



Some Background for an Aspirant

A PART OF THE
LODGE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

This booklet as a part of the Lodge System of Education has been prepared in order to acquaint the candidate for Masonry, as well as his wife and family, with those aspects of Masonic history which will make for a more enlightened beginning.

The first half of this booklet is taken verbatim from the publication of the same name by the Grand Lodge of Minnesota. We are indebted to that Grand Lodge for permission to reproduce their material here. To this we have added a brief condensation of the book, "Freemasonry in Michigan," by Smith and Fey.

It is the nature of Freemasonry that Masonic education is never-ending. This is but a portion of the much larger Lodge System of Education which is designed for the continuing enlightenment of the Craft. We hope that the reader will obtain as much pleasure from these pages as we have had in assembling them.

Committee on Masonic Service and Education
in conjunction with
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The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons
of the State of Michigan

Some Background for an Aspirant

How Old is
Masonry?

This question cannot be definitely answered. For Masonry was not created at a given moment, or even in a single day, month, or year. Its distant origins, the actual beginnings of our Craft, are veiled in the mists of antiquity. We find striking similarities in the Solar Mysteries of Egypt, which it is believed may have been evolved as early as the *year* 2000 B.C. Pythagoras, Plutarch, Plato, and Pindar were among the initiates into the Greater Mysteries, which were the repository of the highest then known "secrets" of astronomy, geometry, religion, the fine arts and the laws of nature. Centuries later, the Roman Collegia emerged; these were small, local groups of artisans-goldsmiths, dyers, builders, potters, and others. They acted upon petitions for membership, received members through initiations, had rooms like those of present day fraternities, divided the membership into grades, had a common table, had a charity fund, used passwords, grips, tokens, and symbols. Each group was self-governing. Some were religious (often pagan) in nature; others were socially inclined, while still others were mostly concerned with their particular trade or profession.

The Guilds

About the third century A.D. there began a series of incursions of warlike tribes from east of Europe, which finally overran the Roman Empire and destroyed the civilization of the time. For more than seven centuries the so-called Dark Ages ensued. Then Europe *began* gradually to re-erect its civilization, and one of the first features of this process was the development and training of craftsmen of all kinds. Later these craftsmen formed societies called "guilds," comprising the men in a particular locality who performed a definite and specific type of work or service. These were much like the old Collegia, though there seems to have been no connection between the two. Most of them had carefully guarded secrets, which members were bound not to reveal to non-members. (It is to be remembered that printing had not yet been invented, and only a relatively few people outside the clergy

could read or write; therefore much of the practical knowledge and also of the learning of that day reposed within the crafts as trade secrets, and were handed down by word of mouth.)

Masons

Most of these artisans seldom went more than a day's journey *away* from home. However, this was not true of the stone masons. Their work consisted largely of the erection of cathedrals, castles, and other large structures, many of which required many years, sometimes centuries, to complete. Local guilds were not equipped either in numbers or in skills to perform this type of work, and the Masonic craft of necessity became migratory. The employer (ofttimes the Church or the Crown), would select a Master of the Work, and he would arrange for the traveling of the various groups of workmen from their previous jobs to the site of the new work. There, after providing for their homes or barracks, they would construct a workshop which would be used also for rest, refreshment, and relaxation; this was called a Lodge, and this word also designated the organized body of workmen who used the building.

Freemasons

Any type of builder was called a Mason, and the craft as a whole was called Masonry. It included quarrymen, wallers, hewers, slaters, tilers, rough masons, cutters, plasterers, carpenters, and all others who worked upon the structure. At the head of the project were those who today would be called architects or engineers; they understood engineering and geometry as the result of long and arduous training, and many were proficient in a number of the "arts" connected with the building trade, such as carving and sculpturing, the making of stained glass windows, mosaics, and other highly specialized skills. They were called "Freemasons," perhaps because they were free to move from place to place as they might desire, whereas the lesser workmen were generally serfs, and could travel only at the pleasure of their masters.

came a day when someone sought membership who was in no way connected with the building trades, because he was attracted by the philosophical teachings of Masonry. Others followed in increasing numbers. (Incidentally, this is the origin of the term, "Ancient Free and Accepted Masons"; these men though not builders, were "accepted" as Masons.)

The First
Grand Lodge

This movement appears to have taken place during the seventeenth century. Undoubtedly it was greatly influenced by the printing of the Bible in 1455. This and the other books which followed opened the field of knowledge to the common people, and they began to think. The Reformation had come in the early fifteen hundreds, when the Church of England broke away from the rule of Rome, and with it came an increased intellectual freedom, until, toward the end of the seventeenth century, it became evident that the building monopolies of operative masons had seen their day. No longer could the "secrets" of geometry and architecture be maintained; they became more or less common knowledge. Now men of wealth, culture and distinction of all manner of occupations were freely admitted to membership in the Craft, and their numbers grew until, in 1717, an event took place which marks the dividing line between the old Freemasonry and the new; between the last lingering remains of Operative Masonry and a Craft which is wholly speculative (that is, a theoretical Craft, rather than physical-a mental concept, rather than practical). In June of that year, four Lodges met and organized the first Grand Lodge of Masons. Its authority was at first limited to "within ten miles of London," but it soon invaded the provinces, and is today recognized as the "Mother Lodge" of Masonry.

How Old?

Thus far, we have discussed the background of Masonry without being too specific about the history of Masonry itself. Actually, it can be proven that it is old-very old. For there are in existence about a hundred of what are known as "The Old Charges," sometimes called constitutions; they were drawn

up by individual Lodges and were used by them much as we use Constitutions and By-Laws in today's organizations. The best know of these is called the Regius Poem, or the Halliwell Manuscript (after the name of the man who discovered it in the British Museum). It was written about 1390 A.D., and it shows that even then Masonry was very old. There is rather convincing evidence that operative Masonry was in existence at least as early as the year 926 A.D.

Masonry in
America

There seems to be no evidence of
the advent of Freemasonry into

America prior to 1717, though it is known that individual Masons did appear in the American colonies soon after that, and that they represented speculative Masonry. The first Lodge in America of which there is documentary evidence existed in Philadelphia as early as 1730. Three years later, on petition from a number of Masons living in Boston, the Grand Lodge of England appointed Henry Price as "Provincial Grand Master of New England and Dominions and Territories thereunto belonging." Later in that year he formed a Grand Lodge, and then granted the petition of eighteen brethren, constituting them into a Lodge now known as St. John's Lodge of Boston. The Lodge of St. Andrew (also of Boston), received its charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1756. Among its members were Joseph Warren, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts at the time.

American
Independence

Space does not permit the telling of
the story of Masonry during the
American Revolution. We can only

say that it is illustrious and that we can take great pride in it. George Washington was a Mason, as were General Warren (previously mentioned), LaFayette and over half of the other American generals. So were John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, James Monroe, Anthony Wayne, Ethan Allen, and Nathanael Greene to mention a few.

Following the war, it was quickly determined that since political relations had been severed between this country and England, Masonic allegiance to the Grand Lodges of England and of Scotland had also been severed. A new Grand Lodge was organized, and from it were chartered other Grand Lodges throughout the country. Today there are forty-nine Grand Lodges in the United States—one for each state (except Alaska and Hawaii), and one for the District of Columbia. Alaska is at present under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the State of Washington, while Hawaii is under that of California. At this writing there is no plan to change that situation, though doubtless it will come about, sooner or later.

Early History in Michigan

While we cannot claim that Free
masonry came to the Great Lakes

Area on any specific date, it is clear that it was brought to the area first by the French at a time when this was Indian Territory. Previous to the coming of the white man to what is now Detroit, Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac set up and became Commandant of a fort on the mainland of Michilimackinac in 1694. In 1701 he established a post at Detroit. For the next 60 years Frenchmen were living in the Detroit area; we can presume that French Freemasons were active there during that period although no records have as yet been uncovered to document this. The conclusion is made for two reasons: first, we have documentation which proves that French Freemasons did establish Lodges in all other French-American outposts contemporary with the period; second, Sieur Picote De Belestre was the last French Commandant at Detroit. He was an active Freemason and an officer in "Regimentade la Marine a Militia" and this regiment had, for many years, attached to it a military Masonic Lodge entitled "Tendre Fraternelle." Thus, this Lodge must have been stationed in Detroit with De Belestre's regiment.

It is interesting to note that on November 29, 1760, De Belestre surrendered his command in Detroit to a British Freemason, Major Robert Rogers, who had been dispatched

to take possession of Detroit, Michilimackinac and the entire Northwest. Major Rogers was an active Master Mason having been raised in St. John's Lodge No. 1 of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The famous Major Henry Gladwin, first British Commandant of the Territory is also listed as a Freemason. Thus, prior to the permanent establishment of Freemasonry in Michigan, there were many individuals both French and British, who were active members of the Speculative Craft.

Lodge No. 1 in Detroit Detroit is the oldest American center of Masonic activity west of the Allegheny Mountains and, moreover, a Lodge began to function here just thirty years after the establishment by Warrant of the first Lodge on this continent.

It was in 1764, a short time after the British took possession of Detroit, that the first Lodge was born and it is lamentable that little is known about it. This Lodge was founded by Lt. John Christie of the 2nd Battalion, 60th Royal American Foot Regiment, April 27, 1764, under Warrant issued by George Harrison, Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of New York, acting under the authority of the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns circa 1717). The first Senior Warden was Samuel Fleming in charge of the commissary at the fort. The Lodge met in the blockhouse of the "Fort du Detroit." It is the same blockhouse where the deliberations with the Indians were held. The room was poorly lighted by the yellow sunshine through its small windows and our pioneer Brethren improvised such crude and scanty furniture as was necessary to the proper functioning of the Lodge. Like so many of the world's old Lodges, the only items extant today are the original Warrant, a Certificate and a few old letters.

Additional Lodges By 1772, there were at least three Lodges functioning at Detroit: Lodge No. 1 and two Irish Lodges, No. 299 and No. 378, held by authority of Irish Military

Warrants issued to Masons of the 10th Regiment then stationed at Detroit. It is worth noting that despite the fact that the first four Michigan Lodges were established through agencies of the Grand Lodge of England, the drama of our Master Mason Degree has a definite Irish flavor and we can only conclude that the brief visitations of these early Irish Military Lodges left an indelible imprint on our Masonic ceremonies.

The second, third and fourth Lodges warranted for work in Michigan were also started by members of the military. These were Harmony Lodge, a military Lodge in Detroit; St. Johns Lodge No. 15 warranted in 1782 for work on the Island of Mackinac and Zion Lodge No. 10 (now No. 1) warranted in 1794 for work in Detroit. Whereas the first three Lodges met in the forts, Zion Lodge met in the home of its first Worshipful Master, James Donaldson, for its first seven years.

Zion Helps
Found
University

Many events are recorded in the well-kept minutes of Zion Lodge, but perhaps the most momentous occurred in September of 1817.

The University of Michigan is the oldest state institution of higher learning. It first took shape in the minds of three people; Augustus Woodward, a Mason and the first judge of the Territorial Supreme Court; Reverend John Monteith, Presbyterian clergyman and Father Gabriel Richard, Roman Catholic Priest. After years of effort on the part of these and other supporters, on August 26, 1817, the Territory of Michigan passed the act establishing the University. An appropriation was also passed in the amount of \$180 to acquire a building lot and "in aid of the resources for constructing buildings for the use of the University...." About two weeks later, the faculty of the institution, John Monteith and Gabriel Richard, acting under statutory authority, proceeded to acquire financial support. On September 19, the Detroit Gazette listed the first contributors: immediately after the Territory of Michigan appears the subscription of Zion Lodge for \$250. The minutes of the Lodge show a special meeting

held on September 15, 1817, to take into consideration the propriety of subscribing as a Lodge, in aid of the University of Michigan.... The action taken was recorded as follows:

On motion, Resolved, that the Worshipful Master be authorized to subscribe, in behalf of the Lodge \$250, in aid of the University of Michigan, payable in the sum of \$50 per annum.

By unanimous action of the Lodge

Further resolved, that the said sum of \$250 be subscribed as above, to be paid out of the sum appropriated by the Lodge for refreshments, and that refreshments be dispensed with until the same is fully paid.

On October 10, the Detroit Gazette published a final list of subscribers. Of the total amount subscribed (\$3,001.00) some two-thirds (\$2,000.00) came from Zion Lodge and its members (sixteen of the thirty-six known subscribers). An additional \$100 came from Oliver Miller, also a Mason.

Michigan was the first Territory or State in the United States to assume the obligations of widespread public education, and at least two-thirds of the credit can be given to Michigan Masonry. It is of additional interest to note that the first Register of the University of Michigan was John. L. Whiting, a Past Master of Zion Lodge, a founder of the Grand Lodge and its first Grand Secretary.

Other Lodges The history of Michigan Masonry shows that the members of Zion Lodge unselfishly sponsored and supported the establishment of additional Lodges in Upper Canada and Michigan including Detroit Lodge No. 337 (now No. 2), Oakland Lodge No. 343 in Pontiac, Menomanie Lodge No. 374 in Green Bay (then a part of the Territory) and Monroe Lodge No. 375 in Monroe.

The Grand Lodge
These five Lodges laid plans for a Grand Lodge in the Territory in order to handle the growing plans for Masonry in the area and in June of 1826 a Grand Lodge for the Territory of Michigan was established in Detroit.

Eleven delegates representing Zion, Detroit, Menomanie and Monroe Lodges met in a convention in Detroit, convened specifically for the purpose of organizing a Grand Lodge. Lewis Cass, Territorial Governor and Past Grand Master of Ohio, was elected to be our first Grand Master. On December 27, 1826, the Grand Lodge Officers were duly installed by Most Worshipful Brother Lewis Cass, who as a Past Grand Master of Ohio was fully competent to do this work. The Grand Secretary was instructed to inform the other Grand Jurisdictions of the organization of this Grand Lodge and to communicate a copy of its Constitution. Thus, was the Grand Lodge of Michigan duly constituted.

So much for glimpses of the early days in Michigan Masonry. We wish we could go on with more, and that we could pay tribute to all those sturdy pioneers whose names are written high in the Masonic annals of our state. But here we must stop. For a more extended treatment, see the book, "Freemasonry in Michigan" by Smith and Fey, available from the Grand Lodge of Michigan.

So much for the history of Masonry, as briefly as we can state it, and still outline its principal features. There is a wealth of material on the subject, and it makes fascinating reading; we recommend it to you. Perhaps one of the best sources is, "A History of Freemasonry," by Haywood and Craig.

The Essence of Masonry
Earlier in this discussion we dealt at length on operative Masonry, barely mentioning the entry of the speculative-though we did give *you* a hint of its nature. As a matter of fact, Freemasonry has both a physical and an intellectual, or spiritual, nature. The former is the organization

itself, manifested in its rites and ceremonies; these have been brought down to us from ancient times and are still preserved, largely in ancient form. Back of the physical, however, hidden by a veil of allegory and symbolism, but constituting the very heart of Masonry, lie its spiritual values the lessons it teaches. Only because of these fundamental truths, the rock upon which Masonry has builded, and the steadfast courage of the men who have upheld its banner, has Masonry endured through the ages.

It is, of course, essential that you know something about how Masonry is organized, and for the present, we shall confine ourselves to a brief outline.

Blue Lodges

We have already mentioned the Grand Lodges of the various states, each supreme in its own jurisdiction. They charter, or "constitute," subordinate lodges, popularly known as "Blue" Lodges, and this Lodge which you are about to enter is one of them. Its principal officers are the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer, Secretary, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon and Tyler. Other officers are a Chaplain, Stewards and a Marshal. The first five principal officers are elected annually; the others are elected or appointed by the Master in accordance with the By-Laws of each individual Lodge. All their respective duties will be made clear to you later. The Master's authority is beyond question, the only appeal from his decision being to the Grand Lodge.

Meetings are called Communications, and may be "Stated" or "Special." The former refers to a meeting held at a stated time and hour specified in the By-Laws while the word "Special" means a meeting at some other time, called at the will and pleasure of the Master.

The Three Degrees

The fundamental principles of Free masonry are exemplified in three degrees: the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master Mason. The first is not to be

regarded merely as a stepping stone to the second, nor the second to the third; they should, rather, be thought of as a series of concentric circles, the smaller contained in the larger, for in a very true sense the Master Mason is still an Entered Apprentice, as he is also a Fellowcraft. Your passage will require some weeks-perhaps months.

Your Duties

You will become a member of this

Lodge when you have received the three degrees, proved your proficiency in them in open Lodge and have signed the Roll of Membership. It will always be your duty to be loyal to the fraternity, faithful to your superior officers, and obedient to Masonic Law. You will be expected to pay your dues promptly and regularly, to stand ready to help a worthy brother Mason in sickness or distress, and to support the charities of the Lodge as your conscience shall direct and your means permit. You are also expected to attend the communications as regularly as possible, and to discharge promptly and efficiently such specific Masonic duties as may be assigned to you.

Being a Mason means being a good citizen, loyal to your government, and conducting yourself as a wise and upright man, charged with an individual responsibility for maintaining the world's respect for Masonry.

Masonic Education

Now that you have knocked at our
portal and will soon be permitted

to cross its threshold, you will hear more of these things. The meaning of all you will hear and see may not be entirely clear to you at the time, for Masonry's method of instruction is such that its full significance can hardly be immediately apparent to the initiate. That is the "raison d'etre" of this Educational Program. We shall meet with you after you have received your Entered Apprentice Degree, your Fellowcraft Degree and again after your Master Mason Degree. In these meetings we shall endeavor to clear up any questions about the work which you may have in mind, for we want you to become an honor to the Craft, and a well-informed Mason is a good Mason.

As Master of this Lodge, I have set _____
_____ for your initiation:
make note of it. Your Intender, Brother _____
will get in touch with you before that date and will do what
he can to help you. Following your first degree this Brother
will meet with you for a discussion of that degree. In the
meantime, read this and the preceding booklet carefully, and
if any questions occur to you, jot them down, and we'll try to
answer them.

_____, W. M.