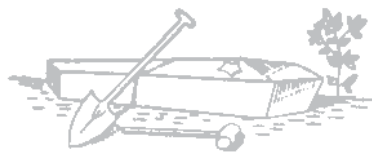
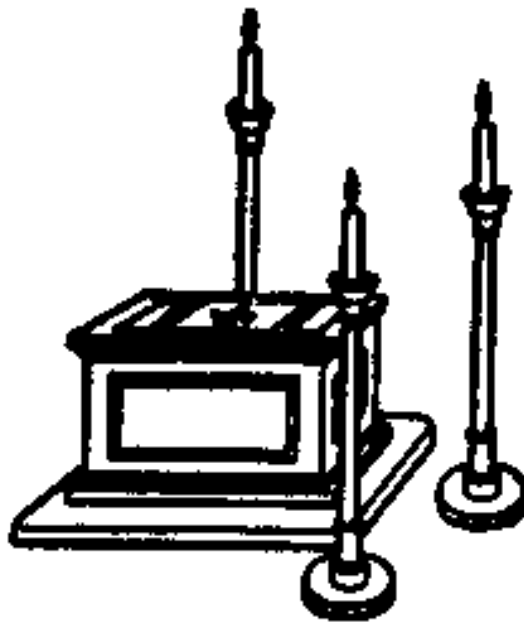


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# The Lyceum

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A publication of the Illinois  
Committee on Masonic Education

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# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Brothers all,

I'm pleased to bring you another Education-packed issue of The Lyceum! In this issue you'll find articles and discussion points that will edify your minds. It being May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month, can be a special time for Freemasons to be extra mindful. In our devotions, our fellowship and certainly in our actions toward our fellow creatures--we can truly be there for one another.

Our featured article is a recent writing by our own Eastern Area Education Officer, WB:. Darin A. Lahners. In it, he discusses the pitfalls of losing ourselves to our electronic devices. There's more to it than brain chemistry--there's real addiction. To follow up this article, it was important to feature a short article recently published via First Rising, the official publication of the United Grand Lodge of England. In this short piece, they focus on the UK Freemasons efforts to relieve those who need mental health support. We've included information at the end of this article about our very own, Masonic Family Health Foundation.

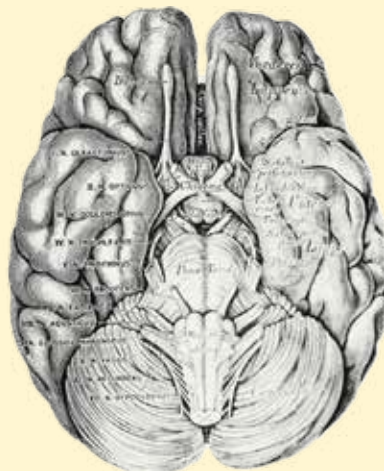
We've also got a great articles from Brother Justus Fischer and RW:. Brother Chad Lacek. In a afirst publishing ever, an Ohio-based RW:. Brother brings a personal and touching piece on the Acacia--I challenge you not to get hit, right in the feels. Aside from all this, there's information on our charities, district education talking points and locations and dates of the next big Masonic Educational Conferences! We tie abow on it with another great book review in WB:. Kevin Wheeler's "Readers Corner.

I hope you're all well and in good spirits. I'll leave you all to it--on to the Chairman's letter...

Yours in Brotherhood,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. H. Johnson".

R. H. Johnson



# From the Chairman

WB Michael Overturf, Chairman of the Masonic Education Committee

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As we enter the month of May, my Brother, the April showers have done their job. The Farmers are planting, flowers are being produced, and the renewal begins. With Graduation in full bloom, everyone is busy with yard work, cookouts, and such; I hope this message finds you healthy and well. On our Education front, I wanted to thank those who took the time and completed our Education Survey. Your responses have helped us develop our long-term education plan—receiving 1,000 responses.

As with everything, times change, and our learning methods also vary. It used to be that if you were low on bread, you would go to the library to find the resources you needed to learn how to bake more. You either checked out the book or made photocopies of the information you needed, and today we google, YouTube, and download PDFs. Times have sure changed.

With our survey results in hand, I was extremely pleased to see that 80% of the respondents wanted to build off the existing intender program and that 52% percent were interested in learning more about the deeper meanings behind our symbols and rituals—jurisdiction-wide. Keep an eye out when we start putting this info to use. Most likely in a zoom style format and even symposiums. We've already built out a "Member's Only" section on the Grand Lodge Website under Masonic Education, which is password protected and will house unique educational resources for our members. Other videos, like our Zoom Edu sessions, are also hosted on the Education portion of the Grand Lodge Site as well.

Fraternally,  
WB Michael Overturf

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Overturf". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Chairman of the Committee on Masonic Education





## MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM



The participation of each Lodge when identifying and providing assistance to members in need is an integral part of the Illinois Masonic Outreach Services (IMOS) program. Under certain circumstances, assistance is available to assist a Lodge with these endeavors.

The IMOS program offers one dollar of matching funds for every one dollar of **cash** contributed up to \$2,000.00. The contribution will need to be utilized to provide necessary

assistance to support an Illinois Mason / Spouse in good standing or a Widow of an Illinois Mason who was in good standing at the time of his death.

Visit the website below to download the application form today!

FIND OUT MORE!

[HTTPS://ILMASONICOUTREACH.ORG/MATCHING-GRANT-PROGRAM](https://ilmasonico Outreach.org/matching-grant-program)



# Put Down Your Phone (And Live Happily Ever After)

by WB: *Darin A. Lahners*

May is Mental Health Awareness month. In my mind, one of the major causes of mental health issues is our dependence on technology, especially social media. I'm not pointing fingers at anyone here, and I'm as guilty as everyone else when it comes to social media use. However, I wanted to begin with a story about being tethered to a phone.

I used to have a job that I was on call for all of the time. It didn't matter what time of the day the phone rang or when a text came in to join another conference call, and the expectation was that I was on the call. I missed a lot of my kids growing up because of this. The job took a lot of time that I should have been spending with them from me. I wasted too many years of my life on a job that was toxic because I didn't know any better or I was afraid of losing income. When I left that job and got another at in a healthy non-toxic environment, my life changed for the better. I regained a lot of time that I was then able to reinvest into repairing my relationship with my children and Freemasonry.

I went to a baseball game last weekend, and it amazed me to look around to see so many people on their phones. Now given the result of the game not being in favor of the home team, that might be the cause of it, but I challenge you to look around at any sporting event, concert, or another public gathering and count the number of people on their phone, either to record the event or just to distract themselves. Given the amount of money that tickets to either a baseball game or concert cost, don't you think that you should be putting the phone down and just enjoying the moment that you paid so much money for? Don't even get me started about Lodge. As I said, I can't say that I'm innocent of either. I have posts of videos taken at concerts on social media, and I have taken my phone out at Lodge during a stated meeting to check my email, texts, or social media. So much for leaving the profane world behind.

PUT your PHONE DOWN and...  
#POSITIVELYPRESENT



When I started to personally examine these behaviors, I realized something that was so hard to do at that moment. What I realize is that if I don't record the concert, somebody else is probably going to and put it on YouTube and that I should just enjoy the concert with the person or people that I'm with; because those are the moments that you can't get back. The same with the email or social media during the lodge meeting. The email, texts, and social media posts are going to be there after the meeting. But like I said, it's difficult to realize that at that moment. You probably have that feeling of ennui sneak in, and you want so desperately to look at your phone even though you're really not bored. I'm having it right now, my brain is telling me to look at my phone, to check social media, and there's a conscious feeling of discomfort in my frontal lobe because I'm not doing it. It is akin to the feeling I used to get when I quit smoking cigarettes when I really wanted a cigarette, and I had to power through that moment and resist the temptation.

While the American Psychiatric Association does not officially recognize the condition of phone addiction, I can tell you as an ex-smoker that I personally know what the symptoms of withdrawal are from something that you are addicted to and that I have seen the symptoms in myself and others around me when they are unable to use their phones. Am I saying that I'm addicted to my phone? No, but I am saying that I see signs that I am probably using it too much. So in order to give it a name for the purposes of the article, I am going to call it addiction.

According to the addiction center (<https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/phone-addiction/>) phone addiction may lead to the below (which is taken verbatim from the above site and placed in italics to denote this).

*Sleep deficit*  
*Lower concentration*  
*Creativity blocks*  
*Aggravated ADD*  
*Anxiety*  
*Reduced cognition*  
*Stress*  
*Loneliness*  
*Insecurity*  
*Impaired relationships*  
*Poor grades*  
*Psychological disorders*

*Chronic phone use can also cause other physical dysfunctions, like GABA (a neurotransmitter in the brain) dysfunction and a loss of grey matter in the brain, which are highly correlated to substance use disorders.*

*Chronic phone overuse is proven to change reward circuits in the brain chemically. One of the primarily affected neurotransmitters is gabapentin (GABA). GABA is an inhibitory neurotransmitter that produces a calming or euphoric effect. It can even control fear and anxiety. The inhibitor plays a significant role in addiction by rewarding substance use and reinforcing addictive behaviors.*

*Research shows that chronic phone use can increase or decrease GABA production. Disturbances to the GABA system are proven to be a warning sign of addiction. In a study by the Radiological Society of North America, heavy phone use was linked to an upsetting ratio of GABA to other neurotransmitters. When the teen test subjects received cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)*

*for the disorder, their brain chemistry reverted to a non-addicted ratio.*

*Grey matter in the brain is connected to the part of the central nervous system responsible for enabling individuals to control movement, memory, and emotions. A recent study scanned participants' brains with a phone addiction and discovered a change in their brain's grey matter. According to the researchers, the physical shape and size of their brains resembled that of drug users. Grey matter volume among people addicted to their phones diminished in critical areas, a condition similarly observed in people with a substance use disorder.*

It is important to note that there has also been a rise in depression and suicide among teenagers in recent years correlated to phone addiction. Adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to the risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 2010-2015, the suicide rate rose by 65%. At the same time, the rate of severe depression among girls increased by 58%. Many researchers believe the rise in suicides is a direct reflection of the negative effects of phone addiction.

Bro. Manly P. Hall prophetically saw the danger coming from technology in the 1960s. In his lecture, "How to Turn Off the TV in One Easy Lesson and Live Happily Ever After," He stated when discussing watching television programming that: *Nothing happens upstairs in ourselves, nothing is being developed as a factor in the growth of our own thinking. We are not thinking, actually, and if we are thinking, we aren't doing anything about it because most of the thoughts are non-factual. So here we go, all through an entire lifetime surrounded by all types of information which we accept only through the eyes and ears, and when the time comes, we do very little to solve our own problems. A person whose mind is being used every day to find new values, accomplish new works, do new things that have not been done, improve the quality of living, solve the personal problems of his life – these are the things that help to exercise the mind, but to drift along from work to television to bed and then up and again the next day is not doing anything to make people, it is only continuing a humdrum which is only one step above animal existence. This means that in some respect we need creative programs. Now, a creative program is something that we do because, basically, we want to express ourselves. We do not wish merely to do what everyone else does, we want to do something that will satisfy our own inner impulses, but for the most part these impulses are not active enough to give*

*us any positive directive. So it seems that one thing we have to do to get away from this “hypnosis of the tube” is to realize that we have faculties within ourselves that do not need to be subjected to this continual negative conditioning, that we are certainly capable of thinking rather than merely watching the antics of someone else.*

In order to solve this problem and overcome the “hypnosis of the tube,” He stated: *Now, something has to happen to change our way of life from admiring the creations of others to the development of creative capacity in ourselves. So if we want to really have a great history, we can study our own inner lives, if we want great theatre, we can be both the audience and the cast, if we want any of the inner understandings which make for philosophy, mysticism and so forth, they are all available inside of ourselves. The only thing we have got to do is bring it out, and we bring it out by dedication, gaining strength in the inner life just as an athlete gains it by daily discipline; by the proper mental-emotional disciplines we can become healthy individuals in terms of our minds, our emotions, our hearts, and our jobs. These are the things we’ve got to work for, and if it means that we must do it, we can, with one quick twist of the wrist, get rid of most of the corruptions of society and face the fact that these are imaginary corruptions. We’ve got plenty of real ones; we don’t have to build them up that way. What we have got to do is find out what corruptions are still lurking in us and correct them, and as soon as we correct the mistakes in ourselves, we begin to see better values in other people because we see in others usually what we are ourselves focused upon. So, don’t let the great Big Bad Tube get you (laugh), be very careful about it, and when uncertain – TURN IT OFF (big laugh), and you will find as you turn it off to do something interesting, beautiful or wonderful, you will never miss it again. You cannot turn it off successfully, however, until there is something you want to be, or something you want to do, right then and there, that is more important than the tube. If you think it out that way, I think it will all work out alright in the end.*

I want you to think about what Bro. Hall says above and how it applies to us and our work as Freemasons to turn the rough ashlar into the perfect ashlar. While he is basing his observations on the television, which was the 1960s was still in its infancy, his words can be taken and applied to anything with a screen. Is it possible that the rise in mental health issues we have seen in this country is due in part to the changes that take place in our brain chemically due to a bombardment from television, video games, computers,

and phones? I can’t answer that question as I’m not a mental health professional, but I would venture to say that it probably is a contributing factor.

What I worry about is things like how social media may be causing our attention spans to shorten and if we are and have unintentionally giving ourselves Adult Attention Deficit Disorder. Again, I’m not a mental health professional, but continually scrolling through social media, especially platforms like Tik Tok, where the maximum video time is 3 minutes, has to be having an impact on us. When I put on my tinfoil hat, I often tell Midnight Freemason Senior Contributor Greg Knott my belief that Tik Tok was socially engineered by the Chinese to dumb down our population and lower our attention spans. Of course, I have no proof of this being true, and there are some really good people and Brothers to follow on Tik Tok, like my co-editor (RJ Johnson). There’s also a ton of garbage on there as well, and the app is designed to allow you to scroll through the garbage to get to the good stuff or to customize your feed by only viewing the people you follow, but the point still stands that the endless scrolling through Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram, Reddit, or whatever your social media of choice has to be having some effect. Or maybe I’m just a luddite.

What I wanted to do with this article is dispense some light and challenge the brethren that read the blog to do something radical. That challenge is to put your phone down and live happily ever after. Now given the nature of everything that our phones do for each of us in our modern society, I know it’s difficult to even think about doing this, but I want you to do me a favor. I want you to look at your amount of screen time or turn on the screen time monitoring on your device and go about your normal business for a week. Then I want you to go back and look at how much time you are spending on your phone, especially on social media. After you do this, I want you to think about that 24-inch gauge we learn about in the First Degree. Are you managing your time wisely? Are you spending too much time looking at your phone?

If you answered yes to the last question above, I want you to do me a favor. I want you to put the phone down and do something that doesn’t require you to look at a screen. Yes, maybe this is hypocritical from the IT worker that is writing an article for the Midnight Freemasons blog at 7:20 pm the night before it’s going to go live. I’ve been staring at a computer



## Questions for Contemplation and Lodge Discussion

screen for about 10 hours today. I get it. How can you take me seriously when I'm asking you to stop looking at your phone. I guess you can't. But maybe because you're reading this and hopefully enjoying it, you will see I'm creating something for you to enjoy, and you can give me some grace and listen to me. Look at the picture at the top of the article and do one of those instead of looking at your phone, or to spin it Masonically, pick some ritual and learn it. Replace some of that time you're spending mindlessly scrolling through your phone to improve yourself as a man and a Mason.

My point is to take care of yourself and those around you. Time is our most precious commodity, and the sands in the hourglass are running. We don't know how much time we have left before we go to the Lodge on high, so take the time to put your phone down more and really live life. Tell those people that you love, that you love them as much as possible, and hug your kids, parents, pets, spouse, or significant other as much as possible. Create opportunities to really connect with your family and friends and to have a face-to-face conversation. Declare the next family gathering you host a phone-free zone or your next family dinner. Make it a challenge or a game, and make those that look at their phone put a dollar in a jar every time they do it and donate that money to a charity. Whatever you're missing on social media or in your email or texts will be there for you after you've lived your life unplugged for a few hours. Maybe you can turn that few hours into half a day, or maybe a whole day from time to time. Maybe you'll realize that you don't need it as much as you think you do. I want you to pay close attention to how you feel when you're away from your screen. As much as it might be hard to do at first, my guess is that it will become easier to do the more you practice doing it. I also suspect that the enjoyment of the other activities you're doing while not looking at your phone might help you to continue to do it. With practice, you might actually feel like you're living happily ever after, even if it's only for a few hours.



1. Do you believe that a dependency upon technology, especially our mobile devices, has an impact on your mental health? Why or Why not?
2. Do you think that technology has helped or hindered our ability to connect interpersonally? Why or Why not?
3. Do you think that social media apps are impacting our collective attention spans? Why or Why not?
4. Do you think you could live without your phone for a day? Week? Month? Year? Why or why not?
5. Do you think that spending so much time on our mobile devices is making good use of the 24 inch gauge? Why or Why not?
6. What is one thing that you wish you had more time for? Do you think you would have time for this thing if you spent less time on your phone? Why or why not?



# Over a Million People Receive Mental Health Support Thanks to Freemasons

*Reprinted from First Rising: The Official Newsletter of the United Grand Lodge of England*



## *\*Editors Note\**

*This short article is reprinted from the First Rising: The Official Newsletter of the United Grand Lodge of England. While Illinois is a sovereign Jurisdiction unto its own, and we are in no way connected to the UGLE, the article is a fantastic look at what Freemasons in another part of the world are doing to assist their communities.*

Published: 9 May 2022

Freemasons are doing their bit for the upcoming Mental Health Awareness Week, raising more than £1.9m to donate to charities supporting mental health. Freemasons have so far made over 100 donations, helping more than 1.4 million people experiencing mental health issues.

To help communities achieve a better state of mental health, the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), the governing body for Freemasonry in England and Wales, and the Masonic Charitable Foundation, are supporting various institutions, schools and universities.

According to the NHS's Young Minds Survey 2020, one in six young people have a probable mental disorder, while 83% of young people said the pandemic had made their mental health worse.

Among the institutions receiving support is Young Minds. Freemasons are donating £260,000 to help the charity support more than 1.4 million young people. The goal is to increase Young Minds' reach by 10% and help many more young people find the support they need, when they need it, and be able to take practical, actionable steps to improve their mental health.

The donation will enable the charity to proactively recruit more young Black and disabled people, to diversify Young Minds' pool of bloggers and expand the experiences and voices on the website. The idea is to

create more content on racism and mental health, as well as for those living with bipolar disorder.

Freemasons have also donated more than £250,000 to Mind. The donation funds the costs of an established peer-mentoring scheme in 18 schools, providing recruitment, training and support to mentors and young people with mental health concerns, through one-to-one talking and listening sessions. The donation also supports the production of two annual conferences on children and young people's mental health.

In 2020, Suffolk Mind trained members of the Suffolk Freemasons on understanding how awareness of emotional needs can lead to better mental wellbeing for ourselves, recognising signs of poor mental health in others, and how to assist by signposting to relevant support. The Freemasons also donated £1,000 to Suffolk Mind.

Elsewhere, in Hertfordshire, a group of Freemasons walked in memory of member Charles Wandrag, who took his life due to mental health issues. The aim of the event was to raise both money and awareness for the charity Mind, with the final total raised being more than £2,000. In West Kent, Freemasons are supporting Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource with almost £ 2,000. The charity provides safe spaces and person-centred mental health support to help people improve their wellbeing. Last year they supported almost 1,000 people with mental wellbeing.



In addition, Northumberland Freemasons have donated £5,000 to Cleaswell Hill School in the local village of Guide Post. The community special school caters for children aged four to 19 with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. Some of them have additional physical, mental and emotional needs. The school is fundraising with the aim to purchase a 17-seater minibus with a wheelchair

tail lift, through the Variety Sunshine Coach scheme.

The Northumberland Freemasons have also helped LD:NorthEast, with a donation of £3,000. The charity supports people across North Tyneside who have lived experience of learning disabilities, learning difficulties and autism. Its work is all about bringing people together and they believe that everyone deserves to have fun, spend time with friends and feel good about themselves. The charity's mission is to support people to do that, from birth right through to older life, and its vision is to achieve equality and social inclusion so people can live their life their way.



In a separate project, Leicestershire & Rutland Freemasons helped Melton Men Cap with a donation of £700 to enable the charity to continue providing support. They also donated £2,000 to Loughborough Wellbeing Centre, which works tirelessly to support people living with enduring mental health issues and has expanded its activities to ensure people stayed safe and well during the Covid-19 crisis. In Jersey meanwhile, Freemasons are donating £3,000 to Dementia Jersey. The funds will pay for a “recharge day” for those who care for others with dementia.

Commenting on the nationwide initiatives, Ian Chandler, Chair of the Communications Working Party, said: “Mental health is an important topic to our members and us. One of the most important things for Freemasons is to support people in their communities, preventing mental health problems and supporting many families.

“During Mental Health Awareness Week on 9-15 May, we should stop, look around us and make sure that we are fine and feel good. Mental health is vital and we should all always prioritise it, no matter what.”

Les Hutchinson, Chief Executive of the Masonic Charitable Foundation, said: “I’m very pleased Freemasons have been able to make such large donations to these very important mental health charities. We’ve come a long way in recent years to having a better understanding of the issues surrounding poor mental health, but it’s still a huge problem for those affected and their families. These grants are a way for Freemasons to help provide the support and understanding that people living with these conditions so desperately need.”

# Illinois Masonic Medical Center



## Our Foundation

### Welcome to the Masonic Family Health Foundation

The Masonic Family Health Foundation is a part of the Masonic Community of the State of Illinois, Inc. and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Foundation has a long history with Chicago, the Great Republic, and what is now the Masonic Medical Center. The Center for Advanced Eye Care, the Center for Advanced Hearing, the Center for Advanced Spinal Cord Injury, the Center for Advanced Stroke, the Center for Advanced Transplant Care, the Center for Advanced Cancer Care, the Center for Advanced Cardiac Care, the Center for Advanced Kidney Care, the Center for Advanced Lung Care, the Center for Advanced Neurology, the Center for Advanced Pediatrics, the Center for Advanced Psychiatry, the Center for Advanced Radiation Therapy, the Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, the Center for Advanced Research, the Center for Advanced Surgery, the Center for Advanced Trauma Care, the Center for Advanced Women's Health, the Center for Advanced Geriatrics, the Center for Advanced Palliative Care, the Center for Advanced Hospice Care, the Center for Advanced End-of-Life Care, the Center for Advanced Organ Donation, the Center for Advanced Organ Transplantation, the Center for Advanced Organ Recovery, the Center for Advanced Organ Preservation, the Center for Advanced Organ Allocation, the Center for Advanced Organ Retrieval, the Center for Advanced Organ Transport, the Center for Advanced Organ Transplantation, the Center for Advanced Organ Recovery, the Center for Advanced Organ Preservation, the Center for Advanced Organ Allocation, the Center for Advanced Organ Retrieval, the Center for Advanced Organ Transport.

### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE FOUNDATION



Looking for medical care assistance? Good standing membership in a Masonic Lodge is required. All care is provided at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center only. For more information regarding care options and to apply, visit: [The Masonic Assistance Program page](#)



## OUR SERVICES ARE COMPREHENSIVE

We care about the well-being of our members, their families, and our community. We want the best for all.

The Masonic Family Health Foundation has been established with the support of many of Chicago's greatest health and human service programs. All of which are dedicated to a single mission: A commitment to the health of the community.

The Masonic Family Health Foundation has embraced the Masonic brotherhood's Heritage in developing the greatest charitable foundation in Illinois.

Learn about the MAF Program



### Programs and Grants

- Chicago's Superior Courts, Inc.
- Chicago's Youth Institute, Inc.
- Children's Home
- University for All of IL
- Masonic Assistance Program

### Upcoming Foundation Events

- Board Meeting - March 15, 2022
- Board Meeting - June 28, 2022
- Board Meeting - September 8, 2022
- Board Meeting - December 9, 2022
- Annual Meeting - April 25, 2023

# The “Free” in Freemason

by Brother Justus E. Fischer



“Ultimately, the downfall of the Freemasons was giving away their stonecutting services for nothing.” - Elon Musk (Via Twitter 5/3/22)

Sometimes I ask myself why exactly we, as Freemasons, do what we do every day. Our labors in the quarry may vary, but the core tenets of our profession remain very grounded in the principles of our Craft, such as brotherly love, relief, and truth.

Love?

Yes, because not every member of our fraternity is a “brother,” but he knows well enough to act the part when the situation arises. (The devil you know, or the devil you don’t know?) I say this with respect because I would much rather a man be a member of our fraternity than not be a member at all. I can honestly say that I love all of my brothers in the Craft, although some of us might not be the best of friends. Does that make sense to you? I know that when push comes to shove, my brothers will be there for me if I’m going through a hard time.

Relief?

Although we are not some “benefit society,” our very existence of who we are should be for society’s use and the employment of noble labors in any profession. It takes a village, a community of brothers, ready to build and rebuild again if necessary. The strong must help the weak and bring balance and harmony into the workspace and society. We are only as strong as the weakest link in the chain of our mystic tie.

Truth?

Indefinitely. Although it is easy to tell a lie, it is much harder to keep up with a lie and remember every occasion in which a person tells a lie to someone. To

live a paranoid life is like a form of mental slavery and not an ideal state of mind for someone claiming to be “Freeborn.”

Where am I going with this?

Operative Stonemasons were able to travel to worksites as needed. This ability to roam freely was not a luxury available to the average workman in ancient times. As masonry morphed into a speculative manner, it made the initiate desirous of introspection, unsoiled by the toils of the brutish operative lifestyle. To roam the depths of the sanctum sanctorum of the mind and unveil our soul’s secret mysteries. This system of morality intrigued notable members of the age of enlightenment and members of the nobility and the gentry class, as seen in the Colonial States of America.

So what is my point exactly?

The Stonemasons traveled far and wide in search of industrious pursuits. The Freemasons traveled to the inner depths of their consciousness. The modern Freemason explores not only matters of personal reflection and contemplation but also the depths of the informational superhighway known as the internet. The metaverse, or virtual reality, is the “secret evasion of mind whatever,” sharing and connecting experiences using our modern working tools to spread the cement of brotherly love. We are free of the limitations that the previous generations had to adapt.

We must enter a renewal period, a clean slate, free and not soiled by the world, to rebuild the temple. “That house not made of hands,” We currently live in a rapidly changing society, so Freemasonry should reflect that when the pancake breakfast becomes the highlight of any particular event and not the actual educational or contemplative work that goes on in

the lodge. We are doing our fraternity a disservice by highlighting the meal as the focal point for a meeting. Every stated meeting should incorporate the very minimum for education, a short 5-10 minute educational piece on something you learned about Freemasonry or why it has impacted your life and made you a better man. If you are a little more seasoned as a Masonic Educator, then perhaps use that time for historical anecdotes or discussions on the allegory and symbolism of our ritual and the philosophical aspects of the ancient mysteries.

In conclusion, nothing in life is “free.” If something is free, we usually regard it with some initial skepticism. Usually, something free might not be of great value or might have some hidden obligation attached to it. So what exactly happened here? We went from Operative Workmen concerned with traveling to earning wages (i.e., the Mark Master Degree) Eventually, we would become speculative workmen, doing everything we can to balance our time in equal parts while traveling and paying with our hard-earned money for the experience of being a Freemason, a fellow member of the Craft. This fraternity is a volunteer-based service organization, so we dedicate our time and financial resources to the honor and privilege of being a member of this society. With that said...

Is it worth it? And for our ex-members, I ask you.  
Was it worth it?

If we don't see the value in Freemasonry, we will not have the motivation to continue forward. If you have money to contribute, we'll take it. If you have time to contribute, we'll take it. Most importantly, if you have some knowledge to share with us, WE WILL TAKE IT.

Fiat Lux

“Lastly, the eighth and the most meritorious of all is to anticipate charity by preventing poverty, namely, to assist the reduced brother, either by a considerable gift or loan of money, or by teaching him a trade, or by putting him in the way of business, so that he may earn an honest livelihood and not be forced to the dreadful alternative of holding up his hand for charity. . .”

\* Maimonides “Eight degrees in the duty of charity-The Religious Intelligencer.” (1826)

# Of Masons and Honeybees

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°



This past year I decided to study honeybees in great detail. They are truly fascinating creatures, and I now understand why the beehive was selected to represent a Masonic Lodge.

The image of an old-style Skep hive is presented to us as a symbol in the 3rd-degree Emblems lecture. Here is the portion of that lecture that refers to honeybees: “The bee-hive is an emblem of industry and recommends the practice of that virtue to all created beings, from the highest seraph in Heaven to the lowest reptile of the dust. It teaches us that as we came into the world rational and intelligent beings, so we should ever be industrious ones; never sitting down contented while our fellow creatures around us are in want, especially when it is in our power to relieve them without inconvenience to ourselves...and he that will so demean himself as not to be endeavoring to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding may be deemed a drone in the hive of nature, a useless member of society, and unworthy of our protection as Masons.”

This brief mention of an important lesson is buried within the explanations of the other eight emblems in the lecture. We are obligated to endeavor to contribute to the common stock of knowledge and understanding. We are also expected to relieve others in want, with the implicit notion that it will not inconvenience us to do so. Even the poorest Mason among us has the power and the ability to relieve his Brother's suffering. Many wants can be met without coins.

Before we explore the Masonic significance of the beehive, I would like to share a little information about honeybees. There are three classes of bees. The workers, which are the overwhelming majority of the bees, are all female. They perform all of the work inside and outside the hive. The Drones, which are all male, make up only a small fraction of the bees. Their only purpose is to mate with other Queen bees briefly during the springtime. They perform no other work. They don't even feed themselves. If you think that sounds like a great job to have, keep in mind that the Drone



dies by being disemboweled after mating. The Drones that survive by not finding a mate are kicked out of the hive to starve before winter. Lastly, there is the Queen Bee. There is only one Queen in each hive. She leaves the hive once to mate, then remains in the hive for most of the rest of her life. Her only duty is to lay eggs, sometimes thousands per day.

The average worker bee lives about 30 days. They begin to work a series of jobs from the moment they hatch, concluding their brief life as foragers venturing outside the hive. They collect nectar, water, and pollen to bring back to their hive-mates.

Honeybees collect and store nectar from flowers, and dehydrate it into honey. Once the moisture content of nectar is below 18%, they cap the honey as winter storage food. Please consider again the lifespan of the workers. Generations of bees work from sun-up until sun-down, gathering nectar, building honeycomb, and stocking up for a winter survival they will never live to see. They make gallons of honey that they will never taste. They dedicate their lives for the greater good of the hive and the survival of their species.

People in our society today seem solely preoccupied with managing their own household. They are focused on their own survival. We are charged in the 1st degree to use the 24-inch gauge to divide our time, setting aside eight hours for the service of God and a distressed worthy Brother. How many people come anywhere near that? How many of us do? Some might suggest that we live in an advanced age, with institu-

tions designed to meet the needs that might have previously been filled by neighbors. Does paying our taxes exempt us from the responsibility of relieving the distressed?

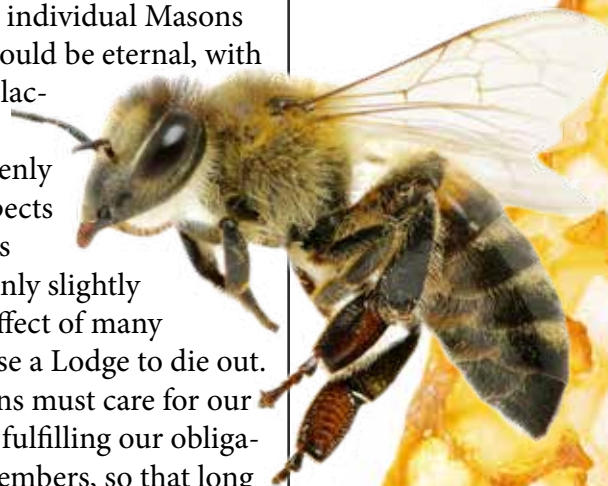
Only one-third of the bees leave the hive at any given time. These bees gather the food and water which must be shared from mouth to mouth with every other member of the hive. They depend on each other completely for survival. During the height of summer a single hive can have up to 60,000 individual bees. The life or actions of any one bee, or even dozens of bees, is not significant. But collectively, their actions determine their fate. A honeybee colony is one of the few creatures, termed a 'super organism,' which can live eternally. They could exist forever. They can just as easily die out during the cold winter months through lack of preparation.

The parallels between a bee colony and a Masonic Lodge, with individual bees and individual Masons are obvious. A Masonic Lodge could be eternal, with each new generation of men replacing the recently deceased. The actions of one Mason are not keenly felt. If he neglects his duties, expects others to do the work, or decides to stop attending, the Lodge is only slightly weakened. But the cumulative effect of many neglectful men can and will cause a Lodge to die out. The current generation of Masons must care for our Craft by adhering to its tenants, fulfilling our obligations, and nurturing our new members, so that long after we are dead and gone the beauties and benefits of Freemasonry will be available to men who have not yet been born.

The admonition to endeavor to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding could be restated as leaving this world in slightly better shape than we found it. It reminds us that our task in life is not simply to survive. As rational and intelligent beings we have the privilege and the duty to consider what our time on Earth will have meant after we are gone.

The symbol of the beehive should recall to our minds the virtues of Industry, Unselfishness, and the willingness to plant a tree while knowing we will not live long enough to enjoy its shade. My Brothers, I hope that when you see a honeybee hard at work, moving from blossom to blossom in the service of others, you will be motivated to increase your own efforts in the

furtherance of our gentle Craft. The world desperately needs the unifying effect of Brotherly Love found in Freemasonry. The future of our species depends on you.



# THE ACACIA: ITS PHENOLOGY, BIBLICAL REFERENCES, MASONIC SYMBOLISM, AND PERSONAL MEANING

by RWB: Keith Manbeck, Ohio, R.S.S. #028

The Acacia is an important symbol in our lives and beliefs as a Mason. The lesson of immortality that it teaches us in the Master Mason degree is one that we should remember and take to heart.

The Acacia also has an especially important part in the creation of certain furniture and other items of great biblical significance. Personally, my view of the Acacia changed significantly with the passing of my daughter.

While giving the Master Mason lecture shortly after her passing, I realized a new feeling of its significance.

## Phenology

Since the beginning of recorded history, the Acacia has been an important plant in the lives of those who live where it grows. It has provided lumber for building homes as well as the furniture in the Tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant was seated. It has provided warmth through firewood and charcoal as well as having medicinal uses.



Vachellia Seyal, also known by the common names of Red Acacia and Shittim Wood, is a tree that is commonly found in the semi-arid areas of tropical Africa. It tends to grow in groups or patches throughout the area. It is classified as an evergreen and sports many thorny spines along its branches. It can grow to a height and width of 10 meters (32 feet) with a trunk diameter of 60 centimeters (23 inches).

The Acacia species are commonly found within 12 degrees of the equator and prefer semi-arid conditions. It grows best where temperatures range between 18-28 degrees Celsius (64-82 degrees Fahrenheit). It is also very adaptable to a range of soil types

but does best in a clay, well-drained soil with a wide pH range. It is also very tolerant of very acidic and salt-laden soils.

The Acacia genus is a member of the Fabaceae family. One of the characteristics of the family is that the plants are nitrogen-fixing. There are nodules on the root system of the plant that attracts certain bacteria that enables the plant to fix nitrogen which is a necessary nutrient for growth.

The plant absorbs the nitrogen from the atmosphere and translocates it through its vascular system to the roots, where the bacteria convert it into a form that the plant can use for growth.

This is the same process that is used by alfalfa, the pea family, and the Locust family.

Acacia is also useful for natural medicinal purposes. Its bark, leaves, and gum extract are used to reduce the symptoms of colds, diarrhea, hemorrhage, jaundice, headache, and burns.

An extract from the bark is used against leprosy and dysentery. It acts as a stimulant and a purgative (laxative) for both humans and animals. Exposure to smoke is believed to relieve rheumatic pains.

There are many other uses for Acacia. These include lumber, harvesting of a gum extract, tannin, which is a source of red dye, and many others. Chemicals in the bark kill freshwater snails and algae that grow on ponds. The bark can be harvested and used to make rope. In many areas, the thorny branches are cut by farmers and are used as fenceposts.



The wood of the Acacia is pale yellow to medium brown, with the heartwood being a pinkish-brown to mahogany-red. The timber contains natural preservatives and is hard and tough, and works well.



Shittim wood was used to create coffins of Egyptian Pharaohs as well as much of the furniture and structure of the Tabernacle of the Ark of the Covenant. The Shittim wood or hardwood is somewhat susceptible to insects and decay.

To properly prepare it for use, it must be split and soaked in water for a few weeks, and then the wood is allowed to dry before it is used for woodworking purposes. Acacia wood is also an important source of rural energy in the countries in which it grows. It is used for both firewood and charcoal.

### Acacia In the Bible

Plants have held significant meanings in many different societies throughout recorded history. The Quince in Greek society was a symbol of love and happiness. The Palm is a symbol of victory; rosemary is a symbol of remembrance. But when we contemplate the Acacia, we begin to look at a plant that had a very important part in the building of the Tabernacle as well as the items that were placed therein.

The Acacia is referenced no less than 32 times in 6 different books of the King James Version of the Bible. It is referred to as Shittim wood and is mentioned 23 times alone in the book of Exodus.

In the 25th chapter of Exodus, Shittim wood is referenced as the material that the Ark of the Covenant is constructed from (Exodus 25:10). It is also used to create the staves that were overlaid with gold used to move the Ark (Exodus 25:13). It was used to create the boards of the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:15, 26:26). There were five pillars made of Shittim wood that were overlaid with gold used to hang the veils in the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:37).

The altar for the burning of incense in the Tabernacle was also made out of Shit-



tim wood (Exodus 27:1, 30:1). The staves for the altar were crafted out of Shittim wood and overlaid with brass. (Exodus 27:6)

The Acacia, due to its abundance and its holding of natural preservatives, made it an ideal resource for creating the structure of the Tabernacle as well as the furniture and the Ark of the Covenant.

The fact that the coffins of Pharaohs were also made out of Acacia shows that the wood was held in the highest of esteem, and it makes sense that when the instructions were given for the construction of the Tabernacle and its furniture, the Acacia would be used to create these most important pieces in our biblical history.

### The Acacia as A Masonic Symbol

Most literature on this topic ties the Acacia and immortality together through the mythological legend of Isis and Osiris. In this legend, Osiris, who was both King and God of the Egyptians, was tricked by his brother Typhon into entering a large, beautifully crafted box.



Upon Osiris's entry, the lid was shut, and the chest was thrown into the Nile. The currents of the Nile carried the chest to Byblos, Phoenicia, where it was cast ashore at the foot of an Acacia tree. The tree grew rapidly and soon encased the chest holding the body of Osiris.

When Queen Isis learned of the fate of her husband, she set out in search of his body. In the meantime, the King of the land where the Acacia grew, which had concealed the body, had it cut down and a column made of the trunk of the tree. Learning this, Isis became the nurse for the King and received the column as her pay. In the trunk of the tree and the column was the preserved body of Osiris.

The Israelites were one of the first people to plant a sprig of Acacia at the head of the grave as a symbol of immortality. The Acacia at the grave also marked the gravesite so that no one would walk upon the grave.

It is also recorded that beams that were placed into houses often sprouted branches even though they had no roots. The name “evergreen” implies that the plant always shows life and will never die.

When we as speculative Masons use the sprig of evergreen representing the Acacia at our Masonic funeral services, we are giving this as proof of our belief in a “thing not seen” for the Brother who has traveled the path that we all must someday travel.

The second symbol of the Acacia is one of innocence. Acacia, in the Greek language, is not only the name of the plant; it also means a moral quality of innocence or purity of life. In this symbolism, we think of him who was in the grave above which the Acacia was planted. His purity of life, virtuous conduct, and fidelity to his trusts lead to the teachings we have learned as Master Masons. We are also challenged to live our lives to emulate his example.

### **The Acacia and Its Personal Meaning To Me**

Our first introduction to the Acacia is made when we are portraying our Grand Master Hiram Abiff. We are blindfolded and confused when the Acacia is planted at the head of the grave.

When the second mention comes about, we are still blindfolded and possibly wondering to ourselves how much longer am I going to have to lay here blindfolded on this hard floor all wrapped up in a carpet. Even to myself as a horticulturist at the time of my raising, I missed the mention of this important symbol. Not until after being raised and sitting through the Master Mason Lecture did my curiosity begin surrounding this incredible symbol. I did some early research to learn that it was a desert plant that did grow in the area of the Temple.

Within several years of my raising, I embarked on the journey to learn the Master Mason Lecture. As I worked on the lecture, the Acacia with the shining emblem at the end of the lecture that after 20 minutes of presenting the lecture, I knew I was at the end. I was able to recite the words in the lecture, and I knew that the Acacia was an emblem of everlasting light. I had not, however, internalized what the Acacia actually meant to me.

When my Grandfather passed to the Celestial Lodge Above in 1996, I was fortunate to participate in his

Masonic Funeral service. My understanding of the Acacia came a little more into focus in my personal life. As I would walk through a field of evergreens in the family nursery, which Grandpa, dad, and uncles started, I would think of him and the lessons that I learned from him.

The lessons included both work and life lessons. As time went on, I realized that Grandpa had truly lived his life as a Mason, and I endeavored to do the same.

When my father passed to the Celestial Lodge above in 2016, I was again fortunate to participate in his Masonic service. This was another step toward my understanding of the meaning of the Acacia. Again, contemplating dad’s life and how he lived it and the fight he put forth, in the end, set an example for me to follow. The Acacia sprig that I deposited meant to me that I was honored to have known my dad as both a father and a mason, and I knew that I would see him again.

In January of 2020, my 35-year-old daughter was diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. Erin endured 12 rounds of chemotherapy and two separate rounds of 10 treatments of radiation therapy. She and her three children also lived away from her husband and their father for three months due to her husband being an Emergency Room Nurse who was exposed daily to Covid-19. I must admit that during the eight months that followed the diagnosis, I had lost hope and I also lost faith. How could someone who I was supposed to trust and love and put my faith in allow something so awful to happen to someone so young and full of life? I struggled to put on a brave face and watch Erin as she never complained and always thought she would win her fight. In the end, the cancer had metastasized to her brain, and there was no way to stop its strong attack on her body. On September 21st, 2020, Erin received her reward for being a true believer, and those left behind were blessed to hear from hundreds of people that she had a positive influence on in her short life.

Shortly after Erin’s passing, I was asked by WB George Moore to present the Master Mason lecture for several Candidates finishing their Grand Masters 1 Day Class. I went through my normal preparation for the presentation. As I stood up that evening and began the Master Mason lecture, I felt a presence of calm that I had not felt in many months in my personal and spiritual life. As I reached the end of the lecture, I realized that Erin was there with me. I

presented the lines as I had so many times before, “When we contemplate the Acacia, an emblem of immortality and which bloomed at his grave, we are reminded of that immortal part that survives the grave” I realized that Erin was letting me know that we would see each other again in the hereafter.

To me, the Acacia is not only an emblem of immortality but also a sign from my daughter that I will see her again and that it is ok to mourn her loss but that we must also celebrate her life. As I sit back and reflect on this very personal experience, it makes me realize that after all of the years of knowing about the Acacia, I feel that I now realize its full meaning to me, which relates to the meaning that we are taught in the Master Mason lecture--that there is life ever after and our soul is immortal.

### **Conclusion**

The Acacia, a sprig of evergreen from a thorny scrubby plant that only grows in the most adverse conditions, was used to mark the grave of our Grand Master Hiram Abiff. There are many references in the Bible to the Acacia, and it was used to create the Ark of the Covenant as well as other furniture in the Tabernacle. It has also been recorded to have been used to create the coffins of Pharaohs in ancient Egypt. It was planted at the head of the grave of the deceased by the Israelites.

Why would the creators of our ritual give us a symbol that has such a notable history? Perhaps it is because, throughout history, the Acacia has represented life from death, and being an evergreen, it is seen as a plant that will never die. The Acacia is meant for us to reflect on our lives and our beliefs, and it encourages each of us to find what that true meaning is for us. As we each learn the true meaning of the Acacia in our own lives, it brings us a peace of mind that we will again see those who have traveled the path before us.

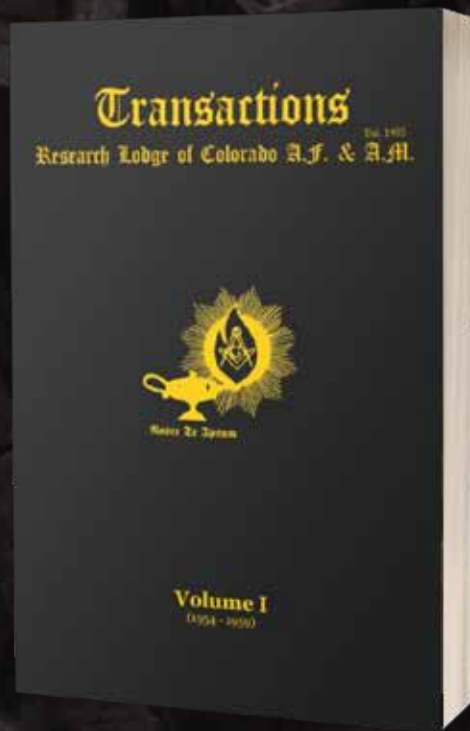


# *District Education*

## *Talking Points*

### **Overview of the Intender Program - After Each Degree**

“After the first and second degrees, the Lodge gives the new brother the Guidebook appropriate for that degree. He then meets with the new brother, teaches the catechism, and goes over the questions and answers in each guidebook.”



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Returning after a Covid-19 Hiatus, South Pasadena Masonic Lodge is having their second Masonic Con on July 22nd, 2022. They will have seven speakers, two film screenings and multiple panel discussions with q/a. More information and tickets are available at [www.MasonicCon.com](http://www.MasonicCon.com)

# Reader's Corner

## The Master Builders: A History of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania

by Wayne A. Huss

A Book review by  
WB.: Kevin A. Wheeler



When starting this book, I had a feeling that I may have chosen another book that was written around or in conjunction with the minutes of the lodges times passed. To my surprise, and contrarily, it was a fascinating read. I

learned a great deal of information that I was unaware of, albeit from a professional Historian who happens to be a non-Mason, Wayne A. Huss.

I will only focus on relevant information that I was previously unaware of for this review. The book was full of great information and surprises, and honestly, it made me feel inadequate at times--just from the sheer amount of information contained within the pages. I was also shocked at much of the content because I had considered myself a learned Brother of the Craft, a Past Master of my own Lodge, and yet--here in these pages existed tons of new information.

Huss begins by describing some terms that dealt with the origins of Freemasonry and discusses how some of the terms used today derived initially from the medieval stonemasons. Some terms include where stonemasons stored their tools, "lodges" (p.1). Although still in use today, the Cowan has a similar but slightly different meaning. In contrast, in today's day and age, we view a "Cowan" as someone who is not a member of the craft and, like an eavesdropper, is concerned with trying to discover our secrets.

The "Cowan" of medieval times "was used to designate a worker of less skill who either was not a full member of the guild or did not possess the "Masons Word," or secret occupational information.

(p.2) One sign that I was completely unaware of, was used by Masons to recognize one other and was quite simple and is as follows--"removing the hat with the thumb underneath and only two forefingers above the brim or making two soft knocks and one loud knock on a door before coming into a room (p.5).

The first four English Grand Masters were non-operatives, but the fourth was part of the Aristocracy and paved the way for every subsequent Grand Master to be of the same nobility.

Colonel Daniel Coxe, a fellow of the Royal Society, was deputized as Provincial Grand Master of the three provinces of England, which were New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, for two years. The deputation also called for the election of a new Provincial Grand Master every two years and established the St. Johns Days to be celebrated annually. In this case, I knew of the celebrations of the two Saints Johns but had no idea that initially, there was one Grand Master for all three territories. One piece of information that I didn't enjoy was the unfortunate discovery that my lodge Tun Tavern No. 3, was not the first lodge in America as I had so long believed, but it was, in fact, one of the first Grand Lodge meeting places. To my surprise, I discovered that one of the first published exposes was written by a man who later became one of the most prominent Freemasonry in all of America and arguably the World. It is even more interesting that Benjamin Franklin joined Masonry just two months after writing his Ex-





pose and later became Grand Master of Pennsylvania while it was a Province. When Pennsylvania received its official recognition, it became the third oldest Masonic Body in the World.

Following the example of the Ahiman Rezon, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania created its own version of the document in 1778 to be its “absolute and independent body, with legislative authority to regulate Freemasonry within its area of jurisdiction” (p.46-47). This was the beginning of the transition, which ultimately led to the Grand Lodge becoming independent and sovereign in the 1780s. It was also inevitable, given the ongoing American Revolution. By gaining its independence, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania became the fourth-oldest independent Grand Lodge in the United States, only preceded by Massachusetts and Virginia (1778) and South Carolina (1783).

Something unique about the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was that they never authorized or permitted the ritual to be written down, even in the form of a “monitor,” to prompt the memories of Masons, unlike other jurisdictions, including the United Grand Lodge of England.

In conclusion, I thought this was a very informative book, well written both historically and Masonically accurate. What caught my attention was the amount of information regarding Freemasonry in Pennsylvania and, subsequently, Freemasonry as a whole. What was unique about this book is that it conveys crucial Masonic information, and we learn from a non-Mason.



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\*Editor's Note - There are a total of three volumes to this historical set focussed on Pennsylvania. In the months to come, we'll add WB.: Wheeler's review of these books as well.

## GRAND LODGE IMPORTANT DATES

Grand Lodge Annual Communication is scheduled for October 7th & 8th. Based on the date of our event, there are some important dates you need to be aware of:

Item Due to Grand Lodge by:

Proposed Amendment (90 days out) July 9, 2022

Reinstatement from Expulsion (65 days out) August 3, 2022

Lodge Name Change Requests (30 days out) September 7, 2022

### EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

**Sequoit No. 127 Mini Edu Symposium**, Antioch, IL - May 21st, 2022

**Masonic Con** (The Original), New Hampshire - June 4th, 2022

**Esotericon**, Virginia - June 10-12, 2022

**South Pasadena Masonic Lodge - Masonic Con**, Los Angeles - July 22-24, 2022

**Texas Masonic Con**, August 20th, 2022

**Masonic Con Kansas**, KC Metro - August 27th, 2022

**AMD Illinois- In-gathering**, Bloomington Normal - September 17th, 2022

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

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

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

