

# MASONIC RITUAL IN VIRGINIA

by  
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## Historical Foundations of the Masonic Ritual

Masonic scholars have been trying for two hundred years to solve the Craft's greatest mystery, the origin of the ritual. Our Masonic forefathers were told imaginative stories about the origin of the Craft. We were established by King Solomon with the help of Hiram, King of Tyre; Masonry began with Noah and his sons; one story claimed Adam as our first Grand Master because he was the first man to wear an apron! This kind of Masonic history prevailed until 1850 when a reaction set in. Later historians discounted the tales and accepted only those facts of Masonry which had incontrovertible written proof.

Operative Masonry existed in ancient times; but that our modern Fraternity began with Solomon, or someone prior to the cathedral builders of the medieval period, is pure legend. Out of the old Craft guilds, out of the loose confraternity of men who worked on the great churches and castles of the period between 1200 A.D., and 1500 A.D., came Operative Masonry with organized Lodges and ceremonies. By process of gradual change it became Speculative Masonry, first organized into a Grand Lodge of Masons in London on June 24, 1717.

The so-called Gothic Constitutions or Old Charges are the earliest proof of our modern Masonry. They consist of about one hundred old manuscripts, found in various places and now carefully preserved.

Many today consider our ritual virtually unchangeable. But this was not so in 1717, when the Mother Grand Lodge was formed, and the years before and after. The charges were read or repeated from memory; they were not secret, but the signs and words, used originally to identify the operative, and later the speculative, Mason were strictly secret and

unwritten. The original ceremonies were brief and simple. They consisted of the administering of an oath of secrecy; the communication of the secrets; and the giving of the charges. Each Lodge was a separate unit, with no standard to go by. The ritual therefore became a matter of the Master's preference as to what words to use to convey the ideas involved. It was several decades after the Grand Lodge was formed before any standardization was accomplished, or even sought after. Thus we find the ritual evolving through a system of trial and error. A gifted Master or Masonic lecturer would frame a passage of appealing beauty. Soon others would use it and gradually it found acceptance in many Lodges. This was a slow evolution; in the first several decades of the newly formed Grand Lodge, no uniformity existed. Even today there are eight widely variant rituals in use in England, all accepted as valid and regular.

Early in Scottish Operative Masonry there were two ceremonies, for they quickly divided entered 'apprentices from fellows of the Craft; but there were no lectures as we know them today. A tradition did gradually grow up around the world — (our ancient brethren had both little education and much superstition) — the idea of a word too sacred to be pronounced, except under special circumstances.

The evolution of the Master's degree resulted from the introduction and assimilation of the Hiramic Legend into the Master's degree. The origin of the story of Hiram, the Widow's Son, is as great a mystery as anything in Masonry. We know that miracle plays, religious dramas, and tales of folklore were commonplace from the Middle Ages. The story of Hiram developed over a couple of centuries. It may have been referred to in Lodge ceremonies for half a century before 1717. In 1723, Dr. Anderson makes no mention of it whatsoever in his Constitutions. But in 1738, the revised edition

refers to the "sudden death of their dear Master Hiram Abiff, who they recently interr'd in the Lodge near the Temple, according to ancient usage."

Where the legend came from no one knows. Hiram is mentioned in the Bible in I Kings and II Chronicles. He was also mentioned in the Cooke Manuscript of 1410. But the Graham Manuscript, discovered in 1936 and dated 1726, and filled with Masonic ritual, tells of the legend of Noah. A valuable secret died with Noah. His three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth supposed that Noah had carried it with him into the grave and determined to exhume the body, "agreeing beforehand that if they did not find the very thing itself, the first thing they found was to be to them as a secret. They found nothing in the grave except a dead body; when they gripped the finger it came away, and so with the wrist and the elbow. They then reared up the dead body, supporting it by setting foot to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, cheek to cheek, and hand to back. One said there is yet marrow in this bone and the second said but a dry bone and the third said it stinketh."

While we are not able to fully account for the adoption of the Hiramic Legend, we can, with certainty, state that our Masonry and our ritual came from:

The Grand Lodge of England  
— 1717-1753

The Grand Lodge of the "Antients"  
— 1753-1813

The Grand Lodge of the "Moderns"  
— 1753-1813

The United Grand Lodge  
— 1813 and on

The Grand Lodge of Ireland  
— 1724 and on

The Grand Lodge of Scotland  
— 1736 and on

The ritual of the original Grand Lodge changed as it flowed, through many years after 1717. The Grand Lodges of "Antients" and "Moderns" both made alterations in the ritual so that rival members of each body found it impossible to make themselves known Masonically in the other. Members of Lodges subordinate to these Grand Lodges came to this country to form themselves into Lodges without warrant or charter. A dozen men, bringing what they remembered of the ritual they heard when "made", would naturally include in their ritual a little of one original source, some phrases from another beginning, a paragraph from a third wellspring, and so on.

The Mother Grand Lodge ritual was not the ritual of the United Grand Lodge which came into existence in 1813, when the two parts of the original Mother Grand Lodge again came together. The United Grand Lodge formed its ritual from the best of the divergent rituals of the "Antients" and the "Moderns".

From four primary sources of American ritual, in one way or another all American Jurisdictions, in part at least, received their "work". These sources include Massachusetts, which at first sent forth what must have been at least an approximation of the work of the original Mother Grand Lodge, though her ritual today is derived from both "Moderns" and "Antients"; Pennsylvania and Virginia, both giving forth individual variants of a combination of "Modern" and "Antients"; and North Carolina, almost purely "Modern".

In 1915 Dean Roscoe Pound showed how various were the next groups of States which received their rituals from the first four American sources. He averred that Maine derived from Massachusetts; Vermont from the Grand Lodge of the "Antients" in Massachusetts before the fusion; Ohio from Massachusetts, from Connecticut, a strictly "Modern" ritual, and from Pennsylvania; Indiana from Ohio and Kentucky, the latter representing Virginia after the fusion; Michigan from the "Antient" Grand Lodge of Canada and from New York; Kentucky from Virginia; Tennessee from North

Carolina, from South Carolina, and from Tennessee; Louisiana from South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and France; Florida from Georgia and South Carolina; Missouri from Pennsylvania and Tennessee; Illinois from Kentucky; and the District of Columbia from Maryland, Massachusetts, and Virginia.

There have been certain unifying influences: The Baltimore Convention of 1843; the work of Rob Morris and his Conservators, which despite the chilly reception by many Grand Jurisdictions, undoubtedly left its impression on the American ritual; the work of Thomas Smith Webb and Jeremy Cross, plainly evident in the esoteric paragraphs printed in many State monitors and manuals; and the honest desire and efforts of many Grand Lodges, through District Deputies, Grand Lecturers, Schools of Instruction, similar instruction, and similar machinery, to preserve what they have in its supposedly ancient perfection. By the time the latter forces were in operation, the ritual was more or less fixed.

Because of the reverence of the average Mason for what he is taught, and his fierce resentment of any material change in that which he learns, rituals and degree forms, ceremonies and practices, usages and customs, continue to be what he believes them to have been "from time immemorial" even when sober fact shows that in all probability they have an antiquity of less than two hundred years.

The catechism forms of lectures came to this country with Freemasonry. The system originated by Anderson was revised by many including William Preston, who suggested, if he did not teach, the esoteric parts of the "work" by illustrations of symbols and emblems, depicted on carpets. The Prestonian work was largely spread in this country by Thomas Smith Webb, who published his first "Freemason's Monitor" in 1797. Almost every jurisdiction, except Pennsylvania, adopted some or all of Smith's modifications of Preston.

A joint report recommending the adoption of the Webb lectures to the Grand Lodges of

Massachusetts and New Hampshire, in 1806, stated, "In the three degrees every master of a Lodge should be indulged with the liberty of adopting historical details, and the personification of the passing scene, as most agreeable to himself, his supporting officers, and assisting the Lodge."

On the defensive in the aftermath of the Morgan Affair (1826), the Fraternity was obliged carefully to guard against cowans and eavesdroppers. Evidence of membership of a would-be visitor was critically tested. Under such conditions, the lack of uniformity of Masonic work among the several Grand Lodges, or even among Lodges in the same State, was a formidable obstacle to fraternal intercourse. It was thought that possible relief from these conditions might be found in uniformity of the lectures. Identification of the members could thus be more readily made, and Lodges could discontinue turning away visitors, among whom many must have been in good standing, even if unable to prove themselves as such.

The Baltimore Convention, held May 8-17, 1843, attempted to agree on a mode of work so that the Masonic ritual might become uniform throughout the nation. On the opening day of the Convention, which was called to address these and associated issues, Dr. John Dove, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, was elected president. In the agenda adopted was a statement declaring the objects and purposes of the Convention to be the promotion of uniformity of Masonic work and the recommendations of such measures as should tend to elevate the Order to its due degree of respect throughout the world at large.

To accomplish its objectives, four Committees were appointed:

1. On the work and lectures in conferring the degrees.
2. On the funeral service.
3. On the ceremonies of Consecration and Installation.
4. On Masonic jurisprudence.

The Committee on the Work and Lectures in Conferring the Degrees consisted of Dr. Dove as Chairman, and four others. Within the Committee, we are told, a "satisfactory degree of uniformity existed", except for one member. In a letter written twenty years after the Convention, Charles W. Moore, a member of the Committee, said, "The work and lectures of the first three degrees, as adopted and authorized by the Baltimore Convention, in 1843, were, with a few unimportant verbal exceptions, literally as they were originally compiled by Brother Thomas Smith Webb, about the close of the century, and as they were subsequently taught during his lifetime.

The only change of consequence was in the due guards of the second and third degrees, which were changed and made to conform to that of the first degree in position and explanation. This was analogically correct."

### Virginia's Ritual in the First Hundred Years (1776-1875)

Organization of the Grand Lodge of Virginia as America's first independent Grand Lodge occurred in 1777 and 1778. The diverse origins of these Lodges set the basis for the evolution of the ritual in Virginia:

<u>Lodge Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Origin of Ritual</u>
Norfolk	Norfolk	England (Moderns) Scotland
Port Royal	Port Royal	Scotland
Blandford	Petersburg	Scotland
Fredericksburg	Fredericksburg	Scotland
St. Tammany	Hampton	England (Moderns)
Williamsburg	Williamsburg	England (Moderns)
Botetourt	Fredericksburg	England (Moderns)
Gloucester	Fredericksburg	England (Moderns)
Cabin Point	Cabin Point	North Carolina
York	Yorktown	England (Moderns)

Subsequent to the forming of the Grand Lodge of Virginia several other Lodges, with existing foreign charters, were chartered. In addition, several new Lodges were instituted. The origin of these Lodges of the first ten years of the Grand Lodge added to the original Lodges, resulted in the merger from which our ritual began.

<u>Lodge Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Origin of Ritual</u>
Richmond	Richmond	Virginia
Northhampton	Northhampton	Virginia
Kempsville	Kempsville	Virginia
Staunton	Staunton	Virginia
Manchester	Manchester	Virginia
Petersburg	Petersburg	Virginia
Portsmouth	Portsmouth	France
Charlotte	Charlotte	Virginia
Smithfield Union	Smithfield	Virginia
Richmond	Richmond	Virginia
Randolph		
Scottsville	Scottsville	Virginia
Baltimore Union	Baltimore	Virginia
Alexandria	Alexandria	Pennsylvania

The Grand Lodge first addressed the ritual in 1786: ". . . considering the diffused situation of the Craft in this State, was pleased to delegate to all Lodges the power of raising to the degrees of Fellow Craft and Master, though in Europe and in large cities that power is solely confined to the Grand Lodge." Thus, at least twenty versions of the ritual were authorized by this action.

On November 12, 1791, the Masters and Wardens met ". . . in order to consider of and adopt a uniform mode of working to be observed by all Lodges under this jurisdiction . . ." The results of this meeting are recorded in the minutes as "The Grand Lodge took under consideration the business for investigating and establishing certain rules and regulations to be engraved on the hearts of all present, but not proper to be committed to writing."

The Grand Lodge was convened for the purpose of laying the foundation stone of the bridge to be erected over Shockoe Creek, on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of June 1795. However, the interesting event which occurred is contained in the Proceedings: "In ample form the Grand Lodge was opened in the first degree of Masonry . . ." This is the first indication as to the exact degree on which any session of Grand Lodge had been conducted.

Grand Lodge Inspectors (now called District Deputies) were directed ". . . not only to report on the proceedings of those Lodges, but also to instruct the officers of each Lodge in the proper mode of working, in order that a uniform method may be established throughout this

jurisdiction" at the 1796 session of Grand Lodge. Here we note the first written indication of the encouragement of the Grand Lodge towards a standardized ritual.

The requirement for an examination in open Lodge ". . . in the degree from which he is to be advanced . . ." was approved by Grand Lodge in 1798. The resolution further required that a condition of his advancement would be the majority ballot of those present.

The year 1800 heralded the beginning of the Committee on Work. The resolution directed the Grand Master to appoint "..some expert Masons, not less than five in number, who, after having conferred together, and agreed upon the mode of working, which, in their judgments, shall conform with the ancient usages of masonry, shall appoint one of their body . . . to exemplify the same, in open Lodge, in the three degrees of masonry." This resolution's stated purpose was to promote uniformity of working in the different subordinate Lodges.

The Grand Lodge of Virginia voted in 1800 against the establishment of a National Grand Lodge. However, it did recommend that a convention be held every three years in Washington ". . . for recommending a uniform mode of carrying on the great work of the Craft, in the different degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason."

The committee approved in 1800 reported to the Grand Lodge in 1801 that they had been unable to agree "owing to the incalculable difficulties, arising from a prepossession in favor of the mode each member has been accustomed to . . ." The committee proposed an alternative method. At each Grand Lodge Session the Grand Master would exemplify in open Lodge the third degree', the Deputy Grand Master the second degree, and the Senior Warden the first degree. The resolution passed. The Grand Lodge session of 1802 first complied with this resolution.

The Grand Lodge officers continued to exemplify the degrees in open Grand Lodge until the resolution was eliminated by act of

Grand Lodge in 1804. The committee established in 1800 and eliminated in 1801, was again made part of Grand Lodge. However, the new committee was required only to exemplify the three degrees at a time and place of convenience and 'such brothers as choose will attend the said exemplification."

The regularity of the several lectures in the early years of Masonry in Virginia, appears questionable. The resolution of 1806 attests to this fact. In that resolution it was declared, "That it be, and is hereby specially recommended to the subordinate Lodges, an injunction on the Master, or presiding officer, at two, at least, or more specified regular meetings in the year, to give, or cause to be given, a lecture on each of the three degrees of Masonry.". The stated reason for this Grand Lodge action was that "the different subordinate Lodges are far from being expert in the mysteries of Masonry, which must no doubt be owing to the want of regular lectures in the different Lodges".

Failure of the District Deputies to make the necessary visits to assure the purity of the ritual caused the following resolution to be passed by the Grand Lodge in 1815: "That the first evening of every succeeding Grand Annual Communication, a committee of five members be appointed by the Grand Master, to be called the 'Working Committee', whose duty it shall be to attend on the second and third days of each Grand Annual Communication, to exemplify to any brother or brethren wishing it, the three degrees of Masonry." This appears as a resolution of clarification of a similar one passed by the Grand Lodge in 1804.

The appointment of one or more Grand Lecturers "for the purpose of disseminating among the brethren of the subordinate Lodges within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge, the mode of work now adopted . . ." was granted to the Grand Master in 1819. However, the Grand Lodge repealed this authority at the Grand Annual Communication in 1820.

In 1821 the Working Committee exemplified the three degrees in open Grand Lodge. After which the Grand Lodge passed a resolution that "the mode of working, as this night exemplified by the Working Committee, is the proper mode of working, and that it accordingly be recommended to the subordinate Lodges, for their adoption and that the District Deputy Grand Masters be requested to instruct them accordingly." Thus, the first Grand Lodge approval of a standard ritual in Virginia.

The first Grand Lecturer was elected in 1822 to ". . . visit such Lodges as may request his attendance. . . ." The filling of any vacancy occurring during recess being left to the Grand Master. James Cushman was then elected as the first Grand Lecturer of the Grand Lodge of Virginia.

The 1823 session of the Grand Lodge saw the abolishment of the position of Grand Lecturer. The subject of the ritual received very little attention for the next twenty years as almost nothing is mentioned in the annual Proceedings.

In an effort to standardize the ritual, the Grand Lodge in 1840 passed a resolution "That a Working Committee, consisting of three residents of the City of Richmond, be appointed at this Grand Annual Communication whose duty it shall be to confer with each other at least as often as once a month, during the recess, and to exemplify their work at the next Grand Annual Communication, and the mode of work, when approved, shall be appointed by all the subordinate Lodges." In addition, in both 1841 and 1842 a resolution was passed by the Grand Lodge to establish the position of Grand Lecturer as an appointed officer of the Grand Lodge, "That the Grand Master be requested to appoint a suitable person to act as Grand Lecturer, whose duty it shall be to visit such Lodges as may request it, and for his services shall receive the voluntary contribution of such Lodges."

1841 also saw the passage of several other resolutions with regard to the ritual. "That hereafter the Subordinate Lodges under this

jurisdiction be required to hold all sessions in the third degree, except for the purposes of working and lecturing in the First and Second Degrees." "That a Special Committee be appointed to prepare a work containing the Charges, Ceremonies of Institution, Funeral Service, and other forms adopted by this Grand Lodge for the government of the Subordinate Lodges, and report to the next Grand Annual Communication." "That a Grand Working Committee be appointed by the Grand Master, whose duty it shall be to exemplify their mode of work before Grand Lodge on the first night of each Grand Annual Communication."

In 1842 a convention was held at the request of the Grand Lodge of Alabama to consider the standardization of the ritual in the United States. However, due to a lack of representation of Grand Lodges, the convention recommended that each Grand Lodge appoint a Grand Lecturer to meet in Baltimore in 1843 to establish a standardized ritual.

The Virginia Grand Lecturer, James D. McCabe and the Grand Secretary, Dr. John Dove, reported to Grand Lodge on the 1842 convention and introduced a resolution "That this Grand Lodge appoint a skillful Brother as Special Grand Lecturer to attend and participate in the actions of the 1843 Baltimore Convention."

The Baltimore Convention was held in 1843 and was attended by Dr. Dove, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. A report on the Baltimore Convention is contained in a separate part of this paper.

Dr. Dove exemplified on the floor of the Grand Lodge in 1843, the ritual adopted by the Baltimore Convention. The Grand Lodge, by resolution, adopted this work as its standard ritual. Several other related resolutions were passed by the 1843 Grand Lodge. "That the Grand Master be empowered to appoint two or more, not exceeding four, brethren to act as Grand Lecturers." That the system of work and lectures agreed to by the Baltimore Convention, as exhibited in the Grand Lodge this evening, be

adopted as the system of work and lectures for this Grand Lodge, and that the several Subordinate Lodges within the same be instructed to abide thereby." The Grand Lodge disapproved use of the "Masonic Trestleboard" written by Charles W. Moore of Massachusetts. The Grand Master appointed two Grand Lecturers for the Eastern and Western Districts.

In 1844 Dr. Dove wrote the Text Book for the Grand Lodge of Virginia and at the 1844 Grand Lodge Session a special committee was appointed to examine it and make recommendations as to the sections to be adopted. Additionally, the 1844 Grand Lodge repealed the law requiring exemplification of the work on the first night of the Grand Annual Communication.

The Virginia Text Book written by Dr. Dove was approved at the 1845 Grand Annual Communication. The exemplification of the work on the first night of Grand Lodge was reestablished.

"That every subordinate Lodge under this jurisdiction shall be entitled to the services of the Grand Lecturer at least once in two years, upon defraying the actual expenses of the Grand Lecturer, while attending such Lodges, and going to and from the same." This resolution was accepted by the 1846 Grand Lodge.

The 1850 Grand Lodge session approved an increase in the size of the Grand Working Committee from two to five.

"The report of the Committee on the plan for a working Lodge was taken up, read, and considered, whereupon; Resolved, that the Special Grand Lodge Committee on Work, be considered and made custodians of the Ritual, as approved and adopted, until otherwise ordered by the Grand Lodge." This was a result of much disagreement on the ritual among the Committee on Work and the District Deputy Grand Masters and was the resolution to a disagreement which continued for the preceding several years. This resolution, which was passed

in 1855, created what was termed "Vigilant Lodge".

In 1856 clarification of the "individual Mason" term was made. The Grand Lodge adopted the following resolution: "That the Grand Lodge hereby forbid the Subordinate Lodges from conferring any portion of any degree, except the Explanatory Lectures, upon more than one candidate at a time."

The questionable practice of more than one Grand Lecturer was brought to an end in 1859. Grand Lodge agreed, "That it is inexpedient to have more than one Grand Lecturer in the State of Virginia.", and in 1861 the Committee on Work was identified as the "Custodians of the Work" and was authorized to consist of five members.

The Grand Annual session in 1871 agreed,

"That the Lodges in the several districts in this jurisdiction be and are hereby authorized to recommend, in the same manner and at the same time that the recommendations are made for the appointment of the District Deputy Grand Master, such skillful brother as they may deem fit to be appointed District Deputy Grand Lecturers for their respective Districts. That upon the said recommendation, the Grand Master with the advice of the same Grand Officers who advise him as to the office of District Deputy Grand Master, shall appoint at the same time the District Deputy Grand Masters are appointed, District Deputy Grand Lecturers for such Districts as may make recommendations therefor.

That the said District Deputy Grand Lecturer shall be charged with, and held responsible for, the correctness of the work in his respective District; shall visit each Lodge at least once each year, and make a report of his visiting to the Grand Lodge; but shall be vested with none of the powers of the District Deputy Grand Master. Should any District fail to make

recommendation of a suitable brother, the District Deputy Grand Master shall continue to supervise the work as heretofore. District Deputy Grand Lecturers shall be commissioned in the same manner as the District Deputy Grand Master, but no District Deputy Grand Lecturer shall proceed to execute the duties of his office until he shall have received a certificate from the Grand Lecturer of his proficiency in the work. The Grand Master is authorized, in vacation, to make appointments for any or all of the Districts, for the current year, without reference to the recommendations of the Lodges."

In 1872, a decision by the Grand Master "That the Grand Lodge regulation requiring of the District Deputy Grand Master a certificate that the officers named in the application for a Dispensation to form a new Lodge, 'are competent to superintend the work and confer the Degrees, including the lectures,' applies to the Wardens as well as the Masters."

"That it is contrary to Masonic Law and usage to require a Master Mason to be proficient in the Third Degree before he can be received into membership in a Lodge, consequently the enactment of a By-Law to that effect would be improper." This decision was rendered by the Grand Master in 1874.

### **Modern Masonic Ritual**

The Grand Master's report to the Grand Lodge in 1876 made it clear that it was necessary to provide some means to preserve the ritual and to devise a methodology whereby differences that might arise in the rendition of the ritual could be reconciled. His report laid a solid foundation for the allocation of responsibility to what we now term the Committee on Work and the Grand Lecturer.

In 1879 the Grand Lodge approved a resolution whereby on the third evening of every Grand Annual Communication a "Working Committee" was to be appointed by the Most Worshipful Grand Master. The duty of this

committee was to attend on the second and third days of each Grand Annual Communication, or more often if required by the Grand Lodge, to exemplify to any Brethren wishing it the three Degrees of Masonry by actual work, giving the lectures in full, and, in addition, to exemplify the catechism through the first section of each degree that was required for the examination of candidates for advancement. This committee was also directed to function as the custodian of the work. Thus the precedent was set whereby the Grand Lodge at various times in the future adjusted the size and directed the activities of this committee.

In 1882 Grand Lodge acted to authorize the Working Committee to meet in the City of Richmond on the Thursday preceding the meeting of the Grand Lodge, with the Committee on Finance and Investment providing "for the payment of three days expenses for such members. . . ." This Communication of the Grand Lodge also reaffirmed the duty of the Committee on Work to report to the Grand Lodge what difference if any, existed in the work between the members of the Committee, in order that the Grand Lodge might act intelligently on such matters as might be brought before it. Thus two more precedents, prevailing to this day, were established.

The relationship of the Grand Lecturer and the Deputy Grand Lecturer, the latter office being unfilled at times, to the Grand Working Committee was spelled out in 1880 when the Grand Lodge took action that provided:

FIRST - That immediately after the election of officers, annually, the Grand Master shall appoint a Grand Lecturer and Deputy Grand Lecturer, whose duty it shall be to visit and instruct the Lodges and members thereof when requested so to do.

SECOND - That in their instructions they shall conform to the Ancient York Ritual, as taught by the Grand Working Committee, and revised

and adopted by the Grand Lodge in 1855, and to the laws of the same, as contained in the Virginia Text Book.

THIRD - The Grand Lecturer and the Deputy Grand Lecturer shall be ex-officio members of the Grand Working Committee, and the Grand Lecturer shall be the Chairman of said Committee.

FOURTH - That the Grand Lecturer and Deputy Grand Lecturer shall receive as compensation for their services the sum of five dollars per day while engaged in Lecturing or travelling to and from said Lodges or members, such expenses to be paid by the Lodges or parties to whom such services are rendered.

FIFTH - That on such visits of instruction, if said Grand Lecturer or Deputy Grand Lecturer shall discover any moral or Masonic irregularity among the members of such Lodges, or in the Lodges themselves, he shall report the same to the District Deputy Grand Master of the District.

SIXTH - That they shall, annually, on the first night of each Grand Annual Communication, make a report in writing of their acts and doings during the year, and

SEVENTH - That in order to promote the efficiency of the Subordinate Lodge and to instruct them in the work, the Grand Master shall visit the subordinate Lodges and instruct them, or he may require the Grand Lecturer or the Deputy Grand Lecturer to visit and instruct any Subordinate Lodge, in which case, the expense attending such visitation shall be paid by the Grand Treasurer on the order of the Grand Master; provided that the expense to the

Grand Lodge under this Section shall not exceed \$300.00 per year.

In its actions in 1880 the Grand Lodge established the precedents which were to govern the relationship of the Grand Lecturer to the Grand Lodge and the Subordinate Lodges from that time on to the present. At the Grand Annual Communication in 1905 the Grand Lodge authorized the division of the State into six lecturing divisions, to be served by six appointed lecturers, one of which was the Grand Lecturer. At this Communication the Grand Lodge also authorized the expansion of the "Working Committee", now called the Committee on Work, to 12 members in order to include the six lecturers, with the Grand Lecturer serving as Chairman. This pattern prevailed until 1922, at which time Grand Lodge specified that one lecturer and one committeeman "shall be appointed from each lecturing district."

Grand Lodge in 1950 increased the Lecturing Divisions from six to nine, and the Committee on Work was increased to consist of "the Grand Lecturer and eleven other members." In this action the Grand Lodge stipulated that one Division Lecturer and one Lecturer shall be appointed from each Lecturing Division by the Grand Master, except that in Division 1 a Division Lecturer and two lecturers shall be appointed, one of whom shall reside on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and in Division 9 two lecturers shall be appointed.

In 1961 Grand Lodge approved a modification to its law concerning the Grand Lecturer and the Committee on Work. Section 1.87, which governs these matters, was modified to read: "At each Annual Communication the Grand Master shall appoint a Grand Lecturer, one Division Lecturer from each Lecturing Division, as specified in Section 1.92 hereof, and a number of Lecturers, which, including the Division Lecturer, shall be one for each eighteen Lodges or major fraction thereof, located within the boundaries of each of the Lecturing Divisions. The Grand Master may appoint an assistant Grand Lecturer, but neither he nor the

Grand Lecturer shall be included as a Grand Lecturer or Division Lecturer of any Division. The Grand Lecturer shall be Chairman, and the Division Lecturer, Lecturers, and Assistant Grand Lecturer, if he be appointed, shall compose the Committee on Work, and they shall be endowed with the functions of Custodians of the Work." At this time it was also determined that "The Grand Lecturer and members of the Committee on Work shall be charged with the duty of examining Wardens and issuing to those proficient in the work, as taught by the Committee on Work, such certificates as may be required for election to any office in a subordinate Lodge as hereinafter provided by law or resolution of the Grand Lodge.

It is interesting to note that with the exception of Virginia's participation in the Baltimore Convention, the Grand Lodge has refrained from entering into ritualistic arrangements with other jurisdictions. In 1906 for example, the Committee on Propositions studied a communication received from the Grand Lodge of Colorado, the primary thrust of which was a proposal to establish a collegium of Grand Lecturers for the purpose of unifying the esoteric and exoteric work of the several Grand Lodges of the United States. The Committee reported that such action was not feasible or desirable, and it therefore recommended that no action be taken in regard to this matter.

Most Worshipful James H. Price, Grand Master in 1923, made his mark on the teaching of the ritual in Virginia. He recommended that the Committee on Work, in conjunction with the Committee on Jurisprudence, provide some means of making it obligatory for newly made Masons to attain a mastery of the catechism in the Master's Degree. "The average Mason, in his anxiety to pass on to the so-called higher things," he said, "makes no effort to familiarize himself with the climax and conclusion of our Masonic structure, and knows nothing of the Master's Degree. It might be made the duty of the Master to see that every Mason is required to learn this catechism, and a blank could be provided for the secretary, who would be

required to include this item in his annual report."

Price's remarks led Grand Lodge to adopt a resolution in 1924 which was to be read by the Master to the Candidate at the conclusion of the Charge as follows: "My brother (or brethren): The Grand Lecturer and District Deputy Grand Masters emphasize the teaching of the catechism of the Master Mason's Degree in each of the subordinate Lodges. The Grand Lodge of Virginia urges the stationed officers of the Subordinate Lodges to use their influence to induce those who are raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason to learn the catechism of the Master Mason's Degree. The Master of each Subordinate Lodge shall read this resolution to every brother who is raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason."

In 1925 the Grand Lodge amended and reenacted the then Section 165 to read: "No brother can be installed as Master of a Lodge until he shall have received the Degree of Past Master, and shall have received from the Grand Lecturer or Division Lecturer a certificate certifying that he is qualified to confer all the degrees, but this provision shall not become effective until the annual election of officers in 1926."

In 1928 the Grand Lodge considered an amendment to this Section which would have included the lectures as part of the requirement for a certificate. However, the result was the elimination of the certificate entirely. The new Section 165, as amended and reenacted, read: "No brother can be installed as Master or Warden, nor occupy such office in a Lodge under Dispensation, until he shall have received the Degree of Past Master."

The Grand Lodge amended and reenacted Section 165 in 1929 by adding: "Effective at the annual election of officers in December 1929 and thereafter, no brother shall be installed Master of a Lodge unless he is able to confer the first section of the three Degrees and the second section of the Master Mason's Degree and has a certificate from the Grand Lecturer or a

Division Lecturer." The Grand Lodge also stipulated at that time that "Effective at the annual election of officers in December 1931 and thereafter, no brother shall be installed Master of a Lodge unless he is able to confer the three Degrees, including the lectures, and has a certificate from the Grand or Division Lecturer showing him qualified." In 1935 the Grand Lodge eliminated the part of Section 165 which required the lectures in order to qualify for the certificate. In 1945, the certificate issue was again raised, this time resulting in action to require that the certificate be issued not more than one year prior to election.

The Grand Lodge amended and reenacted Section 126 in 1947 to read: No Lodge shall, without dispensation from the Grand Master, make more than five Entered Apprentices, or Fellowcrafts, or Master Masons at one Communication."

In 1956 the Grand Lodge adopted a prayer to be used at the installation of officers. In that year it also agreed to modify the funeral service so that it might be used other than at the grave site. This change was made by the insertion or substitution of appropriate words. The word "grave" was changed to "body" with regard to the apron.

Also, the words "with the body" were substituted for "grave" at the close of the apron portion. The words "the grave" in the committal ceremony were changed to "his maker". In the prayer of the Chaplain, the word "grave" was changed to "mortal remains". However, Grand Lodge went on record by recommending ". . . that the graveside service be used in every instance possible."

In 1957 the Grand Lodge agreed to a charge to be used in the installation of the Chaplain. It also adopted a conclusion for the installation ceremony by acceptance of the Marshal's proclamation, to wit: "In the name of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Virginia, I proclaim the officers of \_\_\_\_\_

Lodge No. \_\_\_\_\_ duly installed and the Lodge properly constituted for the ensuing year."

A new Memorial Service was presented jointly by the Grand Master and the Grand Lodge Committee on Work and accepted by the Grand Lodge in 1961.

In 1962 the Grand Lodge adopted the Tiler's oath as follows: "I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereon solemnly swear that I have been regularly initiated, passed, and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in a just and legally constituted Master Mason's Lodge; that I am not now suspended or expelled and know of no reason why I should be." In addition, the Grand Lodge in that year approved a benediction for use with the funeral service when it was not given by the minister.

In 1968 the Grand Lodge agreed that the instructions given by the Worshipful Master after the candidate is conducted out of the lodge room at the conclusion of the first section of the Master Mason's Degree should include an admonishment to retain the solemnity of the Degree. In this year on recommendation of the Committee on Work, a new Memorial Service to be used in a tiled lodge was also adopted by Grand Lodge.

In 1970, the Grand Lodge adopted a ceremony for the Consecration of a Lodge Hall and adopted an optional Evening Memorial Service. The next year it approved a resolution allowing a Lodge of Sorrow to be opened and closed only once a year.

### **Grand Lecturers of Virginia**

The first Virginia Mason to have the title of Grand Lecturer was James Cushman, who was appointed by Grand Master Dr. John H. Purdie. He was apparently an associate of Jeremy Ladd Cross, of Connecticut, who came to Virginia in 1819 and exemplified the ritual to the Grand Lodge, the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons and thereafter organized the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters.

The office of Grand Lecturer was filled by Cushman for two or three years and, since he was authorized to visit only on invitation and to be paid only by the voluntary contributions by the Lodges, the post fell into disuse and a resolution was adopted to discontinue the office in 1823.

In 1841 the next Grand Lecturer was appointed after Cushman some twenty years earlier. He was James D. McCabe. He served a second term in 1842 in this same office.

In 1843 a Convention of Masons met in Baltimore and Dr. John Dove, Grand Secretary of Virginia, was elected its President.

This convention conceived its duty to be that of establishing a uniform mode of working and "to recommend such measures as shall tend to the elevation of this Order to its due degree of respect throughout the world at large." Four Committees were appointed to consider (a) the Work and Lectures, (b) the funeral service, (c) Ceremonies of Consecration and Installation, and (d) Masonic jurisprudence.

The report of this Convention was a 65 page document which contained the work of a non-esoteric nature adopted by the convention, including the funeral service, and the ceremonies of consecration and installation.

On December 14, 1843 the Grand Lodge adopted the work of the Convention as the official work of Virginia and ordered all subordinate Lodges to abide thereby. Thus for the first time in its history Virginia had a ritual which was adopted by official action.

After hearing the report of Dr. Dove in 1843, the Grand Master appointed two Grand Lecturers, James D. McCabe for the Eastern District and Levi L. Stevenson for the Western District. Stevenson made a recommendation in 1844 that the Grand Lecturer for the Western District be not appointed. The Grand Master appointed both of them, however, paying no attention to the recommendation.

In 1845 the Rev. James D. McCabe informed the Grand Lodge that he was unable to discharge the duties of the office of any Lodge. Levi L. Stevenson was appointed as the Grand Lecturer and served in that post for seven years, through 1852. There was no Committee on Work, the Grand Lecturer simply taught the work in the Lodges that requested him to do so.

Powhatan B. Starke, of Petersburg, was appointed Grand Lecturer in 1853, but as far as the record shows he did not serve in that office. Starke was followed by James Evans, being appointed in 1853 and serving until 1872, when he resigned. He was reappointed in 1876 and served through 1880. J. R. Dowell was appointed Grand Lecturer in 1872 and served until 1876 when he died. William Lovenstein was the fifth Grand Lecturer, serving from 1881 through 1882. The next Grand Lecturer was Peyton S. Coles, who was appointed in 1883 and served through the year 1887.

In December 1887, the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication laid off the State into four divisions, each of which was to have a Lecturer, and the Working Committee would be composed of these four Lecturers and five other brethren to be appointed by the Grand Master. One of the four Lecturers would also be named Grand Lecturer. Under this new District or Division system the first Grand Lecturer was J. C. Little. Appointed to serve with him as Lecturers were Harry B. Owens, Francis H. Hill, and George W. Wright. Little served for two years, 1887 and 1888.

George W. Wright was appointed Grand Lecturer in 1889. The brother added as a Lecturer in Little's place was John Clopton. Wright served until 1893 when he was elected Grand Junior Deacon.

In 1893 George W. Carrington was named Grand Lecturer, he having been appointed a Lecturer in 1891. He served until 1895 when he was elected Grand Secretary in December of that year.

The tenth brother to be Grand Lecturer was William E. Turner, but he died during the year and H. B. Owens was appointed by Grand Master Fitzgerald to succeed him. He served until December 1896 as Grand Lecturer.

C. G. Davis was appointed Grand Lecturer in 1897 and served until 1902. Some changes were made in the requirements as to members of the Committee and James M. Clift was appointed a Lecturer in 1901.

William T. Rea was appointed Grand Lecturer in 1903 by Grand Master Thomas N. Davis to replace James M. Clift. He continued to serve as Grand Lecturer until 1910. During his tenure the Grand Lodge increased the number of Lecturing Divisions from four to six.

George W. Wright became Grand Lecturer a second time in 1910, he having been appointed a Lecturer after he completed his term as Grand Master. He was appointed Grand Lecturer upon the death of William T. Rea. He continued to serve as Grand Lecturer until his death in 1924. Two brethren served as Assistant Grand Lecturers with him: Most Worshipful E. L. Cunningham in 1921 and James M. Clift in 1923.

James M. Clift was again appointed Grand Lecturer when George W. Wright died. He served from 1924 until 1928 when he was elected Grand Secretary. He was succeeded in 1928 by Thomas C. Nelson who served as Grand Lecturer until ill health forced him to retire in 1936. Nelson was succeeded by Most Worshipful Ben W. Beach of Danville, who served nine years until 1946, when he asked to be relieved of the duties of the office because of age and health.

George Robert Marshall, of Victoria, was appointed Grand Lecturer by Most Worshipful T. Penn Coleman in 1946 and continued to serve in that post until his death in 1965.

Charles Armistead Sinclair, Jr., was the next Grand Lecturer, but the office remained open for two years until he accepted the title and

position in 1967 when Most Worshipful H. Bruce Green assumed the office of Grand Master. "Charmie" served as Grand Lecturer until 1975 when he was made Grand Lecturer Emeritus by the Grand Lodge.

The nineteenth Grand Lecturer was appointed by Most Worshipful Brother Seymour Levy in 1975. Reid James Simmons assumed the position of Grand Lecturer in February and as of this writing continues to serve the Grand Lodge in that capacity.

### Conclusions

Certain fundamentals are to all intents and purposes the same in every one of the forty-nine Grand jurisdictions in the United States. All American Lodges have a Master, two Wardens, a Secretary, Treasurer, and Altar with the Holy Bible and the other Great Lights, lesser lights, three degrees, require a unanimous ballot, make Masons only of men, have the same Substitute Word given in the same way, are tiled, and have a ceremony of opening and closing. To some extent all dramatize and exemplify the Master's degree, although the amount of drama and exemplification varies widely.

But beyond these and a few other simple essentials are wide variations. Aprons are worn one way in one degree in one jurisdiction and another way in the same degree in another. In some jurisdictions, Lodges open and close on the Master Mason's Degree; others on the First Degree; others only in the degree which is to be "worked". Lesser lights are grouped closely about the Altar, in a triangle to one side of the Altar, or in the stations of the Master and Wardens. In some Lodges the immediate Past Master plays an important part, as in England. Some Lodges have Inner Guards and two Masters of Ceremonies. Dividing, lettering, syllabing are almost as various in practice as the jurisdictions. Obligations show certain close similarities in some requirements; but what is a part of the obligation in one jurisdiction may be merely an admonition in another.

While uniformity in work within jurisdictions is fairly well established as good American Masonic practice, it is not universal. There are several "workings" for instance, permitted in English Lodges, and even in some American jurisdictions, such as Kentucky, not all Lodges use the same ritual.

**Speculations - Will it change?**