

A HISTORY OF THE MASONIC RITUAL IN ILLINOIS

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The working employed in the Illinois Grand Lodge and its constituent lodges existing between 1822 and 1827 is not now known, if indeed there was uniformity! The Anti-Masonic movement of the 1830's emanating from the Morgan Affair closed lodges and grand lodges across the land. Our present grand lodge formed April 6, 1840 at Jacksonville, Illinois. Though no representative of the Grand Lodge of Illinois attended the Baltimore Convention, Grand Master Helm's recommendation was adopted as soon as possible after the return of Missouri delegates from the convention, to appoint a Grand Lecturer to confer with them in Saint Louis. Levi Lusk was sent, at Grand Lodge expense, to be instructed by Carnega and Foster. On his return he reported to the Grand Lodge annual communication of 1844. The same evening, he exemplified the lectures for Harmony Lodge. The next day they were recommended to the subordinate lodges as a guide.

John Barney, the dominant figure of the ritual committee at the Baltimore Convention, arrived in Illinois in 1844 and proceeded to instruct the system of lectures he received from Henry Fowle, a contemporary of Thomas Smith Webb. Henry Fowle, a member of Saint Andrews Lodge in Boston, was a ritualist and lecturer and the leading spirit in making several important changes in ritual as approved by his Grand Lodge and almost universally adopted by those in other states. We may presume them to be the recommendations of the Baltimore Convention as his work was about the same as that of the Baltimore Convention. Barney concentrated his instruction within the vicinity of Chicago until the Grand Lodge met in 1845. Brothers Walker and Stuart of Chicago rehearsed the lectures taught them by Barney, for the three degrees, while attending Grand Lodge. The Grand Master commended their exemplification and the Grand Lodge approved "The Barney Lectures: for use in Illinois lodges. Barney was then appointed Grand Lecturer and communicated his working to his successors as the authorized esoteric ceremonials of the jurisdiction.

When Barney died in 1847 he was succeeded by Carding Jackson and William A. Dickey as the supreme authority on Illinois Masonic ritual. Though it was known as "The Dickey Work" in his time, it was that which Barney introduced and the need for uniformity was recognized as being important. The Grand Lodge approved use of Moore's "Masonic Trestle Board" and Shearer's "Master's Carpet" but still the work was optional and not mandatory upon the constituent lodges. During the first twenty-five years of its existence the Grand Lodge made no formal adoption of a particular system of lectures.

J. J. Huntley, son-in-law and pupil of Carding Jackson, succeeded Dickey. But there were also itinerant lecturers employed by lodges as the influx of brethren of other states arrived. The confusion reached the point compelling remedy in 1851 when the Grand Lodge resolved that subordinate lodges refrain

from employing traveling lecturers appointed by Grand lodges of other jurisdictions or claiming such authority, nor permit them to lecture in Illinois lodges.

Robert Morris is best remembered for having founded the Order of the Eastern Star, though he attempted to introduce a revised system of Masonic lectures. About 1860 he urged adoption of his system of lectures, claimed to be original "Webb-Preston" work with a few corrections after having examined old manuscripts. Morris devised a system of mnemonics and organized "The Conservators of Symbolic Masonry" to promote his ritual. When the National Masonic Convention met in Chicago in 1859, Morris used the occasion to demonstrate his ritual for delegates. Then, at the next annual communication of the Grand Lodge of Illinois legislation was introduced "...and the work known as the Webb-Preston work, promulgated by Brother Samuel Wilson and Philip C. Tucker of Vermont, and Brother Robert Morris of Kentucky, is hereby recognized as the original and only work of this jurisdiction, and this Grand Lodge hereby affirms it in every particular as binding upon its subordinate lodges." Grand Lodge was not too sure it wanted this! Confronting a seeming tide of approval for it, however, Grand Master Buck in June, 1861 called the Grand Lecturers together to restore harmony. Lodges were admonished to abide by the instruction of the lecturers until it might be resolved.

Grand Master Blair divided the state into seventeen districts with one lecturer for each district and Harman G. Reynolds, the Grand Secretary, as Lecturer-at-large. As some of the lecturers were of the Conservators movement friction ensued, especially between the Grand Master and Grand Secretary! Reynolds was deposed as Lecturer-at-large creating sentiment in opposition to the Conservators, who then declared it dissolved! Then in 1863 it was resolved "...that the old established work of this Grand Lodge, as ordered to be taught by the Grand Lodge, and as taught by John Barney, James H. Luce, Carding Jackson and William A. Dickey is affirmed as the regularly established work of this Grand Lodge, and all other forms of work and lectures are hereby prohibited."

The Grand Master, Thomas J. Turner, devoted his attention to restoration of the old work. Brother Jerome R. Gorin, of Decatur, was appointed Grand Lecturer-at-large, and received instruction in the work directly from Barney. This must have been prior to Barney's death in 1847, obviously!

Grand Master Turner in 1864 assigned as Grand Lecturers: M. D. Chamberlin, of Freeport; Thomas J. Wade, of Ottawa; Jerome R. Gorin, of Decatur; Lewis Kevon, of Peoria; Daniel G. Burr, of Paris; and A. L. Virden, of Virden. This group was expanded with the addition of Charles Fisher, Rodney Ashley and Thomas J. Prichett. Chamberlin was named the standard authority of the work until his death in 1895. Though no evidence has been found to support it, probably the meticulous and precise rod work characteristic of Illinois work, was introduced under the guidance of Chamberlin. There seems no other jurisdiction's working

from which it might have been copied or adopted! The wand (rod) is carried in a perpendicular position, as a staff, in the Emulation ritual of the United Grand Lodge of England, and various other modifications fill the variety between that Grand Lodge and the manner employed in the Grand Lodge of Illinois.

Chamberlin opened a lodge of instruction at Springfield in 1865 for brethren from around the state. This was the precursor of our present system of schools of instruction in ritual and floor work. Also, in 1865, a commission of three Past Grand Master, called "Overseers of the Work", was created to control Grand Lecturers. Any person desiring to lecture was first required to become proficient, as certified by one of the "Overseers", then was recommended to the Grand Master for commissioning as a Grand Lecturer. The first board of Overseers included M. D. Chamberlin, Thomas J. Wade and Thomas J. Prickett. The Overseers lasted until abolished in 1867 when the state was divided into districts under Deputy Grand Masters who were to act under such regulations as the Grand Master may prescribed.

The indiscriminate use of monitors from Various jurisdictions attributed to the lack of uniformity in the state and prompted the Grand Master to suggest the preparation of a manual, and a committee was appointed. The committee offered such a publication to be printed and distributed as nearly as possible at cost, for use in the lodges. It also recommended some revisions in the work.

Grand Master Harman G. Reynolds, in 1869, remarked that he learned there was an erroneous impression that the Grand Lodge had abandoned the work, and that the Committee on Work were carefully considering some revisions which they were prepared to exemplify . . . and the apprentice degree was conferred in Grand Lodge on the actual candidate---the only known such occasion!

The Grand Lodge then resolved that a Board of four Examiners, nominated by the Grand Master, and confirmed by the Grand Lodge, shall critically examine all applicants for commission as Grand Lecturers, and appoint none who are not thoroughly conversant with the work of this state. The appointees were Milo D. Chamberlin, Charles Fisher, Thomas J. Prickett and Gil W. Barnard. This board conducted its initial school in March, 1870 at Odin and its second school in June at Galesburg. A new constitution provided that it was the duty of the Grand Master to see to thorough instruction in the work and continue appointing Grand Examiners for this purpose.

While the Grand Examiners visited lodges, they conducted no schools during 1871 and 1872. The board then included Chamberlin, Ide, Cook and Prickett. Schools were conducted intermittently until 1881, since then they became annual activity. Edward Cook was given joint custody of The Standard Work together with Chamberlin.

PUBLICATIONS

In 1885 it was recommended by some that the schools be discontinued due to their cost to the Grand Lodge. But Grand Master Darrah ordered they continue as prescribed in the constitution, whereupon schools were conducted at Mount Vernon, Paris, Bloomington, Bushnell and Chicago. Grand Master Smith altered the pattern by holding nine schools with two board members at some and three at others. The entire board attended the final school in Chicago. It had cost \$1,105.28 for the five schools in 1887 to which 255 lodges and 991 brethren registered, while for the nine schools in 1888 the cost was \$1,001.10 to which 2,051 brethren of 519 lodges registered.

A group of zealous and proficient ritualists called themselves "The Standard Team" and on invitation to lodges exemplified the authorized ritual without expense. Their effort stimulated lodge officers to follow their example.

William J. Hughan, foremost English Masonic scholar, retired from his vocation in 1883 to devote his entire energy to Masonic research. Between 1882 and 1887 he collaborated with Robert F. Gould to publish a three volume set entitled "History of Freemasonry." Hughan dismissed much of the fancied notions present in Masonic literature at that time and led the movement for accuracy and documentation in Masonic literature. Together with Gould, he founded the Quatuor Coronati Research Lodge in London.

Published rituals were carefully circulated only among professional lecturers when they originated. In 1855 Moore's "Trestleboard" was given wider distribution and prompted use of subsequent publications by Mackey, Macoy, Sickles and others. Ceremonials, such as for Masonic funerals, cornerstone layings, and dedication of buildings were not regarded as secretive and were readily published. But the Installation of Officers originally was a secretive ceremony!

It had been the practice to install the Master into his office in the presence of Masters and Past Masters only! The other officers were then installed in the presence of Master Masons only! This custom has since been relaxed in Illinois to permit the installation of all lodge officers in the presence of Masons and their non-Masonic guests. None of the esoteric signs, passes or modes of recognition are employed when the ceremony takes place in other than a Tyled lodge, however!

Grand Officers were once inducted into their office in a large auditorium to which the general public was invited. This example was followed by the lodges and has become popular. In more recent years the grand Officers were installed while the Grand Lodge was in session at its annual communication and Tyled. But in 1977, the custom reverted to former times, permitting Masons and their non-Masonic guests to be present. In fact, the Grand Officers at the time thought this to be the first such public installation of Grand Officers in Illinois!! The determination as to whether a ceremony may or may not be attended by non-Masonic guests, apprentices and fellow crafts is not decided by the ceremony having been published, but by the constitution and by-law codes of the Grand Lodge and its constituent lodges.

Anderson's "Constitutions of 1723" contains a ceremony for installation of officers and part of a ceremony for constitution a new lodge and is the earliest such publication. These are thought to have been Doctor Desagulier's work. The first Illinois publication of these ceremonies came in 1858 when William C. Hobbs was given the assignment to prepare a suitable ceremony for the installation of Grand Officers. His report was adopted the next year and is the initial Illinois non-secretive ceremony adopted. Grand Master Jerome R. Gorin was prompted in 1867 to suggest publication of monitorial portions of the work as well as ceremonials.

A committee "On Arrangement of Esoteric and Exoteric Work" was unable to report completion in 1868 but by 1874 a code of by-laws met the requirements permitting authorization of a manual by the Grand Lodge. A form for ceremonials was ready in 1876 and included Constituting New Lodges, Installation of Officers, Dedication of Masonic Halls, and Laying Cornerstones of Masonic and Public Buildings. These did not depart materially from such ceremonies of former times. The committee had drawn upon such ceremonies employed in Massachusetts, Ohio and Missouri. Brother DeWitt C. Cregier is credited with having inspired the project and John M. Pearson and Edward Cook are credited with good judgement and careful attention to procedures in this publication. Perhaps as an afterthought, in 1889 the Grand Lodge slightly revised it adding a ceremony of cape-stones, peculiar to Illinois and subsequently dropped!

The Chicago auditorium was completed in 1890! The cornerstone was to have been laid by the President of the United States but a labor dispute ruled out the plan. Instead, the workmen laid the stone without ceremony! On completion of the building it was desired to have the Masonic fraternity perform a suitable ceremony. Grand Master John C. Smith contrived to level the cape-stone and devised suitable ritual and a ceremony for the occasion. The ceremony was evidently employed this single occasion!

When The Standard Work became mandatory for all constituent lodges in 1913 it included a flag ceremony and catechism in the third degree. The flag ceremony was dropped in 1944 in a conflict between flag etiquette and Masonic floor work! The cathchism in the third degree became optional work.

Edward Cook, previously mentioned as having joint custody of The Standard Work together with Milo D. Chamberlin, published a ritual during his life time. It was in restricted circulation under control of the Grand Lodge. At his death in 1915, the Grand Lodge sought custody of the printing plates from the printer. When the printer refused to give them up, claiming they were his property, a grave dilemma confronted the Grand Lodge. The Standard Work was altered sufficiently to make the printer's plates obsolete and erroneous! A new monitor was then published by the Grand Lodge in 1916. Edmund Ronayne, who frequently

changed jobs and engaged in many personal disputes, was caused to leave the craft. He then became active in the National Christian Association, a group opposing "secret societies"---especially Masonry, travelling about demonstrating what he claimed were Masonic ritual ceremonies. With Ronayne's assistance, the printer published an expose of Masonry which the National Christian Association, of Aurora, sold to support their anti-Masonic activity.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

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