



The York Rite Bodies

The York Rite, or more correctly, the American Rite, is based on the early remnants of Craft Masonry that were practiced in the early 1700's. The formation of the first Grand Lodge of England in 1717 specified that the lodges were to confer only the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, all other degrees being considered spurious. However, many lodges had been conferring other degrees that they considered an integral part of Masonry, in particular that of the Royal Arch, and formed their own Grand Lodge in 1751, terming themselves the "Antients" and the other Grand Lodge members the "Moderns." With the merger of the two Grand Lodges in 1813 into the United Grand Lodge of England, the lodges agreed that only the three accepted degrees of Masonry would be used by the lodges, but the degree of the Royal Arch would be attached to Chapters allied directly to these lodges and bearing the same number as the lodge, though as a separate body. Thus, unlike the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, which claims to hold the power of conferring the first three degrees of Masonry in addition to those under its jurisdiction, those found in the York Rite have rightfully acknowledged the fact that they are considered appendant to those of Ancient Craft Masonry. It is still the practice in English Masonry that a Masonic member is not considered to be in possession of all the degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry until he has been exalted to the Royal Arch.

Early American Lodges operated in a similar manner until the establishment of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. For a period in US history, the Cryptic degrees were controlled by various state Grand Chapter jurisdictions, until the establishment of the General Grand Council. The Chivalric Orders have been controlled by the Grand Encampment since the early 19th century in the United States. All three bodies are technically autonomous

Masonic entities, only the requirement of membership in the Royal Arch connecting the Cryptic degrees and Chivalric Orders together.

Appendant to the York Rite Bodies are several additional Masonic bodies, most of which are invitational in nature. Membership in many of them is predicated on membership in the Royal Arch, though some have memberships predicated on other bodies of the York Rite, or membership in all of the York Rite bodies. Many are found in other jurisdictions outside of the United States, but several are uniquely American in their origin.

The Capitular Degrees are a set of four degrees controlled by the Royal Arch Chapter. They center on the construction phases of Solomon's Temple, with the exception of the degree of Past Master, hence the title of Capitular. The degree of Past Master is the vestigial remnant of the former custom that the degree of the Royal Arch could only be conferred on a Past Master of a Symbolic Blue Lodge. In the United States, these degrees are considered as proprietary to the Royal Arch, while in England there is no Past Master degree as found here, and the Mark Master degree is controlled by its own Grand Lodge. The Most Excellent Master degree is also part of the Cryptic Degree in England. As stated in the forward, the Royal Arch overseas is controlled by Chapters attached to English Blue Lodges. The Royal Arch Chapters have occasionally been referred to as the "Red lodge" in older Masonic publications, though they should more accurately be described as the "Red degrees." In the United States, all Chapter business is conducted in a Royal Arch Chapter, the other bodies being only opened for the conferral of degrees. Some jurisdictions open Mark Master Lodges as "table lodges," which act as a social focus for the local York Rite bodies



The Degrees conferred by

Royal Arch Masons

Jackson Chapter No. 3, R.A.M.

The Chapter degrees are a natural extension and culmination of the Legend begun in the Blue Lodge. The first three Chapter degrees, Mark Master, Past Master, and Most Excellent Master, develop more fully and expand on the theme of the Temple of King Solomon. The Royal Arch degree concerns itself with the destruction of this Temple by the Babylonians, the "Babylonian Captivity" of the Jews, and their return to Zion after seventy years to begin building the Second Temple, that of Zerubbabel. In the course of this reconstruction, that which was lost at the death of the Architect of the First Temple is recovered.



Mark Master Degree

4°

A Degree that emphasizes the lessons of regularity, discipline, and integrity. It is a most impressive Degree centered on the story of the Fellowcraft of the quarry and their role in the building of the Temple.

Its importance in English Craft Masonry can be judged by the fact that it operates as a separate Grand Lodge, and is highly sought by members of the Craft in that jurisdiction.

The candidate in this Degree represents a young Fellowcraft working in a quarry. After due preparation, he is instructed to choose a mark which will hence forth be his Masonic signature.

The Mark Master Degree teaches two important lessons. First, it teaches that one should relieve a Brother's needs when possible and second, that one should be satisfied with one's wages.



Past Master Degree (Virtual)

5°

A Degree that emphasizes the lesson of harmony. This Degree is conferred because ancient custom required that a Mason must be a Past Master in order to be exalted to the Royal Arch. In some Grand Jurisdictions this Degree is conferred upon all sitting Masters of the Blue Lodge. The Degree confers no actual rank upon the recipient, but is exemplified to maintain the ancient custom.

This Degree teaches the candidate the important lessons of moderation and decorum which are expected of one who would serve as the Master of a Symbolic Lodge. Masters of Lodges must always bear in mind that they symbolically serve as Masters of Master Craftsmen and not as overseers of day laborers. In Ohio, it is necessary to have received this Degree before a Master Elect is installed into office.

It is the tradition of York Temple Chapter that this Degree is conferred by a cast made up entirely of Actual Past Masters of

Lodges, with the occasional exception of the presiding officers who may not yet have attained that distinction.

The allegory of this Degree depicts the passing of the hat from King Solomon to Noah and through him to all future Masters of the Fraternity.



Most Excellent Master Degree

6°

A Degree that emphasizes the lesson of reverence. This Degree is centered on the dedication of the Temple after its completion, particularly the consecration of the Sanctum Sanctorum and the descent of the Host into the Temple. It is complimentary to the Mark Master Degree and completes the symbolic lessons introduced in that Degree.

This Degree portrays the completion, furnishing and dedication of King Solomon's Temple. After which, the candidate, along with the other Temple workmen, is promoted from Fellow of the Craft to the rank of Most Excellent Master, a surrogate for the Master Mason degree. This Degree teaches that he who would achieve his dreams and goals must persevere steadily along the paths of knowledge and virtue, coupling these with diligent industry and a firm reliance upon God.



Royal Arch Degree

7°

The completion of the Master Mason Degree and the summit of the original Degrees of the Blue Lodge as practiced in the Antients Lodges of England before 1820. The Degree explains the origins of the Substitute Word found in the Master Mason Degree, the recovery of the Ineffable Word, and its concealment within the Royal Arch Word. This Degree, together with the Master Mason Degree, may have once been exemplified as one large or "super" Degree, with the Master Mason Degree explaining the loss of the Master's Word and the Royal Arch explaining the recovery of the Master's Word. The presiding body is a Chapter, and the presiding officer is a High Priest (titled Excellent).

This is the final Degree conferred in a Chapter. It depicts the return of the Jews from Captivity in Babylon and their attempts at rebuilding the Temple of King Solomon under the direction of Zerubbabel.

The candidate represents one of the sojourners returning from Babylon to the Holy City. After making a difficult and dangerous journey, he gains admission into the presence of the Grand Council comprised of Jeshua (High Priest), Zerubbabel (King) and Haggai (Prophet, or Scribe). Upon expressing his desire to aid in the labor of reconstruction, he toils among the ruins of the Temple and makes several valuable and significant discoveries, which shed light on the Legend of the Master Mason Degree.



The Degrees conferred by Royal & Select Masons

Jackson Council No. 32, R. & S.M.

The Cryptic Degrees are a set of three degrees controlled by the Select Masters Council. The degrees get their name from the reference to a hidden or secret vault in the degrees, hence the term Cryptic. Only the first two degrees are regularly worked, the third degree, that of Super Excellent Master, is worked as an honorary degree, not being required as a requisite for membership in the Council. It is also somewhat peculiar in its association with the Cryptic degrees, as it is more closely allied in theme and character with the Royal Arch and the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross. The history of the body as a whole is also shrouded in uncertainty and controversy. Though there is early evidence of Councils of Royal and Select Masters being worked in the United States, the degrees were worked variously by their own Councils, Royal Arch Chapters, and even Lodges of Perfection of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Though the Scottish Rite has long relinquished any claim to these degrees, several Grand Jurisdictions still confer them as a part of Capitular Masonry. In England, the degree of Most Excellent Master is grouped with this body. In the United States, all business is conducted in the Select Masters Council, the other two bodies only being opened for the conferral of degrees. Some jurisdictions hold "table councils" in similar manner to "table lodges" as a social focal point of their local York Rite bodies.

The Council degrees are largely an elaboration and explanation of the Royal Arch degree and, to a lesser extent, the Master Mason degree. The next degree, Select Master, concerns itself with the construction and adornment of the subterranean vault introduced in the Royal Arch degree of the Chapter and alluded to in the Royal

Master degree. The last degree is that of Super Excellent Master, and tells the story of the treachery of King Zedekiah, the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. Council Masonry is also referred to as "Cryptic Masonry" in allusion to the vault or crypt referred to in the degrees



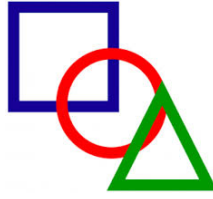
Royal Master Degree

8°

There are two main sections in this degree. The first takes place just before the legend depicted in the Master Mason degree, and the second takes place immediately after it.

In the first section, the candidate represents one of the Craftsmen who are preparing items for the Sanctum of King Solomon's Temple. As such, the candidate has a very impressive conversation with the Master Architect of the Temple. In the second section, the candidate bears silent witness to the grief of the two Grand Masters.

A Degree emphasizing the lessons of patience and fortitude. The Degree centers around the Fellowcraft Masons who were artificers fabricating the fittings and furniture of the Temple. It is unusual in that the first part of the Degree depicts events taking place before the death of the Grand Master Hiram Abif, and the last part depicts events occurring after his death.



Select Master Degree

9°

A Degree emphasizing the lessons of devotion and zeal. The Degree centers on the construction and furnishing of a Secret Vault beneath the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple, and the deposition of those secrets pertaining to the Craft by the three ancient Grand Masters of the Craft. This Degree bridges the events surrounding the concealment and loss of the Ineffable Word and the events leading to the recover of the Word in the Royal Arch Degree. The presiding body is a Council, and the presiding officer is a Master (titled Illustrious).



Super Excellent Master Degree

10°

A Degree emphasizing the lessons of loyalty and faithfulness. The Degree centers around the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple at the hands of the Chaldeans. The Degree is narrated by small interludes of biblical prophecy that highlight the end of the first Temple and the construction of the second Temple. It is noteworthy for its scenes of the Jewish court of Zedekiah and the Chaldean court of Nebuchadnezzar. This degree is an honorary one, and a member of the Council not needing to have it in order to hold membership or office.



The Orders conferred by Knights Templar

Jackson Commandery No. 9, K.T.

The Orders of Knighthood conferred by Knights Templar. The first Order of Commandery, the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, provides a bridge with Ancient Craft Masonry and the Chivalric Orders of Commandery. In this Order, the story of the Jewish Prince, Zerubbabel, and his efforts to secure permission of the Persian King Darius to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem are presented. The last two Orders of Commandery mark a divergence from Ancient Craft Masonry in that they refer to ideals and practices of chivalry and Christianity.

The Chivalric Orders are a set of three Orders culminating in the grade of Knight Templar, and controlled by that body. This body is markedly different from its foreign counterparts, in that it exhibits a paramilitary structure and outlook on Masonry, being the only branch of Masonry in the world that is a uniformed body. Its requirement that its members be professed Christians has led to calls of condemnation from other Masonic bodies and organizations both inside and outside the United States, claiming that the body is more of a Christian organization rather than a Masonic body. These have had little effect on the body, however, as many of the organizations criticizing the body have similar degrees among themselves. The American body is also arranged different from its nearest relatives in England. The American body includes the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, which is not conferred in any other organization, though it has very close cousins in the Irish and American Order of Knight Masons and in the English Allied Masonic Degrees grade of the Red Cross of Babylon. Also, in the United States, the Order of Malta is conferred on members before being

eligible to receive the Order of the Temple, whereas in England, the Order of Malta is an honorary grade bestowed on Knights Templar. In the United States, all business is transacted in the Order of the Temple, the other bodies only being opened for the conferral of the Orders. In England, the Order of Malta meets and operates as a separate body in addition to the Order of the Temple.



Illustrious Order of the Red Cross

11°

This Order consists of two sections. The first depicts Zerubbabel's (the candidate) admission to the Jewish Council at Jerusalem, in which he is invested with permission and authority to travel to Babylon and attempt to obtain leave from King Darius to stop the enemies of the Jews from hindering their progress in building the Temple, as well as to recover the holy vessels of the Temple which were taken as booty to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed the First Temple.

The second section takes place at the Court of Darius. There Zerubbabel renews his earlier friendship with the King, and is granted a position in the royal household. He then participates in a friendly contest with other nobles of the realm regarding the question: "Which is greater, the strength of wine; the power of the king; or the influence of woman?"

An Order emphasizing the lesson of truth. Elements of this Order were practiced in Ancient Lodges before the final form of the Master Mason Degree came into use. It is still practiced in the full ceremonial form by the Knight Masons of Ireland and the Knight Masons of the United States, and as the Red Cross of Babylon in the English Order of the Allied Masonic Degrees.



Order of Malta

12°

This Order is actually a combination of two others: The Order of St. Paul (sometimes called the Mediterranean Pass), which is a preparatory order, and the Order of Malta.

The Order of St. Paul is based on the story of Paul's shipwreck on the island of Melita (Malta). The candidate represents a knight about to depart for the Crusades in the Holy Land. The Order of Malta presents the history of the Order as an opportunity to discuss the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a suitable preparation for the Order of the Temple, in that it provides the candidate with additional New Testament instruction, particularly in the eight Beatitudes.

An Order emphasizing the lesson of faith. This Order requires the Mason to profess and practice the Christian faith. The pass degree of the Mediterranean Pass, or Knight of St. Paul prepares the candidate for the Order by introducing the lesson and example of the unfearing and faithful martyr of Christianity. The Order is centered on allegorical elements of the Knights of Malta, inheritors of the medieval Knights Hospitaller.



Order of the Temple

This Order begins with the candidate, a Knight of Malta, who, after a vigil, seeks to unite with a Commandery of Knights Templar. To test his faith, the candidate is instructed to perform a number of years of pilgrimage. After assuming an obligation, he is then required to undertake a number of years of knightly warfare, as a test of his courage and constancy. Having satisfactorily performed these, he is admitted to the Asylum of the Knights Templar. The candidate is then required to perform a time of penance in token of his humility. Following this, sealing his membership in the Order, he is duly dubbed a member of the Valiant and Magnanimous Order of the Temple.

An Order emphasizing the lessons of self-sacrifice and reverence. It is meant to rekindle the spirit of the medieval Knights Templar devotion and self-sacrifice to Christianity. The history of the Masonic Order is long and convoluted, with the Order's ritual differing between that conferred in England and in the United States. That practiced in the United States has a slight militant zeal to the lesson of Christianity, whereas the English ritual is more allegorical. However, the American ritual is most impressive, and more emphasis is placed on the solemnity and reverence associated with the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. The presiding body is a Commandery, and the presiding officer is a Commander (titled Eminent).



The Order's conferred by
York Rite Sovereign College of North America

Jackson College No. 3, Y.R.S.C.N.A.

Description

The York Rite Sovereign College of North America exists primarily to be of service to the York Rite of Freemasonry. Constituent colleges must declare fealty to the Grand Lodge of their respective jurisdictions. The pre-requisite for membership, which is by invitation only, is good-standing in all four York Rite bodies: Lodge, Chapter, Council and Commander or Preceptory (Canada.)

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave: even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." Matt.20:26-27-28

Legend of York

"This craft came into England, as I tell you, in the time of good king Athelsan's reign; he made then both hall, and also bower and lofty temples of great honor, to take his recreation in both day and night, and to worship his God with all his might. This good lord loved this craft full well, and purposed to strengthen it in every part on account of various defects that he had discovered in the craft. He sent about into all the land, after all the masons of the craft, to come straight to him, to amend all these defects by good counsel, if it might so happen, He then permitted an assembly to be made of divers lords in their ranks, dukes, earls, and barons, also knights, squires and many more, and the great burgesses of that city, they were all there

in their degree; these were there, each one in every way to make laws for the state of these nations. There they sought by their wisdom how they might govern it; there they found out fifteen articles, and there they made fifteen points."----Regius Manuscript, circa 1390----Regius Manuscript, circa 1390

The York Rite

The York Rite takes its name from the Ancient English city of York, around whose minster, or cathedral, cluster many Masonic traditions. Here, these traditions tell us, Athelstan, who reigned more than a thousand years ago and who was the first king of all England, granted the first charter to the Masonic guilds. Here, in 1705, a Grand Lodge in London, to whose constitution the Grand Lodge of England later appealed as the true source of authentic Freemasonry. Though early disappearing from the Masonic scene, this Grand Lodge left an indelible impression upon the institution, and its name --- York --- will survive as long as Freemasonry continues.

Origin of the College

The York Rite Sovereign College of North America came into being in the City of Detroit, Michigan on January 6, 1957. It was the result of a meeting called by Richard W. Lewis, Past Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Michigan, and attended by the heads of the four Michigan York Rite Grand Bodies and a number of distinguished Masonic leaders from other States. These founders, responding to a need which had long been recognized in the York Rite, outlined the structure and purpose of the new organization and arranged for its incorporation.

Purposes

The purpose of the York Rite Sovereign College of North America, as set forth in its Constitution and By-Laws, are as follows:

- (1) To foster a spirit of cooperation and coordination among each of the Bodies of York Rite Masonry.
- (2) To assist in worthy efforts to improve the ritualistic and dramatic presentation of York Rite work.
- (3) To conduct an education program in order to inculcate a greater appreciation of the principles, ideals and programs of York Rite Masonry.
- (4) To strengthen York Rite Masonry in every possible manner.
- (5) To build up a love of country and to aid and support genuine Americanism.
- (6) To reward outstanding service to York Rite Masonry by awards, honors and other methods of proper recognition.
- (7) To support Charitable and Benevolent Endeavors of Freemasonry.



York Rite Colleges

The first York Rite College was constituted on ***June 15, 1957*** in the ***City of Jackson, Michigan***. From here, the new organization spread rapidly from coast to coast and from north to south and by 1970 Colleges had been established in fourteen States and one Province of Canada.

Membership in a College is by invitation, and is restricted to those who hold membership in all of the other York Rite bodies. Since the primary object of every College is to foster a spirit of service and to promote and support the York Rite in every way possible, it is no surprise to find many of the leaders of the Craft numbered among its ranks. Here they find a common ground from which they can act for the welfare of all York Rite bodies without special favor to any. Colleges have been active in the organization of York Rite Festivals, degree teams, drill corps, and many other functions which serve to assist, coordinate, and unify the Rite.

The Sovereign College

The York Rite Sovereign College of North America is the supreme governing body for all Colleges within its jurisdiction. As such, it endeavors to promote all those activities which favor the accomplishing of its stated purpose. Among these is the awarding of certain honors for outstanding service.

The Gold Honor Award may be given to any Mason for unselfish and faithful service in any branch of the York Rite. The recipient need not to be a member of a College, nor is it required that he be a member of all the other York Rite bodies.



Order of the Purple Cross of York

The Order of the Purple Cross of York, the highest honor of the College, is conferred upon those members of the College who have distinguished themselves by their service to humanity or to the Rite, the recipients are designated Associate Regents of the Sovereign

College, and from their ranks are chosen the Regents or active members of that body.

The Sovereign College meets in General Assembly once each year, generally in late July or early August.

Document prepared by:

- Stephen D. Vining P.M., P.R.G.L., P.D.D.I., P.B.G.P., P.H.P., P.T.I.M., P.C., P.G., A.R., O.P.C.
 - Past Regional Grand Lecturer – Grand Lodge of Michigan
 - Past District Deputy Instructor – Grand Lodge of Michigan
 - Past Board of General Purposes – Grand Lodge of Michigan
 - Past Master – Jackson Lodge No. 17, Free & Accepted Mason (F. & A.M.)
 - Past High Priest – Jackson Chapter No. 3, Royal Arch Masons (R.A.M.)
 - Past Thrice Illustrious Master – Jackson Council No. 32, Royal & Select Masons (R. & S.M.)
 - Past Eminent Commander – Jackson Commandery No. 9, Knights Templar (K.T.)
 - Past Preeminent Governor – Jackson College No. 3, York Rite Sovereign College of North America (Y.R.S.C.N.A.), Associate Regent, Order of the Purple Cross of York