

THE AMERICAN RITE
OF FREEMASONRY

Commonly Known as

THE YORK RITE



FRATERNALLY dedicated to
those who seek greater knowledge of
the ONE higher than themselves.



FOREWORD

My Brother Master Mason

This booklet, handed to you by an American Rite Freemason — commonly known as **The York Rite**—contains many important facts of Masonic history. You have been informed that Freemasonry is a progressive science. By the word progressive is meant advancement. No Freemason should be satisfied to remain in a static condition. The thoughtful Freemason seeks ever the broadening influence and opportunity for greater service — these are offered you in the American or **York Rite**. Why not petition now and begin to receive the satisfaction of having worked out your own conception of service. The fees for the degrees are nominal, dues are small and the advantages of membership are large. Ask any York Rite Freemason.

Fraternally,
WILLIAM L. MARSHALL,
Grand High Priest

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN RITE?

Commonly Called The York Rite

The AMERICAN RITE of Freemasonry is not a new rite recently developed nor is it something added to the Masonic system. It is the grouping of degrees according to the best American traditions, of some of the oldest and most beautiful of the whole Masonic system. It is a system of degrees which includes the Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commandery, often erroneously referred to as York Rite Masonry. It is only in North America that there is this regular arrangement of degrees which makes the name — American Rite of Freemasonry — particularly applicable. The names of the various degrees or orders, and other pertinent facts are:

1. The *Lodge*, often referred to as the “Blue Lodge”, consisting of three degrees of (a) Entered Apprentice, (b) Fellowcraft, and (c) Master Mason
2. The *Chapter*, members of which are referred to as Royal Arch Masons, consisting of four degrees of (a) Mark Master, (b) Past Master, (c) Most Excellent Master, (d) Royal Arch Mason.
3. The *Council*, members of which are referred to as Royal and Select Masters, consisting of three degrees of (a) Royal Master, (b) Select Master, (c) Super-Excellent Master.
4. The *Commandery*, members of which are termed Knights Templar, consisting of three Orders (instead of the usual term degree): (a) Order of the Red Cross, (b) Order of Malta, (c) Order of the Temple.

All bodies of the *American Rite of Freemasonry* abstain from discussion of political, religious or outside controversial matters, such being prohibited by the parent organizations. It makes no war on church, religion, political party, class or racial group, dedicating itself wholly to its purpose of making better men and Masons. There is nothing more interesting, more tragic, nor more educational than the periods of history which furnish the background for the Chapter and Council degrees, and in the Commandery is brought to light not only some of the old Jewish history, but the principles enunciated by the Great Teacher who gave to the world the New Dispensation of Love, Truth and Toleration, who brought Light to those who walk in darkness and Life to those in the shadow of Death.

UNIVERSALITY

The largest Masonic group under one banner in the United States is the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the United States of America, established 1797, with approximately half a million members. Royal Arch Masonry is universal Masonry, its thousands of Chapters being found wherever civilization extends. England alone has 1,751 chapters, 467 of them being in the City of London. Our own General Grand Chapter has subordinate chapters in Cuba, the Isle of Pines, and Puerto Rico. In Africa are 166 chapters, located in such out-of-the-way places as the Gold Coast, Cape of Good Hope, Egypt, Transvaal, Orange Free State, North and South Rhodesia, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Natal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Kenya, East Africa, South Africa, British East Africa, Uganda, Isle of Mauritius, Cape Province, Morocco and Nyasaland.

NUMBER OF DEGREES

The *American Rite* does not consist of a large number of degrees, all of which are CONFERRED — never *communicated*, because if a degree is worth anything at all it is certainly worth the effort necessary to confer it properly. Masonic education depends not upon the number of degrees but upon the clearness with which its lessons are transmitted.

ANCIENT CRAFT MASONRY

There was once a time when all of what is known as Freemasonry was contained in one degree. This was followed by a natural development resulting in a system of degrees known as Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. In the latter degree was a beautiful tradition explaining much of the Masonic symbolism. But when two rival Grand Lodges in England united more than a century ago, a vital and essential part of the third degree was removed and placed in a degree known as the Royal Arch. The Mother Grand Lodge was confronted with a large series of degrees and rites which it regarded as superfluous, causing it to make the following edict:

“Ancient Craft Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, namely those of Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and Master Mason, including the *Holy Royal Arch*.”

The foregoing is the only authoritative definition of Ancient Craft Masonry in all the world. Thus did the Mother Grand Lodge set out Royal Arch Masonry as something to be attained by those who are interested in Masonic advancement.

The degree of Master Mason, Sublime as it is and exemplifying the most perfect of all dramas, being incomplete, leaves the mind in a state of confusion and bewilderment. In Royal Arch Masonry are found the essentials of symbolism and philosophy necessary for a Master Mason to understand its meaning, and the completion of the degree of Master Mason.

There are individuals, few in number, who maintain that all Freemasonry is bound up in the system of three degrees. These we most respectfully refer to the definition set forth in full above. We do not belittle the three craft degrees in making the statement that the third degree is incomplete or that *Ancient Craft Masonry* includes the Royal Arch. As Master Masons we know of our own knowledge the correctness of the first statement and we know the other upon authority of the Mother Grand Lodge declaration. The three craft degrees are indispensable. They are to Freemasonry what reading, writing and arithmetic are to the student — the basic for all further study and advancement. These degrees include all Freemasonry just as Mother Earth contains all the forests and the flowers that flourish in their seasons; just as every word in the English language is found in the alphabet of twenty-six letters; just as the dictionary contains every word of every oration ever delivered in the English tongue.

EDUCATION

Men may have great learning or be trained in the skillful arts to the highest degree, but no man is really and truly *educated* until he *knows* One higher than himself. He who knows nothing higher than himself is exhausted by the ordinary

pursuits of peace and in the stress and strain of life has nothing to lean upon. From the prayer at the very beginning of the Entered Apprentice degree to the communication of "that which was lost" in the Royal Arch, runs a thread of gold which leads to a knowledge of that ONE. In the Chapter the profound truths of the Symbolism of the Blue Lodge are unfolded and made clear. Then the thoughtful Mason fully understands what it is all about.

THE CHAPTER DEGREES

MARK MASTER: The individual at *work* in the quarries, striving to put to use the working tools of the symbolic degrees in shaping the Perfect Ashler of his life. Here he learns the duty he owes to himself and to his fellow creature — the basic virtues of Integrity, Morality and Charity.

PAST MASTER: The application here is to society. As a Past Master he must learn to govern as he has learned in the preceding degrees to obey. No longer a lone workman laboring at his task, he now becomes an integral part of the social order. He learns the meaning of that part of the Fellow Craft lecture: "from a *point* to a *line*, from a line to a *superfices*, and from a *superfices* to a *solid*." He himself is the *point*; as a Mark Master he becomes the *line*, the base of all geometric structures; as a Past Master he puts the *line* in action and generates the *superfices* which forms the mathematical *square*.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER: The most spectacular degree in all Freemasonry, applies to that spiritual elevation necessary to raise to "an upright, living Perpendicular." It supplies that third dimension — height — without which life

lacks symmetry and proportion, and forms the *solid*. It beautifully exemplifies the elevation of mind above matter and the elevation of soul above mind. The Temple is finished! Dedicated and consecrated to the service of the Most High God!

THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH: The climax of Ancient Craft Masonry and Masonic symbolism. The earthly cube and the Temple erected upon it, full of earthly imperfections, gives way and upon its ruins is raised that spiritual Temple, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Its dimensions of length, breadth and height are perfect. It is the sum total of life not finished here. And here we receive that "Word" which as a Master Mason you were told was feared "lost, forever lost."

THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMANDERY

The ritual of the degrees of the Council and the Orders of the Temple are profoundly interesting and are in further explanation of many questions which arise in the preceding degrees. The degree of Super Excellent Master is perhaps the most dramatic of all the degrees of Freemasonry. The Orders of the Temple interpret the symbolism of Freemasonry according to the Christian faith.

"Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, Knock and it shall be open unto you."

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