

MARK MASTER MASONS



One of the traditions observed among Masons, is that of the Degree of Mark Master Mason. Tradition informs us that it was instituted seven days after the laying of the foundation stone of King Solomon's Temple. It is said that the three Grand Masters held an assembly of all Masters of all lodges of Fellow craft, and conferred with them on this degree. At the same time they established those admirable regulations for the inspection of the material brought up from the Quarries, which inspection enabled the Overseers to detect imperfect work. Tradition informs us that the degree was conferred, as an honorary reward for previous industry, skill and fidelity, and also as an encouragement to persevere in well doing. It was also designed, as a means of preserving due discipline and oversight at the building of the Temple.

The origin of the degree has been subject to much speculation. One writer says it was a degree leading to the Master's Chair. Others claim it was formerly part of the FC°. This may have been the case but there is no evidence of this fact. The Mark Master's degree is now conferred in England by tolerance rather than by sanction. This degree was first introduced into this country, (Can.), as a side degree which any three brethren' had the right to confer. It was not until several years later that the degree began to be regularly conferred in a Lodge.

The first record of the practice of this degree in this country is found in the early records of Masonry in Halifax, NS. This record bears the date November 16, 1784. Upon application to the W. Bro. Fife, he was pleased to open a Master Mark Masons Lodge. W. Bro. Fife Master, formerly of No 213 L. Square; Bro. Hall S.W., Bro. Allen, J.W. of lodge No

155; and Bro. Lewis, Tyler, of lodge No 210. Then follows, names of six candidates who received the Degree called Master Mark Mason and made the choice of their Mark.

As early as 1786, Joseph Myers deposited in the Archives of Supreme Council of the A. & A.S.R. of Charleston. SC., a ritual of a degree called Master Mark Mason. Its source is unknown, and it virtually ceased in January 1802. Consequently, the Chapters conferring the Mark Master's Degree modified and enriched it by adding portions of Myers Master Mark Masons degree, by that giving us our present degree.

The stones of which the Temple was constructed were of white limestone or species of marble. This material is described as being soft, and easily worked, but hardened by exposure. Tradition informs us that the house was built of stone, made ready before it was brought to the site. So that there was neither axe, nor hammer, or any tool of iron heard in the house while it was being built. The stones were squared, marked and numbered in the quarry, so that when brought to Jerusalem each part was found to fit with such precision, that when finished the Temple appeared to be composed of a single stone.

To fit perfectly each stone must have been true work, properly wrought and polished. True work right dimensions and true to the pattern, square work with perfect right angles. So in the erection of our spiritual Temple, we must build with squared stone, which are the perfect actions of a good man's life. Each brother must contribute his full quota, emblematically wrought, marked and numbered until the moral structure is complete; a building not made with hands eternal in the heavens. "He that is truly square, well polished, and uprightly fixed, is qualified to be a member of our honourable society."