History of Freemasonry

The Freemasons are the oldest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. Symbolically, the Craft dates back to the days of Solomon and his building of the first temple in Jerusalem. The oldest document that makes reference to Masons is the Regius Poem, circa 1425. The illustrious roots of the organization date to when its members were operative Masons who built castles and cathedrals throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. The foundation of the ritual is based on the story of the building of King Solomon’s Temple. It incorporates metaphors with symbolic meaning from architecture, engineering, masonry and construction. It uses the signs and words developed by the Masonic guilds as methods of recognition and the language evolved from a number of sources.

18th Century Beginnings

The organization, as we know it today, began in the early 18th century in England when the Masons started to accept members who were not members of the Mason's craft — these men were referred to as "speculative Masons" or "accepted Masons."

Freemasonry Comes to America

Freemasonry was brought to the United States with our early settlers and the craft became very popular in colonial America. Henry Price, a Boston merchant and tailor, received a deputation from the Grand Lord of England to form the first Provincial Grand Lodge in the Western Hemisphere.

Our Founding Fathers

Among the country’s early Masonic leaders were George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John Hancock. Another influential Mason, Chief Justice John Marshall, served as Chief of the Supreme Court for more than 34 years and shaped the court into its present form.

Worldwide Charity

In the 1800s, at a time when the U.S. government provided no social "safety net," the Masonic tradition of founding orphanages, homes for widows, and care for the aged provided the only protection many people knew. Over the centuries, Freemasonry has developed into a worldwide fraternity emphasizing personal study, self-improvement, and social betterment by way of individual involvement and philanthropy. The dignity of man, the liberty of the individual, the right of all persons to worship as they choose, and the importance of education stand at the forefront of Masonic thought.

Today

Today, there are approximately five million Freemasons throughout the world. Nearly three million of them reside in the United States. At the dawn of the 21st century, Freemasons continue their tradition of building bridges of brotherhood as they strive to make good men better.