



FREEMASONRY

The following is a brief response to questions often asked about Freemasonry: what is Freemasonry, what is its origin, when and where did it start, who started it, and what is its purpose.

Freemasonry is the oldest and the largest fraternal order in the world. It is a universal brotherhood of men dedicated to serving God, family, fellowman and country.

The heritage of modern Freemasonry is derived from the organized guilds or unions of stone masons who constructed the beautiful cathedrals and other stately structures throughout Europe during the middle ages. The skills and architectural genius of these craftsmen and their commitment to the highest standards of moral and ethical values were universally applauded, and unlike other classes of people, they were allowed to travel freely from country to country. Thus, during this period, the word "Free" was prefixed to the word mason, and these craftsmen and the generations of masons who followed, were referred to as Freemasons.

Until about the sixteenth century, masons were strictly an operative craft- stone masons and architects building those magnificent cathedrals and palaces, many of which still adorn the landscape of the European country side. Early in the seventeenth century, membership in these unions or operating lodges of stone masons began to decline, and probably to compensate for their loss in members, they began to admit certain men of prominence in society who were not craftsmen or stone masons. This class of members became known as "accepted masons". At the conclusion of the seventeenth century, a radical transformation had evolved; these accepted masons had become predominant, and the older lodges of Freemasons began to emphasize and teach moral philosophy rather than the technical and operative art of earlier centuries. Tools of the stone masons are still used in the Fraternity today, but only to symbolize moral virtue, not to build cathedrals.

Although the moral philosophy of Freemasonry is founded upon religious principles, it is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. Candidates for membership (adult males) are however, expected to profess a belief in God, and be of good moral character.

In Alexandria, VA, is the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. This memorial is dedicated to the memory of George Washington; Patriot, Farmer, Surveyor, General of the Continental Armies, Founding Father, First President, Freemason and truly the Father of our country. Their web site is www.gwmemorial.org

UNIVERSALITY OF FREEMASONRY

Among the secret orders, the Freemasons are unique. They have withstood the rivalry of insurance societies and the competition of free-wheeling club house fraternities.

They have held on to their secrets and steadily increased their membership. Masonry in America dates back to Colonial days, when frontiersmen met in the woods to conduct their rites. One of the oldest secret fraternities, Freemasonry began in the remote period of David and Solomon and spread around the world, but its roots grew fastest in America; today there are more than four million Masons in America representing every degree of social life from the President down to the average citizen.

Masonry is not peculiarly the characteristic of any one people or nation. It has a beautiful and wonderful universality not found in any other order on earth, nor are its sublime teachings confined to any particular times or seasons.

There is no pretense on the part of Masonry to usurp the place of the Church, and many a devout and conscientious churchman heeds the signs, observes the symbols and lives in accordance with the sacred teachings. The Oriental Mason ready with all the artful learning, strange and mystical philosophy of his country, recognizes, amidst all his superstitions, the universal language of the craft, and rises from the shrine in the Pagoda to clasp hands with a brother from the far West, speaking a different language, believing in a different system of religion, and familiar with entirely different law, turning his face toward Mecca in prayer, or coursing over the desert sands, beneath the rays of the burning sun, remembers, when closing his oft-repeated prayer, or when the agony of the most torturing thirst, the sacred obligations he has assumed as a Mason, and performs to the strange brother from a distant land the acts of a broad humanity.

No less remarkable than the universality of Masonry is the equality which is one of its most striking characteristics. The king no greater than his humble subject; the prince no greater than the beggar. Except as Masonry herself may choose to honor her followers, no distinction is known, and no arbitrary or worldly standard of influence or honor is recognized as entitling one to pre-eminence. It is affirmed by those who have the gift to understand it; to be the echo of that spirit which filled the soul of our Patron Saint, the Evangelist John.

Other organizations may have sterling aims, but always and everywhere Masonry has stood for the right of the soul to know the truth, and to look up unbidden from the lap of the earth unto the face of Him in whose great hand it stands.

William Grover Anderson (son of Lewis Monroe Anderson & Matilda Isabelle Wallace).

WHEN IS MAN IN FULL ACCORD WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF
CHRISTIANITY AND FREE-MASONRY?

When he can look out over the rivers, the hills and the far horizon with profound sense of his own littleness in this vast scheme of things and yet have faith, hope and courage, which is the root of every virtue.

When he knows how to sympathize with men and their sorrows, yea, even in their sins, knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds, and he seeks to know, to love, and to forgive his fellow man.

When he knows how to make a friendship, how to keep friends, and above all, how to be a friend with himself.

When he loves the flowers and he can hunt the birds without a gun and he feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy, when he hears the laughter of a little child.

When he's learned how to live without revenge, how to hope and how to pray, and can be happy and high minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life.

When alone, he can see good in every faith that helps men lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life no matter what the name of that faith may be.

When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain and no hand seeks his aid without response.

When the star-crowned trees and the tranquility of the winter moon subdue him like the thought of one much loved and long past beneath the circling sun.

When he's kept faith with himself, with his fellow man and with God. In his hand a sword for evil – in his heart a bit of a song, "Glad to live, but not afraid to close his eyes in death for that which is to be."

Note: You will find in the nine paragraphs nine of the most expressive words in the English language.

The word “faith” brings the greatest comfort; the most beautiful is “love,” and the warmest is “friendship.” The saddest word is “forgotten;” the most cruel is “revenge,” the most bitter is “alone;” the coldest is “no;” the most peaceful is “tranquility,” and the most tragic is “death.”

(To my thinking and writing on this brief article, I acknowledge with thanks the contribution of Bro. Joseph Fort Newton, 33 degree mason, who was a very able writer and a very able minister of the gospel.

William Grover Anderson (*son of Lewis Monroe Anderson & Matilda Isabelle Wallace*).

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- See Family Sheets, Lewis Monroe Anderson & William Grover Anderson.
 - See Chapters 1-4: <http://www.ajlambert.com>

William Grover Anderson was a 32nd degree Mason, State Senator, Mayor of Baxter, on the Co. Board of Education, ran a wholesale & retail hardware business, undertaker and built several building in Baxter, TN. He was the only surviving male born to Lewis M. & Matilda (Wallace) Anderson. He had five sisters, Micheal Martelia “Telia”, Ollie Lamby, Audra Camilla, Addie, & Eldra Anderson. He was preceded in death by a brother, John Byrd Anderson who died when he was just a year old.

MASONIC TRADITIONS GOT THEIR START IN ANCIENT TIMES

COOKEVILLE — Secret meetings, special symbols, strange titles — to the outsider, the world of the Masons can seem like a bizarre thing. In fact, many people have no idea what the Masons are or what they do.

“Some of those TV programs like to insinuate that the Masonic lodge is here to overthrow the government or it’s a new world order — that’s so far from the truth,” Tommy Clark, grand lecturer of Cookeville Lodge 266, said.



(Pictured: Jeff Abbott, left, and Keith Taylor talk about upcoming events at the Masonic Lodge in Cookeville. Photo by Ty Kernea).

The organization as a whole goes back to biblical times when masons were those who worked with stone to build temples, and continued through history as men who built structures such as pyramids and cathedrals. These men, Clark said, would start out as apprentices and spend at least seven years learning how to

recognize types of rock, and the best way to cut the rock out of the earth and get it to their masters. Then they would become a journeyman or fellowcraft, who would spend at least seven years learning how to take chunks of rock and form it into the correct shape to use in building. Then, after the man had at least seven years of experience in that position, he was finally able to move on and become a master — and, most importantly, be paid a master’s wages. However,

whenever a man started a job, his employers would have to be sure he had the level of training that he claimed he did.

"In order for you to go somewhere to work on a cathedral or a temple or a pyramid — or whatever kind of stone structure, if you wanted to earn a master's wages, they tried you," Clark said. "They found out by a handshake or a word if you actually had been trained as a master mason. Then you were eligible for master's wages."

This is where the group's tradition of secret handshakes and secret words originated.

However, over the years, the traditional form of masonry became less in demand, and the group started to dwindle. The Masons decided to change the focus. They started accepting "free masons" — men who were not masons by trade. Instead of training new men in the art of masonry, they turned to training men to be better citizens.

"We're building and hewing a man's rough edges into a better person," Clark said.

The group turned into a brotherhood that strives to help members grow mentally and spiritually.

"We do not consider ourselves a religious organization, but it is based upon the holy Bible," Clark said. "We don't serve any denomination."

In order to become a Mason, a man must approach a Mason — who is normally marked by a small gold ring depicting the Mason's symbol: The letter G surrounded by the masons' tools of a square and set of compasses — and ask to learn more about it. The Masons check his background to make sure he is a good man with a good history, and then the group votes on his acceptance.

Once accepted, the man becomes an apprentice, just like in tradition. However, instead of learning to work with stone, today's apprentice has to learn the "catechisms" — a series of questions and responses. He'll have to learn them perfectly word-for-word and recite them before a panel before he is deemed worthy to proceed to becoming a Fellowcraft. However, he is not given any written notes to learn the catechisms. He has to sit with another Mason and learn them verbally.

"This goes back to the tribal leaders before there was a written language," Clark said. "The elders had to teach an apprentice what the tribal rituals were, and it had to be letter-perfect in order for it to be correctly passed down from generation to generation."

Once the men become Master Masons, they turn to teaching the lower-ranked men. Luckily for today's members, they don't have to wait seven years in between levels. If they learn their catechisms perfectly, they can move up to the next level after 28 days.

"We're taught to be kind, courteous, professional, ethical, charitable," Cookeville lodge member Roy Chesnut said. "The lodge makes good men better."

The lodge in Cookeville got its start in 1858, and currently has 366 members. There have been two men from Cookeville — James Buck and George Morgan — who also served as Grand Masters, meaning they were the leaders over all the lodges in Tennessee.

This year, the Cookeville lodge is holding its first ceremony, open to the public, which will honor all of the local Masons who have passed away in the last year. The event, called For Whom the Bell Tolls, will be held at 1 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 21, at the lodge, located on the square in Cookeville at 303-B Spring St. During the ceremony, each deceased man's name will be read, and his widow or a designated family member will lay a rose on the alter while a bell is rung in the man's memory. It is intended to be a quiet memorial event for the Masons to honor their brothers. The ceremony will be followed by the installation of the lodge's new officers. The public — both

men and women — is welcome to attend both events. Clark says they plan to make the memorial ceremony a regular event.

“I think that this is something that by its nature can only get bigger and better,” Chesnut said.

Men 18 and older who are interested in learning more about the organization are welcome to talk to the Masons there and find out more about joining. The group is still considered a secret organization, though with the expansion of technology and the Internet, their secret ceremonies and teachings can be found with a little bit of online searching. However, the secrecy is basically just about tradition now — the real focus of the group is on brotherhood and becoming a better man.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN:

“I can go anywhere in the United States, and if I see somebody (with a Masons ring), it’s like I’ve known them all my life after I get done talking with them,” Clark said. “It just opens up so many friendships that I never would have had, had it not been for this lodge. ... We want to help the community be a better community.

“We want to help your sons, your young men, young fellows getting into business to be better men, better husbands, better people. Because it helps our society, and, locally, our community.”