



"Further Light in Masonry"

An Introduction to Royal Arch Masonry
by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

What has attracted so many Brethren to seek further light in Royal Arch Masonry?? The Royal Arch Degrees was considered most important in the early years of Freemasonry and so dogmatic was the Mother Grand Lodge - from which all Speculative Masonry 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." The landmark has never been changed and to this day no other degree has been officially recognized by the Mother Grand Lodge and every rite, system or additional degree in Freemasonry cannot confer its degree on a Master Mason until he has received the Royal Arch Degree. 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 Chapter of Royal Arch Masonry consists of four degrees, Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason.

THE MARK MASTER DEGREE

The Mark Master Degree is believed to have originated as a ceremony of registering a craftsman's mark in those years distinguished by operative craft masons and their temple building. It was later developed into a full-fledged degree by the Masonic fraternity as we know it today, Some scholars say it was the earliest degree and may predate all others by many years. It is highly regarded by students in all Masonry, teaching lessons that have proven of value in all walks of life. Some Grand Lodges place so high an eminence on the Mark Master Degree, that they confine it to the jurisdiction of a separate grand body, the Grand Lodge of Mark Masters.

THE PAST MASTERS DEGREE

The Past Master Degree came into being because originally the degree of Royal Arch was conferred by the Symbolic (Blue) Lodge only on actual Past Masters. This degree was instituted to make it possible for all worthy Brethren to receive the Royal Arch degree. The first record of its conferral is found in 1768 in England.

In Pennsylvania, the Grand Lodge retains control of the Installation of a Master and states that it there is no such thing as a "Past Master's Degree."

THE MOST EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE

The Most Excellent Master Degree is a product of American innovation. It was conferred in a Royal Arch Chapter as early as 1783 in Middletown, Conn. It is by far the most spectacular degree in all Freemasonry. It is the only degree that brings forcibly to our attention the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple. The very idea upon which all Masonic symbolism has been based.

THE ROYAL ARCH DEGREE



The Royal Arch Degree is the climax of Ancient Craft Masonry and Masonic Symbolism. It is described as "the root and marrow of Freemasonry." It is the complete story of Jewish History during some of its darkest hours. Jerusalem and the Holy temple are destroyed, The people are being held captive as slaves in Babylon. Here you will join with some slaves as they are set free to return home and engage in the noble and glorious work of rebuilding the city and the Temple of God.

It is during this rebuilding that they make a discovery that brings to light the greatest treasure of a Mason --the long lost Master's Word.

Many historians have traced the earliest origins of the Royal Arch Degree to Ireland, late in the 17th century and in England in 1738, In 1752, ambulatory or military warrants for Lodges were introduced. This was instrumental in placing the Royal Arch Degree on a par with the Master Mason Degree.

Military lodges were greatly responsible for planting Freemasonry in the Colonies and also gave birth to the use of the Marl and Royal Arch degrees in the "New World." Lodge records show that the Royal Arch Degree was conferred at Fredericksburg No. 4 on December 12, 1753. George Washington was raised in this lodge a few months prior to this date.

The value of Royal Arch Masonry will be appreciated by all who are exalted to that most sublime degree, particularly by those who are seeking to complete their Masonic education. It reveals the full light of Ancient Craft Masonry, presents it as a complete system in accordance with the original plan and justly entitles you to claim the noble name of Master Mason.