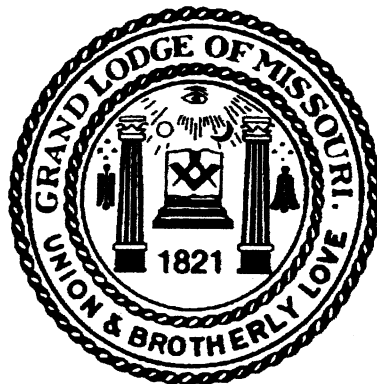


FREEMASONRY

For Masons and Non-Masons
**Answers to Questions
About the
MASONIC FRATERNITY**



Published by the
COMMITTEE OF MASONIC EDUCATION
of
THE GRAND LODGE
OF ANCIENT, FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

What Is Masonry?

Masonry, or Freemasonry, is a 600-year old fraternity with a much older tradition. Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons are members of the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. It is a universal society of friends and brothers who seek to become better men through association with one another and their families. Based on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, it uses builder's tools as symbols to teach basic moral truths that impress upon members the cardinal virtues of brotherly love, relief and truth. Its mission is to help build a better world through its unique process of building better men to live in it, and by urging the practice of brotherly love, charitable relief, and morality and good citizenship in every community.

How Is Masonry Organized?

There are approximately six million Masons in the world, four million of them in the United States, with over 50,000 in Missouri. The unit of organization is the Lodge, which may consist of a few dozen or a few hundred members, and each Lodge is associated with a Grand Lodge. There are over 30,000 Lodges in the world and more than 100 Grand Lodges, the later, in most cases exercising exclusive territorial jurisdiction. There is a Grand Lodge in each state (except Alaska and Hawaii), and in most European and South American countries. Grand Lodges also exist in Africa, Asia and Australia. There is no single central authority, although world organization is maintained by a system of mutual recognition among Grand Lodges.

What is The History of Masonry?

Freemasonry as we know it today originated among medieval stonemasons, particularly in England. The oldest known Masonic record which has been accepted as authentic is the Regius Manuscript of about 1390. Now in the British Museum, it claims an introduction of Masonry into England around A.D. 925. Modern Freemasonry dates from 1717 when four existing Lodges in London joined together to form the first Grand Lodge. After organization of the Grand Lodge of England – thereafter known as the Premier Grand Lodge of the World – Freemasonry became more active. Formation of the Grand Lodges of Scotland and Ireland just a few years later encouraged added interest in its ritual and work, and it is from these Grand Lodges that present day symbolic Freemasonry has evolved. By 1730 Freemasonry was active in America. There were Provincial Grand Masters in several American colonies in the early 1730's, and by the end of the Revolution there were independent Grand Lodges in each of the 13 States.

What is A Mason?

A Mason is a member of the world's largest fraternal organization. He can enjoy the friendship of other Masons in the community, and he will be welcomed as a brother by Masons anywhere in the world.

A Mason shares the aspirations and obligations of men of good will who seek to make themselves better than they are – not better than others.

A Mason worships in his own fashion according to his own religious preference whether he be Christian, Jew or Moslem, Protestant or Roman Catholic, Buddhist or Hindu.

A Mason holds that the brotherhood of man is imperative ... the bond that unites him to other men.

A Mason endeavors to grow in spirit through the exercise of truth, justice, charity and faith in God.

A Mason insists that every man has the right to freedom of worship and freedom of expression, the right to vote according to his conscience, and the right to an education.

Why Is He Called A Mason?

For many centuries the ancient craft of builders – masons who worked in stone, erecting temples, cathedrals and public edifices – shared high standards of workmanship and conduct. The brotherhood of such Masons working in imperishable stone gave rise to the ranks of Apprentices, Fellows, and Master Masons. The tools of their trade were the square, compasses, plumbline, level, trowel and other instruments of precision workmanship. Eventually the great principles of operating masons were adopted by countless others who did not necessarily work in stone, but who have joined voluntarily in thousands of local groups called Lodges that are dedicated to the same principles of brotherhood, rectitude, and charity, and are invigorated by a common dedication to high ethical and spiritual purposes. Employing the works and titles of ancient craft of masonry allegorically. Masons today join together for building – not structures of stone, but men of good character. There is a dynamic force in the ancient institution of the Lodge that continually gives fresh impetus to a man's individual striving.

Who Are The Masons?

Masonic Lodge members in the United States may be highly visible as Shriners in costume, or Knights Templar in uniform, or as apron-wearers in civic processions and at funeral services, or in Lodge regalia at special Masonic ceremonies such as the laying of cornerstones (the U. S. Capitol in 1793 and the Statue of Liberty in 1884 are famous examples), or they may be individually identifiable by a distinctive ring or lapel pin. But in most cases they are not outwardly distinguished in any way at all. They are simply a cross-section of the solid-citizen majority of the population; mostly worthy, ordinary people; self-respecting, considerate, civic-minded patriotic, law-abiding and church-going. Many are leaders in their communities; some are world-famous.

Former President Gerald Ford is a Mason, and so were 13 of his predecessors, including George Washington, who was made a Mason in Fredericksburg, Virginia, as a young man, and while President served as Master of a Lodge in Alexandria. Benjamin Franklin was also an early American Freemason, and was twice Provincial Grand Master in Pennsylvania. Other famous men include John Hancock, Paul Revere, generals Douglas MacArthur, John J. Pershing and Omar Bradley; Admiral

Ernest J. King, Rudyard Kiplin, Beethoven, Mozart, Lafayette, Bolivar, Eddie Richenbacker, J. Edgar Hoover, Cecil B. DeMille, David Sarnoff, Dr. Charles W. Mayo, explorer Richard E. Byrd, clergymen Daniel A. Poling and Norman Vincent Peale; astronauts Edwin E. Aldrin, Gordon Cooper, and others. Most Masons, like the majority of individuals, live their lives without world fame.

You Must Seek Masonic Membership!

Who chooses the men who become Masons? Who selects the candidates and asks them to join? Freemasonry does not seek members through solicitation or membership drives. The individual must seek Masonry of his own free will and accord, and make known his desire to become a Mason. A man who wants to become a Mason asks for an application form from the Mason he knows best – a relative, friend, or acquaintance. The application form, called “Petition for the Degrees,” requests information about the man’s character, personal history and his family status.

The applicant signs the petition form, and two Masons who are members of the Lodge being petitioned sign it as recommending him for membership. Obviously, the Masons who sign as sponsors should be well acquainted with the petitioner. The applicant gives the petition to his Masonic friend who turns it in to the Master or Secretary of the Lodge, the petition is read in the Lodge, after which an investigating committee is required to make diligent inquiry into the character and fitness of the applicant. The committee reports at a regular meeting of the Lodge, following which the Lodge will act upon the petition. Upon acceptance, the petitioner will be notified when to report for initiation.

Degrees Of Masonry

The basic tenets of Masonry are taught in three degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, and they consist of ceremonies of a serious nature in which each candidate takes part with dignity and solemnity. Through initiation, the candidate is taught to identify himself with the Fraternity, to learn its language, to understand its teachings, and generally to acquire the sense of pride that comes from belonging to so time-honored an institution, its many beautiful lessons are acceptable to every man who desires to have a closer sense of relationship with the world and its Creator. The degrees employ the tools of operative stonemasons as symbols to emphasize basic moral truths which are fundamental to society as well as to the Fraternity. Many symbols are used, and each man gains an understanding of the mystic tie which binds together all true Freemasons of the world into one universal brotherhood.

How Secret is Masonry?

The word Freemasonry has always been associated with secrecy, and yet the Fraternity is not a secret society. As long ago as 1630 there was printed reference to “the Mason word” and there have always been special signs and hand grips by which the initiated might make themselves known to one another, as will as private

rituals which are not shared with non-members. In this respect it lives up to its centuries-old reputation for secrecy; but the secrecy is largely ceremonial. The Fraternity does not hide its existence or its membership. Its purposes, aims and principles are not secret, and it meets in Masonic temples and Masonic halls which are familiar sights in thousands of towns and cities.

What About Politics And Religion?

Good citizenship and a belief in God are requirements for the individual Mason. Lodges, Grand Lodges and related Masonic organizations are non-political and non-denominational. In fact, partisan discussion is forbidden within Lodges. This is the rule in regular Grand Lodges and is an important reason for non-recognition of some European groups, claiming to be Masonic, who do not observe it. Lodge membership consists of men of good character who have diverse political views and various religious beliefs. As Masons, they recognize one another only as friends and brothers, without regard to political party or religious allegiance.

Beyond The Lodge

Lodge members may, and many do, join Masonic-related organizations outside of the Lodge, including the York Rite, Scottish Rite, the Shrine (Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine), square clubs, Grotto, and others. There are organizations, though not Masonic, for women related to Masons, the most widely known being the Order of the Eastern Star and the Order of the Amaranth. Similarly, for boys, there is the Order of DeMolay; for girls, the Order of the Rainbow, and Job's Daughters.

What Does Masonry Cost?

While Masonic membership need not be overly expensive, there are fees and dues to be considered. Initiation fees and annual dues vary widely, depending entirely on the local Lodge. Each sets its own rates. Beyond fees and dues, Lodges expect members to be reasonably generous with charitable contributions. If a Mason elects to join other related Masonic organizations, such as Royal Arch Chapter, Royal and Select Masons Council, Knights Templar Commandery, Scottish Rite Consistory, Shrine Temple, square club or any other Masonic organization, his costs increase accordingly.

A Grand Design

Serious inquiry will reveal an image of Masonry as having a grand design for the betterment, happiness and enlightenment of mankind. He who petitions for the degrees and is accepted for membership will be mightily proud and grateful for an inspiring and rewarding experience.