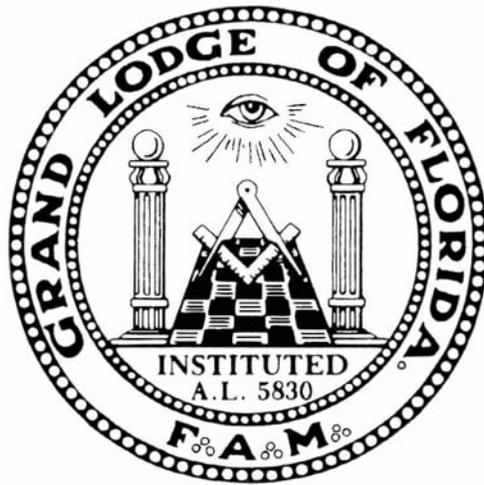


BOOKLET NO. 2

THE LODGE SYSTEM

OF MASONIC EDUCATION



*Prepared by the Grand Lodge of Florida through the Committee on Masonic Education
for the use of the Subordinate Lodges and their members per Regulation 37.18*

REVISED
2009

THE MEANING OF THE TERM “ENTERED APPRENTICE”

My Brother:

You are now an Entered Apprentice Mason. The first step in your journey to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason has been taken. We are sure that you found your Initiation an experience you will never forget. Nor should you ever forget it; a Degree of Masonry is not an isolated experience once had and then done with, but an ever-enduring privilege. You can always sit in an Entered Apprentice Lodge; you can always return to observe, to participate in, and to study its ceremonies. Your possession of the Degree is a life-long possession, which you can continue to enjoy and to enter into as long as you live.

Doubtless, you have an eager curiosity to learn more about this remarkable Degree before you pass on to the Fellow Craft Degree; perhaps its ceremonies seemed somewhat strange to you; its language fell on your ears with unaccustomed accents; and at the end of it, you may have been somewhat bewildered to understand it all. It is our function as Brothers to help you to interpret it, and we shall try to do that by explaining various phases and aspects of it. For the present, it is our privilege to assist you to that end by giving you a brief explanation of the term “Entered Apprentice” itself. To do so intelligibly we must lead you back into one or two chapters of the early history of our Fraternity.

As you have already learned, Freemasonry originated with the builders, who were called Masons, of all those remarkable structures erected in the Gothic style of architecture in the Middle Ages in Europe and Great Britain. This was from six hundred to nine hundred years ago. Our name for those builders is “Operative Masons.” We call them “Operatives” because they were builders in the literal sense, hewing stone from quarries, dressing it in shape, laying it in the walls, constructing roofs, doors, windows and spires. In short, it was their trade and means of livelihood.

These Operative Masons were organized in Lodges, governed by a Worshipful Master and Wardens. They had Lodge rooms and in them held their meetings. The members were divided into grades. They employed ceremonies of Initiation, used symbols, and passwords, preserved secrecy, admitted men only to membership—that is, as you have immediately seen, they were in many ways strikingly similar to our own Lodges. How we are descended from those Operative Masons, and to what extent we have inherited their practices you have already learned.

It was necessary for the Operative Masons to recruit new members to replace those lost through removal, accident, illness or death. To do this they used the apprenticeship system, which was in vogue in all crafts and continues to be used even to this day.

The word “Apprentice” means “learner,” or “beginner,” one who is taking his first steps in mastering a trade, art or profession. The Operative Apprentice was a boy, usually from ten to fifteen years of age. He was required to be sound in body and without maim in his limbs in order to be able to do work requiring physical strength and endurance. Also it was required that he be of good habits, obedient and willing to learn, and of unquestioned reputation, and that he be well recommended by Master Masons already members of the Craft.

When such a boy was chosen an Apprentice, he was called into the Lodge, where all the members could assure themselves of his mental, moral and physical qualifications. If they voted to receive him, he was then given much information about the Craft, what it required of its members, what his duties would be and something of its early history and traditions. That done, he was made to give a solemn promise to obey his superiors, to work diligently, to observe the laws and rules and to keep the secrets.

After being thus fastened in the ties of his Obligation, he was bound over, or indentured, as they describe it, to one of the more experienced Masons. As a rule he then went to live with this Mason, and from him day by day learned the methods and secrets of the trade. This apprenticeship lasted many years, usually seven.

After this young man had gone to school in this manner long enough to give assurance of his fitness to master the art and to become an acceptable member of the society, his name was entered on the books of the Lodge and he was given a recognized place in the Craft organization; and because of this official entering of his name he was given the title "Entered Apprentice," and along with all others of the same degree of advancement constituted the rank, or grade, of Apprentice Masons.

It is difficult to exaggerate the amount of care our Operative Masonic forebears devoted to these learners. The indenter, as the Master Mason was called to whom the Apprentice was indentured, was obligated by law to teach him the theory as well as the practice of Masonry; and it was not until the Apprentice could prove his efficiency by meeting the most rigid tests of skill, and after many years, that he was permitted to advance to a higher rank in the Craft. Other Masons with whom he was set to work at the simpler tasks also were his teachers. He was given moral instruction; his conduct was carefully scrutinized; many rules were laid down to control his manner of life. When we read the Old Charges and ancient documents that have come down to us, we are constantly impressed by the amount of space they devoted to Apprentices. The Operative Masons knew that what the Apprentice of today was, the Master Mason of the future would be.

As time passed, therefore, there grew up about the rank and duties and regulations of the Apprentice an organized set of customs, ceremonies, rules, traditions, etc., and these at least became crystallized into a well-defined unit, which we may describe as the Operative Entered Apprentice Degree. And when, after the Reformation, Operative Masonry became modified and was at last transformed into Speculative Masonry, the Entered Apprentice Degree was retained as the First of the Three Degrees of the Speculative Lodge—that very Degree which was recently conferred upon you. It was modified, of course, to some extent, to meet the needs of the Speculative Fraternity, but in substance and meaning is fundamentally the same as it always has been.

As an Entered Apprentice Mason you therefore are a learner, or beginner, in Speculative Masonry. You have taken the first step in the mastery of our art. And it is because you have this rank that certain things are expected of you. I shall briefly describe a few of these requirements.

First, you are expected to show a certain humility. As a learner you must have guides and teachers; you must show obedience to them and be willing to have them lead you.

Second, you must learn the catechism of the Degrees, so as to prove your proficiency in open Lodge.

But the purpose of learning these lessons is not merely to pass this test; you must master them so thoroughly that they will remain with you through life, because you will have need of them many times in the future.

Third, you must study to improve yourself in Masonry in all other possible ways. Your Lodge will not be content merely to have your name on its books and to receive your annual dues; it requires of you that you become a real Mason, not merely a member in name.

Fourth, you will learn from another member of this Lodge what are the laws, rules, and regulations by which an Entered Apprentice Mason is governed; it is your duty to live in exact conformity to those laws.

You will recall, my Brother, that as you stood in the Northeast Corner of the Lodge during your Initiation you were taught a certain lesson concerning a cornerstone. The meaning of that lesson should now be clear to you. You yourself are a cornerstone of the Craft. Today you are an Entered Apprentice; in a short time you will be a Fellow Craft; after that you will become a Master Mason. The day will come when into your hands will fall the responsibilities of the Lodge. What Masonry is to be in the future depends on what you Entered Apprentices are now. You are the cornerstone on which the Fraternity that is to come is now building itself. It is our hope and prayer that you will prove to be a solid foundation, true and tried, set four square, on which our great Fraternity may safely build itself for its work in many years to come.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE AND THE WORLD OF MASONRY

As you already have learned, the word “Apprentice” means a beginner, a learner. In what is the Entered Apprentice Mason a beginner? Of what is he a learner? It is our privilege to give you some suggestions that will help you to answer these questions for yourself in order that you may better appreciate and understand the First Degree which recently was conferred upon you.

The Masonic Lodge-room as represented in the Ritual is a symbol of the universe. The particular form in which this symbol was cast harks back to early times when man believed the earth to be square and the sky a solid dome; but while this form no longer represents our own knowledge of the physical shape of the world the significance remains the same; the First Degree is not intended to be a treatise on geography or astronomy.

What is this world which is thus represented? It is the world of Masonry, it is the Masonic career from its beginning to its end, including all that lies between. The Great Pillars through which the candidate enters it represent birth and signify that in taking the First Degree he is being born into his Masonic life. Already he has been born into other worlds, physical and social, but now he is being born into Masonry; therefore he is poor, blind, helpless, like a babe in its mother's womb. As one of our scholars has said of the candidate, “The old life with all its accessories has dropped from him as completely as though he were dead. He is to enter on a new life in a new world.”

That new world is an organized world. Masonry is systematic, proportionate, balanced, and exists in the form of duties, laws and definite work, supervised and regulated, controlled through laws written and unwritten, expressed through Landmarks, traditions, usages, Constitutions, and By-Laws,

guided and directed through Officers vested with power and authority. When the candidate takes his Obligation it is to pledge himself to uphold that lawful system; when he salutes the Master and Wardens it is to signify his obedience to the legally constituted Officers! When he is willing to follow his guide and fear no danger he expresses his trust in, and loyalty to, the Fraternity, as should a child which as yet is unable to trust himself.

This new world is a lawful world in which caprice and arbitrariness have no part. It has a definite nature of its own, it is devoted to specified purposes, it is committed to well defined aims and ideals. Its members cannot make it over to suit their own whims or to conform to their own purposes; they must make themselves over to it, must conform themselves to its requirements. One does not become a Mason first in order to become a member; he becomes a member in order to become a Mason, and if there be in his nature anything that obstructs him, he must make use of his Working Tools to remove it. Among the first requirements demanded of the Apprentice is that he shall offer himself as a rough stone, to be shaped under Masonic laws and influences for a place in the Temple of Masonry.

The world of Masonry is a complete world. Existence in it is fully rounded, and it satisfies the needs of the whole man—physical, moral, intellectual and social. It establishes its own physical conditions suitably to its needs. It requires of its citizens that they be good and true men, able to meet the test of the Square, the Plumb, the Level and the Compasses. It offers abundant opportunities for good fellowship and social contacts. It satisfies the mind with the great teachings of a profound philosophy. It worships God, prepares its Altars, opens the Sacred Book and leads the life of prayer according to the needs of the soul. It is to learn such a life as this that an Apprentice must study to improve himself in Masonry; it is not permitted him to come merely for the loaves and fishes, or only to be entertained, or to seek for himself some personal advantage, but it is required of him that he shall build his life according to this Trestle board of a well-rounded existence, assisted by guides and teachers, encouraged and inspired by experienced Brethren, and using the Working Tools and all other means provided.

This world of Masonry is dedicated to Brotherhood. Unless the Apprentice is willing and qualified to lead the brotherly life he will never be able to master the Royal Art. Unless in his Obligations he pledges himself to live this Brotherly life with genuine sincerity, the Mystic Tie can never take lasting hold of his nature. Unless he is willing to abide by the laws, everyone of which exists to define, regulate, or control the brotherly life, he will find himself out of step with the Fraternity and unable to find foothold in the world he seeks to enter. All our Ritual, symbols, emblems, allegories and ceremonies, in all the richness and variety of their meaning, point in the same direction; and unless an Apprentice shall thus accept and understand them, he will fail to comprehend the Masonic teaching.

In taking his First Degree an Apprentice takes his first step into such a life as this; passes through the portals of birth into such a world as this; passes from the darkness, destitution and helplessness of the profane world into the light and warmth of such an existence as this. This is the great meaning of the Degree; and the Degree therefore is not an idle formality, but a genuine experience, the beginning of a new career in which duties, rights and privileges are as actual as anything can be, so that if a candidate is to be more than an Apprentice in name only he must stand ready to do a work upon his own nature which may leave him a different kind of man.

As an Entered Apprentice he must therefore possess certain qualities.

One of these is obedience. Except a learner is willing to obey his guides and teachers, there is no way for him to learn. Such obedience is not intended to be blind or servile, nor rest on fanaticism; it is only what is required of any man, young or old, who undertakes the mastery of a new art.

Another qualification is humility. An Apprentice will never be subjected to humiliation, but it is demanded of him that he have humility, a willingness to be led and directed, a freedom from egotism or conceit, a complete absence of any presumptuous belief that he knows already what he has only begun to learn.

With these he needs also industriousness. Freemasonry maintains a high threshold. It holds out no deceptive promise of an easy victory, but makes it plain that many obstacles and hazards will be encountered in the journey. Its members are called Craftsmen because they are workmen; its Lodges are called quarries because they are scenes of toil; it offers no wages or rewards except to those who earn them; it places Working Tools in the hands of its members, and not playthings.

Also it would be wise for any Entered Apprentice Mason to study a little in Masonic literature, not laboriously or necessarily at great length, but enough to familiarize himself with the Landmarks of our history, with our Ritual, Philosophy, and Jurisprudence. These lectures you are hearing from the members of this Committee will serve in some measure to give you an inkling of what you would find in the works written by the masters of our lore. Time invested in them will bring you a rich return in the future.

In conclusion let me urge that you receive what we have said as to the nature of Apprenticeship, not as a series of pious moralizing or as a counsel of perfection. It is a solemn and serious thing to become a Mason. Once the step is taken, it may well change the course of a man's life, and frequently does. What we have said about the First Degree describes actualities and realities. Let that be all the more stimulus to you to do thoroughly the work of learning; if failure brings painful consequences, success will bring a lifelong reward. And our wish for you is abundant success.

SYMBOLS OF THE FIRST DEGREE

The symbols, emblems and allegorical ceremonies of the First Degree have each a meaning; taken together these meanings comprise the teachings of the Degree. Our time is too brief for me to give you complete explanations of them, or even to mention all of them, but we believe it will be profitable to you to have a few hints and suggestions, especially as they will show that every detail of the Ritual is filled with a definite significance which each Mason can learn if he applies himself.

The Hoodwink represents the darkness in which an uninitiated man stands as regards the Masonic life; for this reason it is removed at the moment of enlightenment. Its removal suggests that we do not make the great things of existence, such as goodness, truth and beauty, but find them; they are always there; it is our blindness that conceals them from us.

The Cable Tow is a symbol of all those external restraints by which a man is controlled by others, or by forces outside himself. If a man does not keep the law of his own free will he must be compelled to keep it by compulsion. The removal of the Cable Tow means that when a man becomes the

master of himself he will keep the law instinctively, out of his own character, and not under compulsion.

The Lodge is a symbol of the world, more properly the world of Masonry. Initiation means birth, or a new birth, an entrance into that world. The symbol means that in its scope and extent Freemasonry is as broad as human nature and as wide as mankind, and that as a spirit and ideal it permeates the whole life of every true Mason, outside the Lodge as well as inside.

The Ceremony of Entrance, by which is meant all that happens at the Inner Door and the passing between the Great Pillars, signifies birth or Initiation and symbolizes the fact that a candidate is entering the world of Masonry, there to live a new kind of life.

The sharp Instruments mean, among other things, that which is the one real penalty for violations of the Obligations—the penalty, that is, of the destructive consequences to a man's character of being faithless to his vows, untrue to his word, disloyal to his obedience.

The Rite of Circumambulation is Masonry's name for the ceremony of walking around the Lodge-room, an allegorical act rich with many meanings. One of the principal meanings of these is that the Masonic life is a progressive journey, from station to station of attainment and that a Mason will always be in search of Light.

An equally significant ceremony is that of approaching the East. The East is the source of Light, that station in the heavens in which the sun appears when about to chase the darkness away. Masons are sons of Light, therefore face the East.

The Altar is a symbol of any place where God is worshipped—in Masonry a place around which our whole teaching revolves and is exemplified. It is not too much to say that all of our ceremonies, teachings and assertions, throughout the Three Degrees, comprise one continuous progressive gesture of adoration of, and fealty to our Creator—the Great Architect of the Universe. Before the Masonic Altar all men are equal, and upon all Masons does this symbolism of the Altar lay its steadying lesson of Godly living.

The Obligations have in them many literal meanings and as such are the foundations of our disciplinary laws, but over and above this they signify the nature and place of Obligation in human life. An Obligation is a tie, a contract, a pledge, a promise, a vow, a covenant, a duty that is owed; in addition to the Obligations we voluntarily assume, there are many in which we stand naturally—Obligations to God, our families, employers or employees, friends, and neighbors. A righteous man is one who can be depended upon to fulfill his Obligations to the best of his ability.

The salute given at each station in turn by the newly-obligated Entered Apprentice is, besides being a portion of the ceremonies, a symbol of a Mason's respect for all just and duly constituted authority.

The Three Great Lights are the Volume of Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses. As a Great Light the Volume of Sacred Law represents the will of God as a man understands it; the Square is the physical life of man under its human conditions; the Compasses signify the moral and spiritual life. If a man acts in obedience to the will of God, according to the dictates of his conscience, he will be living in the illumination of the Great Lights and cannot go astray.

The Lesser Lights are the Sun, the Moon and the Master of the Lodge. The Sun is a symbol of that which is masculine, active, aggressive; the Moon of that which is feminine, receptive, gentle, non-resisting; when these two types of human action are maintained in balance, mastership is the result.

The words, Grips and Tokens are our means of recognition by which among strangers we are able to prove others or ourselves regular Master Masons in order to enter into fraternal intercourse.

The Apron is at once an emblem of innocence, purity and the badge of a Mason. By purity it meant blamelessness, a loyal obedience to the laws of the Craft and sincere good will to the Brethren; the badge of a Mason signifies that Masons are workers and builders, not drones and destructionists.

In the Rite of Destitution the candidate discovers that he has nothing of a metallic character on his person. This symbolism reverts to those ancient times when man believed that the planets determined human fate and controlled human passions, and that there was a metal by which each planet was itself controlled. In ancient Initiations candidates were compelled to leave all metals behind, lest they bring into assembly disturbing planetary influences. While with us this symbolism no longer has its astrological character, the old point about keeping out disturbing influences remains; the candidate is not to bring into the Lodge-room his passions or prejudices lest that harmony, which is one of the chief concerns of Masonry to sustain, shall be destroyed.

The Working Tools represents those moral and spiritual virtues, habits and forces by means of which a man is enabled to reshape the crude and often stubborn materials of his nature in order to adjust himself to the needs and requirements of human society. If a man has lived carelessly, without plan, aim or ideal, he must, if he is to become a Mason, learn to systematize his life, must adopt a Trestleboard, as signified by the Twenty-four Inch Gauge. If he has traits of temper, habits of speech, or defects of character that disturb or injure others, and interfere with his taking his proper place in the Brotherhood, as "knots and excrescences" on a stone interfere with putting it into its allotted place in the building; he must rid himself of them. This is represented by the Common Gavel.

The Northeast Corner is traditionally the place where the cornerstone of a building is laid; when the Apprentice is made to stand there it is because he is the cornerstone of the future Craft. What the Apprentices are today Masonry will become in the future.

The Entered Apprentice is himself a symbol, one of the noblest in the whole emblematic system of the Craft. He represents youth, typified by the rising sun; but beyond that he represents trained youth, youth willing to submit itself to discipline and to seek knowledge in order to learn the great Art of Life, which is the real Royal Art, and which itself is represented and interpreted by all the mysteries of Masonry.

It is by such voices and arts as all these, Brother Entered Apprentice, that our magnificent First Degree gave its teaching to you as a Man and a beginning Mason. We sincerely hope that these hints and suggestions as to the meaning of these symbols and emblems, will lead you to seek further for more Light upon them, not alone in order that you may become a well-trained Mason, but also for their value to you as you lead your life outside the Lodge-room.

PLACE OF THE OBLIGATIONS IN MASONIC LAW

As an Entered Apprentice you have already taken the first of three Obligations; the next will seal you a Fellow Craft Mason; the third will make you a Master Mason. If at this stage you pause to reflect upon the meaning and place of Obligations in Masonry, more particularly in the law of Masonry, you will be enabled to assume your next Obligation with greater interest and a clearer understanding.

“Obligation” is one of those words which define themselves. The root of it is the same as the root of our word “ligament,” and means a cord or tendon by which one thing is tied to another. An Obligation therefore is a solemn pledge, made on a man's honor, by which he ties himself to a society and at the same time ties himself to the duties and responsibilities imposed by it. Such an Obligation may not always be legally binding in a public court of law but it is morally binding, and a man cannot disregard it except at the cost of traducing his own honor. The Masonic Obligations are taken by the candidate as binding without limit of time; that is, he accepts them for the remainder of his natural life; he may possibly in the future withdraw from the Fraternity or by it be suspended or expelled, but that will not release him from his pledge, because he took that pledge, not as a Lodge member, but as a man. Under no circumstances in the future, whether as a Mason or as a non-Mason, can he ever violate it without proving himself dishonorable. This is the true meaning—the limits within which it is true—of the old saying, “Once a Mason, always a Mason.”

Another old saying is, “The Obligation makes the Mason.” If you as a candidate in the First Degree had withdrawn from the Lodge at any time prior to taking the Obligation, you would not now be an Entered Apprentice; upon taking the Obligation you became an Entered Apprentice and nothing could undo that step.

Upon analysis you will find that your Obligation may be divided into separate clauses. These clauses are called “points.” The points as a whole are divided into “affirmative points” and “negative points;” as the terms themselves suggest, the positive points consist of those clauses which require certain acts to be done, the negative points are those which forbid that other acts be done. Both the positive and the negative points are covered by one general point requiring that the whole Obligation be kept in strictest secrecy; this is called the “Tie.”

No man can take a Masonic Obligation, and if he does it cannot be binding, unless he is of lawful age and unless he is of sound mind, not insane and not in his dotage. This means that the candidate taking it accepts, and is competent to accept, full responsibility for it. If afterwards he is charged with having violated any of the points, he cannot seek to evade the consequences by pleading ignorance or inability at the time he gave his pledge. This is all of a piece with Freemasonry's attitude to the candidate throughout; no pressure is brought to bear upon him, no undue influence; he comes unsolicited and of his own free will and accord as a free man in every sense of the word; he is left free to withdraw before taking any Obligation; in short, it is ascertained at every step that he is competent, and to the end he is held responsible for every promise he makes and every pledge he gives.

There is among the laws of Masonry a set of laws which regulate the individual's conduct as a Mason; these lay down what is demanded of him in conduct, define Masonic crimes and affix certain penalties. These may be described as the “disciplinary law” of the Craft. In the majority of

cases when Masons are brought to trial for un-Masonic conduct it is this disciplinary law that is involved. The important point about our disciplinary law, important at least for us here and now, is that the Obligations are its foundation. I shall ask you to pay very close attention to this fact, and for this reason; the Obligations appear as a portion of the Ritual; much of that Ritual is symbolical and not to be taken literally, therefore you may be tempted to feel that the Obligations also are merely symbolical and are a kind of formality or ceremony; this is not true, for the Obligations are in force in the same manner as all other definite law, are in fact themselves law in its most definite and specific sense. This is important for you to know and to remember at the outset of your Masonic career, because the Obligations will always remain binding. Your conduct as a Mason is not left to the guidance of any vague mood or uncertain feeling, but is to be governed according to strict and clearly stated rules.

You may wish to know why it is, if this be true, that the penalties attached to the Obligations are of a type so different from the Obligations proper. If the positive and negative points of the Obligations proper are to be taken literally, why not also the penalties? The answer is that the penalties are to be taken as they stand when they are correctly understood. The form of these penalties comes to us from history. Speculative Freemasonry began, as you have already learned, in England with the organization of the first Grand Lodge, in 1717. At that time all crimes were understood to belong to either of two classes, heresy or treason. By heresy was meant some violation of the religious principles, morals and ideals of the state; by treason was meant some crime against the political and legal authority of the state. The conventional form of punishment for heresy was burning at the stake, or some variation of it; for treason it was hanging, in some form. These two sets of punishments, familiar to everybody for three or four centuries, became so identified with the two types of crime that they became synonymous with them. You can now understand our own penalties: they mean that any crime against Masonry is either heresy, that is, a violation of its teachings; or treason, that is, action against the authority of Lodge or Grand Lodge or against our laws. The penalties are a symbolical presentation of that truth, and truth it is because a Mason may be punished for violating the official teachings of Masonry as surely as for violating its written laws.

As for punishments literally in force, they may be, as our Code of Procedure states: 1. Reprimand. 2. Suspension from all rights of Masonry for a definite or indefinite time. 3. Expulsion. 4. The penalties attached to the Obligations express the general nature of the offense; the penalties prescribed in the Code of Procedure describe the punishments literally in force. No other kinds of punishment have ever been used by Freemasonry; which is to say, a Mason found guilty of violating the teachings of Masonry, of violating its written laws or of flouting the authority of its Officers may be reprimanded, suspended or expelled.

At no point does our Fraternity transgress upon the province of the civil authorities—to do so would violate the Landmarks—but within its own province it is itself a system of law and order. A body of unwritten law is in force within it; the Lodge and Grand Lodge, upon certain occasions, are legislatures and may rescind or modify old laws or adopt new laws by decision of duly qualified representatives; the Grand Lodge may interpret the law, certain Lodge and Grand Lodge Officers enforce the law; and both the Lodge and the Grand Lodge may sit as courts for the trial of cases, may hear testimony, decide innocence or guilt, and affix penalties.

Such facts as these are of paramount importance to you as gradually you form your conception of Freemasonry. Our Craft is not an open arena, a society in which members may go-as-you-please, a

loose and formless social circle, but a completely organized institution in which law, the enforcement of law and punishment for crime are as serious and as real, within their own province, as they are anywhere outside it. The Obligations contain the Mason's vows as well as the disciplinary measures provided for the nonobservance of them. Here is an expression of law and order which is to the body of Masonry what the skeletal framework is to the body of man.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MASONRY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

You have received already a brief story of Freemasonry in the world and from it learned that the beginnings of our Craft go back to a very early period. Also you learned that Masonry in its modern Speculative form began with the organization of the first Grand Lodge and of the Grand Lodge system in London, England, in 1717, and that the earliest known record of an American Lodge is dated at 1730, only thirteen years after the constituting of the Mother Grand Lodge. I shall now attempt to help fill out that picture by giving you a brief story of Masonry in our own State.

The history of Masonry in Florida is like nothing so much as a jig-saw puzzle. Imagine how it would seem to sit in an auditorium to watch a play. The play, as the curtain rises, is in Spanish; but midway in the second act it is suddenly cut off, and there begins a ten minute slice out of a comedy in French; but before it can get well under way, it is replaced without warning by half an act in English; then, and also without warning, the stage switches back to Spanish again, with an act out of picturesque comedy; which almost immediately gives way to an act out of an American play. From then on, it has continued to be an American play. These abrupt switches from nation to nation, language to language, are no exaggerations; they actually occurred; and any man who essays to study Florida's Masonic History must be prepared to grow dizzy while he does so.

St. Augustine being the site of the first white settlement on the North American continent, it may seem strange to those not familiar with the circumstances that Freemasonry was firmly established in the colonies of the New World, from Massachusetts to Georgia before Florida's first permanent Lodge was established.

Florida was discovered and taken possession of in the name of Spain by Ponce de Leon in 1512, and except for a short period between 1719 and 1723, when the French occupied Pensacola, the Spanish Government was in undisputed control of all the territory now constituting the State of Florida, until 1763, when it was ceded to Britain.

Spain was a Roman Catholic Country, and as Freemasonry was inhibited by the Roman Church, no Masonic Lodges had ever been established in Florida, but with the coming of the English in 1763, came Masons, and five years later a Provincial Grand Lodge and a Particular Lodge were established at St. Augustine under Scottish Registry. In 1771 another Particular Lodge was established in Pensacola under the authority of the Provincial Grand Lodge above mentioned.

The tenure of Masonry between 1768 and 1783, during the English occupation, in Florida, became lost History. Nothing was known of it by the founders of the Grand Lodge of Florida or by Masonic historians. St. Fernando Lodge, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Georgia, at St. Augustine, in 1808, defunct in 1811, was believed to be Florida's first Masonic Lodge until the year 1898, at which time Florida recovered its own lost history by a fortunate discovery.

The then Grand Master of Masons in Florida, Most Worshipful James S. Hilliard, received from Brother F.F. Bond, M.D., of Thorncliff, Brighthouse, England, a rare old copy of "Preston's Illustrations of Masonry," on the title page of which was the inscription:

"THE GIFT OF JAMES MURRAY TO ST. ANDREWS LODGE NO. 1, WEST
FLORIDA, JUNE 27, 1776."

No one living had ever heard of St. Andrews Lodge No. 1 of West Florida, and there was no known record of such a Lodge, therefore Most Worshipful Brother Hilliard appointed Brother Silas B. Wright, then Deputy Grand Master, a committee of one to investigate and report to the 1899 Grand Communication.

This was slight information to build on, but, happily, Brother Wright hit upon the right trail at once. He knew that the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania had made a practice of creating Lodges in unoccupied territory, and communicated with Right Worshipful John S. Perry, Grand Secretary of Pennsylvania on the chance that St. Andrews Lodge of West Florida may have been one of its old defunct Lodges. This proved not to be the case, but the inquiry brought to light the entire history of St. Andrews Lodge No. 1 of West Florida.

Only two years previously the Grand Secretary of the Pennsylvania Grand Lodge had opened several old unlabeled wooden boxes which had been lying around in the vault for so long that no living man had any knowledge of their contents. These old wooden boxes contained a mass of priceless Masonic records dating back to Pennsylvania's earliest Masonic Lodges. They also contained Pennsylvania Grand Lodge records up to the year 1819. All of these were supposed to have been destroyed at the burning of the Masonic Hall in Philadelphia on the night of March 9, 1819.

These records were saved that night, however, by George A. Baker, Jr., then Grand Secretary and later sealed in six strong wooden boxes by Bernard Dahlgren, Brother Baker's successor, and removed from hall to hall, through the years, and lastly stored in the vaults of the New Masonic Temple at Broad and Filbert Streets in 1873. Here these boxes remained unknown and forgotten until 1896, when Brother Perry, then Grand Secretary, opened them.

Among the old documents found in these boxes were certified copies of the original charter of St. Andrews Lodge No. 1 of West Florida, and records of its work at Pensacola and Charleston, South Carolina. These records were loaned Brother Wright for copying and filing and they are now in the Vault of the Grand Lodge of Florida.

From these records Florida found that St. Andrews Lodge No. 1 of West Florida was chartered May 3, 1771 by the "Provincial Grand Lodge over the Lodges of the Southern District of North America, located at St. Augustine." The charter was signed by James Grant, G.M. then Governor of the Province of East Florida, together with the other Grand Lodge Officers. Along with these two startling facts: A Florida Lodge as early as 1771, and a hitherto unknown Grand Lodge; was a third one, that the petitioners for the Lodge charter were to establish it in Pensacola, and that all the petitioners were members of Lodge No. 108 of the Register of Scotland, attached to the Thirty-First Regiment of Foot, of the British Army, lately stationed at Pensacola.

As nothing was known of the existence of a Provincial Grand Lodge at St. Augustine, and as the St. Andrews Lodge documents indicated Scottish registry, Brother Wright appealed to the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland for aid in solving the mystery. This brought a letter from D. Murray Lyon, Grand Secretary, under date of March 17th, 1898, which clarified the whole matter, and which read as follows:

“In searching our Grand Lodge records, I find under date of 15th March, 1768—having read a petition from James Grant, Esq. Governor of the Province of East Florida, Henry Cunningham, late Senior Warden of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and many other brethren residing in the Province aforesaid, craving a charter for holding a Lodge there by the style and title of “Grants East Florida Lodge” and also entreating the Grand Lodge to appoint the said James Grant provincial Grand Master over the Lodges in the Southern District of North America, the Grand Lodge granted the desire of that petition, and authorized a charter to be made out accordingly, and likewise a commission appointing Governor James Grant provincial Grand Master over the Lodges in the Southern District of North America.”

So the first Florida Lodge was established at St. Augustine two hundred three years after the city was settled, but only five years after the British succeeded Spanish rule. No records of the Provincial Grand Lodge, or of Grants East Florida Lodge are known to be in existence—both of these bodies were probably suppressed and their records destroyed by the returning Spaniards when Great Britain re-ceded the Floridas to Spain in 1783.

In 1781, Spanish arms conquered Pensacola, with dominican Monks carrying their crosses immediately behind. One of the first acts of these Monks was to drive Freemasonry out. The Master, the Junior Warden and some of the members of old St. Andrews Lodge taking the Lodge's charter and other records fled to Charleston, S.C., then occupied by the English. From Charleston, under date February 9, 1782, they communicated with their Grand Lodge at St. Augustine and asked for authority to continue their work at Charleston as a Florida Lodge. This communication was signed by Thomas Underwood, W.M., H. Beaumont, J.W., John Simpson, P.M. and Thomas H. Steward.

The Provincial Grand Lodge, at St. Augustine, acknowledged receipt of this communication under date of March 14, 1782, and authorized these brethren “to constitute and hold a Lodge at Charleston, S.C. under your charter until it shall please God to restore to you the ancient seat of your Lodge in West Florida, provided you have the Master and a sufficient number of members of the same to form a Lodge.” This dispensation was signed by John Forbes, D.G.M., David Yates, S.G.W., Henry Young, J.G.W. and John Naley, G.S.

The following year, 1783, the Spaniards also returned to St. Augustine, under a treaty whereby the Floridas were re-ceded by Britain to Spain, and Masonry was stamped out in St. Augustine as it had been in Pensacola. Being now without a head, and there being no Grand Lodge in South Carolina, the brethren of St. Andrews Lodge applied to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for authority to continue to work at Charleston under the same style and title with the addition of the word “Late” of West Florida.

This authority being denied, they made up a copy of their charter and records, certified and sworn to, and sent them to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and asked to be chartered under Pennsylvania

registry. This request was granted and they were chartered by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania as “St. Andrews Lodge No. 40.” In 1787 the Lodge became one of the founders of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina, when it became Lodge No. 10, and continued to work at Charleston until 1890 when it became dormant and was dropped from the roll of South Carolina Lodges.

Sporadic attempts were made to revive Masonry in the Territory of Florida during the last Spanish regime, at St. Augustine and at Fernandina, but each effort was short lived—pressure of antagonism in high places was too great to withstand. As previously mentioned herein, it was during this period that St. Fernando Lodge was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Georgia in 1808 and disappeared in 1811 by Government decree.

The United States purchased Florida in 1819, and made a territory of it, which it continued to be until admitted to the Union as a state in 1845. Almost from the day on which the purchase was consummated, Freemasonry began to flow back into the villages, and towns, and cities, but, unreasonable prejudice of lingering Spanish influence against Masonry still existed in the older settlements, where several Lodges came into existence and disappeared shortly thereafter. This was particularly true in St. Augustine where Floridian Virtues Lodge No. 28 was chartered in 1820 by the Grand Lodge of South Carolina and disappeared without a trace of records of length of life. The next Lodge was Esperanza Lodge, chartered by the Grand Lodge of South Carolina in 1824, which became defunct the same year, leaving no records. Following was Montgomery Lodge No. 30 chartered by the Grand Lodge of Georgia in 1824 with a short life, leaving no records. After this, four more attempts to establish Lodges in St. Augustine failed, then Ashlar Lodge No. 98 was chartered in 1888, which Lodge is still functioning with unbroken continuity.

It was six years after Florida became a territory of the United States that the first enduring Florida Lodge was established at the young city of Tallahassee. This was Jackson Lodge which was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Alabama, December 18, 1825 with Robert Butler as Master. Next to be chartered were Washington Lodge at Quincy on December 2, 1828 and Harmony Lodge at Marianna on December 8, 1829, both of which were chartered by the Grand Lodge of Georgia.

In 1830, Jackson Lodge No. 23 of Tallahassee, invited Washington Lodge and Harmony Lodge to meet with it in its hall. They convened on July 5, 1830, for the purpose of forming the Grand Lodge of Florida. This convention adopted a resolution to form a Grand Lodge, declared three Lodges to be sufficient for the purpose and appointed a committee to draft a constitution. The Lodges next met on July 9, 1830, adopted its new body of laws, and on the following day elected officers. Immediately after, they were installed—the new Grand Lodge using the Rules and By-Laws of Alabama for the occasion. Under the new Grand Lodge, Jackson Lodge became No. 1, Washington Lodge No. 2 and Harmony Lodge No. 3. These three Lodges had a total membership of 76.

The Grand Lodge met in the hall of Jackson Lodge No. 1, at Tallahassee, from 1830 to 1869, inclusive. Thereafter meeting in Jacksonville in the hall of the local Lodges for 22 years or until 1891, when it was destroyed by fire. This left the Grand Lodge and Local Bodies without a home, but during the succeeding years, a new four-story Masonic Temple was completed at Bridge and Forsyth Street in Jacksonville, and the Grand Lodge held its first annual Grand Communication in this temple in January, 1893. The local Lodges and the Grand Lodge remained in this building until 1909 when a new 7-story building was erected and dedicated on the corner of Main and Monroe

Streets. These offices were occupied until the present Grand Lodge Building, at 220 Ocean Street, on the corner of Ocean and Monroe Streets was completed and dedicated in 1964.

Until 1912 the Grand Lodge of Florida had no organized system of Masonic relief. Each Lodge administered its own relief. If it had insufficient funds the Lodge would call for help from other Lodges. In the 1912 Grand Lodge Communication a resolution which provided for a per capita tax of twenty-five cents upon each dues-paying member was passed. This money to be used for Masonic relief and to be administered by a Grand Lodge Relief Committee. This Committee still functions, and supplementary funds are provided each year as required.

In 1918 suitable building and grounds were purchased at St. Petersburg to provide a home for needy Master Masons and their wives or widows. In 1919 the home opened for guests and has been in continuous operation since that time. A special per capita assessment against the members of the Grand Jurisdiction together with special bequeaths and voluntary contributions to the Masonic Home Endowment Fund are used to finance the home. The residents in the Home are splendidly cared for, all seem to be contented and happy.

In 1984, seeing the need to replace the aging and outdated structure and to make room for additional residents, M.:W.: James A Wilson began a program to finance a complete rebuilding of all facilities. This was culminated in 1988 with the dedication of our new Masonic Home facilities by M.:W.: Joseph Shurette. Our Masonic Home now has the capacity for 187 residents, and provides total care including medical and dental needs.