



# THE LODGE GATE

## A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BILTMORE MASONIC LODGE

### Symbolism of the Beehive

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A publication of news, history, opinion and thoughts.

Here we are in the height of summer with flowers in bloom and with bees working their tireless jobs of collecting nectar. In a book in my library I found the following quote: "For so work the honey-bees, Creatures that by a rule in nature teach the act of order to a peopled kingdom." - William Shakespeare. This then reminded me of the necessity of the members of a Masonic Lodge to work together for the benefit of the whole. The following is an excerpt from an article in the Midnight Mason by WB Christian Garrett, 32°.

The beehive is a symbol introduced in the Master Mason lecture, representing industry, cooperation, and the idea that a group of individuals working together can accomplish great things. Bees, as creatures, have long been recognized for their remarkable work ethic and the highly organized and efficient social structure of their hives. For Freemasons, the beehive serves as a reminder of the importance of these values in their own lives.

In Masonic symbolism, the beehive is often depicted as a skep, the traditional woven structure reminiscent of an upside-down basket, or by the hexagonal structure of the cells created by the bees working together within. The hive is often shown with a door or entrance, through which the bees enter and

exit. One of the primary lessons that the beehive teaches is the importance of industry. Bees are known for their tireless work ethic, spending their entire lives gathering nectar and pollen and constructing the honeycomb within the hive. Similarly, we as Freemasons are encouraged to work hard and diligently, both in our professional lives and in our Masonic pursuits. By ever being industrious, we as Masons can achieve great things, both individually and as a brotherhood.



Cooperation is another key lesson found within the symbolism of the beehive. As the bees work together in a highly organized and efficient manner, each bee performs a specific task that contributes to the overall success of the hive. This cooperation is necessary for the survival of the hive and the production of honey, which serves as a valuable resource for the bees and for humans. So too do we as Masons, strive to cooperate, utilizing our individual skills for the

betterment of not only our individual lodges but our fraternity as a whole and thus the world.

By working together, Masons can achieve greater things than we could on our own. The beehive should also be a reminder of the importance of unity. The individual bees within the hive are all part of a larger community, working together for the common good. In the same way, Masons are part of a larger brotherhood, united by shared morals, values, ethics, and goals. Through unity, we can create a strong and cohesive brotherhood that benefits our members and communities alike.

Finally, the beehive symbolizes the importance of order and organization. Bees have a highly structured social hierarchy, with each bee knowing its place and role within the hive. This order and organization are essential for the efficient functioning of the hive and the accomplishment of its goals. Similarly, we as Masons value order and organization, both within the fraternity and should strive to in our personal lives. But as our yearly election and installation ceremony remind us, we pass on these duties and responsibilities year after year, in a respectful transition of authority.



### Angelo Soliman: Father of Pure Masonic Thought

As I have often said, I have learned more about many things since the advent of the World Wide Web than I ever did in formal schooling. But then the things I learn are of my choice and not the teacher's. The following is another of those wonderful nuggets found while looking up something else.

Angelo Soliman: Father of Pure Masonic Thought - by Meserette Kentake

Angelo Soliman who achieved considerable fame as a "Princely Moor" in eighteenth-century Vienna, is historically recognized by some as the "First Moorish Freemason."

Soliman was born in Africa, around 1721. His original name may have been Mmadi Make, which is linked to a princely class in the Sokoto State in modern Nigeria. At age seven he was kidnapped and brought to North Africa on a Spanish ship. After a brief time, herding camels in a location not precisely specified, young Mmadi Make was sold again, to a Marquise in Messina on the island of Sicily. There, he learned to read and speak Italian, and, during a period of severe illness, he was baptized Angelo Soliman. His first name was an homage to Angelina, an African woman who worked in the household and was very kind to him. Soliman also chose to celebrate September 11, his baptismal day, as his birthday. Fürst Johann Georg Christian Lobkowitz, a friend of the Marquise and an Imperial General for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, began pressuring the Marquise to give him Soliman. The Marquise finally consented, and Soliman became the Prince's valet and traveling companion, accompanying him on military campaigns throughout Europe and reportedly saving his life on one occasion, a pivotal event responsible for his social ascension. In the service of Lobkowitz, Soliman purportedly learned to write German in seventeen days along with other scholarly achievements.

After Lobkowitz's death in 1753, Soliman entered the service of Prince Joseph Wenzel Liechtenstein. In 1761 he accompanied Liechtenstein to Frankfurt where Joseph I was selected King of the German Empire. Soliman often acted as an advocate for those submitting requests to the sovereign, and his reputation as a "noble Moor" and a protector of the poor and downtrodden grew rapidly. In 1768, he secretly married Magdalena Christiani. When Liechtenstein heard of his marriage, he released Soliman from his service and expelled him from the palace. Soliman bought a small house in the inner city of Vienna and lived there with his wife and their only daughter Josephine, born on December 18, 1772, spending most of his time tending their small garden. In 1774, two years after the death of Liechtenstein, his nephew and

heir Fürst Franz Joseph von Liechtenstein invited Soliman to live in the Liechtenstein palace again in order to oversee the education of his sons. A cultured man, Soliman was highly respected in the intellectual circles of Vienna. He spoke six languages, Italian, French, German, Latin, Bohemian, English.

In September 1781, Soliman joined an elite Vienna lodge of Freemasons known as the "True Concord". Membership of the lodge included many of Vienna's influential artists and scholars of the time, among them the musicians Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn as well as the Hungarian poet Ferenc Kazinczy. Lodge records indicate that Soliman and Mozart met on several occasions. It is likely that the character Bassa Selim in Mozart's opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was based on Soliman. He became Grand Master of the lodge, under the name of "Massinissa", after the famous king of North Africa's Numidian empire. Soliman's identification with him indicates a clear awareness of his African ancestry. Soliman helped to change the Freemason rituals to include scholarly elements. This new Masonic direction rapidly influenced Freemasonic practice throughout Europe. Soliman is still celebrated in Masonic rites as "Father of Pure Masonic Thought", with his name usually transliterated as "Angelus Solimanus".



On November 21, 1796, Soliman, aged 75 died from a stroke while walking in the streets of Vienna. His body, on the order of Kaiser Franz II, was skinned, and his skin was stretched over a wooden figure meant to imitate that of the living Soliman. For ten years it was exhibited to public view in the Natural History Museum of the Imperial House of Austria. Soliman's daughter Josephine sought to have his remains returned to the family, but her petitions were in vain. The then director of the museum declared that Soliman's beauty caused in the then emperor the desire to let him be displayed as a stuffed artifact in his museum. His remains were destroyed in a fire during the 1848 revolution.

A plaster cast of Soliman's head made shortly after his death is still on display in the Rollett Museum in Baden. His grandsons are Eduard von Feuchtersleben, Austrian writer, and Ernst, Baron von Feuchtersleben, Austrian physician.



# Who Cares What Other People Think?



For those of you who read The Lodge Gate newsletter and remember what was read you will recall that several articles over the years have drawn upon the thoughts of the old Greek Stoic philosophers. One of those philosophers was Epictetus, a Greek Stoic philosopher.

Epictetus was born into slavery at Hierapolis, Phrygia (present-day Pamukkale, in western Turkey) and lived in Rome until his banishment, when he went to Nicopolis in northwestern Greece, where he spent the rest of his life. His teachings were written down and published by his pupil Arrian in his Discourses and Enchiridion. Epictetus taught that philosophy is a way of life and not simply a theoretical discipline. To Epictetus, all external events are beyond our control; he argues that we should accept whatever

happens calmly and dispassionately. However, individuals are responsible for their own actions, which they can examine and control through rigorous self-discipline (also a Masonic way of life).

For this article I would like to present the following quote from him: "Never depend on the admiration of others. There is no strength in it. Personal merit cannot be derived from an external source. It is not to be found in your personal associations, nor can it be found in the regard of other people. It is a fact of life that other people, even people who love you, will not necessarily agree with your ideas, understand you, or share your enthusiasms. Grow up! Who cares what other people think about you!" I have found in my nearly four decades as a Freemason a certain set of Master Masons whose

only goal in their Masonic travels seems to be the gain of position, title or fame. The rudimentary teachings of our Craft are disregarded in the pursuit of the admiration of others. If one is to seek the admiration of anyone it should be only the G.A.O.T.U.

I am not a confirmed Stoic but see much about it that is very much Masonic. A partial assimilation of stoicism hasn't been an easy path for me but I read a new quote every day; I reflect on it and try to make sense of how I can incorporate it into my life. This one is not an especially hard one to follow in my daily living for I have never really cared what people thought of me or my actions. I try to be a good person and by aid of the teachings of Freemasonry and the application of them I can only hope to be a "Good Man".

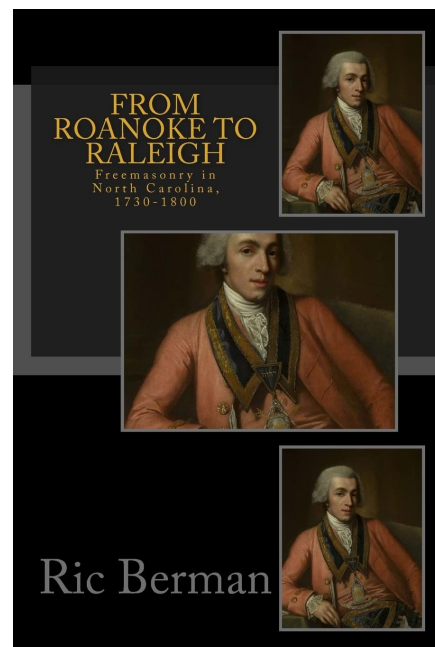
## Book Review

*The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.*

*Brother Mark Twain*

Ric Berman's 'From Roanoke to Raleigh' rewrites the history of North Carolina Freemasonry with implications for our understanding of American freemasonry as a whole. Beginning with the colony's early royal governors, Berman walks the reader from the inception of North Carolina's first Masonic lodges in the mid-eighteenth century to the years that followed the Declaration of Independence, the formation of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, and the foundation of the University of North Carolina. The

book allows the reader to examine newly revealed evidence and lay to rest past Masonic myths.





### Élus Coëns

Not long after the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 various rites and associated Masonic bodies exploded onto the scene, mostly in France and continental Europe. The Appendant and Concordant bodies of Freemasonry encompass a variety of organizations that extend beyond the Blue Lodge, offering Freemasons avenues for deeper exploration of Masonic teachings and principles. Among these prominent bodies are The York Rite, The Scottish Rite, Shriners International, The Grotto, and Tall Cedars of Lebanon. Some bodies such as the Rite of Memphis was banned by many regular Masonic jurisdictions, including the Grand Lodge of North Carolina because it became very political in the mid-1800's, it was banned in several European countries about 1840.

There are some quasi-Masonic that many of us may have never heard of, one being The Order of Knight-Masons Elect Priests of the Universe, or Élus Coëns. It was a theurgical organization founded by Martinez de Pasqually. It appeared in France in the second half of the 18th century and is the first branch of Martinist tradition, otherwise known as Martinism.

Martinism is a form of Christian mysticism and esoteric Christianity concerned with the fall of the first man, his materialistic state of being, deprived of his own, divine source, and the process of his eventual (if not inevitable) return, called 'Reintegration'

The Élus Coëns is an esoteric Christian order founded in 1767, with its focus on establishing an invisible church, independent of any earthly structure, to find the path that leads to the hidden knowledge of nature in anticipation of the coming destruction of the material Church. That is to say, by a progressive initiation and a direct knowledge of God to obtain the primordial unity,



which was lost since the fall of Adam—the Reintegration—through the practice of theurgy, which relied on complex ceremonial practices aimed at what Pasqually termed the reconciliation of the 'minor' person with Divinity. This was to be accomplished through human communication with the angelic hierarchies. In other words, they practiced theurgy which consisted of evoking the intermediary spirits, such as angels and celestial beings in order to obtain their help and support. With this in mind, the Masonic system provides an adequate structure for this course taken using occultist methods.

The teachings address essentially major themes relating to the Judeo-Christian tradition, but from an esoteric point of view,

under the Cabbalistic, Hermetic, and Gnostic influences—some have claimed strong elements of Valentinian Gnostic teachings, but this is actually not as reliable as the Manichean / Mandaean elements very present in these writings and catechisms—found in Pasqually's own texts, rituals and catechisms. They drew upon the power of Church prayers, banished the influence of Satan from humanity.

The group quickly fell apart and by the 1780's had all but dissolved.





### William Morton's Cemetery



Located in Richmond, Texas on 15+ acres, Morton Cemetery is one of the most historic cemeteries in the State of Texas. The cemetery was begun in by William Morton, a farmer, stock raiser, brick maker, and Freemason as the final resting place for Robert Gillespie, a fellow Mason. Morton was one of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred", actually 297 grantees, made up of families and some partnerships of unmarried men, who in 1825 purchased 307 leagues of land (4428 acres) from Austin and, with the Mexi-

can government's approval, established a colony in South Texas.

The land that is now Morton Cemetery was once a part of William Morton's property where he and his family resided. In 1825, a stranger by the name of Robert Gillespie, a native of Scotland, found his way to William Morton's home. He had met with foul play before he reached this area and because he was a fellow Mason, Morton and his family cared for Gillespie until he died on November 7, 1825.

Morton buried Gillespie on his property and built a brick tomb over his grave. This tomb is believed to be the first known Masonic landmark in Texas. History tells us that this tomb was being destroyed by members of Santa Anna's army as they passed through Richmond on their way to San Jacinto, but a Mexican officer, probably General Almonte, realized it was a Masonic tomb and stopped them. The tomb deteriorated through the years but was eventually restored by the Masonic Lodge in 1936 during the Centennial.

### Rodney Swope Creates a Little Trouble

Tripping through the Internet on a cold January 2025 day I came across an article recorded in the New York times dated in 1904. This article is of a little interest to Biltmore Lodge members as Dr. Rodney Swope is a Past Master of our lodge. Interestingly too, the Biltmore Church mentioned here is actually the All Souls Episcopal Church located in the village.

Edith Vanderbilt established the Biltmore School of Domestic Science in 1901. The school trained young Black women in professional housekeeping. The school's goals were to help women with socio-economic challenges find employment and meet the demand for domestic service. The school's coursework included the duties of a maid, cook, laundress, waitress, and housekeeper.





# Biltmore 446 Members Advance Education

George and Edith Vanderbilt not only built a fine home and estate near Asheville they also sought to build a community. They hired folks, both black and white from the local community to work on the farms, in the dairy and in the house itself but Edith especially saw that there was something lacking with the work force and that was education. The couple sought to change things but they didn't do this alone. Two Biltmore Masonic Lodge members were deeply involved as well.

When Edith Stuyvesant Dresser (1873–1958) married George Vanderbilt in 1898, she took on a large role as the mistress of Biltmore with a gracious and generous spirit. As prominent members of the community, the Vanderbilts supported many philanthropic endeavors, including some on Biltmore Estate and in the greater Asheville community.

As mentioned in the previous article, in 1901, Edith Vanderbilt established the Biltmore School of Domestic Science, which trained young Black women in professional housekeeping. The first forestry school in North America was founded in 1896 by German forester Carl A. Schenck who was employed by Vanderbilt to restore the depleted property of the estate. The school educated over 300 students who became the first generation of American foresters

In order to nurture a sense of community among estate employees and their families, Edith organized the Biltmore Estate Exhibition, also referred to as the an-

nual fair, in 1905. She distributed seeds as needed to all of the employees to ensure everyone could participate in the competitions.

Some of the initial categories included vegetables and herbs, field crops, domestic products such as breads and preserves, needlework, and baskets. Categories later expanded to include flowers, hogs, and poultry as well as a miscellaneous category to include eggs, honey, and various other items. Prizes included ribbons and a variety of garden books.

Though Edith was in London during the 1907 event, estate superintendent Biltmore Masonic Lodge member Chauncey Beadle wrote to her:

***“Not another day shall pass without a full report to you of the Exhibition, which was celebrated in the grove above the Farm Cottages yesterday afternoon with the most auspicious weather that it was possible to have. The attendance and exhibits were very satisfactory, and, I believe all who partici-***

***pated enjoyed the day, the social intercourse and objects which were displayed.”***

Thanks to oral histories, we know that the fairs continued into the 1940s.

Edith Vanderbilt founded Biltmore Estate Industries, an enterprise based around traditional wood carving, weaving, and furniture building skills associated with the Western North Carolina region. This initiative developed into a cottage industry that provided jobs and economic improvement for many in the community. By 1914, Edith Vanderbilt became aware of a movement that focused on teaching illiterate adults how to read and write, with teachers volunteering their time to teach adults at night in the same schools where they instructed children during the day. Recognizing that many workers and their family members who lived on Biltmore were illiterate, she founded a Moonlight School on the estate, and also became an official spokesperson for the Moonlight Schools, appearing in public to gain support for the endeavor.

Dr. Rodney Swope, rector of All Souls Church and Past Master of Biltmore Masonic Lodge, had come to Asheville at the request of George Vanderbilt to serve as a spiritual leader for the community. Teacher and woodcarver Eleanor Vance and weaver Charlotte Yale came to Asheville in 1901. Because the boys showed an interest in the women's work, Swope asked that they become a part of the church's mission. George Vanderbilt's wife Edith moved the club to a better location at Biltmore Plaza. The Girls' Club and Boys' Club formed Biltmore Estate Industries in 1905, selling chairs, picture frames, boxes and baskets. Children did the work in the afternoon for pay.

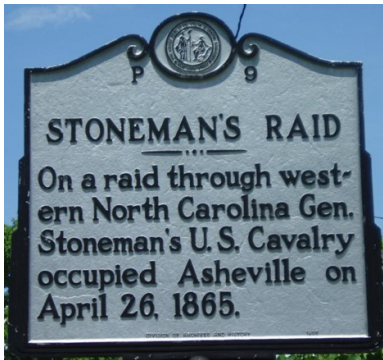
Swope was very interested in children getting a proper education and apparently shared his vision with George Vanderbilt who in turn built a school on the property west of the All Souls Church in the village. Swope was one of the first three Buncombe County public school commissioners appointed to that position in 1909 by superintendent A. C. Reynolds.



Moon Light School class



### Stoneman's Raid



Located just up the road from Biltmore Village is another of the Historical Markers denoting significant events that happened in the local area. This one marks "Stoneman's Raid"

In late March 1865, Union cavalry under Major General George Stoneman, commander of the Union army "District of East Tennessee," marched throughout western North Carolina during one of the longest cavalry raids in history. About 5,000 men under Stoneman's command entered North Carolina with a mission "to destroy and not to fight battles" in order to expedite the close of the Civil War. Stoneman's raid coincided with the raids of General William T. Sherman in the eastern sections of the state, stretching local home guard and militia units thinly across the state and forcing Confederate commanders to make hard choices on where their men were needed most.

Stoneman was in Salisbury, NC on April 13, he divided his forces once again. One column rode west for Statesville, a depot of the Western North Carolina Railroad. Reaching the town with no trouble, the Federals occupied Statesville long enough to destroy some government stores, the railroad depot and the office of the Iredell Express newspaper. Meanwhile, the other column, under Palmer, went to Lincolnton to "watch the line of the Catawba" River and threaten Charlotte. Palmer's men did just that. Contingents fanned out to capture and guard various fords

and crossing points along the Catawba, including an important railroad bridge over the Catawba River in South Carolina. The brigade remained in the area until April 17, skirmishing with various Confederate cavalry detachments.

Meanwhile, to the west, the rest of the command passed through Taylorsville and reached Lenoir on Easter Sunday. One of Stoneman's officers thought Lenoir a "rebellious little hole," but Stoneman's presence prevented the troops from excessive mischief. There the troopers paused. Stoneman, who by now had heard rumors of Lee's surrender, decided that he had completed his mission. On April 17, he left the division for East Tennessee, taking with him more than one thousand prisoners. Stoneman directed his second-in-command, Bvt. Brigadier General Alvan C. Gillem, to continue the raid toward Asheville.

Gillem marched only a short distance before he found Confederates guarding a bridge over the Catawba River just east of Morganton. Brigadier General John P. McCown, a West Pointer from Tennessee, directed the defense. At Murfreesboro, McCown had led a division of the Army of Tennessee; on this day, his command numbered only about eighty men, mostly home guards and local citizens. These Confederates managed to briefly hold the Federal forces at bay, until Gillem sent a flanking column to unhinge the enemy defense. Morganton fell in due course.

Confederate officials planned to defend Asheville too. Confederate Brigadier General James G. Martin, the commander of the District of Western North Carolina, posted five hundred men and four pieces of artillery in Swannanoa Gap on the road to Asheville. The blue-coated raiders reached Swannanoa Gap on April 20. Unable to push through the gap, Gillem sent a detachment through another gap, Howard's Gap, several miles to the south.

With a Blue Ridge crossing now in Federal hands, Gillem continued marching on Asheville. He also summoned Palmer's brigade, still at Lincolnton, to Rutherfordton in support. On Sunday afternoon, April 23, the Confederates again halted the Union advance, but this time it was with a flag of truce. Martin, having received official notification of Johnston's and Lee's surrenders, arranged to meet Gillem the next morning to discuss surrender terms. When they met, Martin agreed to cease resistance following the terms Sherman had granted to Johnston. Thus, on April 25, the Federals began withdrawing to their Tennessee base. However, when the Union government rejected the terms of the Johnston-Sherman agreement, Stoneman ordered his cavalry division to "do all in its power to bring Johns[t]on to better terms," so it returned to Asheville and sacked it.

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### Stoneman's Raid, continued

The locals never forgot the result "Asheville will never again hear such sounds and witness such scenes -- pillage of every character, and destruction the most wanton," recalled a citizen. [1]

Stoneman sought the destruction of the region's factories, bridges and railroad lines. The army relied heavily on local citizens for food and supplies, often emptying storehouses (in other words, they stole what they wanted). And this little nugget brings me to a small link to Biltmore Lodge. As Gillem's forces

roamed the areas around Asheville pillaging and destroying they happened upon the community we know today a Merrill's Cove. Our late WB Jakie Caudle related this story to me some years ago. It seems his great grandmother Merrill had a farm in the cove. When the Yankees came onto her property she knew she could do nothing to stop them from stealing anything and everything they wanted. She simply sat on a keg in her kitchen and waited. Sure enough, the thieving rabble stole

all the meat from the smoke house and then demanded her to provide the location of the whiskey they knew was on the property. She informed them that there was none such on her property and after a thorough search; they left her in peace whereupon she rose from the whiskey barrel hidden under her skirt and continued her day.

No evidence exists that Stoneman was a Freemason.

[1] [www.dncr.nc.gov](http://www.dncr.nc.gov)

### Formation of the First Grand Lodge

I have long thought it rather curious, and others have as well, that four London lodges decided to call themselves the "Grand Lodge" of English Freemasonry when it is obvious that there were lodges in great abundance all over England, Scotland, and Ireland, and had been for probably at least 150 years or more. As an example, King James I of England, while he was still King James VI of Scotland, was initiated Entered Apprentice and passed to Fellow Craft in 1601 in Lodge Scoon and Perth 3; this was in the era before the formulation of the 3rd or Master Mason's degree which didn't come about until sometime after the forming of Grand Lodge. James I entry into Freemasonry took place long before the heralded Masonic entries of Elias Ashmole and the Earl of Moray in the mid 1600's, so it is obvious, again, that lodges were in exis-

tence across the British Isles well before the advent of "Grand Lodge" in 1717.

Some have called the coming of "Grand Lodge" a revival....in what sense was it a "revival"? What need was there for a "revival" of the Craft? Had it grown moribund and basically a gentlemen's club for fellowship, feasting, and drinking? It is obvious also that the operative stonemason's part in Freemasonry was pretty much a thing of the past by the time of the coming of "Grand Lodge" and that speculative masonry was the norm (the old rule that each Lodge had to have at least one operative stonemason was also quickly on the way out if not already gone by this time). So, there must have been some reason, perhaps a rather pressing issue that prompted the four London lodges to make their move.

Let's take a look at the situation in England just prior to the formation of Grand Lodge. Politically, England had just come through the turmoil of the abdication of a king, James II, the enthronement of a Protestant King and Queen, William of Orange and Mary, daughter of James II, the enactment of the Act of Settlement in 1701 which forbade the succession to the English throne of a Roman Catholic, and the last reigning monarch of the Stuart line, Queen Anne who died in 1714. Why was it paramount that an English monarch not be a Roman Catholic? Since the time of Henry VIII, the monarch was the Head of the Church of England and the Anglican Church. This didn't preclude the "closet" Roman Catholicism of several British monarchs....

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### First Grand Lodge, continued

most notably Charles II as well as both his father, Charles I, and his grandfather James I, whose mother Mary Queen of Scots was an openly Roman Catholic ruler of Scotland; this was the great fear during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I that Mary would lead an uprising and overthrow Elizabeth and thus restore England to the Catholic fold. James II was an open adherent of Roman Catholicism which was a major aspect of the failure of his short reign, 1685-88. It was the abdication of James II that started the Jacobite movement that lasted over 50 years.

So then, is it not somewhat curious that within three years of the death of the last Stuart monarch and the beginning of the Hanoverian monarchy that four London lodges decided to proclaim themselves the "Grand Lodge" of England? I am, and others as well, of the opinion that this move was largely a deliberate move to assure the new Hanoverian monarchy that Freemasonry was not a hotbed of Jacobite activity, at least in England proper. In France, where the exiled Stuart family resided, it was another matter altogether...there the machinations for the restoration of the Stuart monarchy was a constant issue, supported by the French monarchy. As far as it is known, all of the principle founding members of Grand Lodge were ardent supporters of the new Hanoverian monarchy. This "Whig" form of Freemasonry centered in

the new "Grand Lodge" was not only novel, in and of its taking unto itself a questionable authority, but it also set about restructuring much of traditional masonry in that it replaced the usage of the "old charges" with a new set of Constitutions, Anderson's Constitutions. Grand Lodge also made certain changes in the observance of traditional calendar days important to the Craft, especially the observance of St. John the Baptist's day, June 24, which had been the traditional day of the election of Masters of the Lodge and other Lodge officers. This became a major point of contention between the "Antients" and Grand Lodge and its affiliates....the Antients accused the Grand Lodge group of unwarranted innovation and disregard of many of the important traditions of Freemasonry. It is rather obvious, then, that there was definitely a political aspect to the formation of Grand Lodge and that the said formation would ruffle quite a few feathers among the members of lodges which did not affiliate with Grand Lodge. As a side note, members of non-affiliate lodges were allowed to visit affiliate lodges but they would sign in as "St. John's Men". It would take several decades for the working out of the differences between the two rival Masonic groups which finally culminated in the coming together into the United Grand Lodge in 1813. So, there we have it...a short sketch of the background politically behind the formation of Freemasonry in

the modern sense, and it is safe to say that both politics and religion have played a significant role in the shaping of our Craft.

Brother Bucky Hanks





### False Greatness

The newly raised Master Mason is caused to listen to the wise words of the lecture at the end of the degree. In the lecture is a short lesson of the three principle stages of human life; youth, manhood and age. We are taught that as youth we should learn 'useful knowledge' so that as men we should apply our knowledge to everyday life and the betterment of all so that in age we can 'enjoy the happy reflections consequent on a well spent life and die in hope of a glorious immortality'. Nowhere in any of our teachings are we told that the acquisition of wealth and fame are noble endeavors nor will these things grant us a 'glorious immortality'.

A very ancient Greek legend was retold by Leo Tolstoy classically told by Herodotus, and Plutarch, about the king Croesus. It was first published in 1886 by Tolstoy's publishing company. The story is of King Croesus and Fate" (AKA: "Croesus and Solon").

Croesus was the last king of Lydia, proverbial for his enormous fortune; even nowadays, many Romance languages use the expression "as rich as Croesus" to describe a fabulously wealthy person. Solon, on the other hand, was one of the Seven Sages of Greece, the philosopher-statesman who first laid down the laws which consequently shaped the Athenian democracy. The former was known for his self-confidence and excesses; the



latter for his reservation, dignity, and wisdom.

Croesus is a rich king, wealthy beyond imagination and is quite enamored with his own wealth. When the wise man Solon comes to visit his kingdom, Croesus asks Solon if he had ever seen greater opulence than his own. Solon replies that birds like peacocks are incomparable in their beauty. Croesus disagrees, and he tries to impress Solon with a list of vanquished foes and claimed territories. Solon still disagrees, telling Croesus that the happiest man he had ever met was a peasant in Athens. He explains that the peasant worked hard, raised a family, and was content with what he had. Croesus takes this as an insult and Solon leaves.

Soon after Solon's departure, tragedy befalls Croesus. His oldest son is killed in a hunting accident, and then Emperor Cyrus invades. Cyrus' army is

triumphant, and Croesus' kingdom is ravaged and Croesus himself is captured and ordered to be executed. As Croesus is about to be burned on a pyre, he cries out Solon's name. Cyrus stops the pyre to hear what Croesus has to say. Croesus relates Solon's story to Cyrus, and Cyrus is moved by the notion that Fate can bring misery to a rich man and happiness to a poor man. Croesus is freed and the emperor and the king become good friends.

The following, by Isaac Watts, is from the poem "False Greatness":

Thus mingled still with wealth  
and state,

Croesus himself can never know;

His true dimensions and his  
weight

Are far inferior to their show



### Traveling Into Foreign Lands

In the second section of the Master Mason's degree the three ruffians attempt to flee the country where they lived and worked for the foreign land of Ethiopia. Why Ethiopia? That is a subject for another talk but suffice to say it was a land where they could run with hopes of never being found. But they could not leave their land because they didn't have the permission of Solomon and they, like the other fellow-craft masons, didn't possess the Master's word. In contrast, we as Speculative Master Masons can travel into foreign lands.

Following is an excerpt from "Foreign Countries" by Carl H. Claudy

Our ancient operative Brethren desired to become Masters so, when they travelled in foreign countries, they could still practice their craft. Speculative Freemasons still desire to "travel in foreign countries" and study their Craft that they may receive such instruction as will enable them to do so, and when so travelling, to receive a Master's Wages.

But the "foreign countries" do not mean to us the various geographical and political divisions of the Old World, nor do we use the Word we learn as a means of identification to enable us to build material temples and receive coin of the realm for our labor. "Foreign countries" is to us a symbol. Like all the rest of the symbols, it has more than one interpretation, but unlike

many, none of these is very difficult to trace or understand.

Freemasonry itself is the first "foreign country" in which the initiate will travel; a world as different from the familiar workaday world as France is different from England, or Belgium from Greece. ... Surely such a land is a "foreign country" to the stranger within its borders; and the visitor must study it, learn its language and its customs, if he is to enjoy it and profit thereby.

Freemasonry has many "foreign countries" within it, and he is the wise and happy Freemason who works patiently at the pleasant task of visiting and studying them. There are the Masonic "foreign countries" of philosophy, of jurisprudence, of history. No Freemason is really worthy of the name who does not understand something of how his new domain is governed, of what it stands for, and why. And, too, there is the "foreign" country of Symbolism, of which so much has already been said.

As a Master Mason, a man has the right to travel in all the "foreign countries" of Freemasonry. If he will but learn the work and keep himself in good standing, he may visit where he will. But it is not within the doors of other Lodges than his own that he will find the guide posts of those truly Masonic "foreign countries" to which he has been given the passport by his Brethren. He will find the gateways to those lands in the

library, in the study club, in books and magazines, and, most and best of all, in the quiet hour alone, when what he has read and learned comes back to him to be pondered over and thought through.

The "foreign country" of Masonic symbolism has engaged the thoughtful and serious consideration of hundreds of able Masonic students, as has that of the history of our Order. Not to visit them both; aye, not to make oneself a citizen of them both, is to refuse the privileges one has sought and labored to obtain.

One asks for a petition, requests one's friend to take it to his Lodge, knocks on the door, takes obligations, works to learn, and finally receives the Master's Degree. One receives it, works for it...why? That one may travel in far way lands and receive the reward there awaiting. ...

Then why hesitate? Why wait? Why put off? Why allow others to pass on and gain, while one stands, the gate open, the new land beckoning, and all the Masonic world to see?

That is the symbolism of the "foreign countries" ... that is the meaning of the phrase which once meant, to Operative Masons, exactly what it says. To the Freemason today who reads it aright it is a clarion call to action, to study, to an earnest pressing forward on the new highway. ...







*Trompe l'oeil makes us question the boundary between the painted world and ours.*

### Fooling The Eye

Way back in the 1990's, after some pressure from my friend and Masonic brother Conley Britt, 33°, I decided to take the Scottish Rite Degrees. The Asheville Valley of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR) was still housed in the Scottish Rite Temple located at 80 Broadway in Asheville. That building was constructed for the AASR and other Masonic bodies with the AASR owning 80% of the shares in the Asheville Temple Company. The degrees of 4 through 32 were written and intended to be acted out on stage with elaborately painted scenery and exotic costumes worn by cast members who could quote their lines from memory. By the time I took my degrees only about half of the degrees were being performed on stage but the work was still impressive.

In one degree, the scene being acted out had the cast working in

what appeared to be the catacombs of a castle or medieval church. The hanging scenery, depicting the stone arches, looked so real that I had to convince myself that it was just painted canvas with more canvas hanging just behind to give the scene depth and not that of the real thing. I later learned that the term for this deceptive art work is called trompe l'oeil.

Trompe l'oeil is French for "to deceive the eye", an art historical tradition in which the artist fools us into thinking we're looking at the real thing. Whether it's a painted stone column or a forest scene at dawn, trompe l'oeil makes us question the boundary between the painted world and ours.

The earliest account of trompe l'oeil comes from ancient Greece, where a contest took place between two prominent

artists, Zeuxis and Parrhasius. The story goes that Zeuxis painted grapes with such skill that birds flew down to peck at them. Not wanting to be outdone, Parrhasius painted an illusionistic curtain that fooled even the discerning eye of his fellow-painter, who tried to draw it to one side. This famous anecdote was repeated in later art treatises, encouraging artists to emulate their classical predecessors.

By the Renaissance, artists had a new tool at their disposal to deceive the viewer's eye: perspective. In architecture in particular, trompe l'oeil moved onto an ever-grander scale with decorated ceilings that conjured up the illusion of infinite space – the ultimate test of a master's skill. In some cases, buildings appear to continue upwards to great heights, while in others the heavens themselves seem to open up.





# 2025 BILTMORE LODGE OFFICERS



Office	Officer
Master	Howard Hazelrigg
Sr. Warden	Michael Ogus
Jr. Warden	Frank Bryson
Treasurer	Doug Robertson
Secretary	Larry Dotson, PM
Sr. Deacon	Tony Rice
Jr. Deacon	Eric Willis
Sr. Steward	Jamie Bradley
Jr. Steward	Xavier Robinson
Tyler	Norman Goering, PM
Chaplain	Alex Hanks

## Author, Humorist and Inventor of the Bra Strap

Famous author and humorist Mark Twain invented the bra strap. At first, the strap was intended to be used to fasten garments such as shirts. It was created to replace the popularly used suspenders.

Twain visioned the invention to help in making several clothes adjustable to fit people perfectly. The idea was patented on 19 December 1871. The patent read 'vests, pantaloons or other garments requiring straps.'

However, the invention did not pick for its intended use. Since then, vests had buckled to tighten them up, and pantaloons didn't need to be snugly, they were a better fit when baggy. Instead, it ended up being an essential part of brassieres that are used in designing the women undergarment up to date.

Apart from being an inventor and an author, Mark Twain was a Freemason. He presented his petition to Polar Star

Lodge No. 79 of Saint Louis on 26 December 1860 and receive his first degree on 18 February 1861.

Mark Twain was fascinated by inventions, but his enthusiasm was also his Achilles' heel. He lost a fortune on inventions, which he was sure would make him rich and successful. Even though his writing became his lasting legacy, every time a woman puts on her bra, she has Mark Twain to thank.

