

MASONIC TRIVIA AND FACTS

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When did Freemasonry begin?

No one knows when Freemasonry began. The first written reference to Masonry as an organization appeared in 1356 when a Code of Mason Regulations was formally drawn up at the Guildhall in London, England. In 1376 we find information about the London Masons' Company and it's interesting to note its early evolution. According to Grand Lodge, it leased in 1463 some land and buildings for 99 years, and the buildings were converted into the first Masons' Hall. (In the 99th year it purchased this property outright); in 1472 the company was given a Grant of Arms with the motto "God Is Our Guide," later changed to "In the Lord is all our trust." The Arms, but slightly changed, remain part of the Arms of the United Grand Lodge of England today.

What is the Regius Manuscript?

The first known document about Free masonry.

Who determined the Regius Manuscript (or Poem) to be what it is?

A non-Mason named J.O. Halliwell-Phillips (the Phillips was added much later to appease his father-in-law).

How was the Regius Manuscript first cataloged?

As "A Manuscript of Moral Duties."

Where was and is the original copy of the Regius Manuscript kept?

In the British Museum. (Its early history is unknown, but it apparently belonged at one time to John Thomas. The first known owner of record was John Thayer, an antiquarian who died in 1673; his grandmother Ann Hart Thayer offered his library to Bodley Library at Oxford but it didn't accept it, so it was sold to Robert Scott, a London book dealer, then it was sold to Charles II after 1678 [the volume was valued at two shillings!]; it eventually became a part of the Royal Library of Henry VII [thus the name "Regius" attached to the manuscript], and in 1757 the library was presented to the British Museum by George II in whose honor the collection is known as "The Regius Collection.")

When was the Regius Manuscript discovered to be a poem about freemasonry?

In 1839. Halliwell presented a paper on this manuscript in that year; a portion of the paper was published in Archaeological in 1840; on the same year the poem was reprinted, and has been many times since then.

In what language is the Regius Manuscript written? What year was it written?

It was written about A.D1390 and was evidently copied from an older document. It is written in Middle English making it difficult for the non-linguist to decipher. Over the years several linguists have translated it into modern English.

According to the Regius Manuscript who called an assembly of all Masons to meet? Where? When?

Athelstan (925-940), virtually King of all England, according to the Regius Manuscript, called the Masons to meet, then he gave them "modernized" charges and sent them forth to carry them out. James Anderson said this took place at York, England, in 926. Coil notes that the two earliest documents (the Regius and Cooke) don't mention York, and he believes the date would be closer to 932. Perhaps the best known portion of the Regius is found in lines 61 to 66 which read: The Craft came into England, as I now say. In the time of good King Athelsant's day; He made them both hall and likewise bower And high Temples of great honor. To dusport him in both day and night, And to worship his god with God with all his might.

Who, in the opinion of most historians, was the foremost Masonic historian who compiled and account of the early centuries in the development of the Craft?

Robert Freke Gould. See his three volume The History of Freemasonry. He painstakingly covers the history of the Craft from what is known about its beginning through 1885.

Where are the earliest lodge records to be found in Scotland? in England?

In Scotland the earliest lodge records still in existence were recorded in Aitchison's Haven in 1598; minutes of Mary's Chapel lodge at Edinburgh are unbroken from 1599; in England, according to Gould, only the records of Alnwick between the dates of 1700 and 1717 are known to have been recorded. Grand lodge tells us: "Early evidence relating to other [than Acceptation] non-operative Lodges is very scarce." From many sources we lean of Elias Ashmole's entry on October 16, 1646 in his diary: "I was made a Free-Mason at Warrenton in Lancashire" along with "Coll: Henry Mainwaring of Karincham in Cheshire." He added the names of seven members of the lodge. The records of this lodge have disappeared.

When did Freemasonry enter Ireland?

No one knows. It was some time after a Grand Lodge was formed in England before the first Lodge came into being in Ireland. Without doubt Masonry was known there at least as early as July 11, 1688.

Which Gothic or Manuscript Constitutions (hereafter called Gothic) contains the first link between the Craft and King Solomon's Temple?

The Cook Manuscript f 1410. Harry Carr in Grand Lodge recorded this from this Manuscript "And at the making of Solomon's Temple that King David began-King David loved all Masons, and he gave them charges right nigh as they are now. And at the making of the Temple in Solomon's time, as it is said in the Bible, in III Book of Kings ... that Solomon had four score thousand Masons at his work; and the King's son of Tyre was his Master Mason."

"Time immemorial" is used frequently in Freemasonry; what does it mean?

Other explanations are given, but briefly "time Immemorial" can be termed as ancient, something having existed from a time one cannot remember.

A major group of historians believe Freemasonry descended from stonemasons. How long have these craftsmen been in existence?

It is generally agreed that stonemasons, in some form, have existed all over the world since the dawn of time, long before the building of the pyramids in Egypt. Actually it takes no stretch of the imagination to realize there had to be stone Masons, and other craftsmen, since men first began to build edifices to protect them from the elements. This would require some type of organizing, leading to some type of organization. Stories in the Bible and other old historical documents readily verify this theory.

How long have lodges with speculative masons been in existence?

To be historically accurate, one cannot go beyond six centuries to find lodges of masons accepting men other than operative craftsmen. And for many centuries few, other than actual craftsmen, were accepted. But it's not unreasonable to assume clerics and other educated men were readily united with the craftsmen (most of whom couldn't read or write). Grand Lodge says the first record of non-operatives being accepted was in July 1634 when Lord Alexander, Sir Anthony Alexander and Sir Alexander Strachan were admitted "fellow craft" in the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel). Coil dates non-operative masons from 1600 in the Lodge of Edinburgh, but McLeod believes this incorrect. The nonoperative, John Boswell, attended a trial of a warden, not a meeting of the lodge. But this Lodge did admit Lord ALEXANDER of Menstrie in 1634 as a Fellowcraft. Then Coil finds nonoperatives in Kelso, 1652; Aberdeen, 1670; Kilwinning, 1672. He found the last of the operative masons as members of a lodge in Lodge Glasgow in 1842.

Where did the term "lodge" come from?

As with many things we can only speculate as to where the word "lodge" derived. Dictionaries say that it probably came from the buildings, or huts, where the craftsmen worked and lived. Lodges of masons are mentioned at York Minster in 1352, at Canterbury Cathedral in 1429, at the Church of St. Nicholas, Aberdeen in 1483, and at St. Giles, Edinburgh, in 1429. "Lodge"

first referred to non-permanent bodies, but gradually reverted to fixed localities, such as Edinburgh in 1598.

What's the story of "the Four Crown Martyrs" for whom the premier research Lodge (Quatuor Coronati) is named?

Gould recounts the tale in this fashion: In A.D. 298, during the reign of Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, five Christian stone masons refused to carve a statue of a pagan god. They were put to death and cast into the Tiber. Crowns appeared on the water above where the bodies had sunk. (That's five crowns!) Two years later the Emperor ordered all soldiers to march past and throw incense on the altar of Aesculapius. Four Christian officers refused to obey the order. They were put to death, and later became the martyrs. So we have four of them. Later all nine were honored. In Germany the five became four. In all of the known Gothic Constitutions this legend is mentioned only in the Regius.

What were the Schaw Statutes?

In 1598 these statutes, or rules and regulations, were enacted in Scotland to cause the craftsmen to observe the ancient usages and to live charitably together. Fines were made enforceable. Obedience to wardens, deacons and masters was enjoined. Cowans were prevented from working under any master, and other rules and regulations pertaining to craftsmen were made mandatory. In 1599 these statutes were amended at the request of Kilwinning Lodge in an attempt to receive royal recognition. The masters convened at Edinburgh and thirteen articles were adopted. Royal recognition was obtained in part.