

**Grand Lodge of Alberta
Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons**

**LODGE PLAN
OF
MASONIC
EDUCATION**

The material contained in this booklet
is a modification of the
"Lodge System of Education"
of the Grand Lodge of New York, F. & A.M.,
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Issued by the Committee on Masonic Research and Education
1936

Copy of first letter to be sent by the Secretary, to prospective applicant. Letter forms can be obtained from Grand Secretary

Dear Sir:

As the exact nature of the institution of Freemasonry is unknown to you, it is deemed advisable before signing the attached petition that you should be informed on certain features and phases of that institution which may effect your decision to apply for membership therein.

Freemasonry has in all ages required that men should come to its door entirely of their own free will; not as the result of importunity nor from feelings of curiosity; but from a favorable opinion of the institution, a desire for knowledge, and a sincere wish to be serviceable to their fellow-creatures.

Masonry is a system of morality based on the belief in the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the brotherhood of men; therefore no atheist can be made a Mason. It strives to teach a man the duty he owes to God, his country, to his family, to his neighbor and to himself. It inculcates the practice of every virtue and makes an extensive use of symbolism in its teachings. It interferes with neither religion nor politics, but strives only after light and truth, endeavoring always to bring out the highest and noblest qualities of men.

It should be clearly borne in mind that Freemasonry is not to be entered in the hope of personal gain or advancement. Admission must not be sought from mercenary or unworthy motives. Anyone so actuated will be bitterly disappointed. The aim of the true Freemason is to cultivate a brotherly feeling among men, and to help the distressed and afflicted to the extent of his ability.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Freemasonry is not a benefit society, although the practice of charity is considered a fundamental virtue. We do not pay so much a year to entitle us to draw sick pay or other benefits, or to make provision for those we leave behind. There are other excellent societies founded for this purpose.

You have no doubt been informed regarding the fees and dues which you will be required to pay. No one should contemplate incurring this expense where such action will involve a hardship to his wife or family or anyone depending upon him.

Loyalty to one's country is an essential qualification of Freemasonry, and only those are acceptable who cheerfully conform to every lawful authority. Disloyalty in any form is abhorrent to the teachings of Freemasonry and is regarded as a serious Masonic offence. Freemasonry is not contrary to the beliefs of any man of upright heart and mind, and has in it nothing inconsistent with his civil, moral or religious duties.

Should the principles as outlined herein meet with your full and complete endorsement, you may proceed to complete and present your application.

Yours truly,

AFTER THE BALLOT, AND BEFORE INITIATION the applicant should meet a small committee, and the following be read slowly and impressively to him. Care should be taken to keep discussion within proper limits.

In the book of human history Freemasonry has a chapter of its own. It is one which, because of its fascinations and because of the light it will shed along your future pathway when you have become a member of a Masonic lodge, you will desire to read. Just now we can make little more than a brief reference to the background of our Masonic Craft.

Tradition leads us backwards through the period of the Collegia, or Guild, of the Roman Empire to the time of the building of King Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem; as a matter of fact the legends of Masonry for the most part find their source in the story of the building of that incomparable edifice. A definite origin is traceable to the builders of those remarkable structures in the Gothic style of architecture that were erected during the Middle Ages on the continent of Europe and in Great Britain. Because they were builders in the literal sense, members in those days were known as Operative Masons. Completing their work in one community they would move on to another, setting up lodges wherever they met, and those lodges were officered almost as our lodges are today. Significant in connection with their lodge affairs is the fact that they had a charity chest from which to disburse relief to members in distress, accident or sickness, and to widows and orphans of Master Masons --reference to which is made here in order to emphasize that, in Masonry, charity always has been and still is regarded as an outstanding virtue.

Such was the Fraternity in its Operative period; and as such it flourished for generations. Then came a change. The publication of Euclid's geometry gave to the world many of the Operative Mason's old trade secrets. With the coming of the reformation the Gothic style of architecture began to lose favor, social conditions suffered revolution; laws underwent marked revision. All these together with many other factors brought about a decline in the Craft until, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the number of Freemasons became so reduced that only a small lodge here and there clung to existence -- and even that was precarious.

To recruit their numbers a new practice was adopted, namely, that of accepting into membership men who in their vocations were not builders in the literal sense. Hence the term, "Accepted Masons." By the early part of the eighteenth century those "Accepted Masons" surpassed the Operative Masons both in number and in influence, and soon the craft was transformed from an Operative Body into a Speculative Fraternity. It took definite form as such in the year 1717 when in London, England, the first Grand Lodge was formed.

By Speculative Masonry is meant Masonry in a moral, or symbolical, sense. The terms and instruments of the Operative Mason of former times are to the Mason of today symbols from which are deduced those ennobling moral lessons that are needful for the building of character which is, indeed, the purpose of Speculative Masonry.

To become a Mason you must be prepared with all sincerity to give whole-hearted assent to its obligations and its tenets, and strict obedience to its laws and regulations. For there are certain traditions, practices, usages, laws and principles which are basic and which are unalterable by an

Masonic Lodge or Grand Lodge. Knowledge about much of these is to be gained during progress through the degrees and by attendance at meetings and association with seniors. For the present we wish to touch briefly upon its principles -- what Masonry is, and what Masonry is not.

Masonic is a system of morality having for its fundamentals

BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF and TRUTH.

Brotherly Love means the development of that confidence whereby we may regard a fellow-man in the highest valuation as a companion and friend -- not from any materialistic viewpoint, but because of the virtuous character he is found to possess and of the sincere friendship he is observed to practice.

Masonic Relief does not mean, primarily, monetary relief; and, notwithstanding that large sums of money are disbursed annually in that respect, a member has no claim on Masonry for financial relief. Its meaning is found in the broader interpretation: that of advice, encouragement and moral assistance. At the same time, charity is not relegated to a subsidiary place; for, charity is the great distinctive feature of the Masonic heart and is bounded only by due discretion respecting one's family.

Truth needs no elaboration. Its meaning is obvious; for Truth is the supreme virtue without which nothing can be certain or secure, and all else must inevitably crumble in helpless ruin and decay. "The eternal years of God are hers".

The principles of Masonry are clear and distinct. While they do involve social and moral obligations, our organization is not a religious fraternity within the restricted interpretation that would mean it to be exclusively identified with any one particular creed or sect or denomination. Masonry admonishes its members steadfastly to practice the Golden Rule; and it teaches and maintains a high sense of respect for and toleration towards all religions. To all Masons it recommends serious study and consideration of the scriptures as contained in the Volume of the Sacred Law that lies upon the altars of its lodges. It believes that therein is provided safe and sane guidance concerning man's duty to God, to his neighbor, to his family and to himself. Indeed, our symbolism places God as the centre of all things. Masonry ever strives to bring its members into closer harmony with the Divine Being and counsels them to observe reverence and humility which ought always to exist between the creature and his Creator.

Neither is Masonry a political party nor an ally of any political party. It leaves its members free to form for themselves their individual political affiliations. Yet Masonry does inculcate a commonsense conception of good citizenship. Moral obligations bind its members to respect and uphold, not to subvert, established authority and order; and, while remembering with filial affection the land of birth, to remain loyal to the law of the land, which, at least for the time being, extends the courtesy and the privileges of residence and citizenship.

Concerning the duties of a Mason: of first importance are the exercise of strictest caution in guarding the mysteries and secrets of the Craft; fidelity to its principles; loyalty to the officers of his lodge; and unqualified obedience to its laws and regulations. Regular attendance at meetings is, of course, an implied duty, for there the member takes his proper place in the consideration and direction of the affairs of his lodge and of Masonry generally. So, also, regular payment of dues is essential; for only thereby is a lodge enabled to discharge its obligations and to function to the fullest extent in all branches of the work.

There are many other matters, all of them interesting, that might be mentioned -- for instance, the organization and conduct of a lodge. But there is not occasion here to enter into details of these unless desired. If there be any questions, we shall be pleased to give what information we may and can impart.

AFTER THE FIRST DEGREE

The same method should be followed as after the Ballot, but with a changed Committee.

It is now permitted briefly to sum up the meaning of your initiation and to suggest how its symbolism may be translated into lessons for practice in everyday life.

In the days of Operative Masons, in order to replace losses caused by removal, accident, illness and death, it was necessary to recruit new members; and in doing this the apprentice system was used. The word "apprentice" means a beginner, an understudy; in other words, one who is taking his first steps towards learning or mastering a trade or profession. Before a boy was chosen to be an apprentice he was called into a lodge, where all the members might assure themselves of his moral, mental and physical qualifications. If they voted to receive him, he was given certain information about the Craft -- what his duties would be, what it required of its members, and something of its traditions and early history. He was required to give a solemn promise to obey his superiors, to work with diligence, to observe the laws and rules, and to keep the secrets. He was then indentured to a Master, and usually went to live in his Master's house.

After sufficient time has elapsed to give assurance of his fitness to master the art and to become an acceptable member of the Society, his name was entered in the books of the lodge and he was given a recognized place in the Craft with the title, "Entered Apprentice." And with the transformation from Operative Masonry to Speculative Masonry the title, "Entered Apprentice," has been continued as that of one who has been initiated into Masonry, or who has received its First Degree.

The close similarity between the method of those early days and the method of today is readily observable. After you had made known your desire to become a Mason, considerable time elapsed between the receiving of your formal application and your acceptance as a candidate. It was during this interval that the members had opportunity to inquire into your fitness to be accepted. Having been accepted, you were required to enter into certain obligations. And now you are indentured as an Entered Apprentice, signifying that you are launched on a voyage of discovery, study and development in the realm of moral living and of building character. The success you will attain depends entirely upon the manner in which you fashion your daily life in accordance with our Masonic precepts.

Let us now consider some of the more important symbols and emblems of the First Degree. The Hoodwink represents the darkness in which the uninitiated man stands as respecting Masonic life. Its removal suggests that the great matters of existence, such as goodness, truth and beauty, are not made. They are found. They are present in our midst always; it is our own blindness that conceals them.

The Cable Tow symbolizes all those external restraints or forces through which a man is controlled by others or by agencies outside himself. There is a difference between lawful liberty and license; and when, of his own free will, a man does not keep the law, then he must be compelled to keep it. By removal of the Cable Tow is meant that when a man becomes master of himself he will keep the law instinctively, out of his own character, and without compulsion.

The Sharp Instrument means, among other things, that which is a definite penalty for violation of the obligation -- the penalty of the destructive consequences to a man's nature and conscience when untrue to his word, faithless in his vows, disloyal in obedience.

The Great Lights of Masonry are the Volume of the Sacred Law, The Square and Compasses. The Volume of the Sacred Law is given to be a rule and guide to our faith. The Square is to remind up to square our actions by the square of virtue. The Compasses are to keep us within due bounds with all mankind.

The Apron, the distinguishing badge of a Mason, is an emblem of purity. By purity is meant blamelessness, sincerity in good will toward the brethren, and loyalty in obedience to the laws of the Craft. It also signifies that Masons are workers and builders.

The North East Corner is traditionally the place where the corner of a building is laid. When the Entered Apprentice is made to stand there, he represents the corner stone of the future Craft. What Apprentices are today, Masonry will be tomorrow.

The Working Tools represent those moral and spiritual virtues, habits and forces by which a man is enabled to reshape the crude, and often stubborn material of his nature in order to adjust himself to the needs and requirements of human society.

An Entered Apprentice has certain duties, enjoys certain privileges, and is bound by certain limitations. His chief duty is to be loyal to his obligation, the clauses of which clearly set forth what he is to do and what he is not to do. He should review it frequently so that its exact words and meanings will remain with him throughout life. And, too, the lecture of the Degree, given in the Book of Constitution with which he is presented, should be studied with equal thoroughness - because it contains Masonic teachings of fundamental importance that stand binding on every Mason forever. His privileges are the right to sit in a lodge of Entered Apprentices and the right to apply for advancement to a higher Degree; he cannot vote or hold office. He is not entitled to a Masonic funeral and may not walk in a public Masonic procession.

Finally, you have undertaken to respect those sturdy virtues which make for well-being in affairs both domestic and social. In family life as in community life the exercise of prudence should teach you the happy medium of tact and tolerance; the firmness of fortitude will develop the courage to face, not to sidestep, moral issues and to remain firm in all times of testing; the restraint of temperateness will chasten unbridled enthusiasm with discriminating moderation; and the call of justice will crown all by elevating the needs of humanity above all other considerations. To summarize briefly, remember at all times that benevolence and charity are the twin graces of Masonry, whose presence in the heart and practice in life make our Order the power for good that it is and the inspiration which we hope it will always be for serious minded men who seek the vision of divine truth.

AFTER THE SECOND DEGREE

The same procedure, but with a different Committee, should be followed.

You are now well on your way into Masonry and no doubt you have been interested in many of its appeals. In the first degree the principal appeal was made to the conscience while in the degree you have just witnessed an address was made to the intellectual faculties. By the Liberal Arts and Sciences, assisted by the five senses, you climb the symbolical steps to the Middle Chamber which in Masonry represents the place of Wisdom.

Let us consider for a moment some of the terms used and then we can apply them to their intended purpose and study some of the allegories peculiar to the Fellowcraft Degree.

A "Fellowcraft" is one of a large number of terms which have a technical meaning peculiar to Freemasonry and refer to an organization of skilled workmen in some trade or calling. A "Fellow" meant one who held full membership in such a craft, was obligated to the same duties and allowed the same privileges. You have already been told of the development of Masonry from the Operative period to the Speculative and recall that after seven years an Entered Apprentice was tested as to his proficiency and if found satisfactory was made a full member of the craft. Such was the Operative meaning of Fellowcraft.

You are yourself a Fellowcraft. This means that you passed through the ceremonies, assumed its obligations, are registered as such in the books of the Lodge, and can sit in either a Lodge of Apprentices or of Fellowcrafts. Do not look upon the Fellowcraft Degree as a mere stage, or stepping-stone. It has in itself the same completedness, the same importance, as the preceding degree, with a definite purpose of its own and in it are embodied two great ideas.

Where the Entered Apprentice represents youth standing at the portals of life, his eyes on the rising sun, the Fellowcraft is a man in the prime of life -- experienced, strong, resourceful, able to bear the burdens and responsibilities. By his skill and experience the arts are sustained and the destinies of the state are in his keeping. At the building of the Temple, King Solomon employed eighty thousand Fellowcrafts or "hewers in the mountains and quarries." The Fellowcraft walks in the full, uncolored light of the noon time and must gain direct experience from contact with the realities of existence. A man gathers such experience only with the passage of time; each day he must come into contact with facts; what he learns one day must be added to the next, and so on until he has come to understand the world. This is education. This is symbolized in the Second Degree by the Liberal Arts and Sciences and makes use of grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

The Middle Chamber, which is so conspicuous an element in the Second Degree, is a symbol of the wisdom gained through the knowledge of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the candidate is called to advance, as on a Winding Stair, to that balanced wisdom of life in which the senses, emotions, intellect, character and habits are knit together in unity. If the Fellowcraft will equip himself, he need not shrink from his toil nor will he faint beneath the burdens, because his competency as a human being will be equal to the demands made upon him.

In the First Degree you discovered that King Solomon's Temple was an outstanding feature of the symbolism of Masonry; in the Second Degree, which you are now studying, it also looms large and it is fitting at this time that you should be given some indication of its meaning in Masonry.

The Temple built by King Solomon, afterwards twice destroyed and twice rebuilt has a larger place in human history than any other building. For three thousand years the building itself, and the memory of the building, has occupied a central place in the principal religions of the Western World. Both as a building and as a center for a cluster of ideas and traditions, King Solomon's Temple has a place outside our religions comparable to that held by no other structure; it appears and reappears, in countless forms and often in many disguises, in folk lore, mythology, literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture and theology. In Masonry, this Temple is used as a symbol.

What kind of human life should Masonry build? Life is such that it may be shaped in many forms. What form would Masonry have to take? The answer, like all of Masonry's answers, is stated in the terms of symbolism; it shall be human life as pictured symbolically by the Temple of King Solomon. That Temple was built by a king wise enough to know exactly what he was doing and why. So should a man be a king over himself, in the building of his life; using his senses and all his faculties as his workmen; selecting out of the quarries of his nature only such materials as a king would use, and wise enough to plan his life aright.

King Solomon called to his assistance the most expert builder he could find, Hiram Abiff, who was also a skilled worker in brass and in the precious metals. So also should a man call into the building of his life only the best influences and the noblest purposes of life and shape it to the ends of goodness, beauty and truth.

Solomon's Temple was dedicated to God. by the dedication of a building is meant the purpose to which it is set aside and devoted -- the one reason for its being. So must man dedicate himself.

You will see by this that Masonry's conception of human life is an ideal in plan and purpose. It sees the life of the senses as something fine and noble, never to be despised; it sees in the skilled hand and trained faculties a value without which there could be no civilization; it sees in the powers of the mind a splendour by which the world is radiated; and it sees in the moral character a power without which all existence would become degraded into something impossible to endure.

Masonry teaches us that the raw materials of our own nature, feelings, passions, senses, faculties, and instincts, may by education be shaped, and by consecration to the Highest be so dedicated, that the whole man will be transformed and entitled to enter the Middle Chamber.

AFTER THE THIRD DEGREE

Particular care should be exercised by the Master in selecting a Committee to meet the newly raised Mason, to present the following to him.

Raised in the Sublime Degree, you now stand a full-fledged Mason. Surely during the ceremonies you must have observed that every symbol, ritualistic phrase and other detail are full of significance. Not a single item is for mere effect or ornament. This is especially true of the Third Degree; for in it to a larger extent are found the deeper secrets and teachings of our Fraternity. The ceremony itself is not lengthy; yet earnest study may be made a matter of years, without fear of exhausting the inestimable lessons. This reference is made in the hope that you may be inspired to devote time to such study.

This, the most solemn Degree of Freemasonry, is designated by the Craft as the Sublime Degree, because of the profound truth inculcated. While the whole system of Craft Masonry is intended to present the symbolic idea of man passing through the pilgrimage of life, the particular purpose of the Third Degree is, by contemplation, to prepare and fit the true Mason for the building and developing of character in the highest and most ennobling sense.

As a Master Mason you have been taught this most necessary and all important truth: that, after having been faithful to all your trusts through life, eventually you are to pass from this earthly scene to receive the reward for your fidelity. The ceremonies and the lecture of the degree are designed to emphasize this engrossing subject. The conclusion to be reached is that youth, properly directed, leads to virtuous and honorable maturity and that the man whose life is regulated by Morality, Virtue and Brotherly Love -- which re, as you were informed upon entry into the lodge room for the degree, the most essential points of Masonry -- will be rewarded by that inmost sense of quiet peace at all times, even in the face of death itself.

Doubtless you have been impressed by the tragic story of our Grand Master, Hiram Abiff. To know it, to understand it and to appreciate the full richness of its meaning will be your invaluable possession while life shall last. Although there is a Hiram Abiff in secular history, to accept the reference merely from a standpoint of historical record would be a mistake; for to us he is by ritual the central figure in the drama of this degree, the climax of Craft Masonry. He is held up to us, and rightly so, as a glorious example of unshakeable fidelity; and we are admonished to be as true to our Masonic obligations as he proved to be to his.

Hiram Abiff is the acted symbol of the soul. The work in which he was engaged as the chief architect of King Solomon's Temple is the symbol of the work we, each and all of us, have in the organizing and supervising of our lives, even until death. The enemies he met are the symbols of none other than those lusts and passions which, in our own hearts or in the hearts of others, seek to destroy our characters and our lives. His doom is symbolical of that which overtakes every man who falls a victim of those enemies. The manner, in which, figuratively, he was raised again is symbolical of the manner by which a man rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. The Most High, by the power of whose word Hiram Abiff this was raised, is the same Great Architect and Grand Geometrician to whom, in all its symbolism, Freemasonry points as the source and inspiration from which to build a noble edifice of one's life.

"To every man there openeth a Way, and Ways, and a Way.
The High Soul climbs the High Way, while the Low Soul gropes the Low;
And in between, on misty flats, the rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth a High Way and a Low;
And every man decideth the Way his soul shall go."

In these days of stress and strain when old established systems and institutions are being shaken to their very foundations, Masonry stands firmly as a rock, unmoved by the blasts of modern criticism. Securely based upon the eternal principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, Masonry, like the "Bright Morning Star", ascends toward its zenith, and as surely though gradually its lofty ideals are realized, to bring joy and gladness and to establish "Peace on earth, goodwill among men."

To a new life, as a Master Mason, you were raised on the Five Points of Fellowship. These you will be required to memorize and repeat in lodge before receiving a Master Mason's apron. The Five Points of Fellowship symbolize a practical application of Masonry's teachings in our every day life. They constitute the covenant that binds all Masons in a fraternal Brotherhood; and, if universally practiced, would establish the reign of the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you."

Briefly stated the Five Points of Fellowship are: greeting a Brother with that sincerity which proceeds from the heart; assisting him in distress; praying for his welfare; keeping inviolate his secrets when imparted to you as such; and vindicating his good name as well in his absence as in his presence.

Already some mention of our Ancient Landmarks has been heard and in pursuing a study of Masonry many references to them will be met. In point of fact, the question of our Landmarks is one upon which Masonic writers of authority express considerable variance of opinion as respecting both the number of them and the enunciation of them. However this may be, there are five upon which common agreement is held and which are essential.

These may be enumerated thus:

1. A belief in a Supreme Being.
2. A belief in the resurrection to a future life.
3. A "Book of the Law" shall be an indispensable part of the furniture of every Masonic Lodge. It is that volume which, by the religion of the country, is believed to contain the revealed will of the Great Architect of the Universe.
4. The division of Masonry into three Degrees; namely, the Entered Apprentice Degree, the Fellow Craft Degree; and the Master Mason Degree.
5. A prohibition against the introduction in the Lodge of topics of religious or

political discussion.

If our form of government is complex it is because our activities are manifold and their field extensive. In our country its lodges are to be found in almost every community, constantly engaged in the benevolent and charitable work of the Craft. Freemasons are of a world-wide Fraternity; in truth they make up "a world within a world"; and when a man becomes a Mason it is this so-called "inner world" he enters. To be well informed concerning it he should make a serious study of the history, symbols, tenets, teachings and activities of Masonry.

Whole volumes have been written upon points and subjects of which, in these papers read to you, little more than passing mention appears. Some lodges possess a number of books which are available to its members; and, besides, there is the library of Grand Lodge where there is a larger number for the use of members of the Craft.

To sum up, we quote the poet Bryant, who perfectly set forth the lesson of the third Degree in particular and the supreme purpose of Masonry in general when he wrote:

"So live, that when they summons comes to join
The Innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death;
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to the dungeon; but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach they grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

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1997-06-01