
The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



Contents

From the Editor-In-Chief.....	3
	RWB:. Robert H. Johnson, FILOR
From the Chairman's Desk.....	4
	W:. Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.
They're Still Alive, but They Don't Exist.....	6
	RWB:. Chad M. Lacek, 33°
Oration 1913	9
	RW:. Lawrence Y. Sherman
Is Masonic Tradition Necessary?.....	17
	Bro. Fernando Rodrigues de Souza
Put It Into Practice	19
	Committee on Masonic Education, IL
Memory, Mental Health & Freemasonry	20
	WB. Darin A. Lahners, FILOR
The Living Chain	23
	Bro. Kaleem Kamboj, 32°
The Modern Progressive Column	31
	Committee on Masonic Education, IL
The LEO Toolbox.....	32
	Committee on Masonic Education, IL
Masonic Conferences.....	34
	Committee on Masonic Education, IL



Find us Online @
www.ilmason.org/masonic-education



Your Publication Staff & Contributors
Robert H. Johnson - Editor-In-Chief, Darin A. Lahners -
Editor, Chad Lacek, 33°, Bernard Davis, Chairman

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear Brethren,

Welcome to the July 2026 issue of the Lyceum. As our nation commemorates its milestone 250th anniversary of independence this month, we find ourselves reflecting deeply on the core pillars that sustain both our Republic and our Craft: memory, tradition, and purposeful continuity. This month's selection offers profound, multi-dimensional perspectives on how we honor our past while intentionally building our future.

We begin our journey with our opening section from the Chairman, where WB Dr. Bernard Davis Jr. explores why Freemasonry truly endures, reminding us that ritual memory must serve as an unshakable compass for individual identity. Following this, Brother Kaleem Kamboj, provides a poignant reflection in *The Living Chain*, illustrating how tradition must be actively worked and interpreted rather than frozen under glass. R:W: Chad M. Lacek offers a deeply moving personal essay, *They're Still Alive, but They Don't Exist*, which examines the inevitable changes in our lives and relationships through the lens of Masonic self-improvement and the working tools.

Then, in a moving and courageous piece, WB Darin A. Lahners opens a vital conversation about a silent crisis affecting many in our fraternity: mental health and suicide. He shines a light on a common struggle among dedicated Freemasons—the inability to say "no" and set personal boundaries.

Looking to our history, we revisit the Oration 1913 by Grand Orator Lawrence Y. Sherman, who beautifully illustrates the harmony of stability, progress, and universal toleration within our fraternity. Expanding our cultural

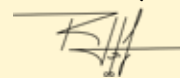
horizons, Brother Ken JP Stuczynski provides a fascinating cross-cultural bridge in *The Three Degrees of Chi Kung*, comparing our progressive advancement to traditional Eastern trinities of body, mind, and spirit. Turning a critical eye to our contemporary practices, Fernando Rodriguez de Souza challenges us in *Is a Masonic Tradition Necessary?* to critically evaluate our current customs, warning against unthinking repetition and the misuse of tradition as a tool for rigid control.

In *The Modern Progressive Column*, we examine a recent international update highlighting South America, serving as a contemporary blueprint for how digital modernization can amplify, rather than diminish, our ancient heritage. Finally, we close our issue with *The LEO Toolbox*, which provides actionable, hands-on educational strategies to help Lodge Education Officers successfully transition simple rote ritual memorization into impactful philosophical growth.

As you digest these pages, I challenge each of you to consider what light has been entrusted to you and how you will choose to carry it forward. May our collective memory always inform our daily conduct, and may our traditions remain the sturdy trellis upon which our future progress climbs.

Wishing you all a safe, reflective, and joyous July.

Fraternally and faithfully yours,



R.H. Johnson,
Editor-In-Chief, The Lyceum
Committee on Masonic Education



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB. Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee



There is a question I have returned to often across my years in this Craft, “*Why does Freemasonry endure?*”

Not merely survive, but actually endure. Generation after generation, across centuries of upheaval, the Craft has continued to find men, form them, and send them back into the world, changed men. I do not believe this happens by accident. I believe it happens because Freemasonry is, at its core, a system of memory, and memory, when it is properly tended, becomes identity.

Consider what occurs when a man is raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. Something is planted in him that does not easily fade. The words, the symbols, the charge, the obligation, these are not merely ceremonies, they are architecture. They form a reference point he will return to when life demands clarity, when the path grows uncertain, or when his own character is tested and he must decide who he truly is. This is how memory works in the Craft: not as nostalgia, but as a compass. The Mason who remembers what he promised, what he received, and what he represents is a Mason who knows himself.

Tradition, rightly understood, is the vehicle through which that memory travels. But tradition is often misread, either clung to so tightly it becomes a cage, or dismissed as the relic of men who could not imagine better ways. Both of these are errors that cost us something real. Tradition in Freemasonry does not exist to preserve form for its own sake. It exists to carry the essence of tested wisdom forward, from the hands of those who shaped us into the hands of those we are now shaping. When we conduct a degree

with care, when we observe our customs with intention, when we take time to explain rather than merely perform, we are not repeating the past. We are extending it. We are choosing continuity over convenience, and in doing so, we make a statement about what we believe the Craft is worth.

A lodge that cannot grow becomes a monument to itself. A lodge that abandons its roots becomes unrecognizable. The work before us, before every officer, every mentor, every steward of our ritual, is to hold both of these truths at once. To honor what has proven itself, and to have the courage to carry it forward with life and meaning.

This month, I invite each of us to reflect on what we are preserving, and whether we are preserving it well. Not just the forms, but the substance. Not just the words, but the wisdom they were designed to transmit. Memory gives us identity. Tradition gives us direction. Our faithful labor gives both of them life.

Fraternally,

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.

WB Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.,
Chairman:
Committee on Masonic Education
Grand Lodge AF&AM of Illinois



ILLINOIS MASONIC STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

AN ILLINOIS FREEMASONRY CHARITY.



WE SAVE LIVES

WE SAVE LIVES

1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Empowering educators to recognize and support students.

2 DRUG & ALCOHOL PREVENTION



Community tools for identification and help.

3 FINANCIAL LITERACY



Real-world finance and practical life skills.

4 ACADEMIC BOWL



Positive recognition for academic excellence.



5 FAMILY IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

Free workshops to find and prevent victims of abduction.

DONATE



BE A PART OF THE CHANGE

Every dollar literally **SAVES LIVES.**

IMSAP OFFICE
3731 Wabash Avenue, Springfield, IL 62711
email: IMSAP@ilmason.org
phone: 217-529-8900 Ext. 219

DOWNLOAD
OUR FLYER



They're Still Alive, but They Don't Exist

by RWB.: Chad M. Lacey, 33°



Crossing the threshold of turning 50 really hit me hard. In many ways it still does. I find myself escaping into memories of the carefree days of my misspent youth. I used to laugh then. I think I laughed every day. Not the kind of laughter elicited by an amusing joke. I mean uncontrollable, doubled over, sides splitting, unable to speak until the waves of hilarity wash over completely and exhaust themselves. Those were the days.

My face is wet with tears even now as I write these words. I can't help it. I'm desperate to cling to those experiences, but the only remnants of them are in the dusty archives of my memory. Most of the people that I shared that joy with are still alive today. I want to be near them and reminisce all those gloriously ridiculous events we blundered into together. But they don't want to.

My heart broke at that realization. A heart-break as crushing as any I've ever felt. How could they care so little about something I care so much about? They were there, they laughed just as hard, for just as long. When I ask them to meet for lunch or get together some evening, it's always, "*Yea, we should do that sometime,*" but that time never comes. It's not a priority; it's not even a desire. They

don't want my friendship. I wondered how this was possible, and then I finally realized that these people I love so deeply don't exist anymore.

Sure, they're still alive and well, raising their families and living their lives. They have the same name, and they still bear a resemblance to the mischievous children they once were. But those dear friends I cherish have not existed for over 30 years. They are long, long gone. So am I.

Freemasonry encourages us to think carefully about identity. We speak often about becoming better men, about shaping character, about progressing from one state to another. These are not poetic ideas. They are practical ones. They suggest that who we are is not fixed, and that over time, we are meant to change.

Most of us accept this when we apply it to ourselves. We can look back ten or twenty years and recognize that we are not the same man we once were. Our priorities have shifted. Our habits have changed. Our understanding has deepened, or at least we hope it has. We speak of growth, and we mean it. It becomes more complicated when we apply

the same truth to others. There is a particular kind of sadness that comes from looking back at the people we once knew well. Classmates, friends, companions from earlier stages of life. We remember them clearly. We remember how they spoke, how they laughed, what they valued, what they seemed to be becoming. There is a sense of familiarity that feels permanent.

Then, years later, we encounter them again or attempt to. Something is different. Sometimes the difference is obvious. The energy is gone. The shared interests have faded. The ease of conversation has been replaced with distance. At other times, the change is harder to identify. The person is still recognizable, but the connection is not. The rhythm that once existed is no longer there.

It is tempting to think that something has gone wrong. We may feel disappointment. We may feel rejected if the other person shows little interest in maintaining the relationship. We may try to reconnect, to reestablish what once existed. There can be a kind of urgency in this effort, a desire to recover something that feels like it should still be available. But there is a possibility we do not always consider. The person we are trying to reconnect with may no longer exist. This is not a statement about physical absence. The individual is still present. They have a life, responsibilities, relationships, and concerns. But the version of them that we knew, the one that existed in a particular time and place, has passed.

We recognize this in ourselves. The boy we were is gone. The young man we used to be has been replaced. We do not expect others to relate to us as if we had not changed. Yet we sometimes expect that continuity from them. Freemasonry offers a framework that can help make sense of this.

The process of self-improvement implies

transformation. We are not meant to remain as we are. The rough ashlar is not intended to stay rough. It is worked, gradually, into a more refined form. That process involves removal as much as addition. Parts are taken away. Edges are reshaped. What remains is different from what was there before.

Applied over time, this results in a series of changes that are seldom reversible. The people we knew in earlier stages of life were shaped by the conditions of that time. Shared environments, shared challenges, shared limitations. When those conditions change, the person changes with them. New influences emerge. Old patterns fall away. Priorities shift. What we are left with is not the same person in a new context. It is, in many ways, a new person altogether. This realization can be difficult to accept. There is a natural desire to preserve what was meaningful to us. The friendships of youth often feel especially significant. They are formed before many of the hardships of adult life take hold. They carry a sense of simplicity that is hard to replicate later in life.

When we attempt to revisit those relationships, we are often seeking more than conversation. We are seeking proximity to a version of the past that no longer exists. That is where the disappointment arises. We are not only missing the person as they are now. We are missing the person they were. The one we laughed with, struggled with, and understood without effort. That person is not absent by choice. They are absent because time has changed them.

In that sense, there is something final about it. The writer Heidi Priebe expresses this idea with unusual clarity. She notes that to love someone over a long period is to attend a thousand small funerals. Not literal ones, but symbolic ones. We say goodbye, again and again, to the versions of people that no longer exist. The versions they have outgrown, the

versions they have lost, and the versions they never became.

This is not a failure of the relationship. It is the condition of being human. We change. Others change. The continuity we imagine is, to some extent, an illusion created by memory. This does not mean that all relationships must end. Some adapt. Some deepen. Some survive the changes because both individuals continue to find common ground as they evolve. But many do not, and that is not necessarily a sign that something has gone wrong. It may simply be a sign that our life's path has taken us in different directions.

Freemasonry does not ask us to resist change. It encourages it. It asks us to examine ourselves, to improve, and to move forward with intention. If we take that seriously, we cannot expect to remain as we were. Nor can we expect others to do so. What it does ask is that we approach this reality with a certain disposition. Gratitude, rather than resentment. The friendships of the past were real. The experiences were real. The connection existed, and it mattered. The fact that it cannot be recreated does not diminish its value. If anything, it clarifies it. There is a way of holding those relationships that does not depend on their continuation.

We can remember them as they were, without insisting that they persist unchanged. We can appreciate the role they played in our development, without requiring that they remain active in our present. We can allow the past to be complete, rather than attempting to reopen it. This is not indifference. It is acceptance.

In some cases, it may even be appropriate to think of those earlier versions of people as no longer living. Not in a literal sense, but in the recognition that they are gone in a meaningful way. The person we knew existed within a particular moment in time. That moment has

passed, and with it, that version of the person. What remains is someone new.

Freemasonry teaches us to live in reality, not in abstraction. The reality is that change is constant, and that identity is not fixed. We are all in the process of becoming something else, whether we intend it or not. To understand this is to avoid a certain kind of unnecessary suffering.

We do not need to chase what cannot be recovered. We do not need to force connections that no longer have a foundation. We can instead acknowledge what was, appreciate it for what it gave us, and allow it to remain where it belongs; In our memory. The people we remember mattered. They helped shape who we are. That does not require them to still be present in the same way. It only requires that we recognize them for what they were and be grateful that we knew them when we did.

I still cry when I think of them. I mourn at the grave site of my childhood; one of those 'thousand small funerals' we all attend as we age. I've learned to mix gratitude in equal measure to the sadness. I'm crying because it was so wonderful. I have something precious that I will always cherish. I'm certain you have people in your life that make you feel the same way, be they living or dead. We'll always have them, as they were, in our glorious memories. Memories that by now have a soft patina which highlights and exaggerates the good, and all but omits any bad in them.

What a miracle our memory is. It resurrects those dear people in our lives and lets us commune with them once more. I hope this brings you some peace as we age together. They are never really gone, until even our memory abandons us, but by then, we mercifully won't know what we've lost. I will end here, as I'm almost out of Kleenex.



ORATION 1913

The Grand Orator, Bro. Lawrence Y. Sherman, delivered, the annual Oration



To our ancient and illustrious fraternity, we return our greetings. To the members we extend our congratulations; our fraternity is a mighty instrument for good; this meeting is at a fitting time and place; the place is fitting because in this building so many of us have gathered in the days that are numbered with the past; here among us are brothers; here since this building was first devoted to this use, we are surrounded by men so well known to us; here has been dedicated our time and our efforts for the benefit of our fraternity. It is proper, too, in point of place that we are meeting in this city, typical at once of the growth, of the purpose, of the strength of the great middle west of this country—to the end that our beloved land is becoming typical of the best thought and action of our race; here on our broad acres and gathered within the limits of our states are the opportunities for all; here in this great Mississippi valley is the granary of the world; here are gathered the best type of all the races of the world; here in Chicago, from our viewpoint, we know no creed, no nationality; all are welcome to Chicago, to Illinois; here, then in that spirit we can gather in that liberalism that is peculiarly fit to exemplify the purpose

of this great fraternity; it is fitting, too, in time as well as place. We have gathered in October, our members here are representative of our brethren; in October is the fruition, the maturity of the seasons; the burning sun of summer is gone, the changeful spring that in turn followed the winter when the snow lay upon the hills and when the vegetable kingdom slumbered in the bosom of mother earth—these three seasons have come in succession; in the-last, when all is done for the season, our brethren have gathered here in this session. October is typical of all the products of the Infinite given us on earth. Our fraternity, too, is typical of the best product of organization, of fraternal love among men. It is so because it shows the developed work in our membership present here today, representing all that it does. There are three score and ten and youth in the field of service in our brotherhood; it represents both the past with its time fulfilled and the future, with its hopes, with its infinite possibilities. There is in this season emblematic of the best that Nature can give us, the landscape, the hills glowing in the distant haze, the foliage of the trees beginning to touch and tint under the brush of the Greatest Master in the world and

the finished harvest that sustains us all. There is in this season the blending of the summer's sun and the cooling breath of winter typical of all good things in moderation of which our order is likewise an emblem.

There is in our order both conservatism and progress, both stability and change; the conservatism that holds fast to all that is good, the progress that reaches forward to the future and takes all that is needed in the changes of the years. Stability is one of the essentials of our fraternity, stability that is typical to the outside world with all its constant flux, with all its current flowing in the stream of human affairs, of the permanence of our craft. It is likewise emblematic of the change that comes in the progress of the future—comes when time has demonstrated the usefulness of change, when we have proved the old no longer answers our purpose— when tested by good judgment, by toleration, by the wisdom of our generation. Then we substitute the things of the new for the things of the old.

Our fraternity, is tolerant. Toleration is one of the corner stones of our country. We draw no lines on' race or creed. We do believe and make an indispensable request that there be an abiding faith and love in a just and wise Creator, of a power that makes possible our redemption from the frailties and evils incident to humanity. We see even from ancient times the toleration that has become the guide of modern days.

Let me read to you the spirit of toleration expressed in this country many years ago. I think it a proper text to be preserved in our records, I think it an example to abide with us. It came at a time when universal toleration in the old world or the new world, was not recognized as a safe principle under which men could live.

In January, 1655, Roger Williams wrote a letter to the town of Providence; he had been exiled from his friends; he had been cast out of the settlement; he had been driven into the wilderness, there to live or die among hostile Indians as chance decreed. His exile was caused by what seems to us a trifling variance in the creed of that day, not in the abiding goodness of the all-wise Creator, not in the belief in the Divinity of Christ, but in the non-essential things that were in the Gospel and the civilization of that day. He wrote on the charge:

“That ever I should speak or write a title that tends to such an infinite liberty of conscience, is a mistake which I have ever disclaimed and abhorred. To prevent such mistakes I shall at present, only propose this case: There goes many a ship to sea with many hundred of souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, it is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination, or society. It has fallen out sometimes that both papists and protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked in one ship—”

He is now speaking of civil authority instituted among men, not of our fraternity, or bodies of similar nature, or purpose—

“Upon which supposal I affirm that all the liberty of conscience that I ever pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges, that of papist, protestant, Jew or Turk, be forced to come to the ship's prayers, or to worship, if they practice any. I further add that I never denied notwithstanding this liberty, that the commander of the ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace and sobriety be kept and practiced both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their service, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help in person or purse towards the common charges, or defense; if any refuse to obey the

common laws concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise against their commander and any officer, if any should preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers, because all are equal in Christ; therefore no master, nor officer, no laws, nor orders, no corrections, nor punishments, I say I have never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander, or commanders, may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors according to their deserts and merits. This is seriously and honestly minded, may if it so please the Father of Light to let in some light to such as willingly shut not their eyes."

That is not in the lifetime of any now living, it being nearly three hundred years since that letter was written in the quaint form it appears. There is in it the germ of universal toleration, subject to such wise restraints only as are contained in the text of the letter. It lays down a correct code for the administration of public affairs, and it applies to the rights of conscience throughout our country. It is well for us who can enter into the spirit of civilized society, to remember that this code is one of universal toleration. We have certain religious qualifications, indispensable to admit to membership, such as any institution might adopt. But for general society there is in the code of universal toleration, the only sound rule for lasting justice.

Our fraternity is one of the greatest solvents of miscellaneous citizenship there is in this country; there is such a miscellaneous population in our country—there are so many creeds, so many races; there is such universal liberty of thought and the widest measure of action; it is a republican form of government and reflects its people as they come and go from generation to generation. What a great responsibility it is! There can be no choice, or government of the people, unless the great body of the people can exercise well their

own self-control, because the control of ourselves precedes first the just control of others; from this there is no escape; no man is fit to represent or govern who cannot first rule himself. Solomon says: "Make no friend with an angry man;" it was because an angry man has lost his self-control, and is no longer to be classified with those who are safe to help control others.

So the fraternity becomes one of the greatest factors in exercising the manly virtues, the restraints and considerate care for others that make human society better from year to year. Every Mason must have that power of self control; however rigid the rules of the order may be, however severe the condemnation of those in authority; they alone are not sufficient to restrain; all the authorities can do is to mark out the lines of where we may go and where we may not. But after all, the brother must himself exercise that self control; there is the greatest incentive to do so for upon admission to the fraternity we become associated in this family with maturer years, and greater experience, not only in the affairs of the masonic lodge but in the transactions of the outside world; our environments are better, our toleration, our hopes and efforts may be higher and better thereby.

How little we know of absolute knowledge, in this world! How limited our senses are after all! How little demonstrated knowledge is our portion! What do we know about our life?—so little, after all! Life is at utmost a fragment of the great unknown, a period through which we rapidly pass bound for an unknown shore. Think of all the knowledge and usefulness of man. We hardly reach the summit of efficiency until our steps decline towards the universal end; step by step we climb the hill of the development of our powers; we make ourselves competent for whatever problems come to us in our lives, and by the time we reach the crown of the hill, we begin

the downward travel to the end. The greatest men in the world perish like the most worthless in the world; they all pass to a common mortal state. The book of fate written by an invisible hand consigns all that is mortal to the common heritage of the dust; with all our wisdom of the centuries, birth, life and death are still unsolvable mystery; their solution is no nearer human understanding now than when the stars first gemmed the firmament to mock the limits of man's knowledge; the ripened wisdom of a thousand years gives no answer, no inner science written by the patient thought of man, answers; the sage stands mute and philosophy is silent at the sepulchers of the departed.

We talk of human knowledge, of all the centuries have garnered, of the illustrious records the learned ones of earth have left. Man charts the heavens that bend above him. He calculates the orbits of distant worlds. Celestial wanderers are identified, scheduled with a time card and christened with man-made names, and the vagrant comet appears on time, never early, never late.

The skies are a part of God's chart of infinity and a rebuke to presumptuous man whose dogmas are but babbling words.

The laboratory filches from nature her hidden processes. The sign posts of the arts and sciences mark the highways of human effort; the electric code is written around the world in every tongue that falls from the lips of man; intelligence spurns the visible wire seen by mortal eyes and travels invisibly across the heavens; the human voice is borne a thousand miles, so that the accents of the prattling child may be heard, without the confusion or folly of Babel, now in part repaired by the wit of man. We are now daily served by devices that our ancestors, even since they came to these shores, would have denounced, because not understood, as infamous agencies, linked with the Prince of Darkness. If knowledge

had been communicated to Europe by wireless telegraphy when Columbus had discovered America, or when the Puritans landed in Massachusetts, those who communicated in that way, would have been regarded in partnership with the devil and would have been burned as witches. That is because intolerance and ignorance would have been linked with the errors and prejudices of the human heart. The masonic fraternity is peculiarly wise upon this question. No record of persecution has left its bloody stain on our pages.

Dead languages have become the living instrument of knowledge of this day. Through them the centuries blaze with the scholar's patient research. To us comes the warning through vanished nations, from races whose domed and pillared capitols of empire, prostrate in the dust, proclaim that after all is done, nothing but truth and justice survive among men. Where the seats of the mighty in the palaces of ancient kings are forgotten, and their very language has perished from the earth, wolves howl their young to teach us humility and a reverence for eternal things. How it humbles human pride to think of the dead that have perished from off the earth, that their very names are forgotten. And the great truths that come to us from Holy Writ are immortal and will be known in remote ages to our brethren; all such things will lead to reflection, and reflection precedes analysis and analysis is the beginning of understanding.

Today I think it is good for the masonic brotherhood to reflect that humility and simplicity mature human understanding. I speak not of wisdom, not of knowledge but of understanding. When God asked Solomon what gift he would have conferred on him, there being but one he could have, Solomon asked not for riches, nor power, nor learning, nor wisdom, nor knowledge; he asked for understanding; it was conferred upon him; he was found to be the wisest of ancient men; we

read his proverbs. A young man, somewhat flippant and typical of his years or kind, when he was told that Solomon's proverbs embodied the wisdom of the human race, both of antiquity and today, said: Anybody can write proverbs of that kind, and the aged listener said: Sit down there and write a few. He hasn't written any yet. It is safe to predict he will not; he must be much older, and much wiser to do so. To me it is strange that Solomon could so many centuries ago write to suit what is true today. Every one of his maxims may be analyzed and admitted now. Solomon wrote in the ancient time. He thought not only for his time, but for the future; until in the very fullness of time, our Creator shall have re-created man's nature, all that Solomon said in criticism, and correction will be proved.

Patience and tolerance lead us to light and truth; so those who toil and think, who work with hand and mind and heart, have filled the world with better things.

The simplest form of life in its origin baffles the wisest and the best that man can know. No human hand, hastening to its kindred dust ever yet kindled the lowest pulsating spark of life. Man may take it, but he cannot recall or impart it; it is impenetrably sealed from his knowledge; here he stops helpless and impotent as the beast in the jungle; man's intellect here recoils, conscious he has reached his limitation; Mortality is denied the creation of life in any form. How comes it and whither does it go? No mortal knows. No man upon reflection can pass that limitation placed here. I once read a work of fiction, intended to illustrate this point. Frankenstein by constant investigation in the laboratory, by profound thought and experiment, discovered a method of creating a being in the form and similitude of a man; he succeeded admirably; he was a robust, physical specimen, exempt from disease and capable of withstanding the elements, and great physi-

cal hardship, but he had forgotten, or could not in the laboratory in his investigations, to instill in that attempted human being moral restraint, and so the moral faculties were wanting. It is a work of fiction, it is true, but it makes one's blood run cold, at times, to read it. It serves to blaze the limitations on mere human knowledge.

So these twin problems of every age are unsolved by the reason or the logic of man; all the lines etched in tears, the lonely vigils of sleepless nights, sorrows that come not singly but in battalions, one woe that doth tread upon another's heel, all the bitter experiences of humanity that winnow truth from falsehood, have added not an atom in all the ages to the demonstrated knowledge, we possess on this subject.

Conjecture sometimes stills but never ends the inquiry. Analogy and deduction point the way to hope and end where the restless longing of humanity begins. The wise teach that palpable or material matter cannot be destroyed by man. Annihilation is a term invented to describe the impossible. Both it and the creation of the material are attributes of a power beyond the domain of man's naked understanding.

Even the pagan feels that mind inhabits the material body. Call it what one will there is an intangible, impalpable element in man greater than and apart from his physical being. Palpable matter is indestructible. In the economy of universal nature why should what is greater cease on death and the lesser endure.

Our senses are finite. Them we may develop, but to them we cannot add. With them the first person was as well equipped as the last. The limits of human understanding will not be marked while the earth remains. But three score and ten years at last can do more than teach us that our mother's faith is better than the wise man's knowledge. By it alone we

know the unseen and the spiritual. It only can bridge the gulf between man's finite senses and the infinite purposes of an all-wise God. In that faith a Mason lives. Wrapped in its mantle he vanishes from mortal eye. How transitory are the works of human hands! Go where the moldering trophies tell of the vanities of all human things; walk on earth's battlefields where the drum beats pulse the tide of war no more; muse where the world's great libraries wait to join the oblivion of time's departing tide, breaking on an unknown shore, all tell of "*conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, shrunk to this little measure.*"

Mark Antony, speaking through the lips of Shakespeare voiced at once his sarcasm and his despair: "*The evil that men do live after them, the good is often interred with their bones.*" But this is not the lesson of time. The ledger of mortality condemns it. Our brethren whose names are stricken from the roll of the living, remind us only of their good. The human heart clings with gratitude to the virtues of the dead. It is only good that is linked with immortality.

There is no conflict between science and religion. It is fit to be recorded here that one of the greatest of earth's thinkers in science and philosophy has put aside the arbitrary dogmas of the century. The limitations on the mind answer those who array mere human knowledge against the hope and faith that struggle in all who have toiled and loved and lost all that made the world seem dear.

Knowledge is the result of man's mind applied to what we know or understand. Man's faculties are not illimitable. How few our senses. How full of error is human reason. How defective our perceptions. The dogmas of one generation are the jest of another. The labored systems and schools of today, tomorrow are delusions and follies. All who worship at the shrine of reason are but wan-

derers in a crumbling chaos. Why shall we compass the universe with our puny mental gifts! If we had fifty special senses instead of five our range of vision would be multiplied. If our minds were expanded many fold our knowledge would reach across a wider circle. It might gather other worlds in its sweep. But our minds are finite, and the works of God are infinite. Is it not demonstrated folly to set the measure of created things, of the future now unrevealed by the mere processes of human reason? The illimitable cannot be gauged by finite instruments.

Masonry is built on faith and hope, on justice and toleration, on charity and love and confidence in men, on a belief that man is not for this world alone but endures when mortality has again mingled with the dull clods of earth and that an all wise, all merciful God watches our steps in the pilgrimage of every human life. Ideals are permanent. It is not given to us to fully attain them. But they are a constant light, a torch transmitted from hand to hand. I sometimes like to think they are evidences of our immortality. They are akin to the soul which

*"Secure in her existence
Smiles at the drawn dagger
And defies its point.
The stars shall fade away,
The sun himself grow dim with age,
And nations sink in years, but thou
Shalt flourish in immortal youth unhurt
Amid the war of elements, the wreck
Of matter, and the crush of worlds."
The longer one lives the more one marvels at
the beautiful souls, some have in rough unpolished
bodies. It is this undefinable quality that
illuminates a homely face and makes us forget
the mask through which shines a great and
sometimes unseen soul."*

Nature seldom sets her rarest gems and precious metals amidst temperate elements or

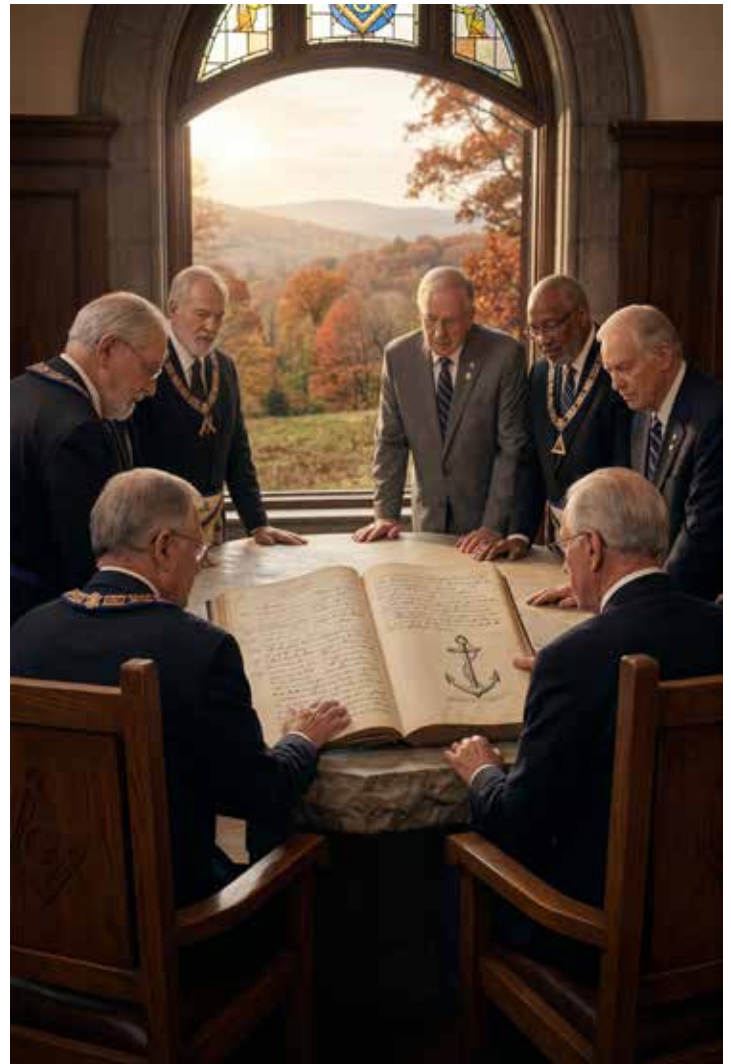
scenes of beauty. They are not found where the beaten path and every eye may discover. Nature has planted them under a blazing sun and the eternal snows. Dull earth and stubborn stone cover them. They must be pursued with pick and drill unseen by human eye until by faith and work they reach the outer world. The noble metals must be sought, the base is everywhere.

Human character is quarried from ourselves and separated from selfish dross by self denial and patience, by ideals and effort for better things. The human mind is an instrument to be reached and developed amidst difficulties. The harder the struggle, the greater the conquest.

All the university's culture never made a man. No one can make a boy rich by merely leaving him money; masonry is not a system that deifies success and condones every means of achieving it.

Masonic wealth consists in other things. It creates character and stability. It gives a righteous conservatism that holds fast to what is good. It separates the ephemeral from the enduring, the moral forces perpetual in our race from transient impulses, for all else. *"Like the baseless fabric of this vision, The cloud capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea all which it inherits, shall dissolve And like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind—we are such stuff As dreams are made of, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep."*

On motion of M.W. Bro. Owen Scott, the thanks of the Grand Lodge were extended to the Grand Orator, by a rising vote, for his profound, eloquent and scholarly oration, and it was ordered printed in the Proceedings.





Something is being assembled

For the Brother who keeps the records



Skullandcrownltd.com

More soon

Is a Masonic Tradition Necessary

by Bro. Fernando Rodrigues de Souza



Are we truly honoring Masonic tradition or simply engaging in the unthinking repetition of ritual? This provocative inquiry challenges the customs we take for granted, arguing that the future relevance of Freemasonry depends on its members becoming more contemplative and questioning Masons. Uncover the crucial distinction between mere habit and the Craft's genuine, enduring legacy.

Dealing with Masonic tradition is a complex subject that requires careful analysis in order to reach a balanced point on the best etymological definition and the set of discourses and practices, which often end up being presented as such, without, however, presenting bases that support them, often serving only as a discourse that restricts and controls the masses.

Is a Masonic Tradition Necessary?

Etymologically, the word tradition has its origin in the Latin “*tradere*”, which means to transmit, pass on to others, give to keep (Mateus, 2013, p. 28).

In practical terms, tradition is understood as a set of symbolic systems that are passed

from generation to generation and that have a repetitive character (Luvizotto, 2010, p. 65). In sociology, Edward Shils referred to tradition as a guiding pattern, a form of knowledge transmitted between generations, subject to some mutations. (Shils, 1981, p. 12) In the words of Giddens (1997, p. 81), tradition is linked to memory, specifically what Maurice Halbwachs calls “*collective memory*”; it involves ritual; it is linked to what we will call the formulaic notion of truth; it has “*guardians*”; and, contrary to custom, it has a force that combines moral and emotional content.

It should be noted that every tradition is essentially exclusive. Only the initiated, the admitted, that is, those who are part of the group, the we, can participate and share its truth, its ritual. (Luvizotto, 2010, p. 69). Marginalization, discrimination against those who are not initiated, therefore, the other (them), is fundamental to strengthen the status of the guardian, the one who holds the power to transmit the tradition and the ritual itself.

The other is outside, formulaic truth is con-

fiscated. (Silva, 2005 apud Luvizotto, 2010, p. 69).

Every social organization advocates for itself a tradition, which usually refers to a distant past, as for example in the various religious matrices and also in institutions such as Freemasonry.

It is not uncommon materials that point to the Masonic tradition as having its bases in remote times, as coming from the Egyptians, Greeks or Hebrews, and even mythological, as originating in the Garden of Eden.

The fact is that regardless of the argument, whether based on historical, mythological, occult or romantic accounts, tradition is an important instrument for Freemasonry, which justifies it up to the present time through this pillar, but also for Freemasons, who can use it to achieve various positive as well as negative purposes.

For the sociologist Weber (1994), one of the forms of domination in a society is based on tradition, the belief in the sanctity of orders and powers that have always existed, whose content cannot be changed, functioning as the element that unites the social orders. This form of action within Freemasonry, despite appearing timidly at specific times, is effective for those who have the discourse in their favor.

However, the use of tradition as a form of domination is an anti-Masonic practice, going against the ideal of evolution and intellectual improvement and the pillar of freedom, and also because it resembles practices of tyranny, censorship and restriction of freedom.

It is possible to observe a certain contradiction between those who embrace the argument of tradition, placing it whenever possible in a veiled way above the legislation, since this same tradition presents itself in many moments as problematic, especially in ritu-

alistic practices, almost always outdated and full of errors and execution defects.

Procedures for latecomers, the candidate's posture at the time of the oath, reception and constitution, circulation in lodge, pronunciation of the 'words' in the apprentice degree, are examples of issues overcome, many of which were resolved more than two hundred and fifty years ago, however, in the name of tradition which coincidentally is that of those who are alive and owners of such a discourse, or their peers, they insist on practicing it in the wrong way.

How can a recent tradition, which appears to be problematic, erroneous and sometimes authoritarian, which handles discourse, be treated as reliable?

Such 'intellectuals' could rely on an ancient historical tradition, basing themselves on ancient rituals, on 18th century expositions or on Old Charges, as these materials truly point us to the various Masonic traditions, rather than a recent, received, erroneously reproduced tradition by these 'intellectuals'. They could even rely on the observations of Hobsbawm and Ranger (1997), when they state that "every tradition is an invention that arose somewhere in the past, and can be changed somewhere in the future", but that would certainly be inferring too much liberalism or progressivism, a problem for such minds.

The argument from tradition can also go beyond the ritualistic aspect and reach the aspect of morality, even though this is subjective within the doctrinal scope of Freemasonry. It is absurd to make it necessary to remember that Freemasonry is not a religion.

In this context, censorship attempts may occur on the debate of certain subjects that do not please the group "holder" of the tradition, so that the tradition begins to assume greater authority than the laws and Masonic free-

dom.

This absurd practice is also presented as anti-Masonic, because within what the laws allow, there are no subjects that should be prohibited or censored by tradition, because, as mentioned, it is not above legislation. Due care must be taken so that this type of attitude does not work as an oppressive and controlling practice, restricting the intellectual freedom of each Freemason, regardless of degree.

In view of this, it is necessary to analyze more and more deeply and in detail what is presented as tradition, especially for the new Freemasons, in order to avoid the dissemination of disinformation ensured by a discourse of authority and supposed discipline, which is shown to be ineffective, out of alignment with the present and the presuppositions of the order, and which often reveals a discourse of censorship and restriction of freedom, central pillars in Freemasonry.

This reflection must be based on reason, through questioning, having as its sole purpose the search for truth, whether in the aspect of social relations or ritualistic.



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE: LISTEN TO IT:



EPISODE: 0069
LUCAS MINTON

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/MAPEPISODE0069](https://tinyurl.com/mapepisode0069)



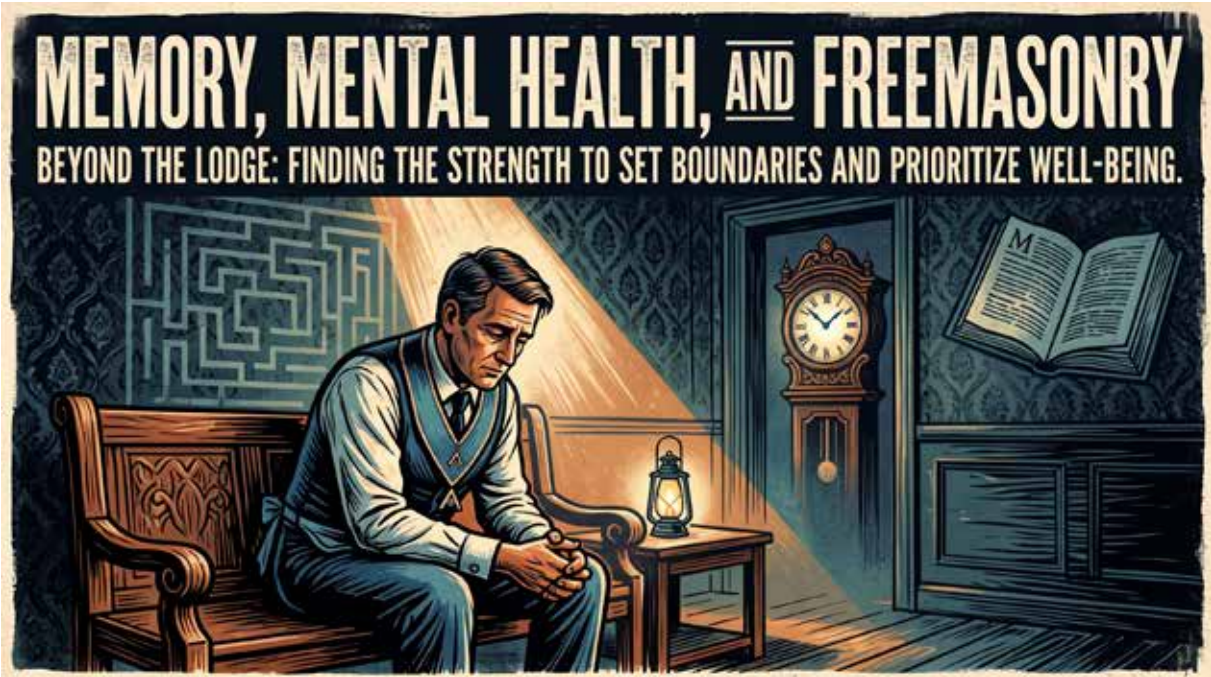
EPISODE: 0112
THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/TMRO112](https://tinyurl.com/tmro112)



EPISODE: 0513
HUMAN SURVIVAL: COLLECT-
ING TRAITS AND VIRTUES

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/WCY513](https://tinyurl.com/wcy513)



by WB.: Darin A. Lahners, FILOR

Grandmaster Ferrell saved my life. He doesn't know that he did, well, he does now. There was a recent Facebook post where he pointed out that we had lost a brother to suicide, reminding brethren to seek help by using the resources here: Suicide Prevention — Illinois Freemasonry. While many brothers may have just scrolled past it, I stopped and I read his post. I stopped because I identified with that dear departed brother. For as long as I can remember, I've dealt with depression.

Depression and other Mental Health issues are a silent killer, because there are no outward symptoms unlike other health issues. In fact, you can be sitting next to a lodge brother who outwardly appears normal; but is fighting a battle internally. Mental health issues have a stigma, and worse yet, men normally have a very difficult time discussing these issues with other men.

According to the CDC's suicide statistics, Suicide Data and Statistics | Suicide Prevention | CDC, which was recently updated with 2024 statistics, the suicide rate for men was four times higher than it was for women. People aged older than 80 had the highest suicide rate. Racially, Non-Hispanic Native Americans and Non-Hispanic Whites were the highest percentages of suicide per 100,000 people. In Illinois in 2024, there were 1,426 deaths by suicide or a rate of 10.8 per 100,000 people.

Sex	Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population
Males	22.23
Females	5.58

Age range	Crude rate per 100,000 population
85+	21.43
80-84	21.67
75-79	17.66
70-74	15.86
65-69	14.74
60-64	17.95
55-59	19.28
50-54	19.7
45-49	17.95
40-44	18.82
35-39	18.58
30-34	17.37
25-29	17.04
20-24	16.99
15-19	9.41

Race/ethnicity	Age-adjusted rate per 100,000 population
Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native	22.45
Non-Hispanic White	17.16
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	13.67
Non-Hispanic Multiracial	10.1
Non-Hispanic Black	8.66
Hispanic	7.96
Non-Hispanic Asian	6.43

In my case, I've been seeing a therapist to help me with my issues. I consider myself lucky because I am getting care, but it's still been a battle for me. One of the things I've recently been exploring in therapy is how I have a difficult time setting boundaries for myself and sticking to them. It is a recurring theme in my life. When I was a child, I didn't have a say. I developed a people-pleasing personality because I didn't think I had any other option. It took therapy to help me discover that I was choosing not to use my voice because I didn't want to let others down. So, I am constantly sacrificing my own happiness and well-being for others and suffering personally for it due to the anxiety and depression that comes along with that sacrifice.

You see, like so many other active Freemasons, I am a member of multiple lodges and appendant bodies. Because I can't say no, I became secretary in both my lodges, and one of the appendant bodies. Freemasonry became another job for me, one that was adding anxiety to my

life, which was in turn manifesting as depression. Instead of the joy and happiness I once felt about going to lodge, degrees and Masonic events, I began to feel the opposite. I felt a crippling sense of dread. The worst part? I didn't feel like I could talk about it with my brethren, so I didn't. Even my good friend and mentor had no idea what I was dealing with. Many of them will read about it here for the first time.

So, how did Grandmaster Ferrell help me? His post made me realize that my personal mental health and well-being is something that I need to prioritize. He reminded me that I was important, and that my life was important. So, I recently made the very difficult decision to step away from being active in most of the lodges and appendant bodies I belong to in Freemasonry. While I feel terrible, because I feel that I have let down my brethren in those lodges and bodies where I was active; I know that I'd let them down even more by continuing to pretend everything is okay when it is not and ending up in a casket.

I realized that I needed to focus on healing myself, work on setting boundaries and holding them, and rediscovering those things in Freemasonry that used to bring me joy, which are Masonic writing and research. If I get back to a place where I feel I can become active again, I will, but only after I'm satisfied that I am well enough mentally to do so. Part of the process going forward is to have my own personal mission statement, of what I want out of Freemasonry, and aligning my Masonic experiences with those. I've developed a mantra to help with the guilt I'm feeling over feeling like I've let my brethren down, I remind myself that *"It's okay to take care of yourself."*

Listen, if this article resonates with you, and you're feeling similar or you just need an empathetic ear; I am here. You can message me on social media or email me at: darin.lahners@gmail.com. I can promise no judgment, just advice. Don't suffer alone. Use the resources linked above or email me directly. Get help, and don't be afraid, you're not the only one dealing with this. Trust me, if I can address my struggles with brethren across the state, then you can address them with someone.



Suicide Prevention & Mental Health

Supporting Our Brothers with Love, Information And Resources

As Freemasons, we promise to support one another in times of need whether that be physical, mental or emotional. In that spirit, we know that it can be a challenge for males to effectively address issues impacting the mental and emotional parts of their lives. Leveraging the strength of our ancient and honorable Fraternity, we rise to this challenge and provide this page to share credible information and discrete access to resources for any Brother or Lodge to use.

ILLINOIS FREEMASONRY

Suicide Prevention — My Brother, Your Life Matters To Us!

**DIAL
988**

THE LIVING CHAIN

Memory, Tradition, and the Masonic Labor of Continuity

by Brother Kaleem Kamboj, 32°



Freemasonry exists in continuity.

A Lodge does not begin anew each time the Worshipful Master sounds the gavel. It is opened, but it is not created. The Brethren assemble in a room prepared by hands that came before theirs. They speak words they did not invent. They handle symbols already ancient when first they encountered them. They stand in stations occupied by men whose names may be recorded in minutes, engraved upon plaques, preserved in memory, or forgotten altogether. And yet, even where the names are lost, the work goes on. This is the living chain of the Craft: not a row of monuments, but a labor passed from hand to hand. This is the mystery of tradition. It is not age, but transmission. The handing of light from one generation to the next, not that the receiving generation should become a museum, but that it should become a steward.

Our July theme, Memory and Tradition, asks two quiet but searching questions. What is Freemasonry without memory? And what does tradition become when it is misunderstood? Memory shapes identity; tradition preserves wisdom. But each demands discipline. Memory may curdle into nostalgia. Tradition may harden into rigidity. Progress, untethered, may dissolve into amnesia. The Mason is charged to escape all three.

As the United States marks the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its independence on the Fourth of July, 2026, the question grows pointed. A nation, like a Lodge, lives by memory. It remembers declarations and sacrifices, failures and promises, amendments and battles, reconciliations and hopes. But it must not remember falsely, nor treat its inheritance as a chain that forbids all motion. The best traditions do not imprison progress; they give progress a moral form.

The Working of Memory

Freemasonry has something particular to offer this anniversary, for the Craft has long understood that memory is not passive. Memory must be worked. Tradition must be interpreted. Symbols must be studied. Ritual must be received, not merely repeated.

Albert G. Mackey, in *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*, makes the point with rare clarity. Freemasonry, he insists, teaches through legend and symbol, and these are not to be prized as antiquarian curiosities. *The object of the Masonic legends*, he writes, "is not to establish historical facts, but to convey philosophical doctrines." A symbol, likewise, is the visible expression of an inward idea. The plumb matters not merely as the builder's tool, but as the teacher of rectitude. The ladder is no mere architectural device, but a figure of ascent. The Temple is not stone only, but the image of an ordered life.

Here is the distinction the July theme requires. Freemasonry does not preserve tradition so that the past may lie untouched beneath glass. It preserves tradition because the past holds forms through which truth can still speak.

A Lodge without memory would be only a meeting. A ritual without meaning would be only recitation. A symbol without interpretation would be only ornament. And a tradition without moral labor becomes precisely what Mackey warns against — an empty show, an array of signs and phrases drained of inward life.

Memory is not the storing of dead things. It is the recovery of living meaning.

The Masonic method depends upon this recovery. Each Brother receives words and images older than his own understanding. At

first he merely remembers them. Later, if he is diligent, he begins to understand them. Later still, if he is faithful, he begins to live them. This is how tradition becomes identity: not imposed from without, but slowly internalized. The Mason joins the tradition by allowing the tradition to work upon him.

The Ladder, and the Ascent by Degree

John Sherer's *The Masonic Ladder* offers another way of seeing this. The ladder is a fitting emblem for memory and tradition, for it suggests ordered ascent. No man leaps from darkness into wisdom. He climbs. He receives one lesson, then another. He learns by degree, not by sudden possession.

Sherer wrote to help the Brethren distinguish the teachings, covenants, and aims of the several degrees, for he had observed a particular failure of memory: *the more striking parts of the ceremony are remembered, while the instructions, which give the rational explanations of the emblems, are forgotten*. The observation has not aged. Masons may remember the drama and forget the doctrine; remember the form and forget the ascent. The ladder teaches otherwise. Every time a Brother returns to a familiar symbol and sees more in it than he saw before, he has climbed one rung higher. Tradition is not a heap of inherited fragments. It is a way upward.

"*Masonic education*," rightly understood, must therefore mean more than lectures upon the past. It means the disciplined recovery of meaning from what has been handed down. It teaches the Brother to ask: *What did I receive? What does it mean? How did earlier Brethren understand it? How must I live it now?* Memory gives him identity. Tradition gives him direction. Education gives him the power to distinguish the two and to use both rightly.

But tradition asks humility as well. We are not the first to climb. The steps were worn smooth before us.

A Memory-Stone of Illinois: Western Star Lodge

Nowhere is this more visible than in the history of the Craft in Illinois. Freemasonry here did not begin in a polished temple or a settled metropolis. Its earliest chapters belong to frontier towns and river crossings, to uncertain jurisdictions and fragile Lodges, to political pressure and to Brethren who labored under conditions far harder than our own.

The story of Western Star Lodge at Kaskaskia is among the great memory-stones of Illinois Masonry. Seven Freemasons in the town of Kaskaskia, then within the Indiana Territory, petitioned the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in 1805; under that authority the Lodge was constituted as Western Star Lodge, No. 107, the first in what is now Illinois. For a decade it stood as the only Lodge in the territory, and yet from that single light there came the first Governor of Illinois, its first Grand Master, a United States Senator, and a host of men who would shape the public life of a young state.

Consider the very building in which it met: a structure that served, by turns, the purposes of town and territory, legislature and court. In early Illinois, Lodge and law, settlement and public service and fraternity, were not sealed away from one another. They stood near the same river, under the same pressures, within the same fragile experiment of ordered community. Shadrach Bond, first Governor of the State and first Grand Master of its early Grand Lodge, presided as Master of Western Star in 1815 and again in 1818, the year of statehood.

Western Star was never merely an institution.

It was a bearer of memory before Illinois had fully formed a Masonic identity of its own. It helped foster other Lodges across the Mississippi Valley. It kept the festival of the Holy Saints John with procession and oration; it buried its dead with the honors of the Craft; it answered the call of the widow and cared for the destitute. In time its building was lost to the floods that at last erased Kaskaskia itself; even the site grew uncertain. Yet the work of the Lodge did not vanish with the walls.

John Corson Smith, who gathered the early minutes into his History of Freemasonry in Illinois, gives us a phrase worth keeping. Western Star Lodge, No. 107, at Kaskaskia, he names the Alpha of Freemasonry in this domain; and to Strangers Union Lodge, No. 14, on the Fever River at Galena, fell the office of the Omega, the last of the early Lodges to go down. Between that first light in the south and that last light in the north lies the whole early labor of the Craft in Illinois: a beginning, an ending, and — as we shall see — a beginning again. To study such history is not merely to know where Illinois Masonry began, but to recover the obligations that made its beginning worth preserving.

That is tradition.

Tradition does not always survive as architecture. Sometimes it survives as habit, memory, example, and obligation. The building may fall. The minutes may fade. The names may be known only to the historian. But while the Brethren still gather and labor, still remember the widow, still honor the dead, still form character and serve the community, the chain remains unbroken.

Darkness, and the Discipline of Revival

Illinois Masonry teaches a harder lesson as well: that continuity is not the same as uninterrupted ease. The first Grand Lodge of

Illinois was organized at Vandalia in December of 1822, in the very seat of government, gathering delegates from several Lodges and electing Shadrach Bond as Grand Master. Yet scarcely had the Alpha finished sounding its note before the tune itself seemed in danger of being lost. This early Grand Lodge did not endure. It faded under the pressures of the age, not least the Anti-Masonic agitation that swept the country after 1826, and ceased its labors in 1827. Western Star itself dwindled, some communications attended by only a faithful few, and at length it closed.

There is instruction here for our theme. Memory is not merely the chronicle of triumph. It is also the record of disappearance, of weakness, and of revival.

For a season Illinois entered what Smith himself called a period of Masonic darkness. Lodges closed. Charters were surrendered. Organized Masonry receded from public view. Standing among those last records — the closing of Western Star and of Strangers Union — Smith writes as one left, in his own words, *as if at the grave of Masonry*, with no duty remaining but to lay upon its memory the sprig of acacia, the Craft's emblem of immortality. Yet he does not end at the grave. The darkness, he says, was *like the restful period of winter to nature*. And then, in a line the July Mason may well take to heart: *Springtime came*. Freemasonry awakened, rekindled her altar fires, and resumed her labor.

The Brethren who kept faith through that winter did not vanish with the institutions. They waited. They remembered. They carried the identity in trust until conditions should permit the work to rise again. By the mid-1830s the light returned, and in 1840 a new and enduring Grand Lodge was raised — the body under which Illinois Masons labor to this day. This was the living chain holding fast at its thinnest point: a few faithful links bearing the whole weight until the rest could

be forged anew. When we open Lodge today in Chicago, in Springfield, or in some small river town, we stand upon work begun by men who met in rooms that have long since vanished into river and floodplain.

This should correct a shallow notion of progress. We are prone to imagine progress as a straight road forward. Masonic history teaches that progress is often recovery — that the work may advance precisely by remembering what was almost lost, and that the future may rest upon a few Brethren who keep faith through the dark.

The living chain is not bright at every link. But it remains a chain.

The Founding as Entrusted Work

The same is true of the Republic. As the nation nears its two hundred and fiftieth year, there will be a temptation to tell only a burnished story — and, from the opposite quarter, a temptation to tell only a tale of failure. Freemasonry should resist both. The Craft knows that identity is formed by honest memory: reverent enough to preserve, humble enough to correct, and courageous enough to continue.

The founding of the United States belongs to our civic tradition, but it is not a finished ashlar. It holds noble declarations and grave contradictions, sacrifice and exclusion, wisdom and blindness, courage and compromise, and to remember it Masonically is neither to make of it an idol nor to discard it for its imperfections. It is entrusted work. Like a young vine, it was set against principles older than itself and left to the generations that would tend it.

Tradition preserves wisdom without imprisoning progress when it does three things. *First*, it preserves principles rather than mere preferences. The old forms matter, but they

matter because they bear inward meaning. Preserve only the outer garment, and tradition becomes costume; discard the garment without understanding the body it clothed, and progress becomes naked impulse. *Second*, tradition invites interpretation rather than rote repetition. Symbols must be read, legends understood, ritual contemplated. The Brother who only repeats the words may keep the sound and lose the wisdom; the Brother who studies them becomes part of the living tradition, receiving, interpreting, and transmitting in turn. *Third*, tradition binds memory to obligation. We remember our predecessors not merely to admire them, but to continue their labor.

Sherer's account of the Five Points of Fellowship is apt here, for it shows that Masonic memory is embodied in duty. The old teaching holds that a Master Mason should not withdraw his hand from a sinking Brother; that his step should not falter in the path of duty; that his prayers should rise for the distressed; that his breast should conceal a Brother's faults; and that approaching evil should be turned aside by friendly admonition. These are not museum pieces. They are living obligations, and a Brother remembers them chiefly by doing them.

*Memory without obligation becomes sentiment.
Tradition without obligation becomes pageantry.*

In this sense memory is not only mental, but moral. A Lodge remembers its dead when it continues their virtues. A jurisdiction remembers its founders when it continues their labor. A nation remembers its founding when it continues toward justice under law. And a Brother remembers his obligation when his conduct bears its impress.

The Search for Depth

Frank C. Higgins, in [The Beginning of Masonry](#), represents yet another dimension of tradition: the desire to trace Masonic symbols into ancient patterns of cosmic, philosophical,

and religious meaning. Some of his historical claims the modern scholar will read with caution; his instinct, nonetheless, is instructive. Contemporary Masonic historians have rightly warned against overconfident origin-hunting and the speculation that crowds this field; yet the sounder intuition beneath Higgins's excess remains useful: symbolism gestures beyond immediate utility. He saw that Masonic symbols do not belong to a shallow world — that the Craft points the mind toward correspondence, order, number, light, direction, and ascent. We need not accept every proposed lineage to honor the impulse to search for depth.

That, too, is part of tradition. Every generation asks where the symbols came from; every generation must also ask what the symbols now ask of it. The first question without the second decays into antiquarianism. The second without the first dissolves into improvisation. Masonic education holds them together.

Gould's great history of the Craft throughout the world reminds us, finally, that Freemasonry has always lived in particular places while belonging to something larger than any place. The story of the Craft in America, and in Illinois, is at once local and universal. Western Star Lodge belongs to Kaskaskia, and to the wider history of a fraternity carried across oceans, frontiers, languages, and jurisdictions. The Lodge room is always somewhere; the tradition is always more than that somewhere.

The Trellis and the Vine

This is why July is a fitting month for such reflection. The Fourth commemorates national independence; Freemasonry teaches interdependence. No man is self-made. No Lodge is self-created. No nation is self-sustaining without memory. Each depends upon those who came before, those who labor now, and those who will receive the work after us.

The peril of our age is not only that we forget

the past, but that we forget how to remember. We gather information and lose inheritance. We keep anniversaries and neglect obligations. We fill shelves with archives and fail to form character. We speak of progress and detach it from wisdom. The result is not freedom. It is drift.

Freemasonry offers an antidote. It gives the Brother a ritual memory deeper than his moods, symbols that resist the fashions of the day, and a place in a chain of men who were themselves imperfect yet bound by a discipline of improvement. It tells him that he is not alone, not wholly original, not free to invent a morality from nothing, and not condemned to repeat the errors of the past, if only he will learn from them.

Tradition, rightly understood, is not the enemy of progress. It is the trellis on which progress climbs.

A vine without a trellis may yet live, but it sprawls. A society without tradition may yet be busy, but it loses form. A Lodge without memory may yet meet, but it forgets why. Tradition gives shape; progress gives motion; wisdom requires both. The founders of our civic life understood something of this tension. They appealed to ancient right and classical example, to biblical language and English law, to Enlightenment principle and colonial experience. They did not create from nothing. They received, argued, amended, adapted, and declared. The American experiment was itself an act of tradition and progress together — the claim that inherited principles might be brought into a new political form.

A Summons, Not a Coronation

The anniversary of 2026, then, ought not to be approached as the final coronation of national memory. It ought to be approached as a summons. What have we received? What have we forgotten? What must be preserved? What

must be corrected? What wisdom has tradition carried to us, and what progress does that wisdom now require?

For Illinois Masons these questions are not abstract. We inherit Western Star Lodge and the early Grand Lodge at Vandalia. We inherit seasons of light and darkness, formation and interruption, disappearance and revival. We inherit the memory of Brethren who met in frontier conditions and still believed the work mattered, and the example of men who served both Lodge and commonwealth, sometimes in the very rooms where public life was being organized. We inherit not perfection, but continuity. And in this two hundred and fiftieth year, that inheritance asks something of us.

It asks that we study, and not merely attend. That we interpret, and not merely repeat. That we preserve what is essential and let what is accidental serve rather than rule. That we remember our Brethren not only by naming them, but by continuing their duties. It asks that we keep the nation's two hundred and fiftieth year not by polishing the past until it grows unreal, but by receiving the past as a charge.

The Lodge is a house of memory. But it is not a tomb.

When we open the Lodge, we enter a tradition older than ourselves. When we close it, we return to the world bearing responsibility for what we have received. The words remain in the room, but the work departs with us. If memory does not become conduct, it has not yet become Masonic.

The living chain depends upon each link, and not every link is bright; some are worn smooth, some almost unseen. A few are famous — Washington, Franklin, Bond, and the public men whose names fill the histories. Most are obscure — the secretaries who kept the minutes, the Tylers who guarded the door,

the widows remembered in charity, the men who held office for a season because no other was present, whose names are no longer spoken but whose fidelity preserved the very possibility of our assembly. A tradition lives because of both.

In the end, Freemasonry teaches that memory is not backward-looking alone. It is forward-bearing. We remember so that we may transmit; we transmit so that those who follow may receive more than fragments. The Brother who understands tradition does not ask, *How may I escape the past?* Nor does he ask, *How may I freeze the past forever?* He asks, *What light has been entrusted to me, and how shall I carry it?* That is the proper question for July.

On the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States, and within the continuing labor of Illinois Masonry, we may say it plainly: the work is old, but it is not over. The symbols are ancient, but they are not exhausted. The memories are venerable, but they are not dead. The tradition is binding, but not imprisoning. It binds us so that we may build.

Freemasonry exists in continuity.

The gavel falls today because it fell before. The Lodge opens today because Brethren preserved the right to open it. The light is sought today because it was transmitted yesterday. The duty remains today because memory has carried it across the years.

And if we are faithful, the living chain will not end with us.

REFERENCES

Gould, Robert Freke. *Gould's History of Freemasonry Throughout the World. Vol. V. Revised by Dudley Wright.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

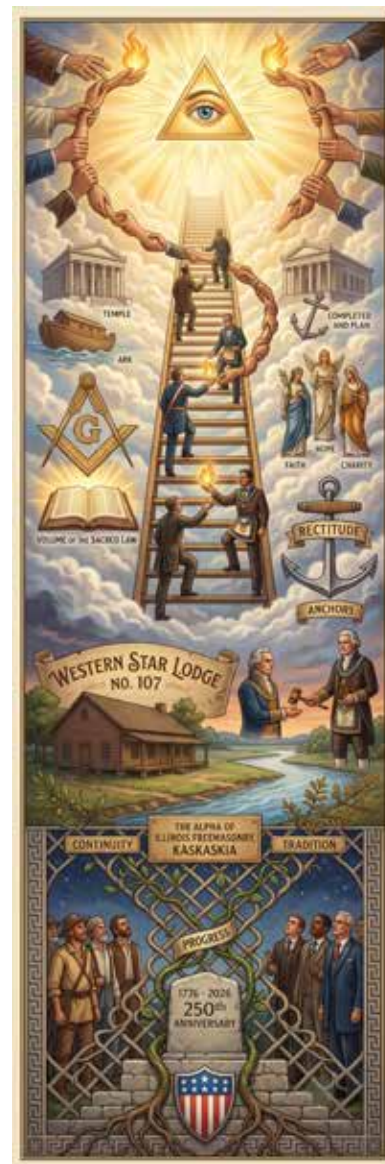
Higgins, Frank C. *The Beginning of Masonry.*

New York: National Masonic Research Society, early twentieth century.

Mackey, Albert G. *The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining Its Science and Philosophy, Its Legends, Myths and Symbols.* 1882 edition; originally entered 1869.

Sherer, John. *The Masonic Ladder; or, The Nine Steps to Ancient Freemasonry.* Cincinnati: R. W. Carroll & Co., 1876.

Smith, John Corson. *History of Freemasonry in Illinois, 1804-1829.* Chicago: Rogers & Smith Co., 1903.



Kansas MASONIC CON 2026

Masonic Con Kansas 2026 Education, Fellowship, and Preservation

Masonic Con Kansas returns in 2026, continuing its tradition as a welcoming gathering for Masons, families, and friends from across Kansas and beyond. Held annually in the Kansas City Metro, this full day event is built around meaningful Masonic education, genuine fellowship, and a shared commitment to preserving the legacy of Freemasonry in Kansas.

As a registered nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status, Masonic Con Kansas remains focused on its mission to preserve, repair, and promote public facing Masonic history throughout the state. Each year's event directly supports this work, aligning with the Grand Lodge of Kansas vision of delivering an excellent Masonic experience, offering impactful education, and strengthening our communities.

Attendees can expect engaging speakers, thoughtful presentations, and time to reconnect with the broader Masonic family. Admission to the main event remains free and open to all. The only ticketed portion of the weekend is the Festive Board, an evening dedicated to fellowship and dining. Donations are encouraged and directly support our nonprofit preservation efforts.

Whether you are a long standing Mason, a first time attendee, or someone interested in the history and influence of Freemasonry in Kansas, Masonic Con Kansas 2026 invites you to take part in a growing legacy centered on education, connection, and preservation.



MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Daren Kellerman

Kansas

✓ Saturday, July 18th 2026

✓ Festive Board July 17th

📍 6161 Slater St.
Mission, KS 66202

GET YOUR TICKETS



Register for FREE now at :

MasonicConKansas.com

THE SPEAKER LINEUP



SPEAKER 1

Robert Johnson

Illinois



SPEAKER 2

Earl Genter

Kansas



SPEAKER 3

Jeremy Barnes

Washington, D.C.



SPEAKER 4

Gregory Bodine

Alabama



SPEAKER 5

Mark Reeder

Kansas



SPEAKER 6

Robert McClarty

Kansas





As we reflect this month on the delicate balance between memory and tradition, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that preserving our heritage means resisting the tools of the modern era. But true progressive Freemasonry has always been a forward-looking science. Tradition provides us with our unalterable core identity, but it was never meant to act as a structural anchor that stops us from navigating the currents of our time.

To illustrate this harmony in action, we look to a recent international report from the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) highlighting the Southern District of South America. Operating across vast distances and multiple borders, this District serves as a brilliant contemporary blueprint for the Craft. By actively implementing modern leadership development and cutting-edge digital integration, they prove that modernizing our communication and management tool sets doesn't diminish our ancient heritage—it amplifies it.

The following selection from their executive update illustrates exactly how innovation, when properly rooted in tradition, ensures the fraternity remains a vibrant, active force for the 21st century:

Leadership and Training: Innovation Rooted in Tradition

"These initiatives focus on contemporary lead-

ership techniques and their application in navigating the challenges of the 21st century. This revitalized approach has empowered members to serve as leaders within the fraternity and in the broader society, reflecting the enduring values of Freemasonry." ~UGLE

Connectivity and Modernization: A District Embracing the Future

"The leadership team's commitment to innovation has driven significant modernization efforts within the Southern District. By integrating technology to facilitate remote participation and enhance cohesion across lodges in multiple countries, the District has fostered a greater sense of unity and accessibility." ~UGLE

A Lasting Legacy of Service and Impact

"Their focus on leadership development and community service has positioned the Southern District as a beacon of positive influence throughout South America. Their efforts illustrate that respect for Masonic tradition can be beautifully harmonized with the adaptability required to meet modern challenges, ensuring that Freemasonry remains a vibrant and active force."



The Leo Toolbox



Practical Steps for Transforming Simple Ritual Memorization into Actionable Philosophical Growth

One of the questions Masonic educators get asked most often is how to successfully bridge the gap between rote memorization and true philosophical insight. Too many times, our lodges function as spaces where we demand perfect execution of text without teaching brothers what the words actually mean. Ritual for the sake of mere tradition can become hollow; ritual practiced for the sake of internal enlightenment is where true self-improvement is accomplished.

To assist our Lodge Education Officers in lifting the veil of allegory, here are three actionable tools to bring into your next stated meeting:

*Tool 1: Implementing Cognitive Scaffolding in Practice

Rather than forcing a new officer or candidate

to swallow a massive block of monitorial text in absolute isolation, change the structure of your rehearsals. Scaffolding is an educational theory where the mentor functions as a facilitator rather than a rigid lecturer.

- **Break Into Cast Teams:** Split your practice into small, focused groups off to the side of the lodge room.
- **Learn the Flow, Not Just the Cue:** Have brothers rotate roles during rehearsals. Understanding the overall choreography and spatial context of the degree allows the subconscious mind to automatically absorb the material, moving the lesson from basic brain memory into true muscle memory.

*Tool 2: The "Reverse-Lecture" Discussion

Many times, we think of Masonic education as simply reading a paper on a famous historical Mason or reciting local lodge trivia. To move beyond this:

- **Isolate a Single Working Tool:** Pick one emblem from the ritual (e.g., the common gavel or the plumb) and ask your officers to recite its monitorial description from memory.
- **Challenge Preconceived Ideologies:** Once the text is recited, immediately open the floor to a roundtable discussion centered on daily conduct. Ask: "How did you specifically apply the dictate of this tool to a difficult professional or personal situation this past week?" Discussing the ritual in terms of real-world philosophy and personal accountability is what truly transforms men into Masons.

***Tool 3: Transitioning from Performance to Mastery**

There is a massive difference in confidence and presentation between a brother who is nervously reciting a string of hidden words and a brother who has mastered his role.

- **Slow the Tempo Down:** Remind your ritualists that reciting a text incredibly fast doesn't mean they know it better; it often means they are panicking.
- **Recite with Meaningful Intent:** Instruct your officers to deliver their parts at a tempo that assumes the candidate has never heard the English language before. When a brother is forced to deliberately inflect his voice to teach the candidate, he is inadvertently forced to think analytically about the meaning of the principles he is communicating.

LEO Minute: Words to Remember

"Many times, we think of Masonic education as being a lesson on the local lodge's history... But if no philosophy is covered in Masonic education, then little self-improvement is accomplished. Discussing Masonic lessons in terms of philosophy, ideas, and a man's conduct is what truly transforms men into Masons."

Live Weblink for Layout Credits: Officers looking to

diverge deeper into the educational models behind these techniques can explore the full frameworks online here:

- [Craftsmen Online - The Great Secret of Masonic Education](#)
- [My Freemasonry Archive - The Seven Blunders of the Masonic World](#)



Masonic Conferences

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education – April 24-26 - 2026, Omaha, NE



Kansas Masonic Con - July 17th and 18th, 2026 Mission, KS at Rosedale Lodge No. 333



Masonic Camp - August 28-30, 2026 Erhard MN Moccasin Valley Camp



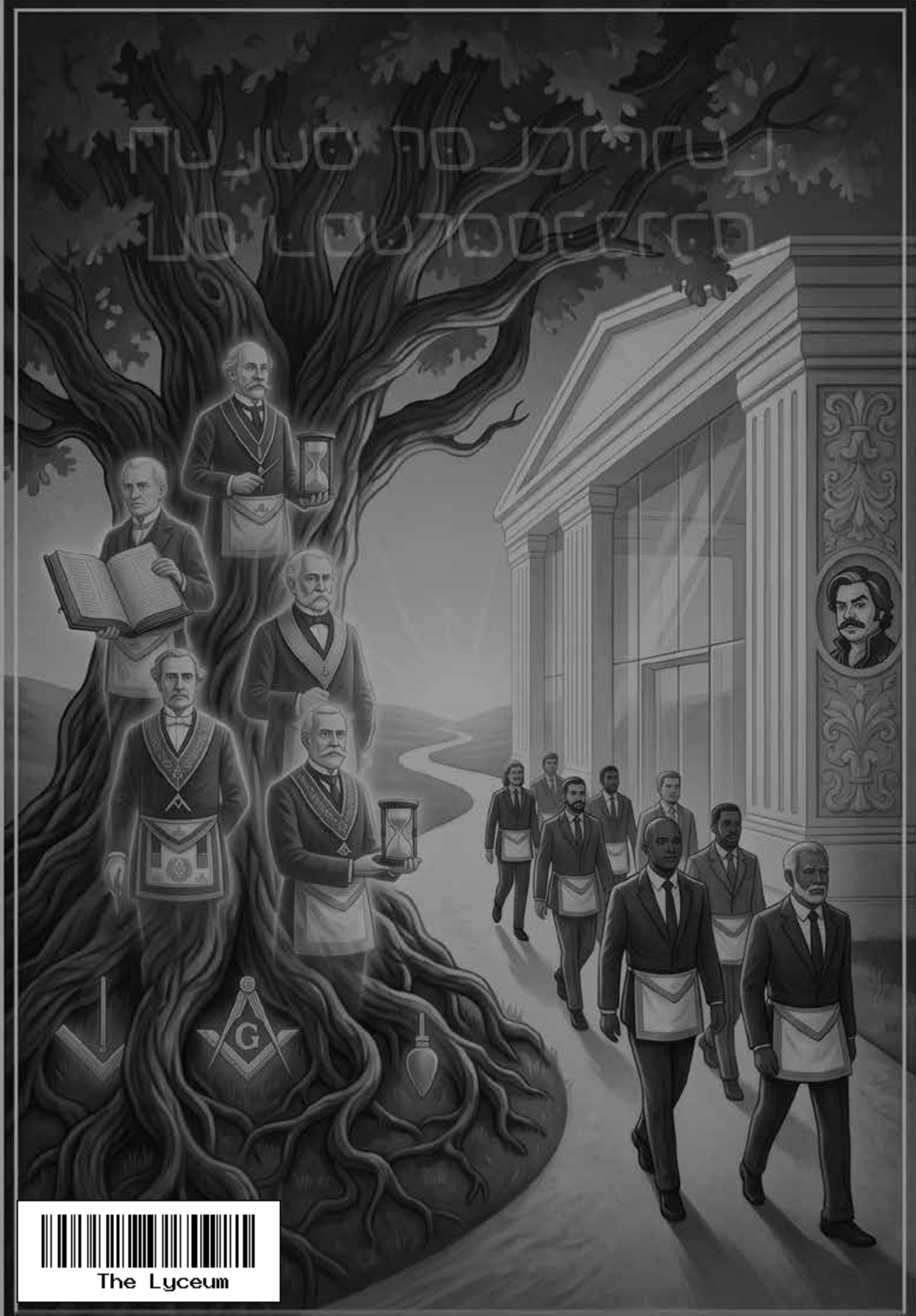
Yes! **Masonic Con Chicago** will be back in Spring 2027.

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

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



נתיבות סוד וסגולה מסע אל האמת



The Lyceum