

Important
for Master Masons!

WHAT DOES
Royal Arch
Masonry
Mean to You?



IT must be quite a disappointment to the average man, on being raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, to be told that he has not completed his work and that the secrets pertaining to the ceremony will not be given him, but instead a substitute word. This is unfortunate, yes, but the true word and secrets are given in the Royal Arch, and in that degree only. Hence, no man actually can become a Master Mason until he receives that supreme and holy order.

This particular method of proving a Master Mason is ancient and originated at York, in England, two centuries ago and gives to us the title "Ancient York Masons," which most grand lodges throughout the world used until a little over a century ago, when chapters were formed to confer the Royal Arch and associated degrees. It was then that the grand lodges ceased using the term and the Royal Arch system — on which the Cryptic and Knights Templar bodies predicate membership — became known as the York Rite.

There are some who would have the newly raised Master Mason believe that he can receive the secrets of that degree other than in the Royal Arch. This is not true, either historically or otherwise, and so dogmatic was the mother grand lodge—from which all speculative Freemasonry derives—that in 1813, when the two grand lodges in England united, a firm and solemn landmark was adopted and placed in the Articles of Union to guide Masons throughout the world, forever on this matter: "Pure ancient Freemasonry consists of but three degrees, viz., that of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, including the supreme order of the Holy Royal Arch." This landmark has never been changed and to this good day no other degree has been officially recognized by the mother grand lodge and every rite, system, or additional degree of Freemasonry in England cannot confer its degree on a Master Mason until he has

received the Royal Arch. Naturally, this is as it should be, because a man is not a Master Mason until he receives the Master's Word and he can only receive it in the Royal Arch!

The second oldest grand lodge in the world is Scotland. As a matter of fact, the records of the operative craft in Scotland are the oldest in the world. In this jurisdiction, since "Time immemorial," every Mason, on being received into the fellowship of a lodge, was required to select and record his Mark. From this custom developed the degree of Mark Master Mason, which completed the Fellow Craft. However, with the formation of Royal Arch chapters in that jurisdiction, which also worked the Mark, the grand lodge entered into an agreement whereby both chapters and lodges could confer this ceremony on Master Masons. Therefore, in Scotland no Master Mason has completed his degree of Fellow Craft until he receives the Mark, and consequently, cannot receive any additional degree, rite or system.

A perusal of the minutes of the early grand lodges in America reveals that the only way a Mason could become a member thereof was to be a Master or Warden of a subordinate lodge or a Past Master. When a Mason was desirous of becoming a member of his grand lodge and had not actually presided as Master of a lodge, he could receive the degree of Past Master and that qualified him. Invariably he would take the Mark and Past Master together. This custom was so widespread in America that when Royal Arch chapters were formed, they assumed control over the Mark and Past Master.

The Most Excellent Master degree is a beautiful and moving ceremony concerning itself with the completion of the temple at Jerusalem. It forms a fitting preview to the Royal Arch. These four degrees comprise Royal Arch Masonry and offer to the new Master Mason everything needed; historically, ritualistically, symbolically, to actually complete his

sublime office. These degrees are not conferred or duplicated anywhere else in all of Freemasonry!

Offering the only legally recognized and historically true completion of the Craft, Royal Arch Masonry is, therefore, the logical step for every Master Mason to take. If, after becoming a Royal Arch Mason, the recipient is desirous of continuing his studies, he may take the Council and the Commandery, both of which are illustrative of and predicated on the Royal Arch. There are also other avenues open.

Royal Arch Masonry is so intensely democratic that it follows the general trend of our nation, as outlined by our founding fathers. Every member has the same standing and vote in his chapter; he has the right to express his opinions fully on any subject. Each chapter adopts its own by-laws, under which it operates. The three principal officers and all past presiding officers are members of the grand chapter of its jurisdiction and have the same voice, vote and democratic privileges. Each grand chapter is independent and adopts its own set of laws. The three principal officers and all past presiding officers of grand chapters are members of the General Grand Chapter, with equal rights, votes, and privileges.

There are a few grand chapters on the continent that do not belong to the General Grand Chapter, which is the largest single, autonomous body of Freemasonry in the world. In time, no doubt, all will join this typically American, democratic institution, which frowns upon all efforts to impose undemocratic methods on a Freemason. We cannot teach freedom and practice authoritarian methods; we cannot praise democracy and create hierarchies; if Freemasonry is to remain free we must follow the truly democratic way of life as is best demonstrated by Royal Arch Masonry.

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