

Grand Lodge Recognitions

By

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The opinions presented in this paper are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Master and Wardens of the A. Douglas Smith Jr., Lodge of Research #1949 or the official views of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Virginia.

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Recently I was requested to present a program in Seat Pleasant Lodge No. 219 in Maryland. I chose as my subject, "Grand Lodge Recognitions." I thought it would prove interesting to outline the steps that a foreign Grand Lodge must take to become "recognized" by a Grand Lodge in the United States.

In the preparation of the paper I was to present, I called the Masonic Service Association (MSA) to order a copy of their latest "Recognitions Chart" and was told that due to circumstances beyond their control, the chart was out of print and had not been published since 1986. The Recognitions Chart has always been a useful tool for not only Grand Secretaries, but for Lodge Secretaries.

I order a copy of the 1990 edition of the "List of Lodges Masonic", printed each year by the Pantagraph Printing & Stationery Co. This is the book used in our Lodges by the Tiler to look up the Lodge of a visitor to determine if the visitor is from a "regular" lodge.

In my profession, I use a Computer Assisted Drafting system (CAD) to make electrical schematic drawings for building construction projects. Using an old edition of the MSA Recognition Chart as a guide, I drew my own Chart using the information found in the "List of Lodges" book.

I came up with many inconsistencies in the chart I drew using the information in the List of Lodges book. I sent a list of questions I developed and a copy of the chart to Most Wor. Dick Fletcher at MSA to see if he could answer some of the questions.

Dick called me and said the questions I raised were good ones but he didn't have the answers to all of them, but he did have a complete set of surveys he had sent to every Grand Secretary in the United States indicating who they each recognized. He asked if I would take on the project of compiling the information contained in the surveys and revise the chart I drew using the information in the List of Lodges book.

Knowing the amount of time I spent preparing the chart from the information in the List of Lodges book, I was hesitant to take on a research project of this magnitude myself. I told Dick I would need some assistance in compiling the information and would try to get some help.

That week I attended a Master's and Warden's Association meeting in my home district and told the Worshipful Master of A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research about my conversation with Dick Fletcher. He was enthusiastic about our Research Lodge taking on this project as a service to MSA and agreed that the Lodge would help.

I drove over to the MSA office in Silver Spring, Maryland and picked up the surveys which they had received from the Grand Secretaries and copies of the Annual Reports of the "Commission on Information for Recognition" from 1961 to 1990. This is the Commission of the Conference of Grand Masters of North America charged with making recommendations concerning the regularity of Grand Lodges in Foreign Jurisdictions.

A committee was appointed from members of the Research Lodge and each was given a share of the surveys and a blank recognition chart. Within three weeks we had compiled all of the

information contained in the surveys and I entered it into a blank chart on the CAD system and sent this back to MSA.

As a double check for errors, Most Wor. Bro. Fletcher had copies made of the revised chart I drew and sent one to each Grand Secretary to proof read for any errors which the chart contained.

Many charts were received back from the Grand Secretaries with corrections made updating the information through October 1st, 1990. Again I corrected the chart using the CAD system and sent a revised copy to MSA which has now been distributed to each Grand Secretary in the United States and Canada for their information.

A "P.S." was written at the bottom of the letter when the charts were returned to the Grand Secretaries which read, "Special thanks to A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949 of Alexandria, Virginia for compiling this Recognition List. They are working with MSA in this project and we are very grateful to them for their efforts."

Special thanks go to Ed Carpenter, Jack Canard and Mark Arbeen, the members of the committee who assisted in compiling the data we received from MSA. I commend Wor. "Pete" Hwoschinsky, the Worshipful Master of our Research Lodge, for taking on this project to assist the Masonic Service Association.

A copy of the chart may be ordered from MSA which is located at 8120 Fenton Street in Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-4785. The last MSA Catalog I have indicates a charge of 75 cents for the chart. I hope that anyone who orders a copy of the chart will add a little something extra to help MSA defray some of the expenses they incur in providing this type of information to our Lodges.