

INTRODUCTION TO FREEMASONRY

Education Program

2024

*Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of
Free & Accepted Masons of Washington*



APPROACHING THE PORTAL

General Information Concerning Masonry



*M.:W.:Grand Lodge of
Free and Accepted Masons of Washington*

Education Program

Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Washington

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Approaching the Portal

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WELCOME TO MASONRY



Congratulations! You have just taken the first step in a noble quest to become a better man by showing your interest in Freemasonry. In this section, titled “*Approaching the Portal*,” you will find a wealth of information on Freemasonry, its purpose and organization, its history and legacy, as well as the duties, rights, and responsibilities of all Freemasons. It is our hope that this will provide a useful guide for you as you evaluate your interest in Freemasonry, petition a lodge, and begin a lifelong journey into Freemasonry.

Freemasonry has a rich, deep, and meaningful history. It is intimately connected with the course of human history and the philosophy, traditions, and legends of our forefathers. In Freemasonry you will discover the reservoir and the arsenal of many great thinkers that have come before us. As you study Masonry and absorb the valuable lessons inculcated within, you will discover influences and impacts from Plato and Aristotle, to Solomon, and Descartes.

But Freemasonry is much more than a history book, and you will find that if you ask ten Masons what it means to them, you will find ten different answers. Masonry is fraternity, brotherhood, and communion with your fellow man. It is a deep system of philosophy and moral instruction that aims to make good and charitable men. It is also a deeply spiritual journey that is highly individualized and dependent on the individual Mason. Most importantly, you will find that you will receive from Masonry that which you put in multiplied by a hundred-fold, and that together with your brethren, you can accomplish great things that go far beyond the capabilities of any one man.

Freemasonry is America's largest and oldest fraternity and has a long and storied history going back centuries. A central tenet of Masonry is "Ask and ye shall receive," and every man who has ever been made a Mason was first required to knock at the symbolic doors of Freemasonry and request to gain admission. By taking the first step in expressing an interest in Freemasonry you are united with every Mason who has come before you. It is critically important that this decision be your own and without the undue influence of others, and by taking this step you are taking ownership and agency over your membership in Freemasonry and joining with your brethren in the creation of good works and good men.

Millions of men have traveled this path before you, and each one of them has received a benefit commensurable with the work and effort that they have put into the craft. You are heartily encouraged to approach Freemasonry with an open heart and an open mind, and I can assure you that Freemasonry is entirely serious in character. At no point will you ever be ridiculed, or asked anything untoward of yourself, your faith, or your family. You will meet amazing men from every walk of life in your Masonic journey, and each one of them is united in the purpose of doing great works and creating great men.



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 give you certain thoughts and information which we feel you are entitled to receive before being presented with an application for membership.

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.



WHO ARE THE FREEMASONS?

Freemasonry is a microcosm of your community; within Freemasonry you will encounter bankers, preachers, lawyers, real estate agents, grocers, waiters, managers, laborers, and every other conceivable profession. You will meet men from such diverse faiths such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Freemasons come from every walk of life and represent the very community in which we live, work, and play. All these men are drawn together by fraternity and our solemn obligations to practice charity, uphold justice, embody morality, and maintain the faith of our individual religious precepts. Freemasonry encompasses millions of men worldwide from countless cultures, races, and religions, who all share the same objectives of creating good men and doing good deeds.





WASHINGTON MASONIC SERVICES

Charity is one of the highest values in Masonry. While charity may mean different things to different people, the act of being charitable starts within the individual's heart. It is about giving of oneself to those truly in need without expecting anything in return.

In concrete terms, the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Washington has a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization called Washington Masonic Services. Washington Masonic Services' (WAMC) mission is to invest in youth and education, provide comfort and support for seniors and those in need, and to preserve and share the Masonic heritage of Washington.

It accomplishes this in partnership with Masonic Lodges, and with the support of individual Masons through three programs. Youth and Scholarship Programs - assisting students experiencing homelessness and providing scholarships; Masonic Outreach Services - providing case management and charitable assistance for Masonic widows, older Brethren, and those in need; The Washington Masonic Library and Museum, which houses a collection of more than 6,000 Masonic objects and more than 50,000 books and archival records.

Each of these areas is a direct reflection of Masonic values and commitments, providing opportunities for individual Masons and Masonic Lodges to get involved in helping with these charitable activities.





WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

What is modern Freemasonry? Masonry, as stated before, is many things to many people. 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 craftsmen are used to help dramatically portray those moral truths. For example, the 24-inch gauge and the common gavel: just as the ruler is used to measure distance, the modern Mason uses it as a reminder to manage one of his most precious resources: time; and, as the gavel is used to shape stones, so it is also the symbol for the necessity of all of us to work to perfect ourselves.

One modern definition is: “Freemasonry is an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principals 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 its 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 real working plan for making good men better.
4. Is a social organization.
5. Has many important charitable projects.
6. Has a rich worldwide history.
7. Is a proven way to develop both public speaking and dramatic abilities and provides an effective avenue for developing leadership.



HE IS I AM WE ARE

WHAT DOES FREEMASONRY STAND FOR?

Masonry stands for some important principles and beliefs.

The primary doctrines of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Its principal virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. These principles or beliefs cover a broad field, 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 year to helping those with sight problems or aphasia, physically disabled children, speech & learning disorders, and those with severe burns. Local Lodges work to help their communities and individuals within those communities.

Masonry's charity is always 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 likeminded 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, 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 place emphasis on the individual man by:

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

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



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, which are called the esoteric side of Masonry, have been handed down by word of mouth for centuries.

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.

Though “religion” can be defined in many ways and according to many colloquial standards, the Cambridge Dictionary of English (2024 edition) defines *religion* as “**the belief in and worship of a god or gods, or any such system of belief and worship.**”



FREEMASONRY IS NOT A RELIGION

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

Masonry has no specific creed, no dogma and 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 specific Supreme Being. Nonsectarian 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 to belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque, although many Masons are very active in their religious organizations, and among our members are leaders of numerous denominations.

Freemasonry accepts your right to belong to any church or religious organization of your choice, or not to belong to one at all, 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.





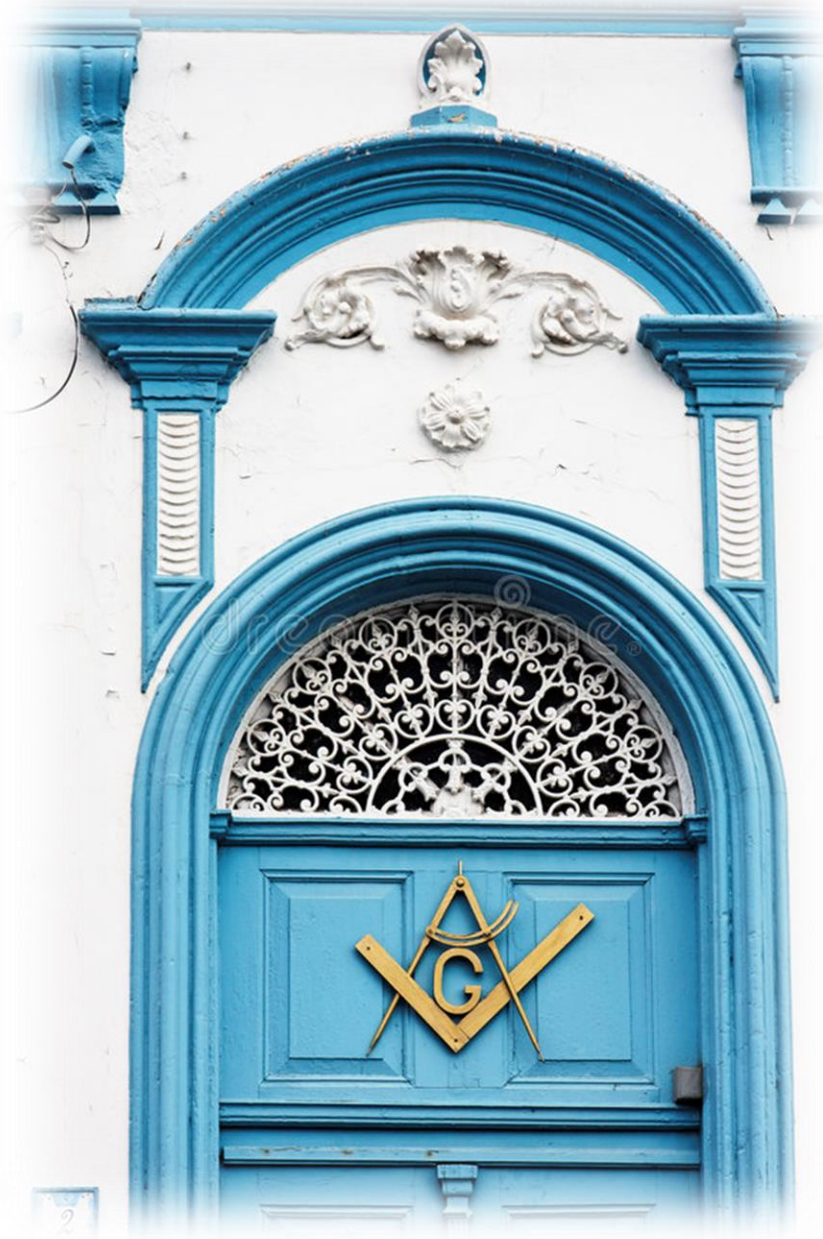
WHAT WE DO NOT DO

Sectarian religion and partisan politics are not discussed in Lodge, and there are very good reasons why. 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 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, which 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 discussions should be kept within the bounds of propriety, and everyone should show tolerance for the opinion of the other. 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 partisan political question; and in your life as a member of the state you will ever be loyal to the demands of good citizenship.



WHAT ARE LODGES?

A Lodge is a group of Masons granted a Charter by the Grand Lodge which has Jurisdiction in their area, in our case the Grand Lodge of Washington. There are specific guidelines set 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 the *Washington Masonic Code* and the *Standard Work and Freemason's Guide*. The leaders of the Lodge are elected by the Lodge membership each year.

These Lodges meet in buildings commonly called Masonic Centers or Masonic Temples. These places may be used by Masons for regular business meetings, Degrees, social activities, other Masonic groups or even community activities. These buildings are generally prominently marked and are often recognized as special landmarks in the cities and towns of our state.



THE ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

We are not sure at what point in time our Craft was born. Hundreds of people, Masons and non-Masons, have investigated this question, but no conclusive answer has been found, and probably never will be. We do know that the earliest written record of the term “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 mists of time. This is also true of the geometry and geometric symbols used in the craft of building.

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 FREEMASONRY

There are two forms of Masonry. One is 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 like ours today. We have officers similar to theirs. Men were admitted only after they had served several years of apprenticeship. This is the origin of the

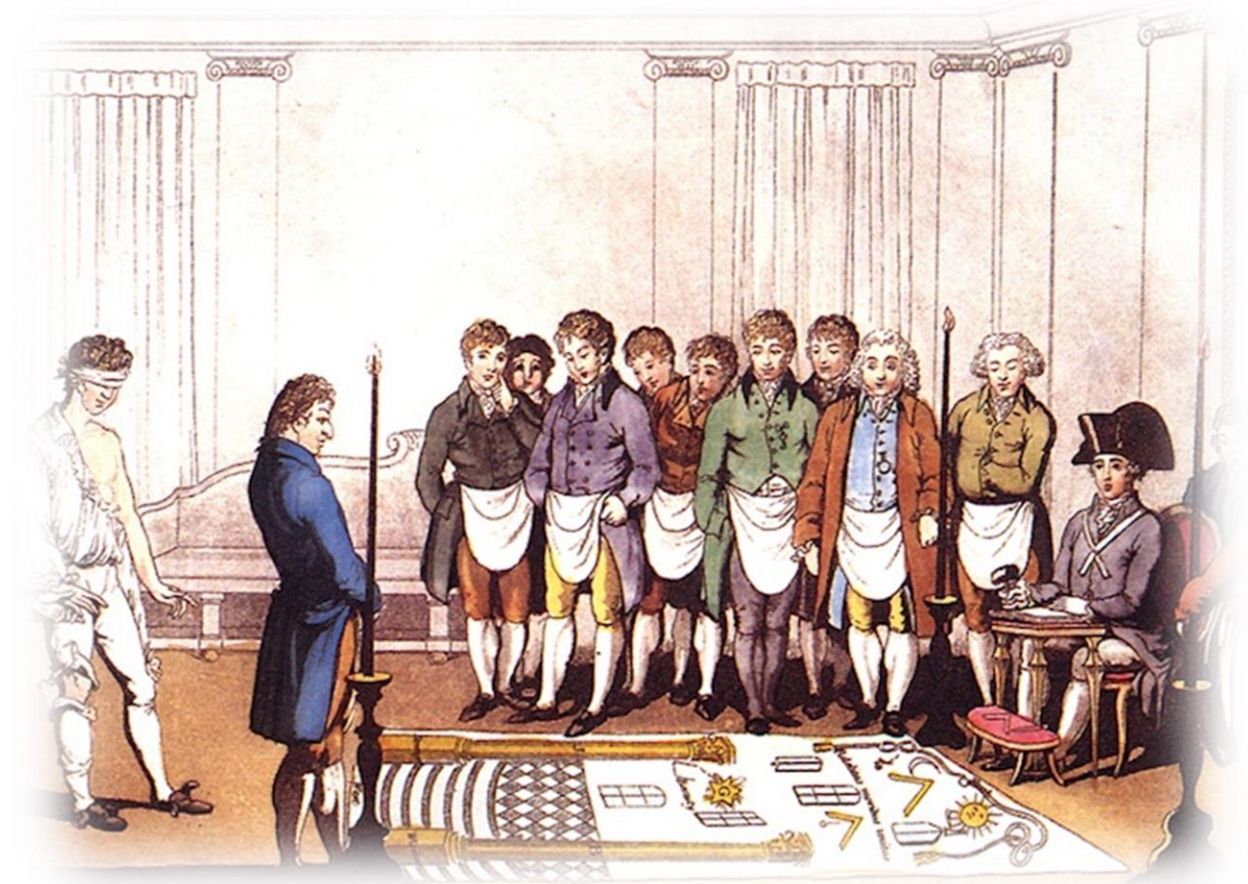
When the organization became what is called Speculative Masonry, men were accepted into the Craft without being actual builders that is they were spiritual builders. Speculative Masonry adopts the terms and concepts of the actual builders, but substitutes men for stone and mortar, and works toward self-improvement rather than the actual construction of buildings.



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 and cathedrals. For this reason, they were not placed under the same restrictions as were other workers. They were “free” to do their work, travel, and live their lives in a manner which was in line with their duties. No one could become an Apprentice unless he was free born.

The word “Accepted” also goes back to the time of the Operative Mason. The “accepted” Mason was originally a man who was not a craft worker, but wished to participate in the moral lessons taught and was accepted as a Mason. From this practice the use of the words “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. The phrase “free and accepted” first appeared 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 number 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.



THE ORIGIN OF GRAND LODGES

In 1717 four Lodges in London met together 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 "Ancient" 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, all other Grand Lodges in the world today are descended.

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. The most commonly used title, like that used in Washington, is F. & A. M., or Free and Accepted Masons.

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 condemn Freemasonry.



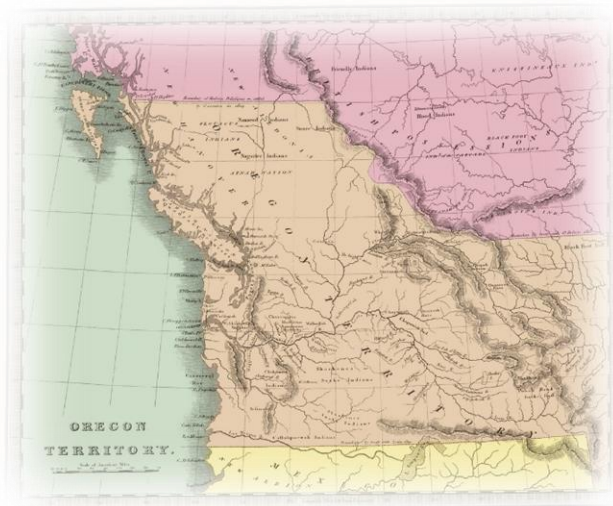
MASONIC HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

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.

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 Johnson, Garfield, McKinley, both Teddy and Franklin 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.



THE FIRST WASHINGTON LODGES

It was November 25, 1852, while Oregon was still a territory and Washington had yet to become one, that Olympia Lodge, No. 5 was granted dispensation (official approval to function). This act made it the First Masonic Lodge west of the Rockies and north of the Columbia River.

By July 1858, there were four Lodges in what is now Washington chartered by the Grand Lodge of Oregon: Olympia, No. 5, Steilacoom, No. 8, Grand Mound, No. 21 (20 miles south of Olympia), and Washington, No. 22 of Vancouver. Grand Mound Lodge now only exists as a “historical Lodge”. At the time these four Lodges were under the Grand Lodge of Oregon, there was a combined total of 113 members. These four lodges from a territory with a population of around 9000 settlers met on December 8th, 1858, and established the Grand Lodge of Washington.



QUALIFICATIONS OF A PETITIONER

Our Grand Lodge requires that a petitioner must be a man, be at least 18 years of age, be able to read and write, believe in a Supreme Being, and be of good moral character. In addition to these prerequisites, a petitioner must have a favorable attitude toward the Craft, and it is anticipated that his purpose in seeking membership is not influenced by any mercenary or self-serving motive. Each petitioner must be prepared in his heart to be a Mason and he must agree to be a peaceable citizen, loyal to his country and its law.

Each petitioner must have been a resident in the State of Washington for the past six months (unless lodge bylaws require a longer residence) The requirement of a half-year's residency before petitioning a Lodge shall not apply to:

- 1. A seafaring man whose home is on board ship. He must petition a Lodge situated in a regular port of call for his ship.*
- 2. A person who is and for six months next preceding the date of his petition has been in the United States Military.*
- 3. A person otherwise eligible, entering the Armed Services of the United States, he being considered temporarily absent from home.*
- 4. A person who for six months next preceding the date of his petition has been in the armed services and has maintained his continuous abiding place and home within the Grand Jurisdiction, and*
- 5. An actual resident of this Grand Jurisdiction who is in attendance as a student at any College, School, or University.*

Each petition must be signed by three Master Masons. They should be well acquainted with the Petitioner for a long enough time so as to be able to vouch for his character. The three must either be members of that Lodge or, if the petitioner has recently moved to this area, then by

members of a Lodge in the part of the state in which he formerly lived where he is better known. If the petitioner is known by a Mason from another Lodge or Grand Lodge, a Mason who is considered an old family friend, his signature may be added to the other three as a courtesy to him, the petitioner, and his family.

Each Lodge establishes the fees for conferring Degrees and the Lodge's annual dues and determines how these are to be paid. One of the questions each petitioner is asked is, "Will this be a financial burden on you or your family?" You may want to consider purchasing a Life Membership in your Lodge when you are entitled to sign the By-Laws and become an enrolled Master Mason.



MASONIC ORGANIZATIONS

The Masonic Lodge is the base of all other organizations that require Masonic affiliation, one or more of which you, or a member of your family, may want to join sometime in the future.

We are not sure where the name *Blue Lodge* originated; one theory is because blue is generally regarded as the color used to characterize friendship. Colors have a large place in the traditions of the Craft. Today it is generally agreed that the American usage is derived from English Freemasonry. We know that the United Grand Lodge of England, in choosing the colors of its clothing was guided mainly by the colors associated with the Noble Orders of the Garter and the Bath. When the Most Noble Order of the Garter was instituted by Edward III in 1348, its color was light blue. Freemasonry's colors were not derived from ancient symbolism. The clothing of three groups of Degrees is related to mainly three colors; the Craft of symbolic Degrees with blue; the Royal Arch with crimson; and other Degrees with green, white and other colors, including black. Worldwide, in many cultures, blue symbolizes immortality, eternity, fidelity, prudence and goodness. In Freemasonry in particular, blue is symbolic of universal brotherhood and friendship and "*instructs us that in the mind of a Mason, those virtues should be as extensive as the blue arch of Heaven itself.*"

Two of the organizations, the *York Rite* and the *Scottish Rite*, expand on the teachings of the Blue Lodge, or basic Masonry, and further explain its meaning.

Shriners International, commonly called the *Shrine*, is not formally connected with Masonry, but has as its own requirement the restriction of its membership to Master Masons. This organization is socially oriented and has as its major project the funding and operation of nearly two-dozen medical facilities for children.

The *Order of the Eastern Star*, *White Shrine of Jerusalem* and the *Amaranth* admit both men and women. *Research Lodges* do academic study on Masonry. There are currently two Research Lodges in the State of Washington and membership is open to any Master Mason. The *Masonic Service Association*, whose headquarters is in Cedar Rapids, Iowa issues Masonic publications and sponsors visits to patients at our Veterans hospitals.

There are several organizations for young people, *DeMolay International*, *International Order of the Rainbow for Girls* and *Job's Daughters International*. In addition, the *Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm* (Grotto), *Tall Cedars of Lebanon* and many other concordant and appendant Masonic bodies will welcome you and your family as members once you become a Master Mason. All you will need is the time and energy to participate.





WHAT TO EXPECT

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 which 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.

It is suggested that you dress respectfully, as in a business setting. Upon arrival 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. You will participate in a brief formal meeting. 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 presented 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.



THE PROFICIENCY

As you take each Degree, you will be asked to show that you understand what has been said and portrayed. This step is called demonstrating your “proficiency.” The proficiency is evidence that the 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.

Each Lodge will serve as the sole judge of each candidate’s proficiency in the preceding degree. This will entail demonstration of the obligations, grips and signs of the degrees received. They also may be offered “The Masonic Education Program”, approved by the Grand Lodge. The tests are simple but will require some study. A Mentor 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 mentor as often as necessary in order to acquire a basic knowledge of Masonry.

A booklet like this one will be given to you at the end of each Degree. It will contain an explanation of the Degree and will explain the symbols and actions in each part of the Degree.

It is encouraged that members progressing through the degrees visit other lodges in their area. They will need to be accompanied by a Brother Master Mason who can vouch that they have sat in lodge with him. In addition, you will be required to memorize a portion of each Degree, so that you will be able to visit other Lodges. It will be written in a brief memory-aid form.

If you so desire, there will be optional material along with a list of voluntary projects for you to participate in that will help you become more comfortable and familiar with your new Lodge and Fraternity. As in all endeavors, you will receive as much from the experience as you put into it.

The new member should attend all Stated Communications of the Lodge. He should arrive early enough to greet all members before the meeting. A lodge can operate on any of the three degrees for a regular stated meeting. If there is a degree being performed above the degree you

currently are, then you will not be able to participate. When the Lodge is closed, you can enjoy fellowship with your lodge brothers if the lodge is providing refreshments.

When you pass the proficiency, you will be given the next Degree.



YOUR DUTIES AS A MASON

You will become a member of the Fraternity when you have received the three Degrees 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, you will be expected to be a contributing member of a Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction. If you move to another state or nation, you may want to become a dual member of a Lodge in a Grand Jurisdiction located there. Every Mason is expected to pay his annual Lodge dues promptly and in this Grand Jurisdiction, on or before December 31 for the year to come.

While a Lodge is not an organized charity, it does support several charitable activities. It would be your duty to lend a helping hand to a Brother Mason in his sickness or distress as well as to aid a Mason's widow or orphaned children. It also teaches love and charity for all mankind, so all mankind has a claim upon your benevolence. This claim is limited only by your own financial circumstance and your perception of your ability to be of assistance.

If as a Master Mason you are present at your Lodge when a ballot is taken on a petition for the Degrees, 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.

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. The Mystic Tie that binds him to his fellows holds him fast.

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 what wherever you go in the world and whatever your financial or social position, you will find 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 decide to go through the Degrees, receive the work, and then 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 person experiences.

On completing the Third-Degree Proficiency, you will be eligible for any office in your lodge. You will have a right to attend any meeting of your own Lodge once you are a Master Mason. Visiting other Lodges, however, is a privilege in this, or any, Jurisdiction. Infrequently a Lodge may wish to restrict attendance at a meeting to its own members, excluding visitors because its members want to discuss something privately. For that reason, no Mason has an absolute right to attend any Lodge meeting at any time or place. A visitor is always a guest, and every guest must be sensitive to the needs of his host.

These statements are not exhaustive. We have just touched on 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 will mean to you and of what you mean to Masonry.



Discussion Points

Consider the following from Approaching the Portal

1. What is a modern definition of Masonry?
2. What are the primary doctrines of Freemasonry?
3. What are its principal virtues?
4. What is the purpose of Freemasonry?
5. What is a Lodge?
6. What are the two types of Masonry and what is the difference between them?
7. What are Free and Accepted Masons?
8. Where and when was the first Grand Lodge formed?
9. Where and when was the first Grand Lodge in America formed?

10. How many U.S. Presidents were Masons?
11. In what year was the Grand Lodge of Washington formed?
12. What is the difference between a secret society and one with secrets?
13. What two subjects are never brought up in Lodge?
14. Name five qualifications an individual must have to petition for the Degrees of Masonry in Washington?
15. What two rites expand the teachings of Masonry?
16. Name five duties that you have as a Mason?