

Maine Freemasonry



Enriching Lives Through
Education, Charity and
Spiritual Growth

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

Freemasonry is the world's oldest, largest and most widely-known fraternal organization of men of good character and reputation who believe in a Supreme Being, universal brotherhood and loyalty to their country. It teaches Masons to be good and contributing citizens and to obey the laws of their land.

Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational, and religious "secret society." Its only secrets are certain methods of recognition and symbolic instruction based on the traditions and usages of ancient operative stone masons. These "secrets" serve as a test of membership of the individual Brother in his Masonic travels.

Freemasonry does not hide its existence or its membership. Masonic buildings are familiar venues in most cities and towns.

Freemasonry is **charitable** in that none of its income inures to the benefit of any individual, but all is devoted to the improvement and promotion of the happiness of mankind.

It is **benevolent** in that it teaches relief of the poor and distressed as a duty, and exemplifies the duty by relief of sick and distressed Brethren and by caring for the widows and orphans of the Brethren.

It is **educational** in that it teaches a system of morality, based upon the Sacred Law, by a prescribed ceremonial. It provides seminars, libraries and many opportunities for study and personal growth.

Although **religious** in character, Freemasonry is not a religion. It neither claims to take the place of houses of worship, nor tries to influence the religious beliefs of members. It is religious in that the Volume of the Sacred Law is open upon the altar whenever a Lodge is in session, worship of God is ever a part of its



ceremonies, and Masons constantly address lessons of morality; yet it is not theological. Freemasonry welcomes and includes men of all faiths.

Freemasonry is a **social** organization as it furnishes opportunities for Masons, their families and friends to gather for its primary

work to educate and provide charity as well as to enjoy other social opportunities together.

Freemasonry does not take part in partisan politics. Although discussion of political matters is forbidden in lodges, thousands of Freemasons have served their communities, states and countries as leaders in government, business and the professions. Fifteen Presidents including George Washington, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Gerald Ford have been active Freemasons.

Freemasonry's purpose is to enrich the individual Mason and help build a better world by teaching and promoting the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. Among its principle tenets are friendship, morality, brotherly love, equality, justice, tolerance, charity, relief of the distressed, and practicing the Golden Rule.

MEMBERSHIP

Freemasonry affords Brethren a peculiar opportunity to assemble with others across many generations, walks of life, faiths, nationalities, and economic and educational backgrounds.

Lodges do not solicit new members, but do provide opportunities for people to learn more about this world-wide fraternity. A man must seek admission of his own free will and accord. He must be at least 18 years of age, of good moral character, believe in the existence of a Supreme Being and be mentally compe-



Stained Glass Window in
Portland Masonic Building

tent. He must obtain a petition from a Masonic friend, be recommended by two Master Masons, be investigated by a committee of inquiry, and pass a unanimous ballot in the lodge to which he makes application. He is then eligible to receive the degrees of symbolic Masonry.

Many applicants seek membership in a lodge where their family members are or have been members. Others join a lodge near where they live or work, or that meets during daylight hours rather than in the evening.

Men tend to become interested in Masonry for one or more reasons. Many join because family members have been Masons. Others are interested in Freemasonry because of its historical allure or its extensive charitable works. And others, whose acquaintances with Masons of good character have captured their attention, wish to emulate these men and pursue the personal development opportunities afforded by the Masonic fraternity. All are good reasons for learning more about Freemasonry and considering membership in a local Masonic lodge.

OUR MASONIC HERITAGE

Freemasonry's beginnings are lost in the mists of time. Tradition and legend trace it to the building of King Solomon's Temple in the tenth century, B.C. Historically, its existence can be confirmed as early as the middle of the fourteenth century, A.D. The Regius Poem or Halliwell Manuscript is its oldest existing document, written about 1390 A.D., that sets forth a code of conduct for masons.

Freemasonry's evolution can be traced from the associations or guilds of operative stone-masons, those cathedral builders of the Middle Ages who traveled freely and worked in continental Europe and England employing the secrets and skills of their craft. Many of the magnificent cathedrals they built still stand, creations of beauty unsurpassed in the builders' art.



Cathedral monument to stone masons

By the 17th century when cathedral building neared completion, some of these guilds or lodges of operative masons began to accept, as honorary members, men who were not of the

mason's craft, calling them "accepted" Masons.

The numbers of these accepted Masons increased and the trend accelerated from the operative to the speculative or symbolic Freemasonry we know today.

This transition was well advanced by 1717 when four old lodges in London, England, met and formed a Grand Lodge. This established the pattern for the structure of present day Masonic organizations.

This premier Grand Lodge, and others later established, promoted the spread of Freemasonry as they chartered lodges and established Provincial Grand Lodges in many countries. Today Freemasonry is active in nearly every county in the free world.

FREEMASONRY IN AMERICA

Organized Freemasonry came to America in 1733, when the Grand Lodge in England formed a Provincial Grand Lodge in Boston. This body was responsible for the formation of lodges in many parts of New England and elsewhere in North America. One of these was Maine's first lodge, formed in Falmouth (now Portland) in 1762. It exists today as Triangle Lodge No. 1.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland established a rival Provincial Grand Lodge in Boston and from it came the charter for Warren Lodge No. 2 of East Machias, Maine's second oldest lodge.

Following the end of the American Revolution, these two Boston Provincial Grand Lodg-

es declared their independence from their respective Masonic parents, and in due course united to form what is now the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

MAINE FREEMASONRY

The two Provincial Grand Lodges in Boston and their successor, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, chartered 33 lodges over 58 years within the then District of Maine until the State of Maine was organized in 1820 as part of the Missouri Compromise.

When Maine became a separate state, the 31 lodges then within its borders, withdrew from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and formed the Grand Lodge of Maine.

Maine's first governor, William King, also served as Maine's first Grand Master, and one of the first acts of the new legislature was the formation of the Grand Lodge of Maine.

Today Masonic lodges are located in cities and towns throughout Maine, exercising benevolent, educational, religious and charitable activities that benefit both Masons and their communities.

MASONIC CHARITIES

Consistent with Freemasonry's tenets of brotherly love, relief and truth, Masonic charities are many and varied. They reflect a true commitment to help.

Masonic organizations commit some \$3 million a day, every day, to finance such humanitarian projects as medical research into the cure and treatment of patients suffering from cancer, schizophrenia, and hypertension, eye and heart diseases. Millions of dollars are provided in direct relief to needy Freemasons, their widows or orphans.

In many states, extensive facilities for the housing and care of the elderly are important Masonic charitable efforts, as are programs to assist the youth of our nation.

Among the many Masonic youth efforts are the 22 world famous Shrine-Mason hospitals for crippled and badly burned children. The Boston Bums Institute and the Springfield

(MA) Orthopedic Hospital are both enthusiastically supported by Maine Shrine-Masons.

The Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation supports the charitable endeavors of lodges and other Masonic and non-Masonic organizations. It financially supports the Maine Masonic College that provides many seminars on Masonry and other courses of study where Masons may participate in certificate programs of study.

The most popular initiative is the Bike for Books Program that encourages school children to read books with the hope of winning a bike. The reading habits developed are demonstrating tangible results in the reading scores of Maine students.

Maine Masonic lodges and other bodies award significant college scholarship assistance and contribute in many other ways to meet the needs of their members and communities.

ORGANIZATION

The basic unit in the Masonic organization is the local lodge, usually referred to as the "symbolic" or "blue" lodge. This is the body which receives applications for membership, acts upon those applications and confers the three symbolic degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason.

The lodge's authority is derived from a charter issued by the Grand Lodge in whose jurisdiction it is located. The Grand Lodge of Maine exercises administrative authority over the entire state. Its membership includes representatives of its constituent lodges from whom elective and appointed officers are chosen. Executive authority is vested in its presiding officer, the Grand Master.

There is no international governing body in Freemasonry. There are more than 150 independent Grand Lodges in the world. Fifty-one



of these Grand Lodges are in the United States, one for each state and one for the District of Columbia. All Grand Lodges are coequal and are bound by the same basic laws and principles.

In addition to the basic organization of symbolic craft Masonry, there are numerous other recognized bodies, such as York Rite Masonry, Scottish Rite Masonry, and the Shrine. Membership in these is optional and open to qualified Master Masons.

There are many other appendant and affiliated bodies within the family of Maine Masonic organizations, including the order of Eastern Star for Masons and related women, DeMolay for boys and Rainbow for girls. They all share the same basic tenets central to Freemasonry.

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

It has been said that Freemasonry is kindness in the home, honesty in business and courtesy in society, concern and assistance for the unfortunate, help for the weak, forgiveness for the penitent, love for one another, and above all, reverence and love for God.

Freemasonry is many things, but above all...
FREEMASONRY IS A WAY OF LIFE



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