. In 1958 money, that's just shy of \$1,500.00.

Now that you know the history of your Committee on Masonic Education, I hope you see the extreme value and just how hard Brothers, just like you, fought to get this committee recognized and standardized. You'll notice that the committee even attended the Midwest Conference on Masonic Education in its eighth year, all the way back in 1958. The Midwest Conference on Masonic Education began in 1949. You can visit their website, [www.mcme1949.org](http://www.mcme1949.org). Since that time, Illinois has become an active member hosting the conference on a few occasions. To this end, I also must share that at the most recent Midwest Conference on Masonic Education for 2023, Right Worshipful Brother Chad Lacek, 33°, was nominated and elected as the 5th vice president.

This means that in 2028, Illinois will once again host the Midwest Conference on Masonic Education. Here's to the future of Masonic Education. Here's to each Brother who makes it a point to educate himself and assist others in finding light in the darkness.



# EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

Saturday, June 24th (St. John the Baptist Day)  
The Northeast Area Masonic Education Symposium  
Free to attend!  
Counts toward GMAE!  
Libertyville Lodge No. 492  
356 Brainerd Ave.  
Libertyville, IL, 60048



Friday, July 28th - 30th  
Masonic Con Kansas  
Overland Park, KS  
[www.MasonicConKansas.com](http://www.MasonicConKansas.com)



Saturday, September 16th  
Masonic Con Chicago  
Libertyville, IL  
[www.MasonicConChicago.com](http://www.MasonicConChicago.com)



For more visit, [MasonicConferences.com](http://MasonicConferences.com)

If your lodge or organization is having an Educational Event (not related to instruction or charities), please let us know. Email the details to:  
[secretary@spesnovum.com](mailto:secretary@spesnovum.com)

Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.





