



Thomas Lodge "THE SILENT BOARD" Newsletter

It could be safely said that fire has been used for heat, cooking and light since cave men somehow mastered the art. From that point on, improvements in technology through the ages have brought us to the fiber optics and plasma of today; but candles have remained a reliable back-up system and are still widely used in many parts of the world as the only source of illumination.

Candles have been the focal point or rituals of all known religions, and through time have been considered much more than simple means of illumination. They are important symbols, with a long and attractive history.

The candle came into the speculative lodge not only from the hall of the guild, it came from the votive offering burning before a shrine centuries ago. Its physical light is the emblem of the spiritual. The burning candle at the medieval altar and shrine carried with it the idea of consecration, of the making and keeping of vows, of "gratitude for mercies which have been vouchsafed".

All craft guilds maintained an altar at a near-by church, and kept it supplied with candles paid for by its members (by donations and also by fines assessed to members for a myriad of "offenses" like late arrival, wearing of improper clothing, forgetting his gloves, etc.). It is easy to see that the lodge custom of burning three candles, particularly and specially three, is originally of great religious significance (the number three, triangle, divinity, etc.) and comes to us from the church and guild whatever the modern Masonic interpretation may or may not be.

The burning of candles in holy places seems to have been a heathen idea originally, and the church (especially the early Christian) met it with great resistance and opposition. Historians and writers from the third century tell us that when the Gospel was read, candles were lighted even though the sun was still shining; not for the purpose of driving away darkness, but as an outward sign of gladness and as symbolic of that light which we receive from the scriptures.

Men's superstitious minds in medieval times believed there was much virtue in the lighted candle; in today's day and age, candles are lit every day at church altars around the globe as a special offering to a specific patron saint.

The three burning tapers in a lodge are symbolic of the sun, moon and Worshipful Master. Each is a governing body. The sun governs the day, the moon governs the night and the Master his lodge with equal regularity.- Later in the ritual it is revealed to us the presence in lodge of the Three Great Lights in Masonry (volume of Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses) made visible by the aid of the Three Lesser: candles forming a triangle about the altar, symbolizing the presence of Deity. (In all ages, the triangle has been the symbol of God, by whatever name He may have been called ).-

*The Inside Sentinel - Editor*

## DECEMBER NOTABLES:

- 1732 Bro. Benjamin Franklin publishes "Poor Richard's Almanac" using the pen name Richard Sanders.
- 1770 Born. Bro. Ludwig Van Beethoven, classical German composer.
- 1773 Date of the Boston Tea Party (members supposedly met at St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston).
- 1809 Born. Bro. Albert Pike, attorney, writer, civil war general.
- 1851 Died. Bro. Joel R. Poinsett (introduced the Poinsettia flower to US).
- 1865 Born. Bro. Rudyard Kipling (prolific writer).
- 1882 Born. Bro. Fiorello La Guardia (US Congressman, NYC Mayor)
- 1900 Died. Bro. Oscar Wilde, prolific Irish poet.

## YOU ASKED FOR THEM: THE SECRETS OF FREEMASONRY

The secrets of Freemasonry can be realized only in a man's heart, and perfect realization is governed by its own conduct and habits of mind. The Mason who keeps the sacred fires of education burning on the altar of his heart, will be inevitably drawn nearer to his God and also to the meaning of life. Receiving the degrees does not make a man a Mason. The various degrees merely point the way and provide means for securing the most noble and valuable secrets of our Order, and the individual Mason must determine for himself whether or not he will seek more knowledge, using the little knowledge he already has to open up the vast stores of wisdom preserved for those who are diligent.

ROYAL ARK MARINER Lodges are administered by the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons (in many countries) though there is no connection between the workings. The teachings derive from the Biblical legend of the Deluge, this event and its hardships are used to represent the hazards of our own lives. Emphasis is given to the providence and mercy of the Deity, to the promise of salvation, and to the need to practice the Cardinal Virtues. The figure at right points out that the chaos caused by the Flood, disastrous as it seems was not the end of all things; and we, working together and facing the reality of our situations, can rise above the difficulties that we encounter. The importance of the family, the need for each individual to work in such a way as to provide benefit for all, and the importance of assisting those less fortunate, are also emphasized.

