



ANCIENT FREE & ACCEPTED MASONRY

It is quite likely that the word "freemason" represented at least three distinct meanings, each having particular application in different times and settings. Skilled medieval builders worked with an even-grained limestone or sandstone called freestone, first mentioned in 1212 in Normandy. The term free-stone mason is recorded in 1375 and easily transitioned to free mason over time. Centuries later this meaning became secondary if not forgotten, when town mason guilds became more active and powerful.

It is hypothesized that a Free Mason was free of his Guild; he had the freedom of its privileges and was entrusted with certain rights. The London Company of Freemasons changed its name to that of Masons in 1655 perhaps recognizing that the term had once again undergone another change in meaning. Members who were not stonemasons could be accepted in the Company and were termed speculative, free or accepted. In time the terms became synonymous and "free" then referred to an inner fraternity of speculative masons.

There are many other discredited theories. For instance: the tradition that sixth and seventh century builders traveled France and Italy freely by authority of Papal bull is widely used but without a doubt, unfounded. Another theory has it that a medieval freemason meant that was either not tied to the land, attached to a monastery or ecclesiastical order, or was totally free from the guilds, specially during the height of the church building period, when there were very few, if any town mason guilds so this derivation is also suspect.

The term "Free and Accepted" was first used in 1722 by J. Roberts in "The Old Constitutions belonging to the Ancient and Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons". "Acception" was an Inner Fraternity of speculative freemasons found within the Worshipful Company of Masons of the City of London. Operative members were then "admitted" by apprenticeship, patrimony or redemption; while speculative members were "accepted" instead. First recorded use of this term dates from 1620.

Lodges and Grand Lodges whose charters roots derive from the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of England, the G.L of Ireland of the G.L of Scotland use the expression: Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (A.F. & A.M.). Those Grand Lodges that don't use the appellation "Ancient" claim descent from the "Grand Lodge Of Free and Accepted Masons under the constitution of England" during the period from 1717 until 1813, and make themselves known as F. & A.M.

This English G.L. was constituted from four lodges on June 24, 1717. A later G.L. in England, styling themselves Ancient, labelled the first group "Modern" although today the preferred term is "Premier". The "Moderns" and "Ancients" united in November 25, 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of England; the choice of style is not universal as some G.L. simply choose one or the other title for reasons of their own. The usage has no bearing on regularity or recognition.

SEPTEMBER NOTABLES

- 1783 Treaty of Paris signed (ending the American Revolution) by three Bros.: Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and John Jay.
- 1832 Died. Bro. Sir Walter Scott, prolific Scottish novelist.
- 1874 Born. Bro. Harry Houdini.
- 1890 Born. Bro. Harland (Colonel) Davis Sanders, founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken.
- 1901 Died. Bro. William Mc. Kinley, 35 th. US President (shot).
- 1907 Born. Gene Autry, Hollywood actor/cowboy
- 1925 Born. Bro. Peter Sellers, well know actor (Pink Panther, Insp. Clouseau)

OF LADDERS AND STAIRS

Playing a mayor role in our FC degree, the winding staircase represents man's instincts to rise, excel and explore the unknown. Climbing the staircase it is said, marks his progress along the spiritual path as he expands and finds out how to make full use of his intellectual faculties. Jacob's ladder features in the EA degree initiation ceremony: it symbolizes the lessons learned in life, which if properly employed, increase the sum of our knowledge.

In his dream of a ladder connecting Earth with Heaven, God promised Jacob his protection and confirmed his pledge to Abraham that the chosen people would possess the whole of the land from the Euphrates river to the south-west. Jacob commemorated the dream by setting up as a monument the stone on which he had rested his head, pouring oil over it to mark the place where he knew that God was present.

The winding staircase of the Middle Chamber is a sign that it is time to embark on the search for divine truth: upon climbing we make two pauses, during the first we learn about the "peculiar organization" of the Order. Intended to remind us of the union of men in society, the blessings of civilization and the fruits of virtue. During the second pause, we receive instruction about the human senses and architecture. The former symbolizes intellectual cultivation, while the latter reminds of the need to cultivate practical knowledge. That cultivation is further enhanced by the seven liberal arts and sciences that must be fully pursued and conquered before being able to be considered worthy.

Freemasonry's ladders and stairs all have odd number of rungs: in Jacob, each step (7) represents a particular theological or social virtue; in the Middle Chamber (3, 5 and 7) will cover from lodge organization to astronomy, providing the education that "all good men made better" should possess.

Two explanations exist: The Roman architect and writer Vitruvius maintains that most ancient temples had odd-numbered steps so that anyone climbing them would necessarily arrive at the top with the same foot as the one they had started with at the bottom (considered to be a good omen). It could also be because in the Pythagorean system, odd numbers were thought to be more perfect than even ones, so the use of the odd-numbered steps symbolizes the state of perfection candidates are expected to obtain.

Southern California Research Lodge F & AM

Ten Guides for Masons

- I am the representative of my Lodge and of all Free and Accepted Masons. Whatever I do or say reflects directly upon myself and my fellow Freemasons everywhere and our good works.
- I am responsible for what my Lodge and Freemasonry represent. They can be no more than what my fellow Freemasons and I make them.
- I should not criticize what my fellow Freemasons do for Freemasonry unless I have a better suggestion and I am prepared to do it myself.
- I must remember that the fact that I bear the name, Master Mason or Freemason, is not enough. I must continue to be worthy.
- My fellow members and I are our Lodges and Freemasonry. Without our active support they cease to exist.
- My Lodge does me a favor by calling upon me. I am not doing the Lodge a favor by serving. It is both an obligation and a privilege to help the Lodge and Freemasonry.
- I should treat my fellow Freemasons with the same respect, honor, and understanding that I would like to receive from them.
- It is not a right to be a Freemason, it is an honor. I should respect that honor by abiding by all of the precepts of my Lodge, my Grand Lodge, and Freemasonry as a whole.
- Whatever differences my fellow Freemasons and I may have, we are all bound together by the bonds of our loyalty to The GAOTU, our families, the Lodge, and Freemasonry.
- The willing Master Mason and his understanding family are the lifeblood of the Lodge and Freemasonry.