

Greenleaf Gardens
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Trestleboard

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FREEMASONRY

Some Basics & a Partial Bibliography

The earliest known use of the word "freemason" is encountered in the London Assize of Wages, 1212 CE. The first reference to a Mason's Lodge is found in 1277, and to "Freemasonry," in an English building contract of 1436.

The oldest Masonic Document is the Regius MS., circa 1390. the first use of the word "Freemason" in print was in 1563, in a book entitled 'Dives Pragmaticus.' The first extended printed account of Freemasonry appears in Plot's 'Natural History Of Staffordshire', Oxford, 1686, pp. 316-18. The first Masonic book is known as the "Roberts Constitutions," printed and sold by J. Roberts in London, 1722. The first Official Masonic book is Anderson's 'The Constitutions of the Free-Masons', London, 1723, of which Benjamin Franklin (a Mason) published a reprint in Philadelphia in 1734, it being the first American Masonic Book. The first duly constituted Lodge in America was The First Lodge of Boston (still in existence as St. John's Lodge), constituted July 30, 1733 by Henry Price of Boston. The first native-born American to be made a Mason was Jonathan Belcher, born in Boston in 1681, and made a Mason in Europe in 1704. He was governor of both Massachusetts and New Hampshire from 1730 to 1741.

Just slightly shy of one half of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons; 31 of the 55 Delegates to the Constitutional Convention were Masons; so were many of Washington's Generals. Prominent famous masons of History include: Paul Revere, John Hancock, Joseph Warren, George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. polk, James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James A. Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Gerald R. Ford.

What do you know about Masonry?

What Presidents have been Masters of lodges?

George Washington, of Alexandria Lodge, Alexandria, Va., James Buchanan, of Lodge No. 43, Lancaster, Pa., and Harry S. Truman, of Grandview Lodge No. 618, of Missouri.

What President was a Grand Master!

Andrew Jackson. He was never a Master of a lodge, but was elected from the floor of the Grand Lodge to be Grand Master of Tennessee, Harry S. Truman, Grand Master of Missouri, 1940.

Who was William Morgan?

A renegade Mason who disappeared, and who was falsely said to have been murdered by Masons because of his intention to publish an expose of Masonic ritual.

Name the Presidents of the United States positively known to have been Freemasons.

Washington, Monroe. Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, A. Johnson, Garfield, McKinley, T. Roosevelt, Taft, Harding. Roosevelt, Truman, L. B. Johnson.(E.Ao only)

Was Thomas Jefferson a Freemason?

It is stated that he once visited the Lodge of the Nine Sisters, in Paris, but there is no official record of his having been raised.

Was Lincoln a Freemason?

In his heart, yes. He was never raised in any lodge, so far as the records show.

Is there a General Grand Lodge of the United States?

There is not. One was proposed in the early days of Freemasonry in this country, and George Washington was approached as a possible General Grand Master, but refused.

Would a uniform ritual in all Jurisdictions be desirable?

Had the ritual been uniform from the beginning it might have been desirable. As all Jurisdictions have their own form of the ancient ritual, any change now, looking toward uniformity, would be deplorable. It would be resented by all who love the ritual of their own Jurisdictions, and would inevitably lose many historic allusions and connotations now preserved in the various rituals. All the rituals teach the same lessons and impart the same knowledge, only the wording being different. An attempt at uniformity would gain little, and might lose much.

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What is the meaning of the word Abif?

Literally, "His father." As used in the days of Solomon, "My father," meaning one having authority, an elder, a wise man looked up to. Hiram Abif thus means "Hiram, my father," a man venerated for his wisdom and his accomplishments.

Why do we call a Master "Worshipful?"

From the old English word "worchyp," meaning "greatly respected." In the Wycliffe Bible, "Honor thy father and thy mother" is written, "Worchyp thy fadir and thy modir." "Worshipful Master," then, does not mean "Master to be worshipped," but "Master, greatly respected."

Why do we have a Grand Master, a Grand Lodge, instead of a Great Master, a Principal Lodge?

"Grand" here means first, or primary. It is also so used in grandfather, or grand total; the first or principal father of the family; the principal total.

Is a Worshipful Master obliged to wear a hat?

No. It is his privilege, and his alone, to remain covered in the lodge. In ancient days the king or ruler remained covered, his subjects removing their headgear as a sign of respect. Brethren remove their headgear before entering a lodge as a sign of respect; the Master remains covered to signify that his position is that to which the greatest respect should be paid. The bat is a symbol of his office. But he is not obliged to wear it if he does not desire to do so.

Why do Masons salute the Master on entering and retiring from lodge?

To avow before all the brethren that they remember their obligations; a visible evidence that they recall what they promised and under what penalties they are bound. In most Jurisdictions a Mason salutes before casting his ballot, to signify that he does so with memory of his obligations as Mason, and with the good of the Order and his lodge uppermost in mind. The Master answers the salute to signify not only recognition, but that- he stands upon the level with his brethren, bound by the same tie which binds them.

Can a lodge adjourn?

No. A lodge must always be in one of three conditions: at labor, at refreshment, or closed. Nor can a lodge dictate to the Master when the lodge must be opened or closed. A Master cannot legally open his lodge before the stated time, but can open it as much later as he chooses; he has the sole power of calling special communications, and can close any communication at any time.

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