

The Ancient Landmarks (Part 3)

By

John Shroeder, PM

Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949

On

May 31, 2003

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.

The Ancient Landmarks (Part 3)

by

John Shroeder, PM

In my first short paper this year on the Ancient Landmarks, I gave a bit of the history and development of the Landmarks, why I considered their role as a fundamental, sine qua non, to the foundations of our Fraternity. I also provided a couple of examples of how they should provide standards for today in setting out guidelines for our philosophy and operations. In my second short paper, which was printed in our Lodge Trestleboard rather than delivered to the Lodge, due to my unavoidable absence from that meeting, I listed and briefly discussed the twenty-five Landmarks set down by Albert C. Mackey which he considered essential to the stability of the Fraternity.

Today, I will give you a summary of the opinions of Albert Pike concerning each of Brother Mackey's landmarks and, in the process, repeat once more Mackey's landmarks for those who did not see the earlier paper. All of the information in this paper is taken directly from *The Little Masonic Library, Vol. II*, Kingsport Press, Inc. Kingsport, TN, © Southern Publishers, Inc. 1946, pages 59 — 66.

Pike comments about the first, "the modes of recognition", that if this is to imply that our present modes of recognition were used everywhere and always by ancient craft Masonry, that is untrue and therefore not a landmark. He points out that the order of two words has been reversed since 1723 and that the substitute word used by the Grand Lodge of England, and their subordinate Lodges in other countries, is not the same as that used in the United States.

About the second, "the division of symbolic Masonry into degrees", Pike points out that ancient Craft Masonry had no degrees prior to about 1723 and even 40 years thereafter, many Lodges did not accept them.

Pike also debunks the third, "the legend of the third degree", noting that it was not introduced in Masonry until about 1723.

About the fourth, "the government of the fraternity by a presiding officer called a Grand Master who is elected by the body of the craft", he says there is absolutely no evidence that there ever was a Grand Master in England prior to 1717, or that a general assembly of Masons was held prior to that, although Lodges and Masonry existed long prior to that time.

The fifth, "the prerogative of the Grand Master to preside over every gathering of the craft" fails for the same reason as the fourth.

The sixth, "the prerogative of the Grand Master to grant dispensations for conferring degrees at irregular times" he says was never claimed as no dispensations were needed because each Lodge was uncontrolled and independent as to when it should meet.

The seventh, "the prerogative of the Grand Master to grant dispensations for opening and closing Lodges", has the same failure as the sixth as early Lodges met whenever they pleased.

The eighth, "the prerogative of the Grand Master to make Masons at sight", he cannot find in any ancient charges or regulations and he says it no longer is held by Grand Masters in his time, as Masons can only be made in just and legally constituted Lodges with the necessary number of Brothers present to constitute the Lodge.

The ninth, "the necessity for Masons to congregate in Lodges", he did not take issue with, nor with the tenth, "the government of every Lodge by a Master and Wardens". (I would add parenthetically, however, that Wardens were not always a part of the Lodge structure as early Lodges seem to have met with a Master and Deacons only.)

The eleventh, "the necessity that every Lodge, when congregated, should be duly tiled", he does take issue with saying that if the work of the Lodge could be done in privacy, it was unnecessary to have a

Tiler without the door, if secrecy could otherwise be assured.

The twelfth, “the right of every Master to be represented in all general meetings of the craft, and to instruct his representatives”, he has some argument with. He seems to interpret “Master” as meaning every Master Mason rather than every Master of a Lodge, and he argues that every Apprentice and Fellow-Craft had a right to be present and to vote in London and in Westminster, but no right to be represented in the general assembly. Nor, he points out, was it ever a landmark that a Lodge could instruct its representatives in regard to questions and matters as they arose at the General Assembly.

The thirteenth, “the right of every Mason to appeal from the decision of his Brethren in Lodge convened to the Grand Lodge or general assembly of Masons” he says never existed. The right of appeal to the Grand Lodge applied only as it might be granted by a Grand Lodge and, insofar as it applies to many kinds of decisions, has never yet been granted in England.

The fourteenth, “the right of every Mason to visit and sit in every regular Lodge”, he argues never existed, and did not exist in his time, as every Mason desiring to visit a Lodge in England must be vouched for, not only as a Mason, but also as a person worthy of being received, and any member of the Lodge can object to his admission.

The fifteenth, “that no visitor not known to some Brother present as a Mason, can enter a Lodge without undergoing examination”, Pike points out does not apply in most nations where examinations are not the usual practice because admission can be obtained by the production of a patent or diploma. He adds that in many other countries, because of differences in ritual, an American could not pass an examination if it were given.

The sixteenth, “that no Lodge can interfere in the business or labor of another Lodge”, he argues is too vague and general and could be stretched to give a Lodge perpetual jurisdiction over a rejected candidate.

The seventeenth, “that every Mason is amenable to the [criminal] laws and regulations of the Masonic jurisdiction in which he resides”, Pike says is not true, except to a limited extent, and is too general and undefined. It is not settled that a Mason of one state can be tried by a Lodge in another state. He poses the question, “If a Grand Lodge should require every Mason residing there to become affiliated there, would the unaffiliated Masons in that jurisdiction be lawfully bound to comply?”

Regarding the eighteenth, “that every candidate for initiation must be a man, freeborn, and of lawful age”, Pike says it was not anciently required that every candidate be of lawful age, nor was it required in England that he be free-born.

The nineteenth, “that every Mason must believe in the existence of God as the Grand Architect of the Universe”, he says that the term “Grand Architect of the Universe” is not an ancient term and does not express an adequate concept of the deity. He also points out that in early Scotland and England it was a landmark that no candidate who was not a Christian and a believer in the Trinity could be initiated. (I add parenthetically, that is still the case in some countries’ Grand Lodges which are widely recognized internationally.)

About number 20, “that every Mason must believe in a resurrection to future life”, Pike says every Mason must believe in another life for the soul of man that is a continuation of this, but not in any sense a resurrection.

Number 21, “that a book of the law of God must constitute an indispensable part of the furniture of the Lodge”, Pike found that this was not required in earlier days in Masonry.

Number 22, “that all men in the sight of God are equal, and meet in Lodges on one common level.” Pike agrees that it is a landmark that on the floor of a Lodge, all Masons stand on one common level, but he denies that it is a landmark that all men are equal in the sight of God and adds that it is not true that we are bound to admit to that common level all kinds and races who may apply.

Number 23, “that Freemasonry is a secret society, in possession of secrets that cannot be divulged.” Pike

refutes this and points out that a secret society is one whose existence is a secret and its members not known.

Number 24, “that Freemasonry consists of a speculative science, founded on the operative art.” Pike says there is neither science nor art in Freemasonry. He says it is a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols but it does not pursue scientific studies nor practice the arts.

Number 25, “that the landmarks of Freemasonry can never be changed,” Pike says that the so-called Landmarks listed above have been changed over time and can be changed in the future. (Parenthetically, I would point out that in 1932, the ??? conducted its first survey of all U. S. Grand Lodges regarding their stand on the Landmarks and published the results showing that Mackey’s 25 Landmarks are NOT universal, even within the United States.)

If I have the opportunity to present another in this series on Landmarks, I will list some Landmarks advocated by other, more recent Masonic authors.

