

APPROACHING THE PORTALS

General Information Concerning Masonry



American Canadian Grand Lodge AF&AM e.V. (ACGL)

Within the United Grand Lodges of Germany (VGLvD) Brotherhood of Freemasons



General Masonic Education

WELCOME TO MASONRY...

You have been elected to receive the Three Degrees of Masonry. We congratulate you on your acceptance and welcome you as one about to enter our ranks. We hope that you are earnestly seeking the truth our Fraternity has to offer.

You have made an important step, one which we are sure you will value not only now, but for many years to come. Masonry is a unique institution that has been a major part of community life in America, Europe and major parts of the world where the influence of European Culture has been felt for over 250 years.

Masonry, or more properly, Freemasonry, is the world's largest and oldest fraternity... and one that continues to be an important part of many men's personal lives and growth. Your decision to enter the ranks of Freemasonry had to be your own, without the undue influence of others. That makes your membership in Masonry one of your own choice, which is significant. Men join Masonry for a variety of reasons, each valid and important.

Millions of men have travelled this path before you, nearly all receiving a benefit from their efforts. A large majority of these men had little knowledge or concept of the Fraternity, or what it could mean to them. For this reason, we wish to give you certain thoughts and information which we feel you are entitled to receive before the conferral of the degrees.

To begin with, you should thoroughly understand that Freemasonry is entirely serious in character. Contrary to what you may have heard, there is no horseplay or frivolity in our degrees; their primary purpose is to teach, to convey to you a knowledge of the principles of our institution. You should, therefore, prepare yourself to approach the degrees with an open mind, determined to absorb as much as possible, without fear of ridicule or indignity.

WHO ARE MASONS?

Masonry is large and diversified enough, to provide what you are seeking. Masons are men who have joined together to improve themselves.

This is accomplished through the principals and ceremonies of the fraternity. They endeavor to extend Masonic lessons into their daily lives in order to become positive influences in their homes, communities, nation and throughout the world.

They base their efforts on morality, justice, charity, truth and the laws of God.

There are over 3 million Masons in the United States of America. Worldwide, membership encompasses millions of men who believe and support the same fundamental principles.

WHAT IS MASONRY?

What is modern Freemasonry? Masonry, as mentioned before, is manythings to many people. Many years ago, in England it was defined as “a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.” It is a course of moral instruction using both allegories and symbols to teach its lessons. The legends and myths of the old stone cutters and masons, many of them involved in building the great cathedrals ofEurope, have been woven into an interesting and effective way to portray moral truths.

In Masonry, the old tools and ways of the craftsmen are used to help dramatically portray those moral truths. For example, the 24-inch gauge and the common gavel. Just as the ruler is used to measure distance, the modem Mason uses it as a reminder to manage one of his most precious resources: time. And, as the gavel is used to shape stones, so it is also the symbol for the necessity of all of us to work to perfect ourselves. One modern definition is: “Freemasonry is an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principle of Operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building.” In other words, Masonry uses ageless methods and lessons to make each of us a better person.

Thus, Masonry:

1. Has a basic philosophy of life that places the individual worth of each man high on its pedestal, and incorporates the great teachings of many ages to provide a way for individual study and thought.
2. Has great respect for religion and promotes toleration and equal esteem for the religious opinions and beliefs of others.
3. Provides a real working plan for making good men even better.
4. Is a social organization.
5. Has many important charitable projects.
6. Has a rich worldwide history.
7. Is a proven way to develop both public speaking and dramatic abilities, and provides an effective avenue for developing leadership.

WHAT MASONRY STANDS FOR

Masonry stands for some important principles and beliefs.

The primary doctrines of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. Its cardinal virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. These principles or beliefs cover a broad field, actually supplying the pattern to meet every experience in human life.

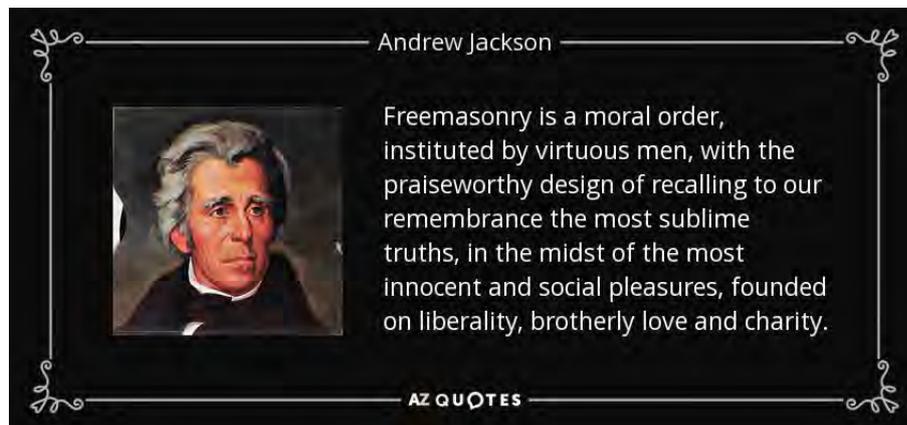
Masonry is a strong supporter of constitutional government... of quality public education... of the freedom of religion and expression... of the equality of all men and women... of the need for strong moral character... and of meaningful charity.

Masonry, and the organizations that are within the Masonic family, contribute millions of dollars every year to helping those with sight problems or aphasia, physically disabled children, speech & learning disorders, and those with severe burns. Local Lodges work to help their communities and individuals within those communities.

Masonry's charity is always given without regard to race, sex, creed, or national origin.

THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY

“The mission of Freemasonry is to promote a way of life that binds likeminded men in a worldwide brotherhood that transcends all religious, ethnic, cultural, social and educational differences; by teaching the great principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth: and, by the outward expression of these, through its fellowship, its compassion and its concern, to find ways in which to serve God, family, country, neighbors and self.”



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY?

Simply put, the overall purpose of Masonry is to provide a way to help each member become a better person. We do not propose to take a bad man and make him good; rather, our aim is to take the good man and make him better.

We try to place emphasis on the individual man by:

1. Strengthening his character.
2. Improving his moral and spiritual outlook.
3. Broadening his mental horizons.

We try to impress upon the minds of our members the principles of personal responsibility and morality; to give each member an understanding of and feeling for Free-masonry's character; and to have every member put these lessons into practice in his daily life. We try to build a better world by building better men to work in their own communities. Freemasonry believes in universal peace made possible by teaching its doctrine through the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

*I'd rather see a sermon, than to hear one, any day.
I'd rather one should walk with me, than merely show the
way.*

*I can soon learn to do it, if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast
may run!*

*All the speeches you deliver, may be wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.
Though I may not understand you, and the fine advice you
give,
There is no misunderstanding how I see you act and live!*

WHAT ARE LODGES?

A Lodge is a meeting place for Masons. This place may be used by Masons for regular business meetings, degrees, social activities, other Masonic groups, or even community activities. Lodge buildings are prominently marked, and are often recognized as special landmarks in most cities and towns of the United States as well as in Europe. The local Lodge is a group of Masons granted a charter by the Vereinigte Grosslogen von Deutschland (VGLvD) (The United Grand Lodge of Germany). There are specific guidelines set by the Grand Lodge as to how this local Lodge may function and what it can and cannot do. These guidelines are set forth in the Code of the A.C.G.L. and the Bylaws of the Lodge. The leaders of the Lodge are elected by the Lodge membership each year.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

We are not sure at what point in time our craft was born. Hundreds of Masons have investigated this question, but no conclusive answer has been found, and perhaps never will be. We do know that the earliest written record of the term “Master Mason” appears in the Regius manuscript, written about 1390 and now kept in the British Museum. Its mention of the “Master Mason” refers to the stone masons of the Middle Ages. The tools of the stonemason date back, of course, to the earliest periods of history and are lost in the mists of time. This is also true of the geometry and geometric symbols used in the craft of building.

There are other theories concerning the development of Freemasonry. Some are so absurd that they will not be mentioned here. The most favored, after the one above, is that Freemasonry was developed by the Order of the Christian Knights Templar when they were disbanded by a Papal Bull and forced to flee from France. Brother John J. Robinson was one, but not the first, who presented this theory in his excellent book “Born in Blood”.

Over the ages Freemasonry, as we now know it, slowly took form. It has evolved into a comprehensive and effective form of fraternal teaching of basic morals, truths and personal fulfilment. It ranks the development of the individual’s reasoning capabilities highly and encourages the questioning mind.

THE TWO TYPES OF MASONRY

There are actually two kinds of Masonry. One we call “Operative” and the other “Speculative”.

Operative Masonry can be traced back to the Middle Ages and beyond. Operative Masons, formed groups with Lodge structures similar to ours today. We have officers similar to theirs. Men were admitted only after they had served a number of years of apprenticeship, usually seven years. This is the origin of the first or Entered Apprentice degree. In Operative Masonry, Masons actually did the physical labor of building. They were the best at their craft, and they kept secret their methods of building.



When the organization became what is called Speculative Masonry, men were accepted into the Craft without being actual builders, that is, they were spiritual builders. Speculative Masonry adopts the terms and concepts, of the actual builders, but substitutes men for stone and mortar, and works toward self-improvement rather than the actual construction of buildings.

“FREE” AND “ACCEPTED” MASONS

How did the words “Free” and “Accepted” originate?

The ancient craftsmen were very skilled and their craft was considered to be indispensable to the welfare of both church and state. They were the men who built castles and cathedrals. For this reason, they were not placed under the same restrictions as were other workers. They were ‘free’ to do their work, travel, and live their lives in a manner which was in line with their duties. No one could become an Apprentice unless he was free born.

The Masons organized into “guilds”, something akin to a trade union, and individual companies or groups of Masons contracted for specific construction projects. In the England of that time, various crafts (carpenters, distillers, pewterers, ironworkers, etc.) also organized into guilds, but most of the population worked under bond to the owners of the land on which they lived.

The word “Accepted” also goes back to the time of the Operative Mason.

During the later years of the Middle Ages, there were few educated outside the monasteries of the church. The “accepted” mason was originally a man who, in a lodge operative in origin or still partly so in character, was for all practical purposes of membership accepted as a mason. From this practice grew in course of time the use of the words “accepted” and “adopted” to indicate a man who had been admitted into the inner fellowship of Symbolic Masons. Candidates were “accepted” into freemasonry no earlier than the mid-seventeenth century. We first meet the phrase “free and accepted” in 1722.

By the late 1600’s the demand for the type of architecture that lent itself to the guild type of operation was declining. Architecture itself was changing; and the number of men, as well as the number of operative lodges, were declining. Increasingly, Masonry adopted the legends and habits of the old operative lodges, for spiritual and moral purposes. As time went on, there became many more “Accepted” members than there were Operative members. Sometime in the eighteenth century, the “Accepted Masons” outnumbered the “Operative Masons” and Masonry became exclusively a speculative organization rather than an operative one.



ORIGIN OF THE GRAND LODGE

In 1717 four Lodges in London met together and decided to form a Grand Lodge, possibly for no other reason than to strengthen and preserve themselves.

In 1723 they adopted a Constitution. Their success led to the establishment of still other Grand Lodges. In 1725 some of the Lodges in Ireland formed a Grand Lodge and a similar body was instituted in Scotland in 1736.

Moreover, the original Grand Lodge in England did not remain without rivals, and at one time in the eighteenth century three Grand Lodges existed in England in addition to the one organized in 1717. Two of these died out without influencing the history of Masonry in general, but the third had a great part in the spread and popularizing of Masonry throughout the world. It called itself the “Ancient” or “Antient” Grand Lodge. Members of the other Grand Lodge were as a consequence called “Moderns”. The two surviving Grand Lodges were long and vigorous rivals, but they finally united in 1813 into the present United Grand Lodge of England. Thus, from one of these two Grand Bodies in England, or from those of Ireland or Scotland, all other Grand Lodges in the world today are descended.

Titles of Grand Lodges in the United States also vary. Some Grand Lodges are called A. F. & A. M. which means Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. The most commonly used title, like that used in the U.S.A. is F. & A. M., or Free and Accepted Masons. The Grand Lodge of South Carolina is an exception in that it is A.F.M.

Masonry was established in France sometime between 1718 and 1725. The first lodge in Spain was established in 1728. A lodge was established in Prague (The Czech Republic) in 1729, in Calcutta (India) in 1728 and in Naples (Italy) in 1731. Masonry came to Poland in 1734 and Sweden in 1735.

The growth of Freemasonry and its ideals and beliefs came not without opposition.

Masons are taught that all men are equal - we meet upon the level.

Individual freedom of thought and action, as well as morality and ethics, are the concepts and ideals upon which our order is founded. The teachings are a condemnation of autocratic government, who in turn condemn Freemasonry.

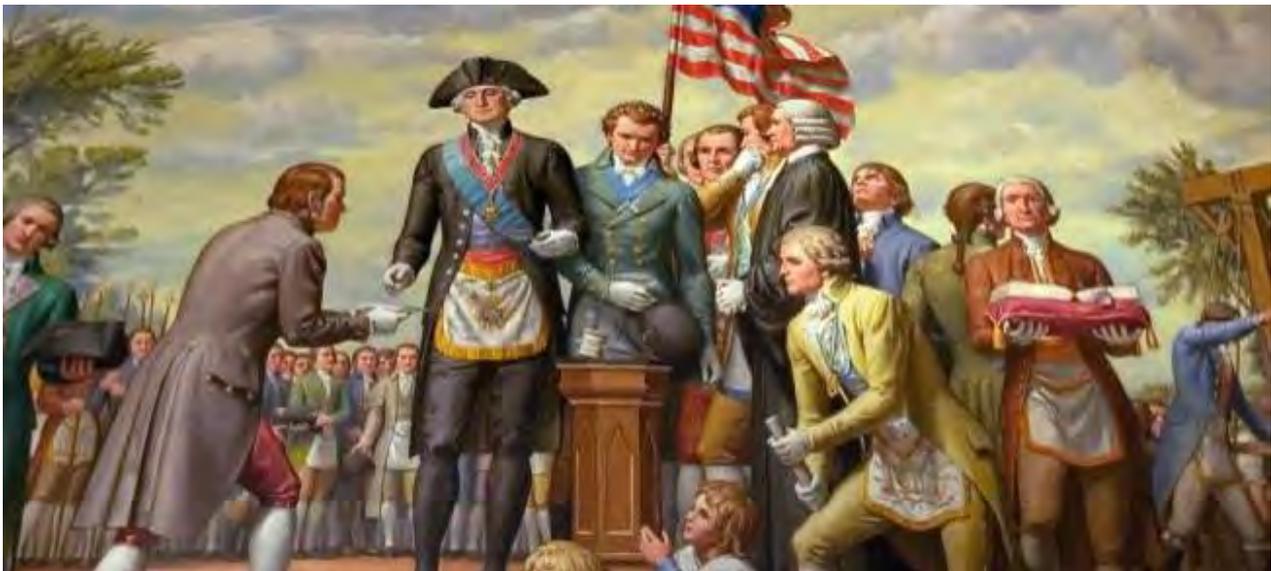


MASONIC HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

It was inevitable that Freemasonry should follow the colonists to America and play a most important role in the establishment of the thirteen colonies. Freemasonry was formally recognized for the first time in America with the appointment by the Grand Lodge of England of a Provincial Grand Master in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in 1730.

American Masons worked under foreign jurisdiction until 1731, when the first American Grand Lodge was established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. One of the most romantic portions of all Masonic history lies in the story of the part played by Freemasons in the formation of the United States of America. Without exaggeration, we can say that Freemasonry and Masonic thinking contributed most significantly to the founding of this great Republic.

Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the drafters of the Constitution, were members of the Fraternity.



George Washington was a staunch Freemason. He was the first of fourteen Masonic Presidents and the only one to serve as Worshipful Master of a Lodge and President at one and the same time. The others after Washington are Monroe, Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Andrew Jackson, Garfield, McKinley, both Teddy and F. D. Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Truman, and Ford - of whom Truman and Andrew Jackson served also as Grand Masters.

In the struggle for independence many well-known patriots, such as Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Marquis de Lafayette, and Baron von Steuben were members of the Craft. No doubt Freemasonry was responsible for and shared much of their thinking and opinions.

Much has been written about the participation of the Fraternity in the Revolution and the founding of America, and it is an episode of which we can be proud. Ever since that period, Freemasonry has grown and flourished, following closely the growth and expansion of the United States.

MASONIC HISTORY IN CANADA

Canada possesses ten political divisions known as “Provinces” with each having a Provincial Government. Nine of these provinces have regular Grand Lodges. Lodges in the tenth Province Newfoundland are still governed by the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland. The masonic scene in Canada can in a broad sense be described as an amalgam of American and British practices and customs.

The first settlers in Canada were the French. Quebec became a French Colony in 1608. It remained so until 1763, when all of Canada became a British possession.

The geopolitical history of Canada is rather confused, but it is enough to say here that the several Provinces underwent various groupings, separations and re-groupings.

Canada became a Dominion in 1867, uniting Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Other Provinces later joined.

The first lodges in Canada emerged about 1740 in Nova Scotia, and about 1750 in Quebec. Many of the earliest lodges were military lodges.

Warrants came from both the United States and Britain.

In 1858, a Grand Lodge of Canada was formed in Ontario, claiming jurisdiction over the whole of Canada, which at that time comprised Ontario and Quebec.

After Canadian Independence, and the progressive formation of other Provinces, other Grand Lodges were erected accordingly.

The original Grand Lodge became the “Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario”.



MASONIC HISTORY IN TURKEY

There is documented reference to the existence of lodges in Turkey in 1738. These lodges appear to have emanated from various European sources. There is also evidence of a Scottish lodge being formed at Aleppo about 1748. A Supreme Council of the Ottoman Empire was erected in 1861, probably under auspices of the Grand Orient of France. It was extinct by 1871. However, the expansion of the Craft came slowly. Various Ottoman Sultans issued edicts suppressing Freemasonry. This repression became particularly harsh during the reign of the Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909). Many Turkish Masons were forced to flee the country. However, this repression did not appear to extend to lodges warranted from foreign countries.

An English lodge (Oriental No. 988) was formed in Turkey in 1856, and another ten English lodges were established between 1860 and 1870. Ireland, Scotland and the Grand Orient of Italy and France also had lodges in Turkey in this period. Most English-speaking lodges had expired by the First World War, although a few held on until 1938.

Upon the coming of constitutional government to Turkey, Turkish masonry was revived in 1909, in the form of a resurrected Scottish Rite Supreme Council warranted from Egypt. The Supreme Council sponsored the National Grand Orient of Turkey, constituted by 14 lodges then holding either French, Italian or Spanish Grand Orient charters. A period of sustained expansion, erecting 65 lodges up until 1935. However, the political climate in Turkey had been deteriorating, and the Grand Orient became dormant in 1935.

The Turkish Supreme Council revived in 1948, and controlled Turkish Craft lodges until it divested control to the Grand Lodge of Turkey, founded in 1956 on a regular basis. The Turkish Grand Lodge was recognized by England in 1970 and today enjoys fraternal relations with most regular Grand Lodges around the world.



MASONIC HISTORY IN GERMANY

Freemasonry arrived in Germany from England, and probably France, in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first recorded lodge was one erected in Hamburg in 1737, in which the King of Prussia Frederick the Great was initiated. Several other lodges followed, all originally holding warrants from London. From 1750, and for some thirty years German Masonry spread under the influence of one Baron Von Hund. By the First World War there were no fewer than eight Grand Lodges in Germany, with three more being formed in 1930. These eleven Grand Lodges, with their locations and years of Foundations are as follows:

1. The Grand Mother Lodge of the Three World Globes, at Berlin (1740)
2. The Grand Lodge of Prussia. (1760)
3. The National Grand Lodge of German Freemasons, at Berlin (1770)
4. The Grand Lodge of Hamburg. (1743)
5. The Grand Lodge of the Sun, at Bayreuth (1741)
6. The Mother Grand Lodge of the Eclectic Union, at Frankfurt. (1742)
7. The National Grand Lodge of Saxony, at Dresden (1811)
8. The Grand Lodge 'Concord' at Darmstadt (1846)
9. The Grand Lodge 'Chain of German Brotherhood' at Leipzig (1924)
10. The Grand Lodge 'Freimaurerbund' at Nuremberg, later at Hamburg (1907)
11. The Symbolic Grand Lodge at Hamburg, later at Berlin (1930)

The first three of the Grand Lodges, all based at Berlin, were called the Old Prussian Lodges. They generally enjoyed the protection of the Prussian Kings and admitted only men professing the Christian Faith.

The Grand Lodges numbered four to nine, admitted men of any monotheistic faith and have been called the Humanitarian Lodges. All the first nine Grand Lodges recognized each other and enjoyed fraternal relations.

The last two Grand Lodges were not recognized by the other nine, evidently because they did not conform to several of the ancient landmarks of the order. By 1930 there were an estimated 100,000 freemasons in Germany, indicating that Freemasonry was wider spread in that country than in any other Continental country at the time.

The rise to power of the Nazis in 1933 saw this happy situation quickly reversed. By 1935, all lodges in Germany were dissolved and their property confiscated by the Nazi German Government. Thereupon, Freemasonry remained completely suppressed until the end of the Second World War in 1945. After the War, the Craft rapidly re-established itself in West Germany. Freemasonry remained suppressed in East Germany under Soviet Rule until the re-unification of Germany in 1989.

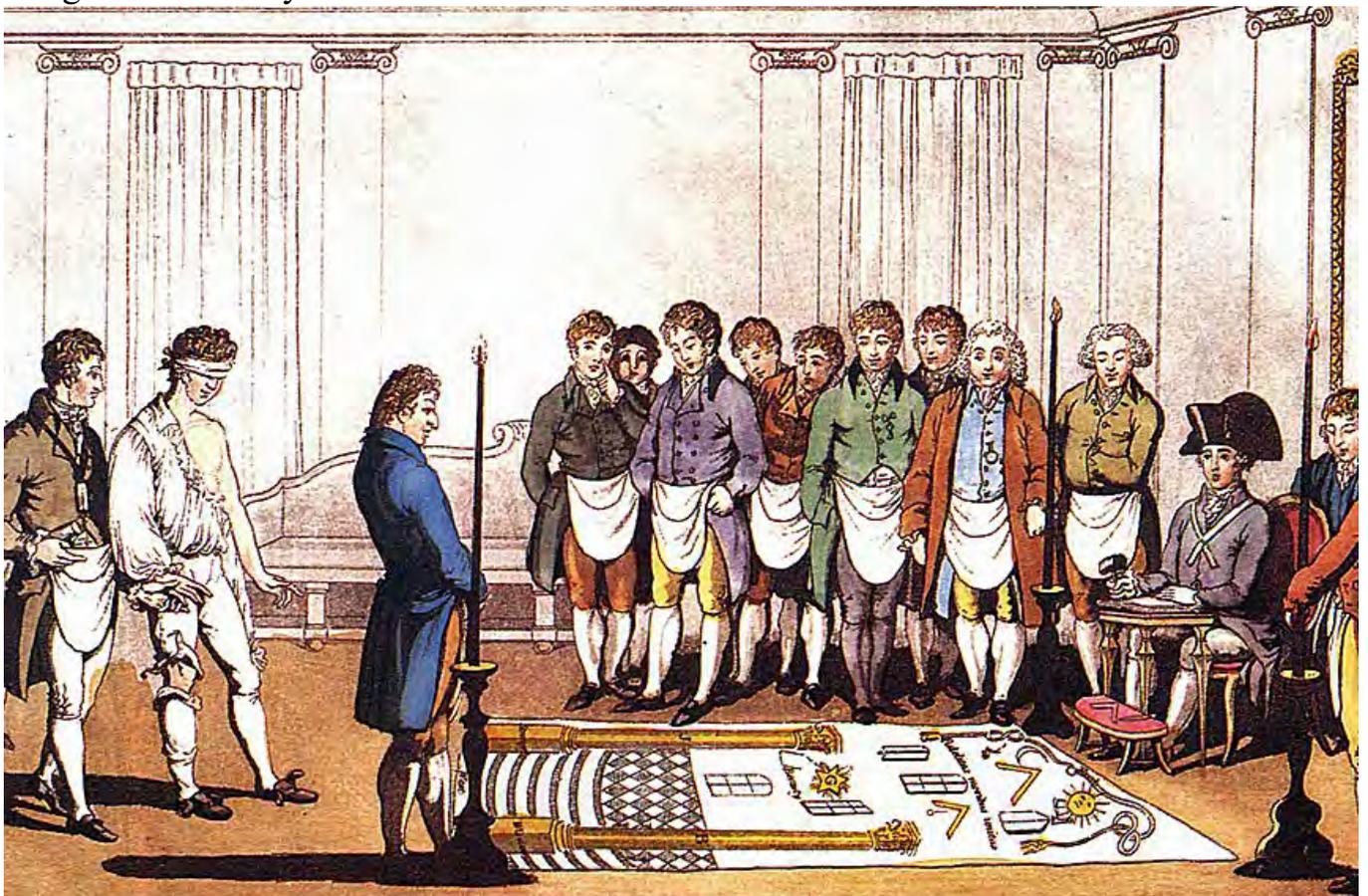
In 1949 representatives of 151 German Lodges met at Frankfurt and founded the United Grand Lodge of German Freemasons. However complete unity was still not achieved as former members of the old Grand Lodges which were working under the Swedish Rite system which presented them with governmental and ritualistic difficulties. However by protracted negotiations the United Grand Lodges of Germany were founded in 1958 with a membership of 264 Lodges of the Grand Lodge AF & AM along with 82 Lodges of the Grand Lodge of Order of Freemasons (FO) at that time.

Particular attention should be paid to the word Lodges since the basis of the unity was a Magna Charta which passed sovereignty to the United Grand Lodges, but maintained the two forming bodies as Grand Lodges. There still remained outside the Union the original Grand Lodge of the Three World Globes, which had been resuscitated at West Berlin. This situation was rectified after the Union, when it joined the United Grand Lodges as a Fellow Member Grand Lodge.

Meanwhile since the end of the Second World War a large number of English-speaking Lodges had been founded in Germany by stationed American, Canadian and British troops. These Lodges formed themselves into two Provincial Grand Lodges, namely the American Canadian Grand Lodge A.F.& A.M., and the Grand Lodge of British Freemasons whereupon they both affiliated with the United Grand Lodges.

In 1970, the status of the three latterly joining Grand Lodges was changed under an amended Magna Charta. Each Grand Lodge with the exception of the Grand Lodge AF & AM and the Grand Lodge of Order of Freemasons (FO) is represented by one member in a Senate governing body of the United Grand Lodges of Germany (VGLvD). the Grand Lodge AF & AM has 5 members which represents them and the Grand Lodge of Order of Freemasons (FO) has 3 members which represent them.

[\(See diagram\).](#) Thus, German Masonry has a unique system of five largely independent Grand Lodges bonded together under the roof of the United Grand Lodges of Germany.



STRUCTURE OF FREEMASONRY

within the United Grandlodges of Germany

(VGLvD)

The purpose of this paper is to describe the present structure of the VGLvD (acronym for: Vereinigte Grosslogen von Deutschland) as it exists today (2000).

Historically, German Freemasonry can trace its origins back to September 13, 1740, when the “Grosse National Mutterloge zu den drei Weltkugeln” (translation: Grand National Mother Lodge of the Three World Globes) was established as the first Grand Lodge in Germany, by Frederick The Great, who served as its first Grand Master. It still proudly exists today as part of the VGLvD.

The VGLvD can best be described as a federation of five grand lodges, united to form one sovereign Grand Body for Germany. This unification originally was designed to accomplish two basic goals; first, to facilitate the need to regain recognition for German Freemasonry after the debacle of World War II, second, to unite different Masonic ‘systems’ existing in Germany under one common roof. Prior to the war, there were a number of active Grand Lodges in Germany. After the war, the partition of Germany and the near-decimation of Masonic membership in Germany over the preceding decade resulted in efforts to consolidate the somewhat varying ‘systems’ existing within the remnants of Freemasonry in Germany. A detailed discussion of these developments would be too lengthy for inclusion in this brief paper; suffice it to say that the VGLvD was formed, and the constituting Grand Lodges united under the terms of what is called the “Magna Charta” (pronounced Karta) of German Freemasonry. The Magna Charta, the ‘constitution’ of the VGLvD. can perhaps be more appropriately termed articles of confederation’. The Magna Charta has been amended several times, and under its authority, laws and regulations for the government of the VGLvD have been adopted. Following is a listing of the five constituent or ‘partner’ Grand Lodges which comprise the VGLvD, shown in the order in which they became signatories to the Magna Charta of Freemasonry in Germany:

1. Grossloge A.F.u.A.M. von Deutschland 1958:

Sometimes referred to simply as “AFAM., and currently composed of between 8,500-9,000 members, this Grand Lodge was established through consolidation of surviving members of seven, pre-World War II Grand Lodges.

2. Grosse Landesloge der Freimaurer von Deutschland 1958:

Sometimes referred to as “FO” (referring to Freimaurer Orden”) it should be more accurately abbreviated as VvD”. Currently composed of approximately 3,600 members, the FvD is part of a complete ‘system’ of Masonic degrees based on the so-called Swedish or Scandinavian Rite. Christian dogma is highly stressed within the FvD system, especially in its advanced degrees, which in some ways can be equated with the American York Rite system.

3. Grosse National-Mutterloge “Zu den drei Weltkugeln” 1958:

The oldest Grand Lodge in Germany, it is often referred to simply as “3WK” (three world globes). Time, and the partition of Germany (we must remember its greatest strength was in Prussia.) have taken its toll, and current membership is currently at about 800 members. This Grand Lodge’s system also includes additional steps or degrees known as “Erkenntnisstufen” (Steps of Enlightenment).

4. Grand Lodge of British Freemasons in Germany:

Often very simply referred to as “the Brits”, “BFG” this Grand Lodge is composed of approximately 1,200 members. Its membership is composed predominantly of British Forces personnel, with the result that more than half the total membership is not physically resident in Germany.

5. American Canadian Grand Lodge AF&AM e.V.(ACGL) 1970:

Generally referred to simply as “ACGL” this jurisdiction is composed of approximately 2,700 Master Masons (we mention MMs only because membership figures for each of the other German-speaking jurisdictions include Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts). Composed predominantly of members of the American and Canadian Forces or government personnel stationed in Germany, subject to constant turnover resulting from reassignments, most of its current membership is not physically resident in Germany.

In almost every other jurisdiction, reference to the Grand Lodge is always simply “the Grand Lodge”. Here in Germany, we almost always use the acronym or nickname - even for the VGLvD itself. This may be a natural result of the proliferation of Bodies, or simply the result of the German penchant for abbreviating everything, a habit which comes quite naturally to military and government personnel as well.

It must be mentioned that although the official language of the ACGL is English, the ACGL has lodges in Germany which work under other languages such as German, French, Turkish and Italian. In other words, “Unity in Diversity”

In 1995 Turkey Lodge # 995 was chartered by the VGLvD under the ACGL and consecrated in Frankfurt am Main. This Lodge usually works in the Turkish language. The first German speaking Lodge in the ACGL, Europa Lodge # 1051 was consecrated on the 15th of December 2012.

Dominion Lodge #848 was solemnly reactivated on the 17th of March 2012. This Lodge works in the French language. This was then subsequently followed by the consecration of other French speaking Lodges in District #5.

Presently the only ACGL lodge working in Italian is Leonardo da Vinci Lodge #1064 which was consecrated in 2014.

The Magna Charta

Previously mentioned this document clearly states the constituent Grand Lodges are autonomous; they govern their own internal affairs. The Magna Charta also contains rules for electing a Grand Master and one Deputy Grand Master; regulations for the regular convening of a Communication (called 'Konvent' in German; a word akin to the English convention); and-various other rules for the government-of the VGLvD. There are no Grand Wardens in the VGLvD, but a Grand Treasurer and a Grand Secretary are part of the so called "Grossmeisteramt" (Grand Master's Bureau). The governing organ of the VGLvD is the 'Senate', composed of members elected or appointed by their respective Grand Lodges, based on a proportionate membership representation, and in the interest of continuity most are normally re-elected or appointed for successive terms. Several committees exist, which are appointed or confirmed by the Senate.

Since the VGLvD is recognized and acknowledged as the sovereign Grand Lodge in Germany, each constituent Grand Lodge enjoys recognition as the result of its membership in the VGLvD. Fraternal relations with other Grand Lodges, including any exchange of representatives, are strictly within the sphere of responsibility of the VGLvD. Generally, correspondence between Grand Lodges must be channeled through the VGLvD, except when this authority is delegated. A prime example of this delegation may be noted in the fact that the ACGL has conducted its vast correspondence direct to all other jurisdictions, as the VGLvD is neither administratively nor financially in a position to handle the administrative requirements of the ACGL. While the five partner Grand Lodges are autonomous and govern their internal affairs without interference, specific restrictions are placed on their activities. As 'subordinate' Grand Lodges, those matters normally construed as the inherent right or responsibility of in the 'sense of absolute responsibility and matters normally construed as the inherent right or responsibility a sovereign Grand Lodge (in the sense of absolute responsibility and authority for a territorial jurisdiction), they cannot individually pre-empt the prerogatives or rights of the VGLvD. As the VGLvD is the guarantor of recognition with all other Grand Lodges, it bears the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that all lodges working under its sovereign authority are regular.

In effect, a 'federal' or 'collective' voice exists for recognized Freemasonry in Germany, and as the result of this 'partnership' in the VGLvD. each partner is involved in the decision-making process in regard to those matters and laws affecting all Freemasons in Germany.

Needless to say, as in any federal system, efforts to effect better coordination among the partner Grand Lodges, as well as efforts to establish greater uniformity in respect of certain Masonic procedures are among the many subjects that constantly involve the Grand Master and the Senate. On-going attempts to define and regulate these and other important Masonic matters are undertaken at the regularly scheduled meetings of the Senate and the several Senate committees.

The Konvent

The Konvent is the regularly convened Communication of the United Grand Lodges of Germany. As currently regulated, the Konvent is convened every three years for the purpose of electing a new Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master, who serve for a three-year period. Each Lodge is entitled to one vote at the Konvent, and that vote can only be exercised by the Master, one of the Wardens in succession, or by a proxy as specified in the regulations governing the Konvent.

Interim Konvents may be called at any time, but these would be more ceremonial in nature, with legislation normally not introduced except in emergency circumstances. The Grand Master of the VGLvD, together with the Senate, determines when and where Konvents may be called in the intervening years. The triennial Konvent is normally held in the City of Berlin, the official domicile or seat of the VGLvD. As this is written, Most Worshipful Brother Christoph Bosbach is Grand Master of the VGLvD, having been elected in 2015.

Summary

It is hoped the foregoing will be of some assistance to Brethren who are not familiar with the German language (most good source books are in German) to better understand the complexities of the organization of the Masonic fraternity in Germany. A structure that is unique in the world of Freemasonry; one that has proved exceedingly workable, and stands as a living monument to the ability of Masons to exemplify that vital Masonic ideal of “..who best can work and best agree”. It is obvious that in a brief review such as this, one can, at best, do little more than gloss-over the subject. In line with the axiom that a picture is worth a thousand words, the organizational chart which follows illustrates graphically the foregoing text.

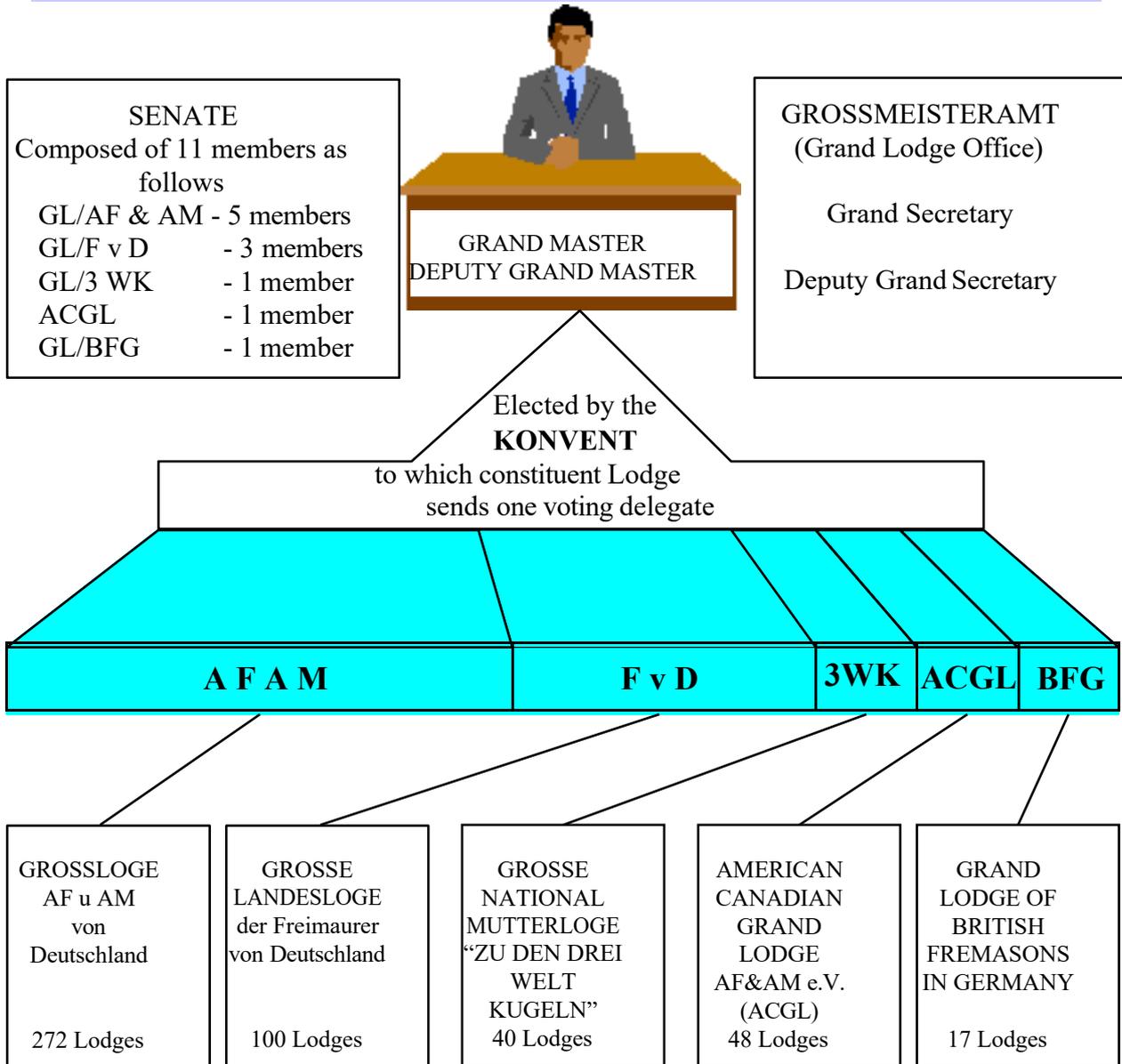
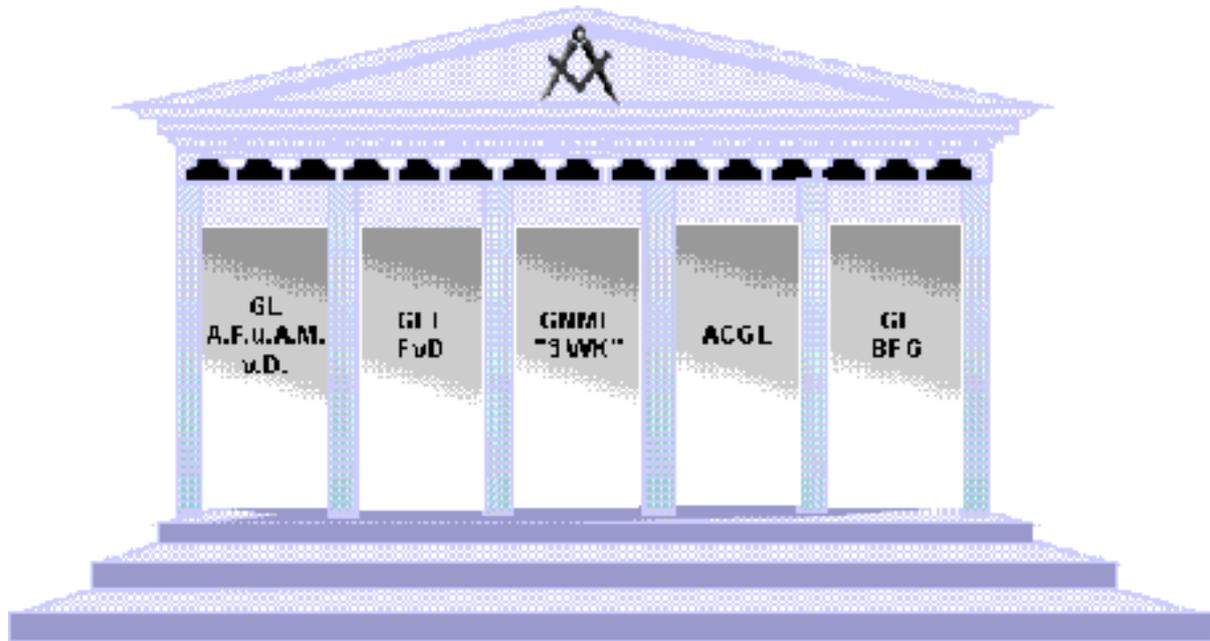
Attested by:

John H. Abernathy

Grand Secretary

American Canadian Grand Lodge

AF&AM e.V. (ACGL)



WHAT WE ARE NOT

We are not a secret society!

A secret society is generally one that wraps itself in a cloak of absolute secrecy. That means no one knows who the members are, where they meet what they do or what they stand for.

That is not Masonry at all! Masonry may have “secrets,” but it is not a secret society. Masonic secrets are few in number, and deal with the general method of initiation, the ways we recognize each other, and very little else. These parts of the ritual, which are called the esoteric side of Masonry, have been handed down by word of mouth for centuries.

Masonry’s purposes, ideals, and principles may be learned by anyone who inquires. There are numerous books on these subjects which are available to the public. Masonry often has public notices in the newspapers, and our members are usually numbered among the more prominent citizens in the community.

We are not a Religion!

Masonry, as an organization, is understanding and tolerant of all religious thoughts. Masonry has no specific creed, no promise of salvation, no dogma, no priesthood. There are no requirements as to religious preference in becoming a Mason.

Masonry does ask you to state your belief and trust in a Supreme Being.

Nonsectarian Prayers are a common part of all our ceremonies, but are not offered to a specific deity.

Masonic ritual does incorporate lessons and examples from the Bible, but they are given as representative illustrations.

Masonry does not require you to belong to a church, synagogue or mosque although many Masons are very active in their religious organizations, and among our members are leaders of many denominations.

Freemasonry accepts your right to belong to any church or religious organization of your choice and does not infringe on that right. Neither does Masonry try to be a substitute for your church.

Masonry wants to unite men for ‘the purpose of brotherhood; not as an organized religion.

WHAT WE DO NOT DO

Sectarian religion and partisan politics are not discussed in Lodge, and there are very good reasons why. When we meet in a Lodge, we are all on a common level, and are not subject to the classes and distinctions of the outside world. Each Brother is entitled to his own beliefs and may follow his own convictions. Our objective is to unite men, not to divide them. These two subjects can cause honest differences of opinion which might well cause friction among Brothers. No member running for political office has any right to expect the support of any other member because of Lodge affiliation. This does not mean, however, that matters which concern themselves with the nature of government or individual freedoms are not proper concerns of Masons as good citizens. There will be subjects concerning the Lodge's business that have to be discussed. These discussions should be kept within the bounds of propriety, and everyone should show tolerance for the opinion of the other. Every Master wants harmony in his Lodge; and, once a matter has been put to vote in the Lodge, and a decision made, the decision should be accepted by all members regardless of how they voted.

Masonry teaches every Mason to be a good citizen and to perform his civic duties. We do not try to keep anyone from expressing his opinion, or from serving his city, county, state, or nation in an honorable manner. Anyone who serves in political office should not act politically as a Freemason; nor, in the name of Freemasonry in exercising his rights.

To sum up: As a Mason you will never introduce into the Craft any controversial sectarian or political question; and in your life as a member of the state you will ever be loyal to the demands of good citizenship.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A PETITIONER

Our Grand Lodge has decreed, "A petitioner for the degrees of Masonry must be a man, at least 18 years of age, able to understand the English language, a believer in a Supreme Being, and of good moral conduct."

In addition, it is generally understood that there are internal and external qualifications necessary to become a Mason. The internal qualifications refer to those not apparent to the world and include his attitude toward the Fraternity and his motives and designs in seeking entrance into it.

The outward qualifications refer to his physical fitness to participate in the degrees and perform the duties of a member, his reputation in the community and his financial ability to conform to the requirements of membership.

The applicant must act of his own free will, he must first be prepared in his heart and must act un-influenced by friends or unbiased by mercenary motives.

Each petition shall be signed by three Master Masons who are members in good standing in a recognized Freemasons Lodge, or by one Mason in good standing who is

member of the ACGL Lodge being petitioned. The petitioner must have resided in Germany for a minimum of six months. All petition fees must accompany the petition. He must be a free man in the fullest sense. He must be a peaceable citizen, loyal to his country and its law.

MASONIC ORGANIZATIONS

You have asked to join the Masonic Lodge, or “Symbolic Lodge”, or “Blue Lodge”. It is the base of all other organizations that require Masonic affiliation, one or more of which you, or a member of your family, may want to join sometime in the future.

We are not sure where the name “Blue Lodge” originated, one theory is because blue is generally regarded as the colour used to characterize friendship. Colours have a large place in the traditions of the Craft. Today it is generally agreed that the American usage is derived from English Freemasonry. We know that the United Grand Lodge of England, in choosing the colours of its clothing was guided mainly by the colours associated with the Noble Orders of the Garter and the Bath. When the Most Noble Order of the Garter was instituted by Edward III in 1348, its colour was light blue. Freemasonry’s colours were not derived from ancient symbolism. The clothing of three groups of degrees is related to mainly three colours; the Craft of symbolic degrees with blue; the Royal Arch with crimson; and other degrees with green, white and other colours, including black. Worldwide, in many cultures, blue symbolizes immortality, eternity, fidelity, prudence and goodness. In Freemasonry in particular, blue is symbolic of universal brotherhood and friendship and “instructs us that in the mind of a Mason, those virtues should be as extensive as the blue arch of Heaven itself.”

Two of the organizations, the York Rite and the Scottish Rite, expand on the teachings of the Blue Lodge, or basic Masonry, and further explain its meaning.

The Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, commonly called the Shrine, is not formally connected with Masonry, but has, as its own requirement, the restriction of its membership to members of the York Rite and/or Scottish Rite. This organization is socially-oriented, and has as its major project the funding and operation of nearly two dozen hospitals for crippled and burned children.

The Order of the Eastern Star, White Shrine of Jerusalem and the Amaranth admit both men and women. Research Lodges do academic study on Masonry.

The Masonic Service Association, whose headquarters is in Silver Spring, MD, issues Masonic publications and sponsors visits to patients at our Veterans hospitals.

There are several organizations. The International Order of De Molay (For young men) and Jobs Daughters, The International Order of Rainbow Girls for young people. In addition, the Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets of the Enchanted Realm (Grotto), Tall Cedars of Lebanon and many other concordant and appendant Masonic bodies in the United States of America will welcome you and your family as members once you become a Master Mason. All you will need is the time, finances and energy to participate.

WHAT TO EXPECT

First of all, relax.

All of the ceremonies of Masonry are serious and performed in a dignified manner. There is no horseplay, no hazing.

Enter the Lodge with an attitude which will help you appreciate the serious and solemn ceremonies that you will experience.

The degrees, or teaching lessons, are done in the form of short plays, in which you play a part, prompted by a guide. The language is beautiful, and the content both meaningful and interesting.

When you receive each degree, it is suggested that you dress respectfully, as in a business setting. When you arrive at the Lodge for your degree you will be asked to wait a short time in an outer room while the Lodge prepares to conduct the degree. A small committee will meet with you formally. You will be asked a series of questions to ascertain your motives and confirm your free choice in joining our Fraternity. You will then be prepared to receive the degree by temporarily exchanging your street clothes for the plain garment of a candidate.

The degree itself will be given by a team of Masons. Listen to the content of what is being said. These are spiritual lessons given with great dignity.

You should have no worries about entering a Masonic Lodge.

The degrees are simply lessons and you will be treated as the friend and brother that you are becoming



THE PROFICIENCY

As you take each degree, you will be required to show that you understand what has been said and portrayed. This step is called “the proficiency”. The proficiency is evidence that the candidate is qualified for advancement, just as in the days of operative masonry, when the worker had to show that he was qualified to do more complicated tasks.

In the A.C.G.L. candidates are asked to memorize a portion of the degree work and state it to one or more members of the Lodge.

A brother may not be Passed to the Degree of Fellowcraft or subsequently raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason within this Jurisdiction without first exhibiting suitable proficiency in the preceding Degree. Such proficiency must be ascertained by examination in open Lodge or by a Committee of three Brethren, one of whom must be a member who has exhibited proficiency in that Degree in open Lodge. All three members of the Committee must certify to a Brother's proficiency prior to authorizing the Brother's advancement. A complaint registered with the Master concerning any Candidate for a Degree, shall have the effect of blocking the Brother's advancement until the complaint has been investigated and disposed of in proper manner.

The proficiency is simple, but requires some study. A mentor will be assigned to you to help you learn the material, answer any questions that you may have, and see that you pass smoothly through the process of becoming an informed Mason and an active Lodge member. You are expected to meet with your mentor as often as necessary in order to acquire a basic knowledge of Masonry.

A booklet similar to this one will be given to you at the end of each degree. It will contain an explanation of the degree and will explain the symbols and actions in each part of the degree.

In addition, you will be required to memorize a portion of each degree, so that you will be able to visit other Lodges. It will be written in a brief memory-aid form.

If you so desire, there will be optional material along with a list of voluntary projects for you to participate in that will help you become more comfortable and familiar with your new Lodge and fraternity. As in all endeavors, you will receive as much from the experience as you put into it.

When you pass the proficiency, you will be given the next degree.

YOUR DUTIES AS A MASON

You will become a full member of the fraternity when you have received the three degrees, proved your proficiency in each of them, and signed the by-laws of your Lodge. In assuming the obligations of the degrees and signing the by-laws, you enter into an agreement with the Lodge, wherein you bind yourself to perform certain duties, and the Lodge binds itself to protect you in certain rights and privileges.

Always your duties will be loyalty to Masonry, faithfulness to your superior officers, and obedience to Masonic laws. These are fundamental conditions of membership.

As a Mason, it will be your duty to maintain membership in some Lodge. If necessary or expedient you may transfer your membership to another Lodge.

Membership in a Lodge necessarily requires some monetary obligation. Dues should be paid promptly as an imperative condition of membership. While the Lodge is not an organized charity, it teaches love and charity for all mankind and especially for Brother Masons, their widows and orphans. It will therefore be your duty to stand ready to lend a helping hand to a Brother Mason in sickness or distress, and to aid in the charities of the Lodge, after you become a Master Mason so far as your conscience will guide and your means permit.

If you are a Master Mason and present at your Lodge when a ballot is taken on a petition for degree, you must vote. Voting on a petition for membership is not a right or privilege to be exercised at your choice, but an obligation and a duty. This is only another way of saying that the responsibility for deciding who shall be Masons rests on every member. You may be summoned by the Worshipful Master to attend a meeting of your Lodge for some special purpose, or to discharge some duty required of you as a Mason and, unless circumstances at the time make it impossible, it will be your duty to obey.

A Lodge differs from any other organization in many fundamental respects; duties and obligations may not be laid down or taken up at pleasure and membership is not a mere gesture of honor or an idle privilege. A member may not stand aside until an opportunity occurs to secure something from it for his own selfish purpose, nor may he evade his responsibilities by shifting his burdens to more willing shoulders. The Mystic Tie that binds him to his fellows holds him fast.

When among strangers you will have certain means of recognition by which to prove yourself to another Mason and to prove him to you, to enable you to establish Fraternal relations with men whom you might never have met. To know that wherever you go in the world and whatever your financial or social position, you will find Brothers ready to extend to you the hand of fellowship, is one of the greatest of all the privileges of membership.

YOUR REWARDS AS A MASON

If you go through the degrees, receive the work, decide that Freemasonry is a fine institution and then do nothing about the teachings presented to you, then you are wasting our time as well as your time and money. If you recognize the opportunity which is yours, take the various doctrines and truths presented to you, study them, analyze them, contemplate their meanings, and apply them to your own life, then your investment of time and money will be richly rewarded.

Do not adopt a double standard of conduct, whereby you apply Freemasonry to a part of your life, but feel that it doesn't apply to other phases. The thoughtful Freemason will apply the teaching of our Institution to each and every phase of his life, and we sincerely hope that you will see fit to follow such a practice. This great opportunity for self-improvement is one that you should grasp to such an extent that the principles of Freemasonry will eventually spread through every facet of your life; when you do you will have allowed Freemasonry to become one of the greatest of your personal experiences.

As a member of a Lodge you will be eligible for any office in it. It will be your right to visit other Lodges in this or other Grand Jurisdictions, provided always that the Worshipful Master is willing to admit you after you have been properly identified. In case of sickness or distress you have the right to apply for relief, but is strictly at the discretion of the Lodge to grant.

These statements are not exhaustive. We have just touched the fringe of a great theme, but it is our hope, with such light as may have been given you, that you will go forward -with a livelier understanding of what Masonry will mean to you and also of what you mean to Masonry.



BROTHERHOOD

Oh come ye all, each one of you
 In brotherhood unite.
All Masons we; a bond to share
 Of all that is upright.
'Tis truth we seek, we are as one
Upon the level meet No dogma have,
 one God a must
 And heaven next replete.
A brotherhood of man we serve
 A fatherhood of God.
The "Golden Rule," a way of life
 We lack a false facade.
No matter what our stations be
 If high, or low - between,
Through brotherhood in Masonry
 So much there is to glean

