

Phoenicia Lodge No. 58 F&AM
www.phoenicia58.org
P.O. Box 30412, Phoenix AZ 85046
The Trestleboard
Special Edition – Rods, Cabletow and Wages
Nov 2019



Brethren of Phoenicia Lodge,

In your hands you hold a special edition of our Trestleboard. In operative masonry, the Trestleboard is used by the master architect to draw his designs and plans, which are then used by the laborers to construct the building, agreeable to the designs laid down for them.

The Masonic fraternity is the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. Members of the Masonic fraternity come from virtually every occupation and profession, - from all stations in life. All masons meet on an equal basis as friends, regardless of income, political ideology, or religious belief. All are patriotic citizens, and all have a belief in a Supreme Being.

Respectfully presented to the members of Phoenicia Lodge No. 58 F&AM,
Bryon P Howe, PM

The Masonic Rods and Staffs



a 3-part mini-series brought to you by WB Chris West

by C. Richard Walk, PM

Why This Program Was Prepared

I have been told that in Virginia the stewards have "Rods" beside their chairs and beside the Deacon's chairs are "Staffs" and that was about all the information I had about these metal poles of the lodge room. As a steward, I sat by them for two years and possibly another two years as a deacon. I thought I had to know more about them and began to ask questions. The answers I obtained about these instruments did not satisfy my curiosity and with the prodding of Worshipful Brother William A. Meyer of Springfield 217, I decided to put together a program on the Rods and Staffs.

As I did the research, two things from the Middle Chamber of the Fellowcraft degree kept running through mind. The first was "Tools and implements of masonry and symbolic emblems most expressive are selected by the fraternity to imprint on the mind wise and serious truths". The other was "The lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance and the devastations of war have laid waste and destroyed many valuable - - - -".

What Are Rods and Staffs

The first thing I did was find a definition. I found that Rod and Staff may be used interchangeably. However, from a biblical sense, staff meant support; such as, "Bread is the staff of life".

History and Development

The development was as follows:

1. Club
2. Stave
3. Staff (spear, arrow, etc.)
4. Wand (supernatural)
5. Baton (marshal)
6. Mace (only one made entirely of metal)
7. Scepter (surmounted by globes)
8. Crozier (surmounted by a cross)
9. Rod (divining)
10. Masonic Rod (surmounted by symbolic devices)

The meaning of the above developed in this way:

1. Brute Force
2. Power
3. Leadership
4. Delegated Authority
5. Correction
6. Protection
7. Support

8. Effort
9. Progress
10. Prosperity
11. Peace

Power has been associated with the devices throughout their development. We might think of power in the following ways:

Outwardly Inwardly

To Strike To Support

To Chastise To Promote Peace
and Prosperity

To Correct To Protect

Special Forms of Rods

Some special forms of the Rods are:

1. Caduceus of Mercury
2. Rod of AESCULAPIUS

The caduceus of Mercury was a winged rod entwisted by two serpents. The Rod of AESCULAPIUS was a rod entwisted with one serpent and is now the symbol of our medical profession.

Biblical

Rods and staffs are each mentioned more than one hundred times in the bible. The best known verse is the 23rd psalm. Here the hooked staff was used to beat down the grass and retrieve straying sheep. The rod was used for protection. Other well known parts of the bible are:

Adam selected a branch to use as a staff to lean on.

Rod of Moses turned into a serpent when he threw it down. (Wisdom by effort).

How Did Rods and Staffs Get Into Masonic Lodges?

There is no evidence that they were used by operative Masons. In Britain the Grand High Steward presided over the King's household and carried a white Rod. This may have been the start of the Masonic Rod but it probably came from Ushers in the House of Parliament. One usher carried a black rod and the other a white rod. People would be seated by calling a "black rod" or "white rod" depending on where they wished to be seated.

The first mention of Masonic Rods was in a procession of Grand Lodge in 1724 in which the Grand Stewards carried white rods symbolizing purity and innocence.

As late as 1812, Deacons in Pennsylvania carried columns in procession. Deacons first carried blue rods tipped with gold, symbolizing friendship and benevolence. Later they were tipped with a pine cone in imitation of the Caduceus of Mercury.

It is also reported that rods were used in early lodges to find eavesdroppers in the eaves of the lodges.

Symbolism of the Rods and Staffs

Symbolism requires individual thought and interpretation to be of any value. Each individual may interpret things in his own way. For example: looking at a picture of a river may bring to the mind of some a fishing experience, to some it may be sailing or boating and to others peace and solitude. The important thing is that it has meaning to the individual and can help him perfect his

ashlar. So, the following statements must not be considered final, but rather suggestive of the endless possibilities of rod symbolism.

It could symbolize a plumb line pointing to heaven and could mean moral rectitude, or to set our lives to lead to immortality.

The Stewards rods could remind us of the perfect parallel lines and John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.

They could mean authority or power.

They could remind us of a lever. Archimedes said "Give me a lever and a place to rest and I will move the world". How infinitesimal are the forces exerted by the mechanical lever as to the spiritual force exerted by the Masonic Rod on the minds and hearts of men.

The devices on top the rods represent the forces of nature acting beneficially for mankind.

Oliver Day said "The glorious orbs of night and day (referring to the moon and sun of the deacon staff) have not yet lost their power to stir the thoughts of divinity in the human mind".

The moon on the Junior Deacon's staff is a water spilling moon. The water spilled on the ground with sunshine, as represented by the sun atop the Senior Deacon's, on the growing crop brings forth the fruit of harvest overflowing in the cornucopias in the rods of the Stewards.

The story of the cornucopias goes like this: When Zeus was an infant, he was raised by the two daughters of Melisseus. His daughters were virgins so for nourishment, Zeus was given the milk of the goat Amalthea. When Zeus became ruler of the Gods, to show appreciation for his early care and nourishment, he placed the goat Amalthea in the heavens as a constellation. To the daughters of Melisseus, he gave each one horn of the goat with the provision that as long as they lived, whatever they desired they only had to express the wish and it would be supplied from the goat's horn in over-flowing abundance. And so the cornucopias of the steward's rods are overflowing with the fruits of the harvest to symbolize the abundant material and spiritual life which faithful masons may hope to enjoy.

Rods and Staffs from State to State

There are many differences in the way the rods and staffs are used from state to state, indicating that the lapse of time, and ruthless hand of ignorance has played a significant roll in this ritual.

In Maine, the stewards have white rods. The deacons use black.

There are lodges in Virginia that use white and black rods.

In Illinois and Washington the rods and staff's are both used and are carried at a 45 degree angle.

In Colorado the candidate is led into the lodge by the stewards carrying the rods upright.

There are no stewards in Pennsylvania (at least as positioned officers in the lodge room).

In Illinois the stewards keep their hand on the rod at all times.

In Washington and Illinois at funerals both the steward's rods and deacon's staffs are used.

In Virginia Funerals Stewards with their rods upright lead the procession of masons into the funeral home. Deacon's staffs are not used.

Symbolism:

The 23rd Psalm states that "Thy rod and thy staff comfort me", and this is a time to comfort the family.

They also represent the lines that touch the circle which circumscribes our bounds throughout life -----from initiation into masonry until death.

They also may represent the lines of brethren at the altar that were in support of the deceased brother.

The Cabletow - by Elbert Bede



brought to you by WB Ray Brigandi

I wonder how many of us have given serious consideration to the significance of the cabletow of Freemasonry, which has both physical and spiritual symbolism. Its derivation and definition are uncertain, and the word probably comes from the Hebrew or German word meaning “a pledge of the body.” This definition becomes significant as one obligation follows another.

An intriguing definition of the cabletow is given by Carl Claudy in his introduction to Freemasonry - “It is symbolic of the life cord by which the embryo receives life from the mother. It is the Masonic cord by which the Masonic infant is attached to his mother lodge.” As soon as the infant is born the physical cord is severed, but never the knife was ground which can cut the spiritual cord that ties a man to his mother.

In Masonry the physical restraint of the cabletow is removed as soon as the spiritual bond of the obligation has been assumed, and again; never have the means been made by which to cut the obligation that binds a man to his mother lodge and to the craft! Expulsion does not relieve him from his obligations; unaffiliation does not dissolve the tie that binds; demitting to another lodge cannot make the new lodge a mother lodge.

The Entered Apprentice learns that the duties of self-improvement, civic philanthropy, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are his newfound and more important binding cord. The Fellowcraft wears the cabletow so that it may be an aid to his journey; an urge to action; a girding up; a strengthening for the masonic life to come; by it, another brother may also assist him on his way. The Fellowcraft learns that the cabletow is more than a rope, it is at once a tie, a lifeline, and a measurement.

In the Master Mason degree, the candidate pledges himself as fully as it is possible for him to do so. He is brought fully to light, spiritual bonds are completed and physical shackles are forever removed. One cannot restrain by physical bonds what spiritual bonds will not fetter. The Master Mason learns that the duties to God, country, neighbor and to the fraternity are the evolved umbilical spiritual threads of his obligation.

What is the length of the cabletow? Thousands of times this question has been asked and few are the appropriate answers. Who can define the length of a spiritual tie? Each brother must decide for himself the length of his cabletow.

The Wages of a Master Mason



Brought to you by an unknow brother

We have heard of the wages of a fellowcraft mason. But it is as Master Masons that we labor in this fraternity. Why then have we heard so little about the wages of a Master Mason?

The reason we do not find the explanation of the wages of a Master Mason described so clearly and ubiquitously is because each brother must find his own interpretation of our symbols. So too each of us must find for ourselves the wages. One brother may not be paid in kind or of the same wages as another. One may receive wages in the gratitude of one for whom he has performed an act of charity. Another may receive wages in the joy that comes from having brought cheer to the sick or depressed. Another may receive wages in the appreciation of a brother to whom he has imparted something of Masonic knowledge. Still another may receive wages in the form of honors conferred upon him by brethren he has faithfully served. And another by the satisfaction derived from his service to others. Too wages are paid in the friendships formed and made in freemasonry, and from the opportunities to coach a candidate, and from the privilege of participating in degree work.

The wages of a Master Mason are not paid in silver and gold or articles of commerce and trade that may be stolen or that may deteriorate over time. They are paid in those things that the receiving brother may keep in the repository of faithful breasts. They are paid in the things that are secure in the hearts of his brethren and friends. The wages of a Master Mason cannot be measured by any standard from which the value of intrinsic or extrinsic things are measured. The wages of a master mason are measured only by the value placed upon them by the one who receives them.