

## Masonic Symbols, Regalia and Information

# Freemasons and Masonic Regalia

This first post serves as a cursory introduction into the fascinating world of freemasonry and aims to engender a greater understanding of this mysterious and long established organization. We will touch on the basics of the history of the establishment as well as introduce certain **Masonic regalia** which form an integral part in the practice of freemasonry.

Freemasonry arose from obscure origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and with an estimated global “brethren” in excess of 2 million men. It is clearly a well engrained society with a rich and curious history. The first Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of England , was founded on 24 June 1717 however there are clear references to the existence of other lodges around the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century.

It's initiated members, known as brothers, apart from sharing many common metaphysical and moral views, share a strong binding belief in a “Supreme Being”. Freemasonry explicitly and openly contends that it is neither a religion nor a substitute for one and as such members of many faiths including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, etc are free to become Masons. “The true Mason is not creed-bound. He realizes with the divine illumination of his lodge that as a Mason his religion must be universal: Christ, Buddha, or Mohammed, the name means little, for he recognizes only the light and not the bearer.”(Manly Hall, *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, 1976)

The core of an initiated Masons' focus is moral uprightness, charitable concerns within the local and wider community, as well as the development and maintenance of fraternal friendship.

While there are many that believe it operates primarily as a “secret society”, this has been strongly refuted by freemason themselves who insist this is not the case. While they debunk theories of a secret organization they do concede that certain elements of the Masonic rituals remain a secret to the uninitiated.

### Masonic Rituals

*Masonic rituals* and symbols form an integral part of the practice of freemasonry and while some symbols are universal, rituals can vary from lodge to lodge. Common symbols that are prevalent include the compass and the square which are reported to

represent morality (square) and spirituality (compass). It is also worth noting that the meaning of the symbols change depending of the level of initiation, that is to say the Masons are free to interpret them as they wish.

As the Mason passes through the degrees of the Lodge, he receives true light, and is considered elevated above those who have not had the mysteries of Freemasonry revealed to them.

Common regalia worn at meetings include the Masonic apron which also serves as an indication of the brethrens degree or level of initiation within the organization. Masonic jewels (in the form of rings), which bare the symbols of the compass and the square, are also commonly worn during the rituals.

There is clearly much to learn about this fascinating society known as the Freemasons and we look forward to delving much, much, deeper to extract that truth which is largely unknown to the uninitiated.

## Hidden in the Masonic Symbols

It is widely believed that secrets and hidden symbolism are at the very core of Freemasonry. Depending on which literature you treat as gospel on the subject you might come up with different answers as to the actual meaning behind the symbols seen in **Masonic Regalia** and *Masonic rituals*. Lets explore some of the common symbols and the meaning behind them.

The square and the compass, with the letter “G” are by far the most universally recognizable of the symbols. The square and the compass collectively is seen as a representation of order and direction which should be applied to the life of the Mason. It is also used as a reminder to the Mason of his obligation to the ancient fraternity. The letter “G” represents Geometry which plays a large part in the art and practice in the “craft” of Stonemasons, who traveled through Europe building Cathedrals and Churches. The “G” is also reported to represent God, the divine creator of the Universe. This falls very much in line with the belief that every Mason adheres to, that of the “Supreme Being” – the Creator of all things.

Individually they bear their own meaning:

The Square represents an emblem of virtue in which we must “square our actions by the square of virtue with all mankind”. The Compass exemplifies our wisdom of conduct, the strength to “circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds”.

Symbols were used in ancient times in much the same way that imagery is used in modern times. It was a tool or method used to engender a greater understanding for the lessons or morals being taught. Imagery has always been a more effective way to communicate a message and this is as true today as it was thousands of years ago. It is also important to remember that the world's population was by in large illiterate at the time Freemasonry began to flourish and therefore it is logical to assume that imagery and symbols would have been used as a means to identify with the teachings.