

MASON'S MARK



To the ancient operative Mason, the "Mark" was primarily a means of identification. Protected by his own ability, and the registration of his mark, as our signatures are recorded in our bank today. Tradition informs us that at the building of the Temple, each workman placed his own Mark upon his own material. Thus the workmanship of every Mason be readily distinguished and praise or blame thereby justly awarded.

In ancient Rome when two friends were about to part, it was a custom to break a piece of money or a piece of ivory in two. On each both placed a secret mark, each retaining a part. This was a token of everlasting friendship. It was called the "Arabon". Both the word and the custom were borrowed from the ancient Israelites. It is derived from the Hebrew "Arabon", meaning pledge.

Among modern speculative Mason's the Mark is no longer a prerequisite for obtaining a livelihood. It is not even the emblem of the Mark Master's Degree. It is a sacred token of friendship and brotherly love. When presented by the owner to another Mark Master Mason, the latter would give all the gifts that a common friendship and brotherhood have to offer.

If the Mark is presented to obtain a favour, it then becomes an 'Arabon' or pledge. While it actually remains in the possession of its owner, it ceases, so far as he is concerned, to be of further advantage to him. Until, conforming to ancient usage, he redeems it from its former pledge. Symbolically the minimum price of a pledge is a Jewish Half Shekel of silver, or a quarter of a dollar.

It must, therefore, be evident to every Mark Master Mason, that the selection and registration of his Mark is no idle formality, undertaken haphazardly. Once selected, it cannot be changed. It is the mark that will identify him and his work, throughout his lifetime.

The tools of a Mark Master Mason are the Chisel and the Mallet, with which he fashions his work. His Mark, therefore, should be one made with the straight cutting edge of the Chisel. Crests and figures involving circles, curves and other elaborate designs are not suitable. They cannot be easily and quickly made with the tools available. This is why we urge the newly advanced MMM, to choose a Mark composed of straight lines in any form, whether in squares, angles or triangles. Such Marks can be made by the edge of the Chisel, under the stroke of the Mallet.

That is the symbolic meaning of the Mark as it applies to the individual MMM Whether we are conscious of it, or whether we like it or not, each of us has a mark that distinguishes everything we do. It is the stamp of our personality and character, which marks all our thoughts, words and actions, be they good or bad. By them we warrant praise or blame.

When we offer our Mark as a pledge, we are pledging ourselves, our characters, and our deeds. We can only redeem our pledge by living our Masonic principles and teachings, thus showing the world that we are truly Mark Men.