



THE LODGE GATE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BALTIMORE MASONIC LODGE

You Can Go Home Again

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A publication of news,
history, opinion and
thoughts.

Asheville's Thomas Wolfe's magnificent novel "You Can't Go Home Again" is both the story of a young writer longing to make his mark upon the world and a sweeping portrait of America and Europe from the Great Depression through the years leading up to World War II. He discovers a world plagued by political uncertainty and on the brink of transformation, yet he finds within himself the capacity to meet it with optimism and a renewed love for his birthplace. He is a changed man yet a hopeful one, awake to the knowledge that one can never fully "go back home to your family, back home to your childhood...away from all the strife and conflict of the world...back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time." We find that our homes are not the refuge they once were because they sit in an ever changing world.

The book title has since become an idiom with a deep meaning for those of us who understand it. Home, even if we never touch a thing is still a changeable world. Freemasonry for some is a home. It has a feel, a look and many of the baser aspects of a home. A Masonic lodge is a place we moved into earlier in our lives and grew into better men. It is a place we leave to go to work or to some



other aspect in our lives and it is a place we return to just like a home. But Freemasonry and its associated Masonic lodge is much like Wolfe's referenced home.

The night we were raised was new and exciting. Then, we knew little of the world we had entered. That night we met and befriended many men we then called brother. In our mind we wanted to wear the collar and hat of the Master and we desired to learn the ritual so that we too could usher men into this world. Ten, twenty and thirty years on, we hardly recognize the world we entered. Everything has changed. The building may be the same but many of the men we met on that first night are dead or have moved. The dedication and proficiency of the officers and degree teams has

diminished, or is it that our memory of such things has faded. The overall attendance of the meetings has declined as has the interest in things Masonic. The community surrounding the building has changed and so has the community's attitude towards our craft.

We return to our lodge each week, month or just occasionally to find that it isn't the same anymore and we get depressed and worried. But then, if we stop and think, we will realize that it is not just the physical elements that have changed; we have changed. Freemasonry has done its job. It made a better man of us, a more mature individual with a different outlook on life. Sure, the men of old are gone and in this busy world of jobs and young families, the officers can't find the time to learn their parts. The membership has aged and our attendance is lower. The world offers more for men now than fifty years ago. But if we take a deep breath and think about it, we will agree that the world has changed; we have changed but Freemasonry remains the same. It is there waiting for us like that old front porch of your youth. We can go home again.



The Iconic George Washington Print

In our lodge hall hangs a picture of Brother George Washington. Many lodges have this or a similar picture hanging on their walls. But why this one?

The following article comes from Brother Christopher Hodapp's book *Freemasonry for Dummies*.



*George Washington as
Master of His Lodge (1932)
by Hattie Burdette*

If this portrait looks familiar to many of you, it should. The portrait was commissioned in 1931 by Freemason and U.S. Congressman Sol Bloom for the George Washington Bicentennial Commission, and painted by artist Hattie Elizabeth Burdette (1875-1955). It depicts Washington presiding as Master of Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, gavel in hand. If not the most famous image of Washington as a Freemason, it's arguably the most widely circulated one that is seen regularly in lodges all across the United States. Yet, it was commissioned by a Congressional committee and paid for by the government, not Masons. Imagine such a proposal today.

How is it that this particular painting of Brother George dressed as Worshipful Master wind up in so many American lodges? According to William D. Moore and John D. Hamilton's detailed essay, 'Washington As the Master of His Lodge: History and Symbolism of an American Icon',

New York Congressman Sol Bloom, director of [the Memorial] and a member of New

York's Pacific Lodge No. 233, took pride in his agency's insistence on "realism." In consultation with F. Walter Mueller, a member of Century Lodge No. 100 in South Orange, New Jersey, Bloom reviewed many Masonic portraits of Washington before rejecting them all as inaccurate. He then hired Burdette to - create a portrait in which the figure was based upon Houdon's statue of Washington while the overall work incorporated the relics maintained by Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22... As well as appearing repeatedly both in the Masonic press and in publications of the Washington Bicentennial Commission, more than fifteen hundred photolithographic reproductions of Burdette's painting were distributed by congressmen to Masonic organizations throughout the United States.

Brother Sol Bloom represented the 20th Congressional District (Manhattan's west side) in the House of Representatives, serving fourteen terms from 1923 until his death in 1949. During the critical years leading up to and through the end of World War II, he was Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and he later went on to become one of the first signers of the United Nations charter.

In 1931, Bloom was named both chairman of the Congressional George Washington Bicentennial Commission and the director of the George Washington National Masonic Memorial's Bicenten-

nial Committee, commemorating the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth the following year. On that date, the new Masonic Memorial towering above Alexandria would be dedicated and opened to the public. Bloom requested eight Washington D.C. area artists to each create a poster which would be used to promote the official government-sponsored national celebration of Washington's birthday in 1932. Artist Hattie E. Burdette asked permission of Alexandria-Washington Lodge 22 to use their lodge room and Washington's Masonic gavel, sash, Past Master's jewel, his chair, and other items to depict in her painting.

Her model was Teft Johnson (photo next page), an actor who portrayed the role of Washington in several historical plays under the direction of famed Broadway producer David Belasco. Of all the posters submitted, Burdette's was selected by the Commission to advertise the Memorial's dedication.

On November 29, 1931, Congress and the National Bicentennial Commission decided that second week of May in 1932 would be set aside as Masonic Week. Consequently, May 12th would be the official opening and dedication of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.

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George Washington Print, continued

Invitations to this gala event were sent to thousands of American citizens and to regular Freemasons around the world. Although not a Mason himself, President Herbert Hoover and the First Lady were among the first to accept the invitation. Others included every member of Congress (imagine Congress doing that today), the Justices of the Supreme Court and members of President Hoover's cabinet, along with all 49 of the Grand Masters of the U.S. The mayor of Alexandria, the governor of Virginia, and many other government, military, religious and

civic leaders joined the celebration.

As bad luck would have it, a torrential five-day downpour nearly ruined the ceremony - 50,000 attendees and onlookers had been expected and planned for, but the rain and flooding kept all but 1,500 from climbing the long driveway and attending at the Memorial itself. Bleachers outside sat wet and empty as reportedly hundreds of onlookers watched from the bottom of Shooters Hill safe and dry, huddled in railroad coaches at the Alexandria train station. Those who could manage to get inside

the Memorial jammed into the 400 seat auditorium for the various speeches, far exceeding the Fire Marshal's directives.

I am told with as much confidence as is possible that reproductions of Hattie Burdette's painting were circulated to every U.S. lodge possessing a charter in 1932, and that even today, every lodge in Virginia still has one hanging in its building. The original hung in the U.S. Capitol throughout 1932, and was then gifted to the George Washington National Masonic Memorial when the year was over.



*Teft Johnson,
George's stand-in*

Volume of the Sacred Law

It goes without saying that the Bible looms large in Freemasonry, it is, in essence, at the center, literally, of the Lodge. As one of the "three greater lights" along with the square and compass it comprises the required "furniture" of the Lodge and, as such, the Lodge cannot be opened without them. In most English speaking Lodges this Volume of Sacred Law is in the form of the 1611 Version of the Bible known as the King James Version. It is also the version of the Holy Scriptures given to each Master Mason upon his being raised to that degree. In this article I want to explore the background of events and the situation which brought about its production. The KJV is the last in a line of translations

of the Tudor-Stuart period of English history and, for the most part, is more an updating of the earlier work of William Tyndale which had been done some eighty years prior to the KJV. Tyndale's translation was done before the split with the Roman Catholic Church under Henry VIII and was considered at the time an act of heresy, however it was such a fine translation that it formed the basis of all subsequent translations which followed; most biblical scholars agree that 60% of the KJV comes straight from Tyndale's version. So, if Tyndale's translation was so good why was there a need for an updated version? It is here that we need to look at what was going on in England in the period following Tyndale's

time. Let's set up the time line....the Protestant Reformation had begun in Germany under Martin Luther in 1517 but England did not become part of the Reformation until Henry VIII broke from Rome in 1534 as part of the issue of his "divorce" from his wife Kathryn because she could not bear him a son. When Henry died in 1547 his son Edward VI, a son by his wife Jane Seymour, took the Church of England (C of E) in a decidedly more "Lutheran" direction but this turn did not last long nor go far because Edward did not reign but just slightly over six years before he died.

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Volume of the Sacred Law, continued



This brought about a total reversal of the Reformation in England since the next person in line to the throne was Mary, Henry's daughter by Kathryn his first wife. Mary took England back into the Church of Rome and, for the most part, undid everything that the English part of the Reformation had accomplished. During Mary's short five year reign many of the reformers who were lucky enough to escape England went to Geneva, Switzerland where the French reformer Jean Cauvin, we English speakers know him as John Calvin, had taken up residence. It was there in 1560 that the version of the English Bible known as the Geneva Bible was produced. It was, again, based mostly on Tyndale's work but also had annotations, side notes as it were which gave explanations of the text many of which were vehemently anti-Papal and, in some cases could be anti-monarchical; this would not be welcomed by either King or Pope. During the reign of Elizabeth I, who succeeded her half sister Mary in 1558, England returned to the Church of England that her father Henry VIII had established and it was during the later years of her reign that a movement began among a few scholars and schoolmen which would spread into the Church itself and eventually become a movement of separatists, the Puritan movement.

At first, the early Puritans wanted to "purify" the C of E of all aspects of "popishness" that had remained in the English Church. They objected to the

vestments of the clergy which they called the "popish rags" and other aspects of ritual in the C of E that smacked of the medieval Catholic Church, thus it was when James VI of Scotland became the heir to the throne of his distant cousin Queen Elizabeth, he became James I of England and began the Stuart dynasty. The Puritan faction felt that since James was raised in the Calvinistic Presbyterianism of Scotland he would welcome their views, but not so fast! James mother was Mary Queen of Scots a staunch Roman Catholic and although James was outwardly compliant with the Scottish religious leanings, he and most of his off spring were very likely secret Roman Catholics. His son James, who became James II was openly a Roman Catholic. Back to the Puritans! The more radical reformers wanted to completely do away with the C of E and set up a form of Congregational/ Presbyterian polity....this would actually happen under Cromwell some forty years later, but James I felt that the monarchy and the state Church were inseparable and he famously stated, "no bishops, no king". Thus as almost an afterthought at one of the meetings between the new king and members of the Puritan faction it was suggested that perhaps a "new" translation of the English bible could be produced which would be agreeable to both the King and his supporters and the Puritans, and so began the work which would give us the version known as the King James Version. It was not a new translation but rather the end

product of the comparison of all preceding versions with a few minor changes and updates of language that had occurred since Tyndale's translation of 1526. The KJV is contemporaneous with the works of Shakespeare and has much of the majesty and grandeur of the literary aspect of the English of that time. As it was said to be by James and his bishops "a sop to the Puritans" it became the most beloved of all versions of the English Bible. The fact that it is largely a revision of William Tyndale's version is not well known among most folk today, but it should be, and I will remind the reader that when you read the KJV even in its somewhat modernized form today your are still reading Tyndale for the most part.

So mote it be!

Brother Bucky



Book Review

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

Brother Mark Twain

At our June 2nd meeting the Master reported on attending the Grand Master's regional visit in Waynesville. It seems the overriding concern of the Grand Lodge is the decline in membership numbers. Frankly, since the initial decline a few decades ago this has been their concern. Reduced membership equates to a reduced income to the Grand Lodge and I firmly believe this is their biggest fear.

Biltmore Lodge hit its high mark in membership about 1995 with a robust number of 525 members. That sounds like a lot, and it is but from a percentage viewpoint today's Biltmore Lodge is turning out a higher percentage of members attending meetings than in the old days. It is true we are not conducting the numbers of degrees that we once conferred but we have to stop and ask ourselves; is it quantity or quality that is the most important.

Our Master is researching a system in use by Masonic Lodges in Florida that has generated an increase in petitions. He hopes to report back to the lodge in the near future what he discovers. But, if we should adopt such a system we must be careful to let only qualified men into our lodge.

I recently came across a book that sparked my interest enough that I ordered it and have been pleased with what I have read. It is entitled 'Guarding the West Gate' by Ken Peck. The following is from the Foreword.

Freemasonry has never been sustained by numbers. It has been sustained by men. From its earliest days, the Craft has understood a simple truth that modern organizations often forget: who enters matters more than how many enter. Lodges rise or fall not by enthusiasm alone, but by character—by the quality, disposition, and readiness of the men admitted within the West Gate.

This book is written primarily for Masons. It is not an introduction for the curious, nor a defense offered to critics. It is not intended to persuade, recruit, or justify Freemasonry to the outside world. Its purpose is internal, reflective, and corrective. It speaks to those already entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the Craft—those who understand that preservation requires judgment, not sentiment.

The West Gate is not symbolic ornamentation. It is a moral threshold. To stand watch there is to accept responsibility not only for the lodge as it exists today, but for the lodge that will exist years from now. Every petition accepted shapes the future of the fraternity. Every standard relaxed carries consequences that outlive the moment.

In an age that prizes growth, visibility, and inclusion above nearly all else, Freemasonry's insistence on discernment can appear out of step. Yet history offers ample warning. Whenever standards are lowered for convenience, expediency, or misplaced charity, harmony erodes.

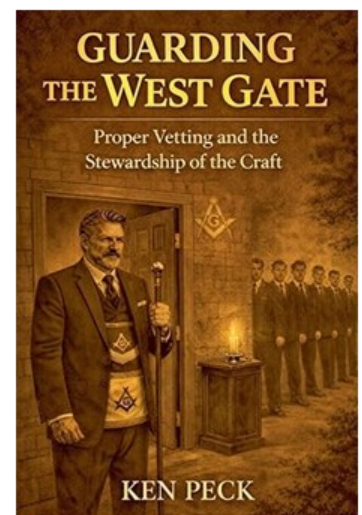
Instruction becomes diluted. Brotherhood weakens. What was intended to be a school of moral formation risks becoming merely another social institution.

Guarding the West Gate is not an act of exclusion. It is an act of stewardship. The duty owed at the gate is threefold: to the lodge, to the petitioner, and to the reputation of Freemasonry itself. To admit a man unprepared for the obligations of the Craft does him no kindness. To accept a petitioner whose motives are misaligned does the lodge no service.

To ignore warning signs for the sake of peace or popularity places future brethren at risk.

The future of Freemasonry will not be decided by how many men knock at the door, but by how faithfully those already within keep watch.

I recommend this book especially to the officers of the lodge but to any and all who care for the wellbeing of Freemasonry.





John Cutshall

Sometimes, when you least expect it, something will pop up in front of you that needs more investigation. On a late December 2025 morning I was strolling through the Woodlawn Cemetery in the Oakley community of Asheville and there in the lower portion of the cemetery I spied a headstone with a Masonic square and compasses prominently displayed at the top. The man's name was John Cutshall. Upon returning home I quickly went to my computer to see if John was a member of Biltmore Lodge. He was not. The next task was to search the Internet for any information I could find on him and boy, did I find some.

John Cutshall was born on November 16, 1911 in Belva, Madison County, NC, the older of two children. His father was a laborer for the railroad. At some point the family moved to the Biltmore district of Asheville, NC and John graduated from Biltmore High School. He married Jessie Mae Wyatt on March 3, 1929 before he turned 18.

John spent several years working for a "local highway shops" in Boone, NC (possibly as a highway sign painter). He enlisted in the army in the late summer of 1933; that October he wrote a letter to the editor of the Boone newspaper about his military experience. "I go out for boxing, wrestling and any sport that comes up. We have beer parties and dances every Friday night, the US Army band gives us

plenty of music. . . . If any of you fellows are going to join the Army come to the 17th Field Artillery at Fort Bragg. It is the best outfit in the Army."

A 1934 newspaper article says that John, still at Fort Bragg, was "winning considerable notice as a cartoonist.

His first three-year enlistment was up in 1936, and he left the Army. By the time he registered for the draft, on October 16, 1940, he had become a police officer for the city of Asheville.

John re-enlisted on October 19, 1942 and this time was assigned to the 603rd Engineer Camouflage Battalion with the rank of CPL, possibly because of his artistic skills. That Thanksgiving he won the battalion championship in close order and manual of arms drill, won second place in tent pitching, and qualified as a sharpshooter on the rifle range. In January, 1943 he was promoted to Staff SGT, still with the 603rd.

After the war he re-enlisted on November 6, 1945, and married his second wife, Geraldine Cairnes Barber, on January 10, 1946 in Chihuahua, Mexico.

In 1946 he was assigned to an Army recruiting job in Baltimore, working in the art department. From 1946 to 1952 he illustrated a series of historical incidents involving the US Army; these cartoons were carried by over 600 newspapers

around the country. In 1948, having enlisted for another term, he served as editor of Recruiting Digest, a service publication at Fort Meade, and also as chief artist for the Second Army. Sometime during his Maryland years, he attended the Maryland Fine Arts Institute; he also studied at the Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs.

In 1950, he was transferred to the Military Police School at Camp (later Fort) Gordon in Georgia; he and Gerrie took up residence in Augusta. In that role, as a member of the Military Police Board, he wrote lesson plans for all phases of criminal investigation, illustrating them with his own drawings. He also served at the base as provost marshal and prison camp commander. He continued drawing and painting outside of his MP job as well—winning second and third place in a Combat Intelligence poster contest in the summer of 1952. Meanwhile, Gerrie worked as a photo re-toucher.

John left the military on April 15, 1953 with the rank of Captain, and spent the rest of the year taking accounting and business courses in Florida. In December, 1953, he parlayed his MP experience into a job running the Polk County (NC) prison camp. By 1956, he'd become the superintendent of the Macon County (NC) prison camp for youthful offenders; he continued to draw newspaper cartoons for the Franklin (NC) Press.

By 1962 he was back at Fort Gordon, this time as a civilian employee, working as artist-illustrator for Post Training Aids. From 1965 until at least 1970 he served as supervisor of the art department there, and two of his paintings ("The Battle of Gettysburg" and "Custer's Last Stand") were displayed at the base.

Sometime in the 1970s John retired, and he and Gerrie eventually moved back to Franklin, NC. John became active in the Masons, the VFW, and the American Legion as well as at All Souls Episcopal Church in Biltmore. Gerrie died in 1986, and John was married again, to a woman named Margaret.

John died on July 27, 1990 and is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in Asheville, NC.





Henry Price, 1st North American Grand Master

Records of the life of WB Henry Price are sketchy. It appears by the epitaph upon his tombstone that Henry Price was born about 1697, and that he came to New England about 1723. By 1730, he was a member of Lodge #75 in London.

Henry Price did not declare himself Grand Master in 1730; rather, he was officially appointed Provincial Grand Master of New England in 1733 by the Grand Master of England, Viscount Montagu. His authority was extended to cover all of North America in 1734.

Key facts about Henry Price's appointment:

1730: Henry Price was a member of a regular Masonic lodge

(Lodge No. 75) in London, England.

April 30, 1733: The Grand Master of England issued a "Deputation" (an official warrant) appointing Henry Price as Provincial Grand Master of New England.

July 30, 1733: Price convened an assembly of Masons at the Bunch of Grapes Tavern in Boston, presented his commission, and established the first "regular" Provincial Grand Lodge in America.

August 1734: His commission was officially extended by the Earl Crawford, the new Grand Master of England, to cover all of "His Majesty's Dominions in North America".

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts considers its founding date to be the formation of this Provincial Grand Lodge under Price. The Henry Price Medal, awarded for exceptional service to the fraternity, is named in his honor.

Price is widely recognized as the "founder of duly constituted Masonry in America" because he held a legitimate, written authority (the Deputation) from the recognized Grand Lodge in England, which had the power to establish new lodges. This differed from earlier, informal Masonic gatherings that may have existed in the colonies (such as those in Philadelphia around 1730).

He died on May 20, 1780.



Joseph Montfort, GM of America

Joseph Montfort was elected Master of the Royal White Hart Lodge in 1765. Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2. Is located in the town of Halifax was chartered on 21 Aug. 1767. The lodge is still in existence.

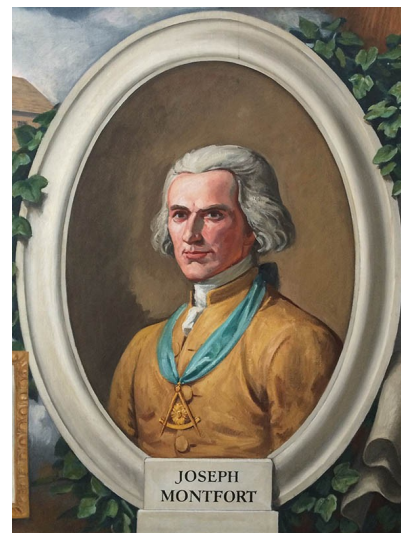
In 1767, he traveled to England, and amongst other business, procured an official Charter for Royal White Hart from the Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge, Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, numbered 403.

On January 14, 1771, the Premier Grand Lodge deputized Montfort by warrant to be the

"Grand Master of and for America." The warrant is in possession of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and is written in ink and copper on parchment. The seal of the Premier Grand Lodge of England is in the upper left corner. Although his commission granted him jurisdiction over the English colonies, notes from the Premier Grand Lodge of England at the time noted his commission's jurisdiction was over the Province of North Carolina. Nonetheless, Montfort styled his signature "G.M.A.," meaning "Grand Master, America," and indeed chartered a lodge outside the Province of North Carolina.

Other than Royal White Hart, Montfort chartered at least eight lodges in his jurisdiction.

In 1940 the Grand Lodge created the 'Joseph Montfort Medal' to be presented by the Grand Master to any Master Mason in good standing and recognized by this Grand Lodge who in the opinion of the Grand Master is deserving thereof because of distinguished service or achievement.





Catechism Night



At a recent meeting of our lodge the Master dispensed with labor so that a Fellowcraft Mason could be examined on his catechism. I was sitting where I could watch the brother and most of the other Masons in the room with the intent of writing this short article describing the events. From my perch, and with this goal in mind, what I witnessed and the conclusions drawn, I hope you will enjoy.

Firstly, the candidate did a much better job in this recitation than he did on his First Degree catechism. He suffered from the same anxiety we all suffered when we performed our first question and answer session in front of what we considered to be seasoned Masons. We had never done anything like this before and were nervous. Our second degree catechism, as his, came much easier.

My next observation was that of the Master Mason conducting the examination. He had stepped in at the last moment for the candidate's coach who was unable to be at lodge. His patience and understanding were evident. There is a bond that develops between a coach and a candidate during the weeks or months necessary to teach what is required. The coach understands how his candidate learns and the candidate trusts his coach and follows the slightest hand or facial gestures. This candidate on this particular night did not have these cues but did well despite the loss. Both men are to be congratulated.

The next thing observed were the Master Masons on the sidelines. Some nearly fell asleep, others were awake but uninterested and the remainder paid attention. Of these men I no-

ticed that some silently mouthed the words along with the candidate. They were reliving the days when they were sitting, as this man did, in front of the Master and the assembled craft reciting what they had been taught. It was obvious that the catechism had not left their memory and that it meant something to them.

The catechism we learned was not something intended to be forgotten. There are aspects in each which require of us behavior and actions intended to make us better men and better citizens within and without the lodge.

The next time you witness a catechism it would behoove you to recite along with the candidate and remember from whence you came.

Catechisms and More

Way back in 1986 I was initiated into Masonry. My father, Brother Jay Sorrells, saw to it that I was assigned to WB Leonard Hare to learn my catechism. I had always known of WB Hare as he lived only a few blocks from where I grew up.

I would meet Leonard at his home and he and I would walk to his back yard and sit under a shade tree. There I learned what was required but I also learned community history, things about members of the community (some that probably shouldn't have been told) and a history of Biltmore Lodge and its membership.

His manner of teaching made judicious use of hand movements that would be cues to me that I was to say a word or phrase at a specific moment. He was a patient man and understood the difficulty of learning words and sentence structures from a bygone era.

WB Hare died in 1995. We are told that we are but one generation from obscurity but as long as I live, so will he. His teaching methods have also lived on. I use his technique when I coach a candidate. We work a while, learn the definition of an unknown word, provide an understanding of the symbolisms asso-

ciated with the ritual degree and yes, I use those odd little hand movements to prompt the candidate at certain points. Along with this I provide a bit of lodge history, an understanding of how a lodge operates and a little or a lot about me both as a person and as a Mason. The candidate likewise opens up about himself. We become more than Masonic brothers, we become friends.

I hope that in years to come these candidates I coach will remember me fondly as I remember my coach and carry on the work of building strong Masons.



Freemasonry Is Where You Find It



Freemasonry is a fraternal organization for men who express a belief in a Supreme Being and a desire to improve themselves and expand their social circles outside of existing work, church, and childhood friend groups.

Being a Freemason involves a shared initiatory experience with more than 300 years of history across almost every country in the world. Our ceremonies reinforce common moral lessons, and our meetings provide a supportive environment for self-improvement and frequently a catalyst for charity in local communities.

The opening paragraphs are just one interpretation of our illustrious fraternity and the men who call themselves Freemasons. Freemasonry is not a building but an idea and a lifestyle.

Seven years ago, back in 2019, we had the interior of the meeting room repaired and painted. For Biltmore Lodge, which meets weekly, we found that we had to move our meeting to another location. I was reminded of this move while pursuing photos on my computer. The attached photo of the Master's hat and gavel on a simple wooden stand was what recalled this memory. Under WB Robert Freeman's leadership we moved our meeting to the dining room where we set up a small but usable lodge hall. Let's say that a gathering of 20+ Masons in that small area created much closer bonds but all who attended appreciated the effort and the continued fraternal connection. But, there were those among our membership who railed against such a move and

said that it was not legal. They were reminded that our Bylaws simply states that our meeting place is at 6 St. Paul Street.

Those of you who are students of Masonry will recall that Freemasons set up meeting places in prisoner of war camps out of site of guards, the discovery of such would have brought on severe punishment. These meetings were never sanctioned by a Grand Lodge, because they too didn't know of them. Masons in countries where Masonry is outlawed still meet in secret places that may change locale from time to time but the intent is to meet as Masonic brothers.

Masonry is not a place; it is that which is in a man who calls himself a Freemason.

Masonic Memorial Statue

Too many people today deny that the World War II Holocaust happened and this ignorance, if left unchecked, could lead to another such event. We see it today in the anti Semitic ranting of uninformed or politically motivated people. Even less known is the roundup, torture and deaths of many hundreds of thousands of Freemasons by the Nazis. The Nazi regime persecuted Freemasons during the Holocaust, banning the organization, confiscating their property, and sending thousands to concentration camps. The persecution stemmed from the Nazi belief that Freemasonry was part of a conspiracy working against

German interests.

These men, though from different communities, still banded together in secret to continue as fraternal brothers even while under the eye of their captives.

A sculpture of seven Masonic brothers likely refers to either the seven Freemasons who secretly formed a lodge in a Nazi concentration camp, commemorated by a monument, or carvings by William Rush at the Philadelphia Masonic Temple, representing allegorical figures, but both are significant Masonic art featuring the number

seven. The concentration camp memorial honors figures like Paul Hanson and Luc Somerhausen who created the "Liberté chérie" lodge, while Rush's carvings depict symbolic aspects of Freemasonry, highlighting the significance of the number seven in Masonic thought.





The Cable Tow



In the Speculative craft, the Cable Tow is more than just a physical cord used during initiation; it is a profound symbol of our evolving relationship with duty and the Masonic fraternity.

Initially, the Cable Tow represents a literal tie, an emblem of submission and a physical safeguard. However, as a Mason progresses, the physical rope is discarded, replaced by a spiritual and moral obligation. It signifies that the brother is no longer led by external force, but by his own internal commitments.

Historically, the "length of my cable tow" referred to a specific

distance (often cited as three miles) within which a Mason was expected to travel to attend a summons or assist a brother. In modern symbolism, this distance is no longer measured in miles, but in capability. It acknowledges that every Mason has unique responsibilities to his family, his vocation, and his health. It remains the "tether" that connects a Mason to his Lodge. You are bound to your brothers, but only within the limits of your own strength and resources.

The Cable Tow also serves as a reminder of self-control. Just as it can be used to lead, it can also

be used to restrain. It teaches us to curb our passions and keep our prejudices in check, ensuring that our conduct remains "within the compass" of Masonic virtue.

"The Cable Tow is the measure of a Mason's willingness to serve, limited only by his ability to do so without injury to himself or his connections."

Ultimately, the Cable Tow teaches us that we are all linked. While the cord may be invisible, the bond it represents is unbreakable, provided we remain true to the length of our own honor.

An Amalgamation in District 39



There was a time over 100 years ago when Masonic lodges were created in North Carolina at a quick pace. The attraction of membership and the expanding population drove the need. As a lodge is chartered it is assigned a lodge number which is simply done by giving the new lodge the next number in sequence. Biltmore Lodge No. 446 was chartered in March 1892 just 44 years after Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118 was chartered in 1848. Between those dates 328 lodges were chartered. In the 10 years after Biltmore was chartered 71 new lodges were formed.

Sadly today the numbers of lodges are declining. There are currently 350 active lodges in the state. As of June 2026 Swannanoa Lodge No. 561,

chartered in 1908, merged with Black Mountain Lodge No. 663 chartered in 1925 forming a combined lodge under the latter's name and number. Recently, four lodges in Gaston County merged to form one lodge. Other mergers locally are being looked at. Rather than using the term 'merging' some Grand Lodges and subordinate lodges are using the term 'amalgamation' to describe the joining of two or more lodges into one. This term may sound a little less ominous but in the end it is the same thing.

Often, the need to merge two or more lodges into one is related to the decline in dues paying members. The newly merged lodge may well see a financial gain and possibly a gain in attendance but

will it last? That depends. If the newly formed lodge keeps on the same track of not adding younger men, better educational programs and remains in the shadows of the community it will once again face the same problems and will seek another lifeline of merger or shutting its doors.

We as Masons need to support our lodges not only in attendance but with our talents as speakers, as influencers of young men to become Masons and with the payment of our annual dues. If Masonry is to survive we the Masons of today must step up to see to it. Let's support Black Mountain Lodge with our attendance. Their next meeting is July 13 at 7 PM.



Virtue

In the Entered Apprentice Degree, the new brother is introduced to the Four Cardinal Virtues during the close of the explanatory lecture. These virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice and are very briefly explained to the new Entered Apprentice. Unfortunately, these virtues have no connection to the rite of initiation experienced by the new Mason and the lecture does little to clarify their introduction at this time. From an esoteric standpoint, one must go to great lengths to manipulate these virtues to make a connection to the ritual.

Up to at least 1750, none of the early Masonic manuscripts or ritual exposures contains any reference to the Four Cardinal Virtues. Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia states, "It is probable that this peculiar part of the lectures goes back beyond the dawn of symbolic Masonry and that what we have is a distorted remnant of a much more meaningful symbolism or has been built up in modern times out of a brief and unimportant part of the old pre-Grand Lodge working." In addition, one must realize that the Masonic ritual is a combination of many ideas that have come from the distant past and woven into a ritual. Over time, ideas have been added, removed or merged with other concepts to form the current Masonic ritual. Based on the evidence, the Cardinal Virtues were not added to the Masonic ritual until after the



middle of the eighteenth century. Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia suggests that the Cardinal Virtues were "taken from the Christian Church, which derived them from Plato and to which the Church had added the three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity, which Freemasonry also borrowed."

In any event, the Cardinal Virtues have intrinsic value to the Mason and are certainly essential to Freemasonry. They can stand on their own within the ritual without any direct connection to the initiatic experience or to Masonic symbolism.

For the Stoics, virtue was not just one good among many, it was the only true good. Wealth, health, and reputation may seem desirable, but they are unstable and outside our control. Virtue, by contrast, depends entirely on our choices and therefore cannot be taken away. The four cardinal virtues—wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control, defined the Stoic path. Wisdom guides judgment, justice governs our actions toward others, courage steadies us in hardship, and self-control

disciplines our desires. Together, they form a complete life aligned with reason and nature. Stoics considered external things "indifferents." They may be preferable or harmful, but they are morally neutral. What matters is how we use them. A rich person can act unjustly, while a poor person can live nobly. Thus, happiness (eudaimonia) comes not from circumstances but from the consistent practice of virtue. This radical claim gave Stoicism both its strength and challenge. It demanded that individuals take full responsibility for their character, independent of fortune. Virtue alone makes life worth living, turning philosophy into a discipline of daily integrity. "Virtue is sufficient for happiness." —Stoic maxim

Up to at least 1750, none of the early Masonic manuscripts or ritual exposures contains any reference to the Four Cardinal Virtues.



The Old and the New

Biltmore Lodge uses a floor cloth in the Fellowcraft degree as part of the lecture. The canvas floor cloth in use until recently may be as much as 100 years old. We simply don't know its age as there is no recorded evidence of its purchase or first use. If it were purchased for use when we moved to our current building then it is over 70 years old. Just imagine the numbers of times it has been unrolled for use and then rolled up again. Imagine the numbers of feet that have trod over it as the stair case lecture has been delivered. If you have that in mind, you can now imagine that it is in poor shape.

There was a thought in 2024 to replace the old floor cloth with one that was very close in design. An attempt to locate a suitable replacement from a fraternal supply store turned up nothing suitable or was in keeping with the antique look of our current floor cloth. Seeing that no pre-existing item was available it would then be necessary to have a cloth hand painted, but where to turn for that talent. Certainly there are folks who can do the work but where to find them and then how to pay for the professional work was a problem. A call was placed to our Chaplain, Brother Alex Hanks. Bucky has many connections in the 'artsy' community of Asheville and it was supposed he might well find the needed talent. He immediately responded with a suitable artist, his wife Linda. When asked, she readily agreed.

The first step was to purchase a suitable canvas material. The original floor cloth is 51 inches wide and 20 feet in total length. We opted for a 60 inch width of #8 unprimed material donated by WB Clay Sorrells. The paint necessary to provide the symbolic scenes is a special latex paint and this was donated by Brother Bucky Hanks and Linda. After recovering sufficiently from knee surgery Linda began to reproduce the scenes found on the four panels that made up the whole staircase depiction. After several months, the work was completed. As you can see, the new cloth is identical to the old but with more vibrant colors. After the paints dried thoroughly a sealer was sprayed on to preserve the work. You can see the two cloths in the photo.

The new floor cloth was used for the first time on May 19, 2026 when Entered Apprentices Chase Bouchillon and Carlos McMahan were passed to the degree of Fellowcraft. They were told of the hope that as many feet would walk across this cloth as had on the former.

1 Kings

⁷The house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.

⁸The doorway for the lowest side chamber was on the right side of the house; and they would go up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle to the third.

The old and the new



2026 BILTMORE LODGE OFFICERS



Office	Officer
Master	Michael Ogu
Sr. Warden	Frank Bryson
Jr. Warden	Tony Rice
Treasurer	Michael Lawrence
Secretary	Larry Dotson, PM
Sr. Deacon	Eric Willis
Jr. Deacon	Jamie Bradley
Sr. Steward	David Anderson
Jr. Steward	Some old Past Master
Tyler	Howard Hazelrigg
Chaplain	Alex Hanks

Does Size Matter?

Lodge meetings years ago were well attended and today we lament the loss of the large turnouts but one has to understand there is a difference between then and now. In 1993 Biltmore Lodge boasted a membership of over 500 Masons. Today we have on the order of 180 members. Do the math; that is a loss of over 300.

Then the world was barely entering the online digital age and TV variety was still at a minimum. The men who attended the meetings were of a different generation. They were accustomed to gathering in social environments rather than meeting online. Our Biltmore Chapter of the Eastern Star was also larger and more active and provided wonderful meals for us.

Yes, the assemblage of Masons was larger years ago but no more fraternal and friendly than now. If we want larger turnouts at meeting it is incumbent upon us to make the effort to



attend, and to encourage younger men to become a Mason. If Masonry is to survive and grow it is up to us, the Master Mason of today to build for the future.