

THE YORK RITE OF FREEMASONRY

Vermont

MORE LIGHT

For the Benefit of the Craft in General and Master Masons in Particular

PREFACE

The true Mason is ever seeking more Light or Knowledge, and when he asks for this Light or Knowledge he is often told by well meaning but mistaken brothers that “as a Master Mason” he has received all the light there is in Masonry”. The unfortunate result is often that he suspends his quest for Light, even though still unsatisfied. Basic and indispensable as they are to the foundation to all Masonry, the Blue Lodge degrees comprise only the beginning, not the ultimate in Masonic Knowledge – just as reading, writing and arithmetic are the stepping stones for all higher learning.

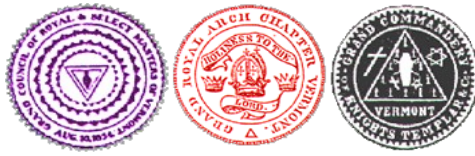
The York Rite of Freemasonry, also known as the American Rite, consists of the Symbolic degrees as conferred in the Blue Lodge, the Capitular degrees conferred in a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the Cryptic degrees conferred in a Council of Royal and Select Masters, and the Chivalric orders conferred in a Commandery of Knights Templar. Beyond the first three degree, there are an additional ten (10) ceremonies, in each of which the candidate participates as a central character. While the several bodies are separately governed, together they form an aggregate which provides the only complete understanding of Ancient Craft Masonry. Indeed, the York Rite may be likened to the graduate school of Freemasonry.

In the legend of the Master Mason degree, King Solomon’s Temple is not yet completed, and those faithful craftsmen who have labored so long upon it are deprived, by the wickedness of others, of that for which they have wrought. Thus the story is left unfinished, and the Master Mason is left in possession of a poor substitute for the real object of his labors. It is in the York Rite that the story is completed, and the goal is realized.

Several of these degrees shed light upon degrees, and only when in possession of all of them has one passed the circle of perfection in Ancient Craft Masonry. They contain some of the most important and beautiful moral lessons ever imparted.

Attached hereto is a single petition which will serve for the remaining degrees and orders of the York Rite. The names of the Chapter, Council and Commandery in your area and their fees should be completed by the Brother who gives you this pamphlet.

In order to fully appreciate each of the York Rite degrees and orders, it is most desirable to take them singularly over a period of several evenings. For those whose work or travel schedules do not permit such an extended initiation period, it may be possible to receive the degrees and orders in one or more “Festivals” at which all the degrees or orders of one body are conferred in a single day.



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PETITION FOR THE DEGREES AND/OR ORDERS

The undersigned represents that he received the degree of Master Mason in _____ Lodge # _____ located in _____ and is a member in good standing in _____ Lodge # _____ located in _____ Under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of _____.

Being desirous of receiving further light in Masonry, he received the degree of Royal Arch Mason in _____ Chapter No. _____ hereby petitions to receive the degree of Royal Arch Mason in _____ Chapter No. _____ and is now or will become a member in good standing in _____ Chapter No. _____ under the jurisdiction of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of _____.

Wishing to complete the circle of perfection in Ancient Craft Masonry, he received the degree of Super Excellent Master in _____ Council No. _____ hereby petitions to receive the degree of Super Excellent Master in _____ Council No. _____ and is now or will become a member in good standing in _____ Council No. _____ under the jurisdiction of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters (or Cryptic Masons) of _____.

Further, he declares that he is a firm believer in the Christian religion and is desirous of receiving the Orders of Knighthood and becoming a member of _____ Commandery No. _____, under the jurisdiction of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Vermont.

He asserts that he has resided within the State of Vermont for at least one (1) year prior to the date of this petition. He promises full and cheerful compliance with the customs, rules, regulations and usages of the fraternity as they may apply to the Chapter, Council and/or Commandery names above.

He further states that except as noted, he has not petitioned any other Chapter, Council or Commandery, or if so, has attached a statement in which he makes full disclosure of the circumstances thereof (name and location of body petitioned, date and action taken thereon).

He provides the following personal information

Full Name _____ Place of Birth _____
Street Address _____ Date of Birth _____
City & State _____ Occupation _____
Telephone # _____ E-Mail address _____

He has read this petition, has personally signed his name hereto, and consents that a copy of same may be considered as an original by any of the above.

Date: _____ Signature _____

Full payment of the fees is requested with the petition. Checks should be made to individual petitioned body.

We vouch for the good character and Masonic standing of the petitioner and recommend favorable action by the bodies petitioned:

CAPITULAR DEGREES THE CHAPTER OF ROYAL ARCH MASONS

While the keystone is the principal locking stone of the Arch, the Copestone is the top, or cap of the entire wall. Therefore, the Royal Arch of Freemasonry, which has been classed as “the copestone of Ancient Craft Masonry”, is known as the Capitular Rite.

MARK MASTER MASON. The work of the Temple continues as in the preceding degrees of the Blue Lodge. The candidate represents one of the workmen who presents a piece of work for inspection whose value is not appreciated at first, but later becomes “the head of the corner”. In ancient times, stonemasons placed an identifying symbol or “mark” upon their work. The Workman was classed by the quality of his work, therefore, most strove to do their best work prior to identifying the piece by placing their mark upon it. The degree lays great stress upon the dignity of labor; that we must all work and receive wages according to our just deserts. An important lesson is also taught that we should never claim for ourselves the property or labor of another.

PAST MASTER. In former times, no one was eligible for the Royal Arch Mason degree except Past Masters of Symbolic Lodges, but this meant that very few could receive it. The degree of Past Master was instituted whereby one might become a “Virtual Past Master” and thus be eligible for exaltation to the Royal Arch Mason degree. The candidate is taught that he must first learn to obey before he can learn to rule, and that he must learn to govern himself before he can govern others.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER. In this degree, King Solomon’s Temple is at last completed and after the holiest article is brought forth from the Tabernacle and deposited into the Sanctuary, the Temple is dedicated with imposing ceremonies to the service of the Most High God. King Solomon offers a sublime invocation, and the burnt offerings and sacrifices are consumed by the fire from heaven. The brethren rejoice that their long labor is ended and lay aside their aprons. Chronologically, this is the final degree having to do with the erection of King Solomon’s Temple.

ROYAL ARCH MASON. The candidate witness the burning bush where Moses was given the command to return to Egypt and lead forth the children of Israel from bondage, and where God imparted to him the Ineffable Name. They then witness the destruction of the beautiful Temple erected by King Solomon, and are carried away captives to Babylon. After 70 years of bondage, they are permitted to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the House of the Lord. After a long and hazardous journey along the river Euphrates, they arrive and find themselves in the midst of ruins. Upon making themselves known to the grand council, they are set to work removing the rubbish of the old Temple in order to lay the foundations of the new. Amidst these complete the knowledge gained in the Symbolic degrees. Thus are connected together in the most intimate way the work of the Blue Lodge and the work of the Chapter, neither being union of the “Moderns” and the “Antients”, it was agreed that the Royal Arch Mason degree was an integral part of the Master Mason degree.

_____ Chapter No. _____ Royal Arch Masons Meets on

_____ in _____ Fee for degree \$ _____.

CRYPTIC DEGREES
THE COUNCIL OF ROYAL AND SECLECT MASTERS

It is a peculiarity of the York Rite, whether intended or not by its authors, that the movement of the degrees is often historically reversed; so that as we apparently go forward in regular progression, the knowledge and light gained reflect backward upon the path we have traveled before, and degrees that seemed complete when we took them are found to require the explanation of the subsequent degrees before they can be fully understood. This is especially true of the Cryptic degrees, two of which historically precede the Royal Arch Mason degree, but which hold in reserve their valuable teachings until the candidate is ready to receive them with the most impressive effect. The term Cryptic Masonry stems from the fact that a central feature of the Royal and Select Master degrees is an underground chamber or vault.

ROYAL MASTER. This degree symbolized a Fellowcraft in search of further light. Hiram Abif is still alive and imparts to the candidate the sublime teachings of useful labor on Earth and a worthy end of life. The tragedy of his untimely death is again brought forward, with the great loss suffered by the craft. The efforts of the candidate are eventually rewarded, and he is admitted into a secret fellowship that has been entrusted with secrets not yet available to the majority of the Craft. This is one of the most beautiful degrees in all Masonry, with lessons so impressive that they are never forgotten.

SELECT MASTER. When the Temple of Solomon was completed, a number of secrets of the Craft had been lost. The craftsmen were advised that future generations may rediscover them if they properly applied themselves with fervency and zeal. The Select Masters degree reveals how these secrets had been preserved for subsequent rediscovery. The degree dramatized an incident which occurred during the building of the Temple. It is closely connected with the Royal Arch Mason degree, and in fact affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding. Our three ancient Grand Masters appear in charge of a very important work connected with the Temple. The candidate, who represents one of King Solomon's most particular friends, is promoted to the work, in which only a limited number are employed. The information imparted to the candidate makes clear to him the preceding degrees.

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER. This degree has not connection either in history or symbolism with the Royal and Select Master degrees. It refers to circumstances that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, commander of the army of Babylon, and the ceremonies are intended to represent the final destruction of King Solomon's Temple and the carrying away of the captive Jews to Babylon. King Zedekiah of Judah listens to his false counselors and despises the warnings of the Prophet Jeremiah to heed his fealty to Babylon. Jerusalem is captured and its traitorous King is taken before King Nebuchadnezzar, who visits horrendous punishment upon him and his sons before utterly reducing the city and its Temple to rubble. The Super Excellent Master degree is one of the most dramatic and impressive in all of Freemasonry and is especially significant in that it is the only degree based directly upon the destruction of the Temple. In full form, it requires a large, well rehearsed cast, and every Cryptic Mason should avail himself of an opportunity to witness the degree in full form, even if he has already received it in abbreviated form.

_____ Council No. _____ Royal and Select Masters, meets on
_____ in _____ Fee for degrees\$ _____

CHIVALRIC ORDERS
THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

The Masonic Orders of the Temple and Malta are founded upon the traditions of the Chivalric Orders of Knighthood of the middle ages, and the Rite has therefore acquired the title of Chivalric Masonry.

ORDER OF RED CROSS. Set in the period of the Royal Arch Mason degree, a grand council is convened at Jerusalem to deliberate upon the unhappy condition of the country and to devise means to secure the favor of King Darius and his consent to proceed with the rebuilding of the city and temple. Zerrubbabel, represented by the candidate, offers to travel to the Persian court and remind the King of his former promise to aid the Jews in the work. He participates in a royal debate and when his turn comes, he proclaims THE ALMIGHTY FORCE OF TRUTH. King Dairus is so impressed that he grants Zerrubabbel his wish. Zerubbabel reminds him of his vow. The King makes a decree accordingly, and to perpetuate it he creates the Order of the Red Cross, founded upon TRUTH, and confers it upon Zerrubbabel.

Here we bid farewell to all the degrees having to do with the building of King Solomon's Temple, its destruction, and the rebuilding of the city and temple, and we go forward to the period of the Crusades when the Orders of Knighthood were formed to recover the Holy Sepulchre and to protect the pilgrims who went to visit its sacred shrines. It is also at this point that the York Rite takes on a distinctly Christian character in which the candidate is recruited as a knightly soldier to wage war against the enemies of Christ.

ORDER OF MALTA. The members represent soldiers of the Cross, and the Order is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. The candidate humbly solicits to be admitted to the privilege of the Mediterranean Pass to enable him to safely undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and also to be enrolled as a Knight of Malta. The ceremonies of the Pass degree refer to the shipwreck of Saint Paul upon the island of Melita or Malta, and the viper that came out of the fire and clung to his hand, as related in the Acts of the Apostles. The Order of Malta describes the history of the original order of Hospitallers who were famed for the construction and maintenance of hospitals for the poor.

ORDER OF THE TEMPLE. In one of the grandest and most impressive ceremonies in all of Masonry, the true capstone of the YORK RITE, the candidate represents a knight of the period that succeeded the Crusades, who has made a vow to visit the Holy Sepulchre, and who seeks admission into the ranks of the Templar's, the better to fulfill that vow. As a trial of his worthiness there is enjoined upon him seven years of preparation, beginning with an unarmed pilgrimage in the direction of the Holy Shrine. After having served six years of this preparation, he is commanded to devote the remaining year of preparation to penance, as a trial of faith and humility. Beautiful lessons of the death and ascension of our Savior are inculcated, and the candidate is at last received into full fellowship in a most solemn manner.

The ancient Order of the Temple was suppressed and its members dispersed, and the warlike spirit of the Order has passed away. But there remains a spirit of refined and moral Chivalry which prompts the members to be every ready to defend the weak, the innocent, the helpless and the oppressed, and as last to be greeted as Brethren and received into the "widely extended arms of the blessed Emanuel".

_____ Commandery No. _____ Knights Templar, meets on
_____ in _____ fee for degrees \$: _____