

# MISSOURI YORK RITE BEACON



Grand York Rite of the State of Missouri

Missouri York Rite Beacon is the official publication of the Grand York Rite of the State of Missouri.

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Page 3	Grand High Priest's Message
Page 4	Grand Master's Message
Page 5	Grand Commander's Message
Page 6	Grand York Rite of Missouri Session
Page 7	Picture This....
Page 10	Grand York Rite Cruise
Page 11	Freemasons in the American Civil War
Page 13	Administrative Professional's day
Page 14	Letter from the Editor
Page 16	Capitular Education
Page 17	Capitular Development Course
Page 26	73rd Triennial Convocation
Page 27	Membership Retention
Page 29	The Pickaxe and Work of Discovery
Page 30	Writer's Corner
Page 34	RARA
Page 35	CMMRF
Page 36	Commandery Charities
Page 37	Grand York Rite Bulletin Board
Page 39	Springfield Chapter's 175th Anniversary

**Submissions:** All submissions of photographs should include a 40 to 50 word article telling who, what, when, where and why. Pictures should be high resolution jpg (s) from a camera (at least 300 dpi). Phone pictures should be set to high resolution.

**Cover Artwork by: REC Larry Wilson & REC Donald MacCormick**



Articles to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to:

<https://moyorkrite.org/missouri-york-rite-beacon-news-submission-form/>



# M.E.C. Kevin M. Ritter Grand High Priest Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons



Greetings, Companions!

March has come and gone, and April is already half-over. Time truly does fly when you're having fun! And I'm still having so much fun serving the Grand Chapter this year! Official visits are nearly completed, and while I won't be able to attend every Chapter in the state this year, I've enjoyed visiting the Companions and getting to talk with you more about your experiences in the York Rite, what brought you to your Chapters, and what keeps you coming back.

I wanted to take a quick moment to share some thoughts with you on Masonic leadership. I've discussed this with some of the Chapters I've visited, but I think it's important to share with each of you. To me, there's no one definition of what a Masonic leader looks like. Sure, he might be someone in a suit with a gold collar and an apron with fringe, but he might also be one of the Faithful Few, those quiet workers who the High Priest can always count on to be there and get something done; he might be a long-time member who's been away for a while but is making his way back into active membership; maybe he's the member with a young family, so can't make every meeting but is always available for a committee meeting by Zoom. Or perhaps he's a new member who approaches you about helping him learn a new ritual part that meant something to him when he received the degrees. Each of these men is a Masonic leader, and our Lodges, Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies can't exist without all of them. If you are reading this, you are a Masonic leader in some context, and I want to take a moment to say to each of you, thank you for what you do for the York Rite.

Time marches on, and my term as Grand High Priest is drawing to a close. I'm looking forward to visiting the Grand Chapter of Oklahoma later this month, completing my last official visit, and preparing to visit our youth groups next month. I hope each of you has enjoyed this year as much as I have.

Take care of yourselves and each other and continue to **BE EXCELLENT TO EACH OTHER.**

Fraternally,

Kevin M. Ritter  
Grand High Priest





# M.:I.:C.: Dennis W. Houck Grand Master Grand Council of Cryptic Masons State of Missouri



Greeting Companions,

What an exciting month it has been. I am still feeling the excitement that comes from our Grand Master's Cryptic Day. On that day, we brought sixteen new Royal and Select Masters into our fraternity. I am so thankful and blessed to have been in the company of so many of you dedicated Companions who had worked so hard to make this event such a success. I am additionally thankful to Centralia Council Number 34, for sponsoring this event for a second year in a row.

As the Grand Session grows nearer and my time in office grows shorter, I have been reflecting on the events of the passing year. I am amazed by the dedication of all the Companions that I have met across this great State. You are the backbone of our great fraternity and I appreciate your dedication to our craft.

In my continuing travels, I have visited several of the Grand Sessions of our South-Central Region. In those journeys, I have observed their proceedings and enjoyed their companionship. However, those travels have imparted on me how very proud I am that you all carry such a very high standard of conducting in your Councils and in our Grand Session here in Missouri. Our ritual is beyond reproach.

Companions, this will be my last report to you in the Beacon Magazine. Next month, the Deputy Master will address you all in this collum. The future of the Councils in Missouri are looking bright. In the future you will be led by some of the best leaders our state can provide. Over the past seven years, I have seen the Grand Council appoint the brightest and most effective leaders I have ever seen. When I come out of office, you will not be left in good hands, but in great hands. Thank you all for your support and dedication to our craft. It is a tribute to you all that Missouri Cryptic Masonry has grown and continues to grow into the best that Freemasonry has to offer.

I now leave you with Philippians 4 vs 13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". Paul wrote this while in prison, emphasizing that he learned to be content in all circumstances—whether having plenty or being in need. The "all things" refers to enduring hardships, trials, and living according to God's will, rather than achieving selfish ambitions or tasks. Additional, the verse implies that strength is not personal but provided by Christ. And it is a reminder that Christ is with believers in difficult situations, offering strength, peace, and perseverance.

Fraternally,

M.I.C Dennis W. Houck  
Grand Master of Cryptic Masons  
State of Missouri





**SK Terry Coppotelli**  
**Right Eminent Grand Commander**  
**Grand Commandery of Knights Templar**  
**State of Missouri**



Sir Knights,

This is my first communication since succeeding to the role of Grand Commander. It is truly humbling, and I vow to serve you and the Commandery to the best of my ability for however long I am afforded this opportunity.

I want to thank SK Skiles for letting me be by his side during his Grand Commandery journey. We entered the line the same day and have had plenty of fun and memorable moments over the years. He and Claudette have always been welcoming and gracious towards me and Maureen. Words can't express how much we appreciate all the time he and his Lady have given not just to the Commandery, but the York Rite and Freemasonry as a whole. Ron has served our Fraternity for over 50 years, and I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to the sacrifices he and his family has made.

There will be time later to discuss visions, plans, meetings, and all the work we have ahead of us. But right now, all I ask is for you to keep Ron, Claudette, and their family in your thoughts and prayers.

Fraternally Yours,

Terry Coppotelli  
Grand Commander



# Grand York Rite Grand Session 2026



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# Picture This.....



On a beautiful Palm Sunday, March 29th, Ascalon Commandery No.16 and Ivanhoe No. 8, held its Easter Vigil at the St. Charles Masonic Temple. A wonder service was held followed by light refreshments.

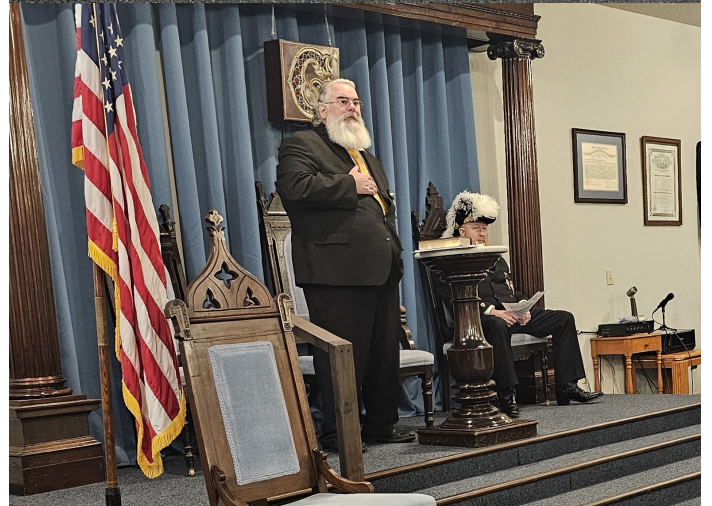
**IVANHOE COMMANDERY NO. 8  
AND ASCALON COMMANDERY NO. 16**

## Christian Observance of Palm Sunday

March 29, 2026

2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

St. Charles Masonic Temple  
2015 Collier Corporate Parkway  
St. Charles, MO 63303



# Grand Commandery Drill Competition Columbia

Below are some of the drill teams from the Grand Commandery Drill Competition held on Saturday, March 21, 2026, in Columbia, Missouri.



Ely Commandery Number 22, held its annual Easter Sunrise Service the morning of April 5th, in the Kirksville Masonic Temple. Approximately \$300 was collected in free-will offerings for the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage ([www.kthlp.com](http://www.kthlp.com)).



## Sir Knight Terry Coppotelli's Installation

On Tuesday, April 7, 2026, S.K. Terry Coppotelli was installed as Grand Commander of Knights Templar of the State of Missouri at Ascalon Commandery Number 16. Congratulations Very Eminent Commander. We know you will serve us well.





## THE GRAND YORK RITE OF MISSOURI 7-DAY CRUISE TO ALASKA

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Club Balcony (ma)	249-361 / 41-101	4	\$2,710.78 p/p	\$887.39 p/p*
Balcony(ba)	214-367 / 38-108	3	\$2,498.07 p/p	\$887.39 p/p*
Inside (ia)	135-362	2	\$1,612.05 p/p	

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Your deposit for your cabin is only \$250. Certificates are available, (pay \$150 and get \$300 off the cruise). Veteran's discounts are available. Final payment doe by March 26, 2027.

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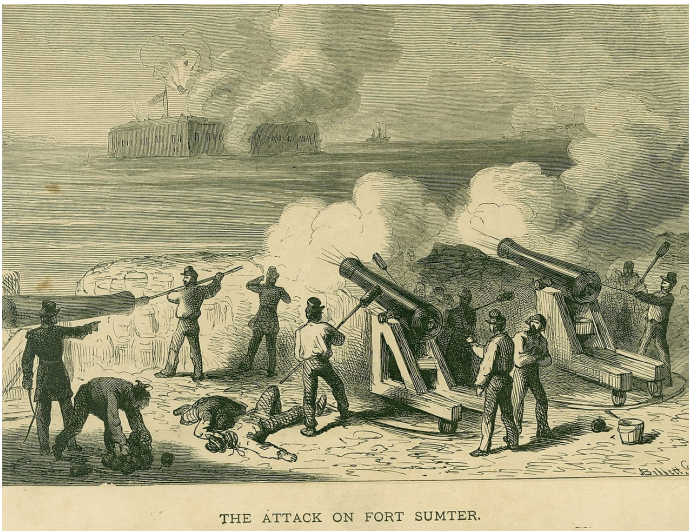
Email: [alloyenterprises@hotmail.com](mailto:alloyenterprises@hotmail.com)

Phone: (864) 833-1013

# Freemasons In the American Civil War

Assembled by: REC Larry Wilson

On Friday, April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, starting the American Civil War. Even though there are disputes, arguments, and political opinions on why this war started, we will not examine the whys and the how comes of its beginnings. What we will look at is how this caused Freemason to fight Freemason. Even though we practice Brotherly love, relief, and truth, that was not always that case during this great war. We suffered a lot as a country and fraternity during many of these battles. Families lost husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, mothers, sisters, and daughters, but we also suffered as we lost those Brothers of our election.



In the end, this war resolved the fundamental question of whether the United States, born of a declaration that all men were created with an equal right to liberty, or would it continue to exist as the largest slaveholding country in the world.

The victory of the Union Army would dictate that the United States would remain as one nation under God, and it would end the institution of slavery. But this war came at a high cost. In it we would lose nearly 625,000 lives. This is nearly as many American soldiers as would die in all the other wars in which the United States would fight in combined. The American Civil War was the largest and most destructive conflict that the Western world would have seen since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and the onset of World War I in 1914.

By the spring of 1865 all principal Confederate armies would have surrendered. With the capture of

Confederate President Jefferson Davis on Sunday, May 10, 1865, in Georgia, the remaining resistance would end, and the war would be over. What was to follow would be the long, and painful process of rebuilding of this great nation.

During this great conflict, there are numerous stories where Brother Freemason would help Brother Freemason through difficult times. I would like to think that we would take care of each other in the best way possible, under the constraints that were imposed upon us by county, state, and military leadership. Here are some of those stories.

One notable example was remembered as to occur in June of 1863, during an incident in St. Francisville, Louisiana. There Union soldiers, under a flag of truce, attempt to find any local Confederate Freemasons, so they could properly bury their dead commander, a Lieutenant Commander John Hart of the USS Albatross.



In another incident of Brotherly Love, Confederate Masons in Georgia escorted a captured Union soldier, Brother Williams, from his prison to a local lodge to raise him to the degree of Master Mason before helping him reach safety.

Legend has it that Freemasons being held as prisoners of war would often receive extra food, supplies, and live in better living conditions from the

opposite side if they were recognized as a Brother Freemason.

In a sign of Brotherly Love, Freemason and Union Captain Henry Bingham, provided aid to wounded Confederate General Lewis A. Armistead. An act that would be seen as a Masonic relief to a Brother in distress.

There are several stories where Freemasons, who were Confederate cavalry members, would escort Union Masons safely through Confederate lines.

If a property displayed a Masonic symbol, this would protect a Freemason's personal property or lodges from looting by soldiers.


Freemason and Confederate Captain W.W. Leake, granted a truce and ensured a Brother and Union Soldier Hart to receive a proper burial, even tending his grave long after the war had ended.

These stories and acts of brotherhood highlight how Masonic values, like Charity and Brotherly Love, sometimes superseded the hostilities of a war.

faithfully supporting their respective governments while upholding their Masonic values.



To commemorate the love Freemasons have for each other, the Friend to Friend Masonic Memorial in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was built to stand as a testament to this spirit. The statue depicts Union General Winfield Scott Hancock and Confederate General Lewis Addison Armistead, both Masons, who were personal friends despite fighting on opposing sides. The monument's inscription emphasizes how their unique bonds of friendship enabled them to remain a brotherhood undivided,

 **GRAND COUNCIL  
RITUAL  
PROFICIENCY**

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

**Tom G. Cupples, Jr.**  
**Hiram Council No. 1**

**Part III, Section B**  
The Lecture in the Royal Master Degree

**Part IV, Section B**  
The History in the Select Master Degree

**Part IV, Section C**  
The Apron Lecture in the Select Master Degree

**Part V, Section E**  
The Charge to the Candidate in the Select Master Degree



# Happy Administrative Professionals Day!

On Wednesday, April 22, 2026, we will be celebrating/observing Administrative Professionals Day (Secretaries Day or Admins Day). It falls within Administrative Professionals Week (the last full week of April in the United States). The day recognizes the work of secretaries, executive, personal, and all other administrative assistant professionals.

During World War II, there was a shortage of skilled administrative personnel in the United States due to Depression-era birth-rate decline and booming post-war business. The National Secretaries Association, founded in 1942, was formed to recognize the contributions of administrative personnel to the economy, support their personal development, and to help attract workers to the administrative field. Key figures who created the holiday were the president of the National Secretaries Association, Mary Barrett; president of Dictaphone Corporation, C. King Woodbridge; and public relations account executives at Young & Rubicam, Harry F. Klemfuss and Daren Ball.

The National Secretaries Association's name was changed to Professional Secretaries International in 1981 and to the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) in 1998.

The official period of celebration was first proclaimed by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Charles W. Sawyer as "National Secretaries Week", which was held June 1-7 in 1952 with Wednesday, June 4

designated as National Secretaries' Day. The first Secretaries' Day was sponsored by the National Secretaries Association with the support of corporate groups.

In 1955, the observance date of National Secretaries Week was moved to the last full week of April, with Wednesday now designated as Administrative Professionals Day. The name was changed to Professional Secretaries Week in 1981 and became Administrative Professionals Week in 2000 to encompass the expanding responsibilities and wide-ranging job titles of administrative support staff in the modern world. The week-long observance was created space out the bookings where administrative professionals would be taken out to lunch.

As this day approaches, please remember your Secretaries, Recorders, Grand York Rite Executive Assistant, Grand Secretary, Grand Recorder to the Council, and Grand Recorder to the Commandery. They do a job that is usually overlooked or not even know by the craft. It is a dauntless job that usually does not include pay. So, show some sign of kindness to these individuals as they are the backbone of this fraternity!!!

- Grand Secretary & Recorder: REC/MIC Donald MacCormick
- Asst. Secretary: HMEC Kevin B. Sample
- Grand Recorder: Roger Fleer
- Executive Assistant: Debbie L. Hanson



**MWB Emmett J. Bryson Grand Master &  
MEC Kevin M. Ritter Grand High Priest  
invite you to experience the first two Degree of the Royal Arch!**

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# MISSOURI YORK RITE BEACON

Greetings Brethren, Companions and Sir Knights,

Well, we are into the month of April, and just two months away from Grand Session. As you can see, we already have an advertisement for that session and a link to make registration for a hotel room. We highly recommend that you do so before they run out of space.

In this issue, we present articles on the Capitular Development Course, The Pickaxe and Work of Discovery, Writers Corner, and Freemasons in the American Civil War.

Many articles have been written on the American Civil War. In the editor's opinion, a war in which brother fought against brother is on of the most horrific fights anyone can have. Within these bloody battles Freemasonry shined through with it tenants of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. This article shares some of these stories with you on the month in which the American Civil War began.

The Pickaxe and Work of Discovery is a wonderful article written by one of our local authors, Bro. F. Brad Fowler. In it, we find the pickaxe and how it is an important part of Royal Arch Masonry. Take a look, you might gain further light in our branch of Freemasonry.

In Cryptic Masonry, your Membership Retention Committee has written several interesting articles throughout the year. The Beacon Magazine has been very lucky to have this committee to present such

articles. Their enlightened views and vision has been a shining light to our membership to help retain and engage our member in the craft. Thank you for your hard work in your presentations.

Did you know that the York Rite of Missouri has electronic books available for your reading pleasure. In our writers corner, you can find some of the Royal Arch books available with a hyperlink to their source material.

Finally, your Grand Master, M.I.C. Dennis Houck forwarded several picture to us to use as we saw fit. Well, one of such came with a directive to make sure that it made it into the magazine. You can find it on page 15. We are proud to share it with you all.

That about covers everything this month. We hope that you enjoy everything that we have to offer. Always remembering that we are here for you. If you have anything that you would like to share or include in this magazine, you can find a link on the Grand York of Missouri's website. Feel free to submit as much as you want, as often as you want.

Well, we hope you all stay healthy and wise. May God shine down on you, your families, and friends. And we hope to see you all down that dusty trail.

Peace be to you all,

Editor



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**For those that cannot, there are others that do**

**Thank you for all your hard work this year Most Illustrious**



**This message is approved by MIC Dennis Houck**



**Capitular Education 2025-2026**

**Greg Walker, Chairman**

**Committee:**

**REC Donald MacCormick, VEC Lloyd Lyon, VEC Nick Young,  
VEC Doug Rose, VEC James Bell**

Companions all,

This month's reading focuses on the intricacies of the ritual of the Royal Arch degree. As I write this, I am attending the Grand Session of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Mason of Arkansas. Our greeting has been warm and genuine. Their meeting was efficient and while I will not say if it was better or not as compared to Missouri's Grand Chapter session, it does make me appreciate our ritual and those keepers of it. And I have an ever greater appreciation of REC MacCormick and MEC Sample for the work they invest in our session. Our opening is special. The furniture and regalia sacred. The names are significant. I hope we all take a moment to enjoy the opening of our Grand Chapter this June.

**Grand Chapter Capitular Education Series - April 2026  
Royal Arch Degree**

For this month's reading I would encourage all Chapters to turn to the pages of our ritual where you find the pronunciation guide. There is only one proper way to pronounce each of these words in our Chapter and it is important that our ritual remain consistent across the state.

- Shem, Ham, and Japheth
- Moses, Aholiab, and Bezaleel
- Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai
- The Signet
- Candlestick, Altar of Incense, Breastplate and Ark of the Covenant
- The Prophecy
- The Task and the Sojourners
- The Working Tools
- The Inventions or Discoveries

\*\*\*\*\*

Our education series will follow this schedule:

April 2026: Royal Arch Degree, continues

May 2026: Royal Arch Degree, completion including quiz

June 2026: Wrap up of education for the year and a short expose on a passage of scripture from the Royal Arch Degree ritual from the role of Jeshua, the High Priest.

This schedule may not fit all Chapters perfectly, but it is suggested that your members come prepared with a copy of The Beacon in hand, print or digital, to your meetings so that they may take part in the group readings and discussion that follows.

# Capitular Development Course

## Shem, Ham, and Japheth

Shem, Ham, and Japheth were the sons of Noah, who, with their wives, went into the Ark with him and thus became the only survivors of the Flood.



Engraving of Noah's Ark from the Nuremberg Chronicle

It may seem odd that they would be mentioned in the Royal Arch Degree. It must be remembered that the Holy Royal Arch Degree took its sources from a number of earlier rituals. One of these was – and is – called the Royal ark Mariner Degree, and is based on the story of the Ark, and features these characters in the ceremony. It is also believed by many scholars that this Degree originated in the guilds outside cathedrals and churches on Holy Days for the entertainment and education of the masses. It should be remembered that in earlier times the only language used in church was Latin, and the majority of the public being illiterate, the Miracle Plays were their main source of learning the more famous Biblical stories.

A key feature of this Degree was the rainbow, being God's promise and covenant with His people stretching across the sky.

Indeed, another consideration is how all these stories are about journeys to find some form of Truth. In the story of Noah, the ark (incidentally, in



Noah offers a sacrifice to God (one hopes he had three of whatever he sacrificed on board...)

many languages the word for 'ark' and 'arch' is the same), a group of people are carried over the waters by an Ark to Ararat, a sage haven. In the story of Moses and the Chosen People, an Ark (of the Covenant) is carried across the earth by men, on their way to the Land of Milk and Honey. In the story of the Rebuilding of the Temple, the descendants of Israel travel a dangerous and rock road, carting the vessels of the destroyed First Temple from the East (Babylon) to the West (Jerusalem) with the intention of rebuilding the House of God.

As an aside, it is also curious to note that in each case we see a reiteration which, like ripples on a pond, become less with each repetition. In the story of Noah, his family are on a flood which covers the Earth; in Exodus Moses parts a sea; and in the return to Jerusalem the remnants of Israel cross a river (the Jordan). Or again, if the Temple is an image of Creation, then we move from God's abode in Eden, with a garden adjacent in which lived Adam and Eve; then God lives in a vast Temple; and finally, in a rather smaller Temple erected on the ruins of the greater by a band of emigrants. Once again, we have this theme of 'diminution' as man and God communicate on an increasingly even level.

It is therefore not difficult to see how this symbol of the Arch, together with the key players, made its way into early forms of the Royal Arch Degree.

### **Moses, Aholiab, and Bezaleel**

To better understand why these three characters feature in the Royal Arch Degree, it is useful to recall the short Catechism said at all Royal Arch Festive Boards in England:

- ◇ “Companion Principal Sojourner, how many Grand Lodges do we commemorate?”
- ◇ “Three, Most Excellent.”
- ◇ “Name them.”
- ◇ “The First or Holy Lodge, the Second or Sacred Lodge, and the Third or Grand and Royal Lodge.”
- ◇ “Where was the First or Holy Lodge Held?”
- ◇ “At the foot of Mount Horeb, in the wilderness of Sinai.”
- ◇ “Who presided?”
- ◇ “Moses, Aholiab, and Bezaleel.”
- ◇ “Where was the Second or Sacred Lodge held?”
- ◇ “In the bosom of the Holy Mount Moriah.”
- ◇ “Who presided?”
- ◇ “Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Tyrian, Widow’s Son.”
- ◇ “Where was the Third or Grand and Royal Lodge held?”
- ◇ “At Jerusalem.”
- ◇ “Who presided?”
- ◇ “Zerubbabel, prince of the people; Haggai, the prophet; and Jeshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest.”

It is interesting to note that our ritual covers both the travels of Moses and those of Zerubbabel, while the story of King Solomon is absent, having been covered in the Master Mason Degree. A possible reason for this has been reviewed in the section Possible Connection to the Third Degree above.

Moses, of course, was the prophet who led the Israelites out of captivity into the desert, who organized the tribes during that journey, and who supervised the creation and erection of the Tabernacle, assigning the Tribes to the duties ascribed to it. It was he who dictated the design of the Tabernacle, assigning the Tribes to the duties ascribed to it. It was he who dictated the design of the Tabernacle and the creation of the holy vessels, the primary one being the Altar of Incense, the Seven-branched Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread and, of course, the Ark of the Covenant. It was also he who placed an Omer of manna, Aaron’s rod, and a copy of the Law received from God into the Ark.

In Exodus 31 we learn God called Bezaleel from the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan (two of the four principal tribes) to serve him. The description of their skills is remarkably similar to those of Hiram Abif, filling them: “in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood...”(Exodus 31, 7-11).



**The Seven-Branches Candelabra of the Temple as spoils of war on Trajan’s Column in Rome.**

Bezaleel and Aholiab are to make: “The tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle; the table and its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base; the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy place.” (Exodus 31, 12-17).

Since Bezaleel and Aholiab are therefore going to work closely with Moses in creating the Tabernacle and all the furniture within, and since the two of them will provide and craft the object under the supervision of Moses, it becomes apparent why their relationship is similar to that of King Solomon, who supervised, with Hiram King of Tyre, who provided, and Hiram Abif, who crafted. Remember, too, that Bezaleel and Aholiab were senior members of two of the four principal tribes, and therefore carried respect and authority in their own right. Since early Freemasonry come to see this triumvirate as the rulers of the “First or Holy Lodge”, it is not surprising therefore that we still encounter them in the Royal Arch degree, since they were the creators of the objects associated with the Ark which are

brought to light in this Degree.

### Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai

We are familiar with these characters, since it is Jeshua who governs the Chapter as High Priest, Zerubbabel who assists him as King, and Haggai who competed the Grand Council as Scribe. In fact, in the Old Testament, Haggai is Prophet to Zerubbabel, and it is he who rouses Zerubbabel to speak with King Darius to seek permission to return to Jerusalem, as we read in the Book of Haggai. However, the Bible is unclear whether he actually returns with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, both of whom lead the remnants of the Israelites back to Jerusalem. We read of Zerubbabel in the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 Chronicles, and in the Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. The clearest description of the journey and rebuilding of the Temple are to be found in Ezra, here returning under the authority of King Cyrus of Persia, rather than Darius.



Zerubbabel receives authority from King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem.

We also find brief mentions in two Apocryphal books, Sirach and I Esdras. It is in Esdras that we find the famous debate over the power of wine, women, and the king, in which Zerubbabel declares that Truth is greater than all things, and in terms of our ritual this joins his name to the concept of truth, so that the ring or signet with which he is presented by Cyrus as evidence of his royal commission is called the “ring of Zerubbabel, or Truth.”

As we saw above, this is the Third, or Grand and Royal Lodge presided over by Jeshua, Zerubbabel and Haggai.

In fact, it is worth perhaps noting that, since we are descended from Operative Masons, in all three cases the rulers meet in Lodges, not Palaces, Temples, or Throne Rooms.

### The Signet

The use of a signet ring, which bore a seal, was a

common method of sealing treaties and official documents from early in man’s history. A document would be prepared, then melted wax to form a seal, which would attest to the document’s authenticity. This was both an enduring symbol of authority, and also a useful measure when the monarch was often illiterate and incapable of writing his own name.



Signet ring and seal from [www.foxfirejewelers.com](http://www.foxfirejewelers.com)

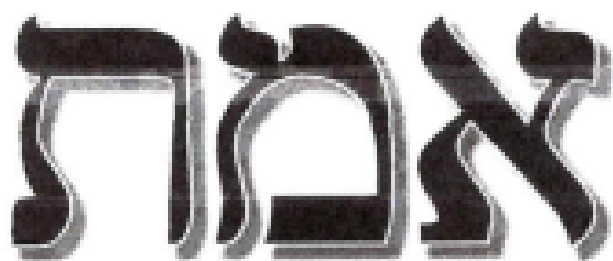
As a symbol of authority, the ruler’s signet was often reproduced, either perfectly or with qualifying signs, and circulated to those who had authority over regions of his land, so that satraps, princes or minor rulers could issue local edicts in the name of the king. This led to the practice of giving a ring bearing the monarch’s seal to those who needed to travel across his lands, as a sign to those guarding the cities or places of passage that he traveled with official permission. While official papers were often issued for this purpose, a ring indicated the travelers had the personal permission of the ruler and therefore should be allowed to pass without hindrance.

Note that the pharaoh gave a signet ring to Joseph when he put him in charge of protecting Egypt from the predicted famine (Genesis 41: 41).

In The Royal Arch the signet represents the fact that the traveler has the permission of Zerubbabel. This is of course unlikely, since there is no reason a prince would give his ring to a latecomer to the Exodus from Babylon to Jerusalem, nor even a copy of it. However, in the Degree the ring has a second purpose: to remind us that Zerubbabel stands for Truth, and that by implication those who bear his ring are both seeking an audience with the Sanhedrin for a high purpose, and that their endeavors will bring about the discovery of Truth, or the True Word. In this it is a commonly used plot device, where a small object is a harbinger of future action.

Where does this idea come from? In Hebrew, the word ‘truth’ is emet or emeth. Jewish sages noted

that these three letters, aleph, mem, and tav (remember Hebrew is written right to left) are also the last letters of the three words which conclude the account of Creation, ‘bara Elohim la’ asot’). These three letters (aleph, mem, and tav) also mark the beginning, middle and end of the Hebrew alphabet. According to the Jewish sages, “the seal of God is Truth”, a phrase which should be very familiar to us by now. In this context, emet is seen as the experience of self-fulfillment, of completing God’s plan for mankind. In one Kabbalistic commentary, it is described as being “the power to realize one’s own deepest potential, which is in fact the power of the Jewish soul to bring about the ultimate realization of God’s potential.”



It is interesting to see just how profound the background to this symbol is the Royal Arch truly is. It is yet another proof that these rituals were not lightly thrown together but were assembled by men who were deeply versed in all manner of religious, spiritual, esoteric and historical subjects, who were determined to preserve this ancient wisdom in our rituals. We are fortunate indeed to have this treasury of philosophical and practical teachings to study.

Candlestick, Altar of Incense, Breastplate and Ark of the Covenant

If you read Exodus Chapter 25, you will find a detailed description of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Breastplate, and the Seven-Branched Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread (which oddly is not mentioned at all in our ritual). Chapters 26 and 27 read almost like a modern craftwork manual in its detailed description of the building of the Tabernacle, adding that these plans were given to Moses along with the Ten Commandments on top of Mount Sinai.

The Breastplate – or Breastplate of Judgment to give its full title – which is still worn by the Presiding Officer in Most Chapters is described as a plate of gold into which are set four rows of three stones, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Seven-branched Candlestick – Menorah – was made according to a design provided by God to



Moses. It is perhaps interesting to note that all the elements of the candlestick were to be made of beaten gold. As well as being a precious metal, it is also an inert metal and a very good conductor. One may perhaps wonder how such an imposing item could be made out of solid gold, since the Israelites were meant to have fled during the night from Egypt, and it would be hard to imagine their first thought was to how much gold they could carry, especially since they were slaves and therefore unlikely to possess much. This is awkwardly handled in the Bible in Exodus 3:22, where it says God told Moses to get the Israelites to ‘borrow’ as much silver, gold and cloth as they can manage to obtain from their Egyptian neighbors, which is later put towards the building of the Tabernacle. This ‘borrowing’ is rather like that college roommate we all dreaded, who seemed to think our belongings were also his to use or wear!

One may also remember that, during Moses’ absence communing with God, they persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf out of their jewelry, which was later melted down into ash and the Israelites made to drink it in water (Exodus 32:1 – 20). It is also noteworthy that the seven arms are to be decorated with almond blossoms and almond buds – reminiscent of Aaron’s wand which was later placed in the Ark. By the time the Menorah was placed in the Temple, it had nine companions, since we are told in II Chronicles 4:7 that King Solomon (who did nothing by halves) had no less than ten Seven-branched Candlesticks placed in the Temple.

The Menorah was filled with the purest olive oil and was never allowed to go out. This practice is continued in many religious traditions, including Christian churches and synagogue, as a symbol of the eternal presence of God within the sanctuary. It is also seen as a memorial to the dead, where the eternal flame is often present at Tombs to the Unknown Soldier seen in many countries (incidentally the first eternal flame ever to commemorate an individual as opposed to an

unknown warrior was that placed upon the tomb of President John F. Kennedy).



Table of Shewbread

For the sake of completeness, although it is not mentioned in our ritual, the Table of Shewbread bore twelve loaves of bread, made of flour according to a recipe known to the Priests, and placed in two columns of six, surmounted by cups of frankincense. The Table was placed to the North of the Altar of Incense, while the Menorah was placed to its South. The bread was replaced weekly, and wine was poured over them, in a ceremony which reminds us of the offering of the first High Priest mentioned in the Bible, Melchizedek, to Abram (Genesis 14:18), which will be well-known to those who have received the Order of High Priesthood, a prerequisite to being allowed to officiate as the High Priest of a Chapter, and which in New York state is performed once a year during the Annual Convocation of Grand Chapter.

The Altar of Incense is described in Exodus Chapter 30. It was double cubical altar set immediately before the veil in front of the Holy of Holies, and incense was continually burned upon it. Like the Ark it was made of Shittim Wood, which is a species of Acacia, and as every Mason knows a symbol of immortality. Both were covered with a



Altar of Incense: note the rings and staves similar to the Ark of the Covenant.

layer of gold, and both the Ark and altar had rings set into them and two gold-covered staves, presumably to carry them in processions, not unlike the God Thrones of ancient Egypt, on which they were probably model, since the Israelites had lived in captivity in Egypt for many years and would have logically drawn much of their religious symbolism from that country's practices and customs.

The Ark of the Covenant we saw for the first time in the Most Excellent Master degree, when it was 'safely seated' in the Holy of Holies during that ceremony.



The presence of the Ark of the Covenant in the Royal Arch ritual is largely Masonic license, since there is no reference to it in the Bible after the sack and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is also not featured upon Trajan's column in Rome, which commemorates the sack of the Temple in C.E. 66, in which only the Menorah is pictured. There is a telling story in the Talmud, the authoritative body of Jewish tradition, of a priest finding a loose stone on the Temple Mount and, realizing it is where the Ark was hidden, runs to tell his colleagues, but dies on the way. The moral is that the Ark is not yet meant

to be found. This common tradition of something remaining lost until it is meant to be found can also be seen in the legend of King Arthur, and, of course, the Lost Word.

However, despite the debate over whether it featured in the Second Temple built by Zerubbabel, its importance as a Masonic symbol is profound, since it is the vehicle by which the True Word is recovered: it bears the Word upon its exterior, while within is found a cipher through which is learned how to pronounce that Word.

The form of the Ark is also different to that used in the Most Excellent Master degree. While the one used in that ceremony is closer to the precise descriptions in Exodus, including the Mercy Seat and the two Cherubim, the one used in the Holy Royal Arch degree omits the Mercy Seat and Cherubim; perhaps to make the story of finding the characters upon it and removing the lid to discover its contents simpler to follow.

While the High Priest traditionally wears the breastplate at all meetings of the Chapter, this version of the Ark of the Covenant, Menorah and Altar of Incense are normally only used during the Royal Arch Degree Ceremony itself.

In the ritual, it is assumed that the Menorah and Altar of Incense were brought back to Jerusalem from Babylon by the exiles as part of the furnishings of the temple handed over by King Darius; while the Ark of the Covenant was found beneath the ruins of the Temple during the ceremony, to accomplish the words of the Master Mason Degree: “until the wisdom of future generations discovers and brings to light the True Word.”

### **The Prophecy**

As the Candidates come before the High Council, the High Priest reads from Haggai 2:1–9, 23.

This is a bridge passage, which recalls how Zerubbabel the Prince and Jeshua the High Priest were inspired to lead the remnants of the exiled Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and Temple. It recalls God’s Covenant with his people when He led them out of exile in Egypt, and now reflected in the journey out of exile in Babylon. It is interesting to note that, in the passage, we are told that God said: “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.” However, we also read in Ezra 3:12 – 13 that: “many of the priest and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for

joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.” In other words, those who were too young to remember the glory of the first temple shouted for joy, but those who remembered King Solomon’s Temple wept when they saw the Second Temple being erected by Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

In our ritual, the Scribe is Haggai. In the Bible, however, he is called a Prophet; and in the English ritual the three members of the High Council are Zerubbabel the King, Jeshua the Priest and Haggai the Prophet. The English ritual also had two scribes – Ezra and Nehemiah, which reflects the fact that they both wrote about the second Temple, notwithstanding the fact that they were by no means contemporaries!

### **The Task & the Sojourners**

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In many versions of the Holy Royal Arch Ritual the three Candidates are referred to as Sojourners. The term ‘sojourner’ means someone who is a traveler but is staying temporarily in one place. Thus, the Candidates, who have traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem, are now invited to rest for a while, and assist in the work being undertaken. They are told that the only work remaining is menial and involves clearing away the rubbish in order to lay the new foundations for the Second Temple. Symbolically, this indicates that, although they have just proven themselves to be Most Excellent Masters, or the most sophisticated and accomplished Masons, they are told they must undertake the type of work normally given to Entered Apprentices. However, they willingly accept the task in hand, for they have been taught that “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”: and we know that in a little while these humble sojourners will indeed be Exalted (the Ceremony of the Holy Royal arch is sometimes called ‘Exaltation’) to become the Masters of the Veils.

The task itself, clearing away rubbish in order to



The foundations of the First Temple still stand.

lay the new foundation, is of course symbolic. In several continental versions of this degree, including the Scottish Rectified Rite and the Rite of Strict Observance, the Latin motto associated with this degree is ‘Adhuc stat’, meaning “It still stands”. This is accompanied by a Tracing Board depicting the fallen Temple, but with the pavement and the bases of the two columns still standing. Here we can see the Fallen Temple as a version of Hiram Abif. The man was murdered, but the Inner Man, that part which makes him immortal could not be destroyed. Similarly, the physical Temple may lie in ruins, but that essential part, the immortal soul of the Temple, still exists, and this is why the ceremony has the Sojourners enter the very heart of the edifice in order to discover the great secret, that eternal part of Temple which man alone cannot destroy.

Again, if the Temple is a symbol for our own bodies, now dead and corrupt, what is this rubbish which we are clearing away? It is the accretion of bad behavior, dissipation, sinfulness, pride, envy, indeed all those attributes which we have been working to chip away in order to reveal the perfect ashlar within! At last we understand: Truth lies within. It is not some distant external goal. It was been within us all the time, but we failed to recognize it.

### The Working Tools

The tools the Sojourners are given are the crow (bar), pickaxe and the spade. We are told that the crowbar is used to lift objects of great weight – in this case the capstone of the vault. The pickaxe is used to loosen the soil and the spade is used to dig up and cast aside the rubbish.

We are also told that these refer to lifting prejudice and passion from our minds, loosening the hold of sin and folly, or vice and ignorance, and preparing the ground upon which to build the spiritual and moral life of his Second temple.



Sojourners’ tools.

In the English ritual, their description is rather more evocative:

- ◆ “The stoke of the pick reminds us of the Last Trump, when the grave shall be shaken and loosened and give up its dead; the crow, being an emblem of uprightness, points out the erect manner in which we shall arise on that awful day to meet our tremendous though merciful Judge; while the manner in which the body is laid in the grave is depicted by the work of the shovel.”

It is perhaps interesting to note that in the Popular National Songster, a collection of patriotic and other songs written in the early 1800s, one song, called Patriotic Diggers, which was meant to evoke a sense of class equality:

- ◆ Johnny Bull beware, keep at a proper distance,  
Else we’ll make you stare at our firm resistance,  
Let alone the lads who are freedom tasting,  
Recollect our dads gave you once a basting.

Chorus:

Pick-axe, shovel, spade, crow-bar, hoe and barrow,  
Better not invade, Yankees have the marrow.

To protect our rights, ‘gainst your flints and triggers,  
See on yonder heights our patriotic diggers,  
Men of every age, colour, rank, profession,  
Ardently engag’d, labour in secession.

Chorus:

Pick-axe, shovel, spade, crow-bar, etc...

...

Here the Mason builds freedom’s shrine of glory,  
While the Painter gilds the immortal story;  
Blacksmiths catch the flame, Grocers feel the

spirit,  
Printers share the fame and record their merit.

Chorus:

Pick-axe, shovel, spade, crow-bar, etc...

It is difficult not to be struck by what appears to be clear references to Masonry hidden in this song. Firstly, there is the overt claim that Masons were responsible for freedom and the war against John Bull, or the English. Though other traders are listed, their function is rather to extol and preserve the tale of the Masons' efforts. It is also interesting to note that the chorus lists the pick-axe, spade (shovel is but a variation) and crowbar. It also says: "Yankees have the marrow". While this may be a stretch, it would seem to be a close hint at possession of a secret. In *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590 – 1710*, by David Stevenson, he says (page 149): "The form marrow bone was also influential in the eighteenth century and was incorporated with the Hiram Legend: the secret taken from the corpse was a bone, with the marrow or secret in it."



The sword and trowel

Traditionally there are two other tools which were used by the builders of the Second temple. While not overtly mentioned in the Preston Webb Royal Arch Ritual, they are commonly found in almost all other variants of the Royal Arch theme, and are even mentioned in the Cryptic Degrees, which once said alongside the Capitular Degrees. These are the sword and trowel, and are taken from Nehemiah 4:14, which says: "The laborers who carried the loads worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other." So, the workmen carried a

trowel with which they rebuilt the Temple, and a sword in the other hand, with which they defended themselves from their enemies who sought to prevent them from finishing.



Remember the two towers in front of cathedrals (here Notre Dame in Paris) reproduce Boaz and Jachin, or the pylons before the Egyptian Temples....

Symbolically the sword and trowel also represent the Tree of Life, reflected in the two columns of King Solomon's Temple. The sword represents the Pillar of Severity, while the trowel indicates the Pillar of Mercy. Recall its introduction as a Working Tool of the Third Degree, when we are told it is used for: "spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection, that cement which unites us into one sacred band of friends and Brothers."

### The Inventions or Discoveries

We learn, not surprisingly, that there are three discoveries. The first is the Keystone, the second the three Squares, and the third the Ark of the Covenant. Each discovery links it to one of the preceding Capitular Degrees.

Firstly, the Keystone is found, which was discovered among the rubbish in the Mark Degree, and is one more discovered among the rubbish in this Degree.

Secondly the three Squares are discovered, which reminds us of the Virtual Past Master degree, since the Square jewel is the insignia of Mastership.

Finally, Ark of the Covenant is found; and as we learned in Hiram King of Tyre's speech in the Most Excellent Master degree: "although the structure has been finished, the temple is not complete, for it cannot be the House of God until the Ark of the Covenant has been placed therein."

For Masons, while the discovery of the Ark is of great importance, it is almost incidental in our story to the most important discovery of all: the true Word.



Edward Kelley, John Dee's Assistant, reanimating a corpse.

The True Word is written within the very heart of the temple. In the Mark Degree we Hear Revelations 2:17 quoted: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

We learn that, just as man has his true name written within, so does the Temple, and by finding

and saying this word the Temple – like man – may be brought back to spiritual life.

The power of a name has been taught across the centuries. In magical lore, it was taught that, in order to control a person, angel or even demon one needed to know its true name. This is why, in the Rite of Exorcism, one of the priest's main tasks is to get inimical spirit possessing the victim to divulge its true name. Once the priest has this he can go about the task of expelling it form the person it is occupying. Vodoun has a similar ritual for controlling another person through knowing his or her name. Even seemingly harmless Victorian love spells involved writing the name of the object of desire upon a piece of parchment and performing some innocent spells over it, then either wearing the paper in a locket or burying it in a place the desired one would walk over. Angels, demons, sprites, elementals, even gods have been summoned through the ages by evocation, which meant using their name. Even our fairy stories and nursery rhymes reflect this action: think of Rumpelstiltskin, or the Wicked Witch's mirror in Sleeping Beauty to cite just two examples.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in this story the name which will reestablish the Temple is found at the very heart of the ruins, and that uttering it will bring the whole edifice back to life.



## GRAND CHAPTER RITUAL PROFICIENCY

# CONGRATULATIONS!

Christopher A. Wehrenberg

Wilson Chapter No. 75

Part 1

Complete Opening and Closing of a Chapter



# THE GENERAL GRAND CHAPTER OF ROYAL ARCH MASONS INTERNATIONAL

Organized October 24, 1797

Post Office Box 34037 - Little Rock, Arkansas - USA 72203-4037

Email: [ggs.dbrowning@ggcrami.org](mailto:ggs.dbrowning@ggcrami.org)

## 73<sup>rd</sup> Triennial Convocation



### Official Call

To all members of the  
General Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons, International

The General Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons  
International will convene its 73<sup>rd</sup> Triennial Convocation  
on **Monday, August 31, 2026, at 8:00 a.m. EDT** for the  
business at hand at the **Capitol Hilton Hotel** in the city of  
Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Registration information will be [sent](#) to the Grand Secretaries  
and posted on the dedicated Triennial website:  
**[yrtriennial.org](http://yrtriennial.org)**.

All resolutions effecting changes to the Constitution and Standing Regulations of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International, in order to be considered by the delegates at this Triennial convocation, must be received **on or before February 28, 2026**, in the office of the General Grand Secretary, P.O. Box 34037, Little Rock, AR 72203 USA.

Given under my hand,  
this tenth day of December 2025  
In the city of Little Rock, Arkansas:

**Teko A. Foly**  
General Grand High Priest

Attest:

**Dick E. Browning**  
General Grand Secretary



## MEMBER RETENTION



This will be my last article regarding membership retention. If you have gleaned even one thing from my wild rantings, over these past few months, I view that my job is complete. I have talked about learning skills that you are not good at, and this writing was about me as much as it was bought you. For me it was really tough putting these words to print, I have procrastinated, skipped the Christmas issue, but I gained growth and self-improvement through this painful process. I would like to extend my thanks to the editor of the Beacon for the reminders and gentle nudges to mentor me along the way and help keep me writing. So, with that being said, lets get on to this month's article.

So, what will YOU do for your Councils in the coming year? Learn a ritual part? Become a Master of Ceremonies (MC) for a Table Council? Cook a meal for a meeting? Give some Masonic education for a meeting? Encourage yourself to do at least one "new to you" thing that you are not that great at for your Council this next York Rite year. I know what you are thinking, so...

First, encourage yourself to stay away from the can not's. Convince yourself to excel by not saying negative self-defeating comments like... "I am not good at cooking, ritual work, planning, leading, or I will never be able to fill 'their' shoes". To him that overcometh, right? ... Let's get out there and Overcometh. We get better by practicing. You can Do it! (In my bad voice imitation from the movie Waterboy).

When you take a position, earn your story. Get that satisfaction in your heart. Any position you take should have a story behind it of what you did to make it better. Accomplish some small things that do not warrant or gain recognition. What is a position served without a memory of what you did to better improve said position? Even if you fall short of making a positive change, you will know that you made the best attempt that you could and have the satisfaction that you did all you could. Don't leave yourself with only excuses of why you did not excel in the position you accepted.

Reach out to build relationships, be more observant of new folks, bring them into conversations, sit them with your group. We as leaders and peers should look to take advantage of opportunities to bring people into our team. Put them

in with an experienced group on any project. Find what they like and where they might fit in best.

Mentoring is important. We jump on those with initiative and often overwhelm them with too many duties. On the other foot, those that require a little work or guidance, we often do not take the time. Step up and give mentoring and feedback to our new folks. It doesn't take that much time or effort. Are we really too busy to answer a question or take a little effort to help them grow. Is there a lack of assistance for other reasons that we should self-reflect on ourselves?

Let's not play "dog eat dog". Our Fraternity is much smaller than it was in the past and there is a plethora of positions available for those who want to serve. This is not the workplace where things could be stagnated; we should be moving this fraternity forward. Selflessness brings more rewards than selfishness. You may not receive instant gratification. However, you will have something which nothing earthly gives or can destroy. A calm sunshine in your soul and a heartfelt joy. We should all strive to live on in the remembrance of others for building the brotherhood and doing good.

Do not shut down initiative, especially in the new Companions. Just because your Council knows it does not work, be receptive and have a conversation. The next idea may be the Future Success of your Council. Use some Critical Thinking Skills and questions to show the new motivated guy his input is important, but it is okay to share the challenges you have faced in the past. However, remember to show compassion when giving feedback. When a new Companion comes to you with an idea. Do not throw it back at them to handle on their own. If you are unable to assist them in their task, get them with another Companion who can assist them in completing their task. Be honest and look back to the Crucial Conversations article to give honest and objective feedback.

Do your part so things fall in place. Look at the strengths and weaknesses of all your Companions and give them opportunities to improve. Team building and group development is in direct correlation to Retention. Each of us making ourselves better, makes the Council better, makes the Grand Council better, and meets our core philosophy of making Good Men Better. God Bless.



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# The Pickaxe and Work of Discovery

*A Royal Arch Educational Reflection by: F. Brad Fowler*

Among the many symbols found within the Royal Arch degree, some are immediately recognized and frequently discussed: the Keystone, the Triple Tau, and the Sacred Name. However, other tools appear in the narrative whose symbolism is equally meaningful, though less often explored. One such tool is the pickaxe.

At first glance, the pickaxe may seem like a simple working tool. In operable labor, it is used for breaking hard ground, loosening stone, and clearing away debris. Unlike finishing tools such as the chisel or shaping tools like the gavel, the pickaxe is utilized at the beginning of the work, when the laborer must penetrate the surface to access what lies beneath.

This makes the pickaxe a fitting symbol for one of the central lessons of Royal Arch Masonry: the work of discovery. In the Royal Arch narrative, the Companions are engaged in rebuilding the Temple. This work is not merely construction; before rebuilding can commence, the remnants of the past must be cleared away. Stones need to be removed, foundations exposed, and the earth itself examined. It is through this labor that something unexpected is revealed. What had long been hidden beneath the surface came to light once more.

The pickaxe represents the effort required to achieve that discovery. Truth is seldom found on the surface; it often lies buried beneath layers of neglect, misunderstanding, or forgotten history. Just as the workmen in the Royal Arch must break through rubble and hardened ground, so too must Masons be willing to engage in patient labor to search for deeper understanding.

This symbolism reflects an important principle of Masonic education: light is not simply given to us. It is uncovered through effort, reflection, and perseverance. The Royal Arch teaches that the greatest discoveries often arise when we engage in the humble labor of clearing away the debris that time has left behind.

Moreover, there is a deeper personal lesson within the symbolism of the pickaxe. Each of us carries layers of assumptions, habits, and limitations in our lives that can obscure the truth. Sometimes, self-improvement requires us to dig beneath the surface of our own character. We must examine our motives, question our beliefs, and remove the

obstacles that prevent us from seeing clearly. This labor is not always easy, but it is essential for growth.

In this context, the pickaxe symbolizes intellectual and spiritual courage. It reminds us that the search for truth requires effort and encourages us to dig deeper rather than remain satisfied with surface appearances.

Another lesson to draw from this humble tool is that discovery in the Royal Arch does not occur because a single individual searches alone; it happens because Companions work together in common labor. The task of rebuilding the Temple calls for cooperation, patience, and shared purpose. Similarly, the pursuit of Masonic knowledge is strengthened when we study, discuss, and reflect together.

Thus, the pickaxe serves as a reminder that Masonry is not merely about preserving ancient traditions; it is about continuing the work of discovery. Every generation of Masons must be willing to examine the foundations, remove the rubble of misunderstanding, and rediscover the truths that lie beneath.

When we reflect on the symbolism of this simple tool, we remember that the most meaningful revelations are often uncovered through steady and faithful labor.

Sometimes, the greatest discoveries begin with the simple act of striking the ground and beginning to dig.



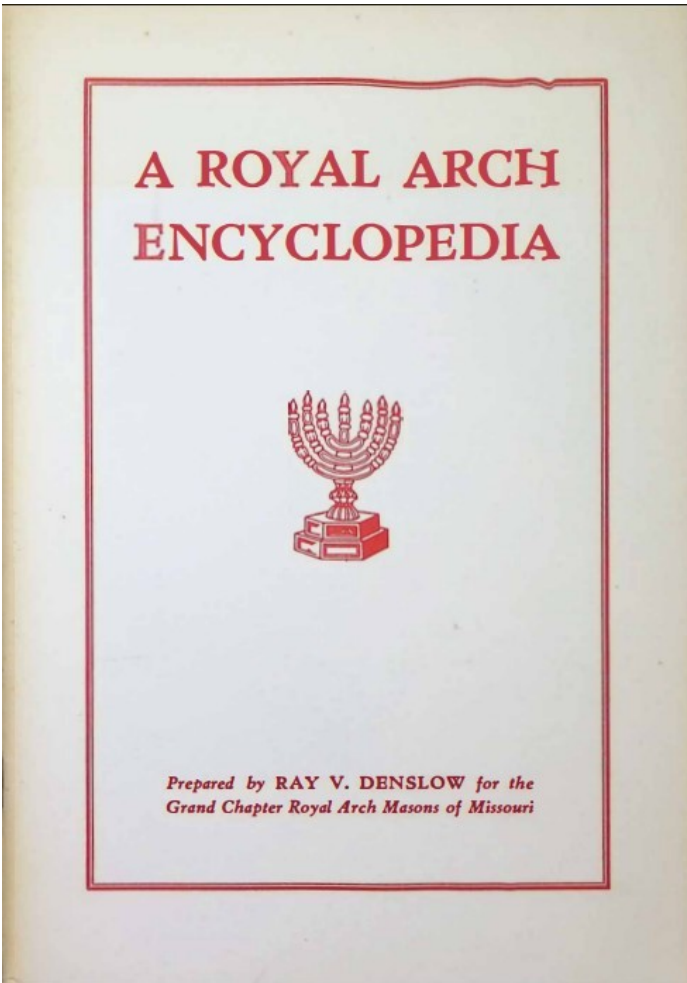


Did you know that the Grand York Rite of Missouri has several books on its website that can be read electronically for free. Here is a list of such books with hyperlinks to those locations. Enjoy the free stuff.—Editor

encyclopedia" for the material is in condensed form and the volume, if we may term it that, is readily accessible.

If the chapter of Royal Arch Masons is to be of service in educating Masonic brethren, it behooves its members, and especially its officers, to acquire "such a knowledge of education as to enable them to impart this education to lesser informed brethren."

Naturally, there are some things inadvertently omitted; there may be some inaccuracies for the human mind is fallible. We shall welcome suggestions-and even criticism.

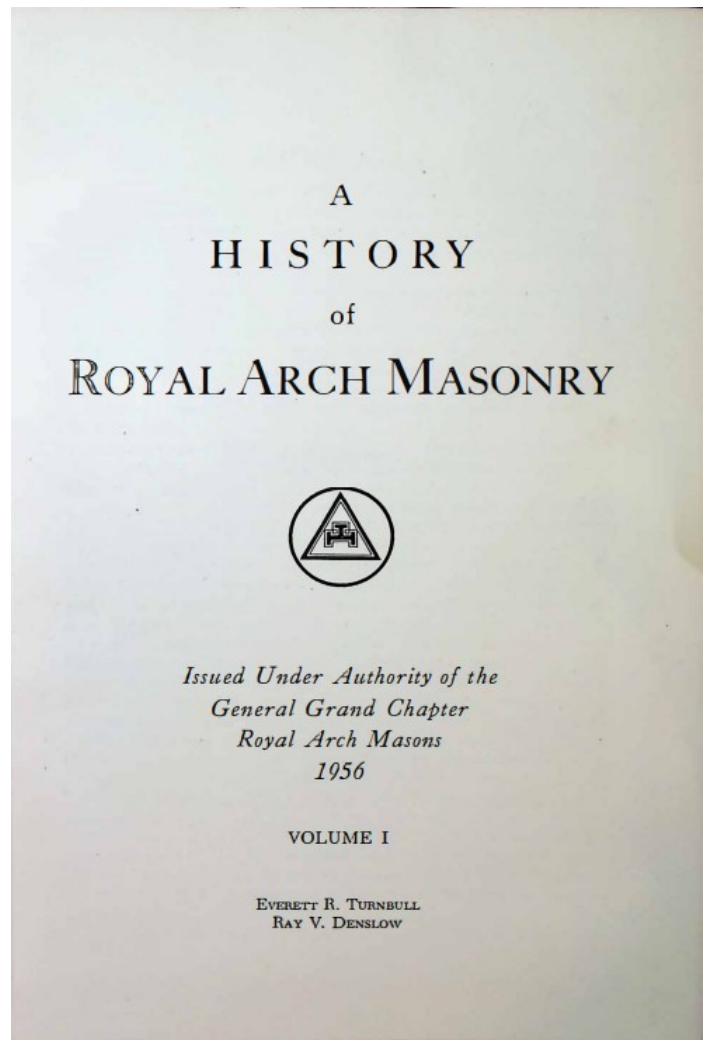


**A Royal Arch Encyclopedia**  
**RAY V. DENSLOW**

This encyclopedia of the Capitular Rite, Royal Arch Masonry, has been prepared in response to many demands for information concerning this particular branch of Ancient Craft Masonry.

There are hundreds of volumes dealing with various phases of our rite, and there are several encyclopedias in which are valuable references. But we are living in a busy era and our members find it impossible to take the time to look up needed references.

This might be called a "busy man's



The story of today is the history of tomorrow. When that story is written there is sufficient information to make a history.

Our Masonic ancestors, whether through indolence, or a fear of making public their secrets, failed to leave sufficient records whereby the true story of Freemasonry could ever be written. This seems to be particularly true when we come to writing the story of Royal Arch Masonry. Confronted by lack of original material, and unable to spend our time in the libraries of the grand lodges of Europe, we have been compelled to rely largely on the books, documents, and certificates which are available for examination.

The members of the original committee charged with the preparation of this history are no longer among the living, for that committee was appointed May 28, 1934.

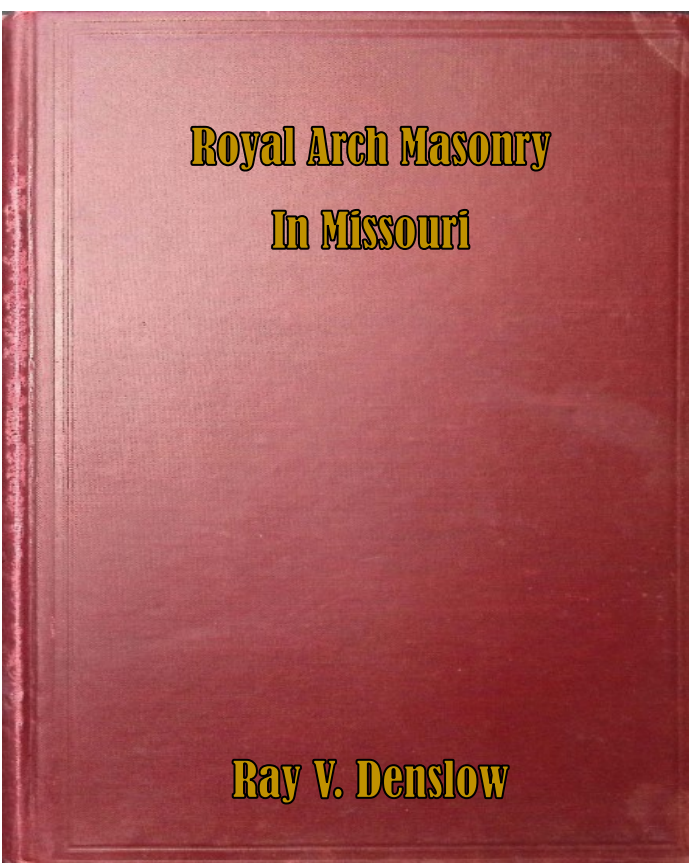
That committee did little towards acquiring material; after their death, others were appointed to the work. The last appointed committee consisted of Charles C. Hunt (Iowa), chairman (on whom we had depended), Ray V. Denslow (Missouri), and Everett R. Turnbull (Illinois).

We believe that in publishing this history we have supplied a real need of American Freemasons and the Royal Arch Craft, for no volume has been published on this side of the Atlantic which would give Royal Arch Masons of the Western Hemisphere the history of the Royal Arch degree and its associated degrees.

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

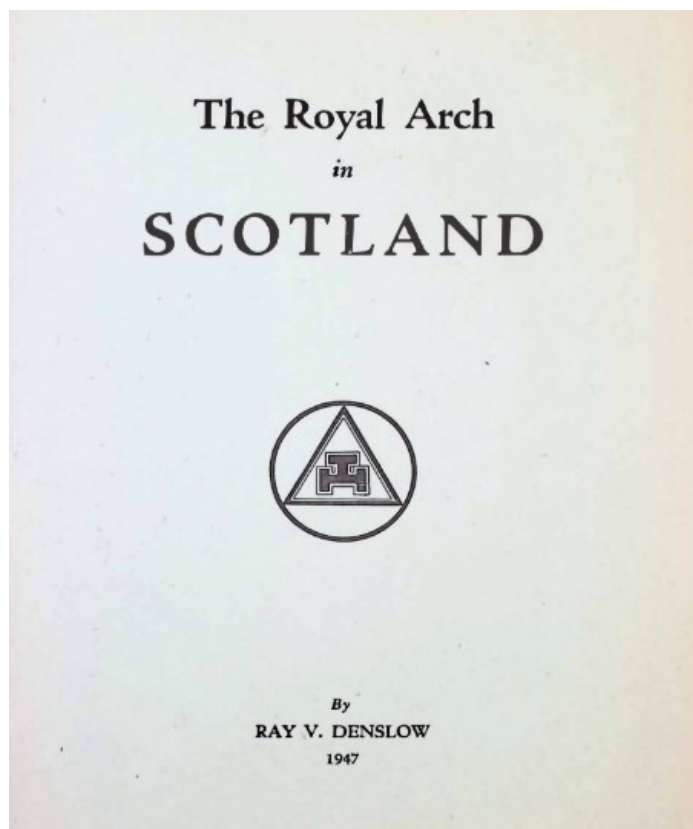
[Volume 3](#)



Your Grand Chapter ranks high among other Jurisdictions, not so much numerically, but in influence. One has only to read the fraternal correspondence of other Jurisdictions in years past to see the influence yielded by such outstanding leaders and thinkers as Anthony O'Sullivan, George Frank Gouley, Wm. H. Mayo, Robert F. Stevenson, Wm. F. Kuhn, Corona H. Briggs, and others, to realize this fact.

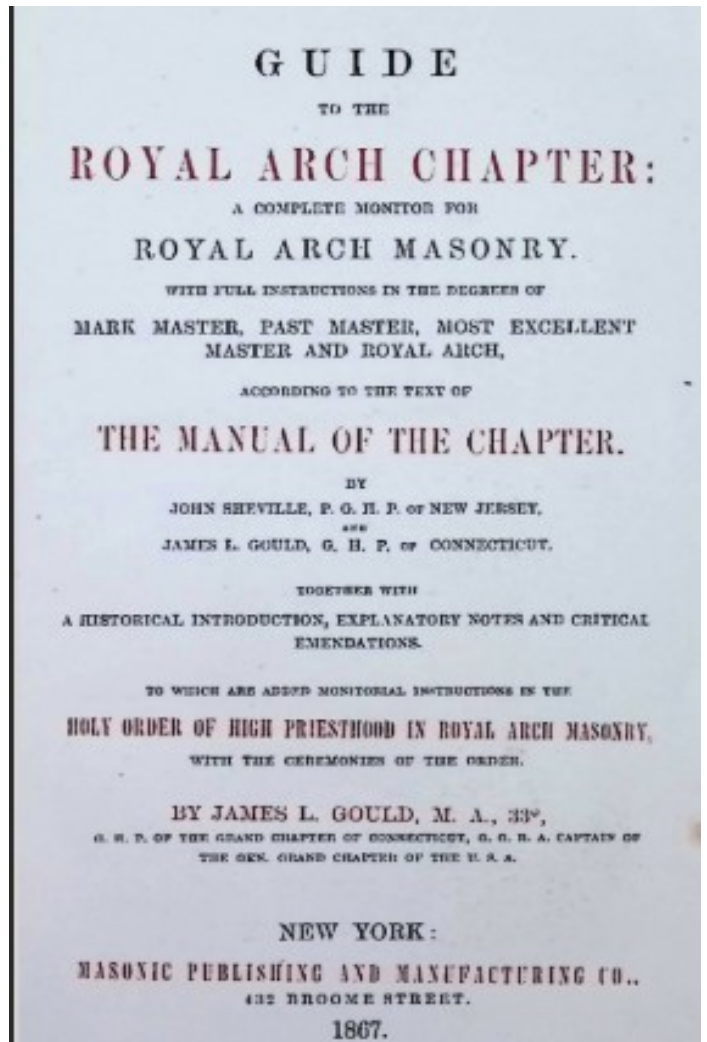
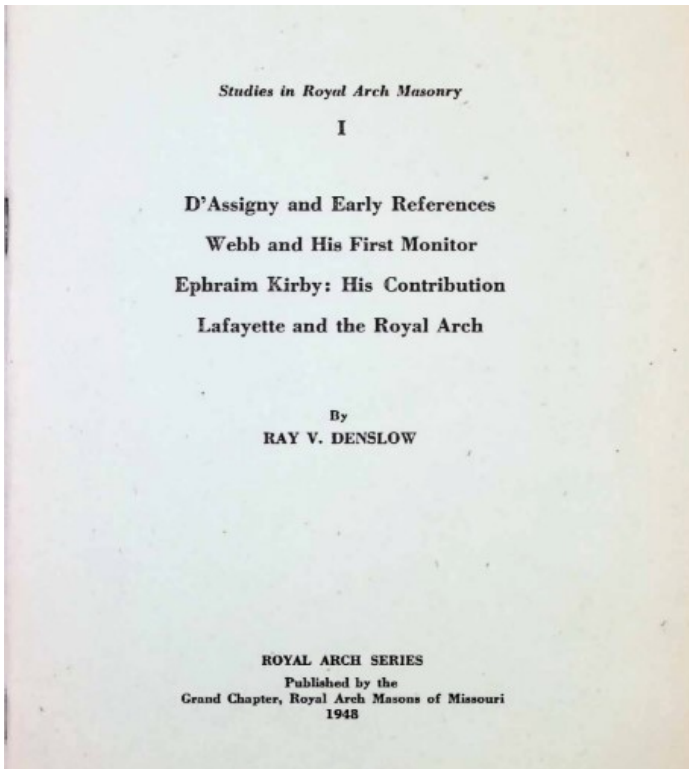
[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)



In England the Supreme Grand Chapter is, and always has been, very closely related to the Grand Lodge of England, officers in one often being officers in the other. This is not true in Scotland where both bodies have always been sovereign and independent organizations, although Grand Officers of Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter maintain excellent and cordial relations, and the communications and convocations of each body usually find a large representation from both bodies in attendance. The Grand Lodge of Scotland has never made claim to any of the degrees conferred by the Grand Chapter of Scotland and has never questioned its jurisdiction.

Thirty-five years ago (1912) the Grand Lodge of Scotland, being asked to define its attitude towards other groups operating in Scotland and making claim as to their Masonic character, published in its proceedings of February, 1912, the names of the organizations recognized by it.



Ireland might well be the place of origin of the degree known as the Royal Arch, if we consider the first references to the degree, for most of the early references are from that country. The well known Robert Freke Gould has supplied us with the first contemporary account of a Masonic procession in which certain references, distinctly Royal Arch in character, are found. It concerns an account of the public observance of "St. John's Day" by the Freemasons belonging to the bodies at Youghall and proves that some form of Royal Arch Masonry must have existed in those parts as early as 1743, and very probably several years previous to that time for the reference would indicate that it was well known at that time.

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 3](#)

[Volume 4](#)

**GRAND CHAPTER  
RITUAL  
PROFICIENCY**

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

M.:.E.:.C.:. Kevin Michael Ritter  
Springfield Chapter No. 15  
Part 1  
Complete Opening and Closing of a Chapter

The unexpected favor with which the appearance of the "Manual of the Chapter" was greeted has induced the author to comply with the frequently expressed desire for the publication of that little work in a larger form, better suited to the use of the older members of the Fraternity. The original work was presented to the Loyal Craft, in the hope that it might call attention to the ancient ritual of the Chapter Degrees, in what may be properly called the American Rite. The text of that work has been carefully preserved, and such explanatory notes have been added as seemed to be necessary to render the present volume not only a complete Text Book of the several degrees according to the ancient ritual, but also a Guide for every Companion to a proper understanding of the ceremonies and symbolism of the Capitular degrees.







## Our Leadership

R.A.R.A. is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors, all of whom are Royal Arch Masons. The General Grand High Priest serves as the President, supported by Regional Coordinators and State Ambassadors who oversee public relations, fundraising, and community engagement efforts.

## Our Mission: Advancing CAPD Research

Since its inception, R.A.R.A. has aimed to improve the lives of children and individuals with CAPD. Our mission is to fund research that fosters understanding, identifies solutions, and paves the way toward a cure.

## Your Contributions at Work

R.A.R.A. awards approximately \$500,000 annually to fund research on CAPD. Researchers are rigorously vetted and must provide regular progress reports. Many of our grantees have achieved significant breakthroughs, advancing early detection, better treatments, and understanding the causes of CAPD.

**\$1.6 Million in Grants → \$43.2 Million in Research Funding Through Matching Programs 100%**

## 50 Years of Making a Difference

- ⇒ Funded over 50 emerging scientists since 2011.
- ⇒ Contributed \$1.6 million to the Hearing Health Foundation, enabling \$43.2 million in matching grants.
- ⇒ Formed a strong partnership with Autism Speaks, resulting in over \$1 million in pledged funding and the first Royal Arch Masons Fellowship in 2016.
- ⇒ Supported grantees whose research has been recognized by prestigious organizations like the National Institutes of Health and the Department

of Defense.

Hearing Health Foundation (HHF) is grateful to Royal Arch Research Assistance (RARA) for their most generous support of Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD) research as part of our Emerging Research Grants (ERG) program.

Researchers funded by RARA have made tremendous strides toward a better understanding of CAPD, as well as developing treatments and therapies that can benefit anyone affected by the disorder, from children to the elderly.

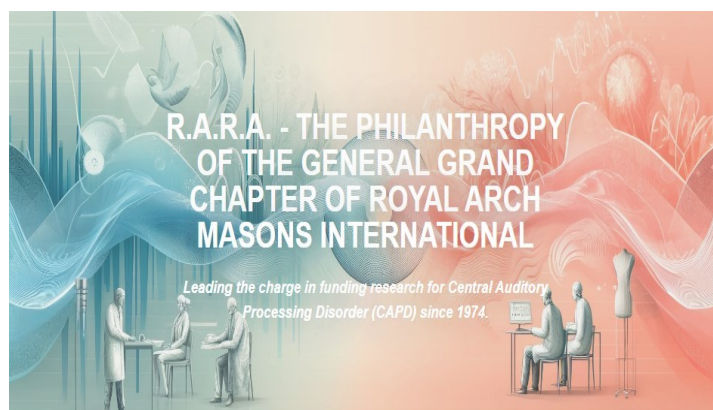
Many RARA-supported HHF grantees have gone on to receive awards from the following federal institutions:

- ⇒ NIH (National Institutes of Health) including the NIDCD (National Institutes on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders), the NINDS (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke), and the NIGMS (National Institute of General Medical Sciences)
- ⇒ NSF (National Science Foundation)
- ⇒ CDMRP (Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs)
- ⇒ DoD (Department of Defense)
- ⇒ VA (Veterans Administration)

We are grateful for your investment and trust in our rigorous grant review process. We look forward to continuing our relationship and furthering CAPD research for years to come. Follow the links at right to learn about RARA grantees' projects and accomplishments by year.

Contributions can be made out to Grand Chapter of Missouri with RARA in the memo section and sent to:

**RARA, MGYR Office  
107 S. Williams Street  
Fayette, MO 65248**





The Cryptic Masons Medical Research Foundation, (CMMRF), was incorporated in the state of Oklahoma, March 6, 1986. The driving force behind this new corporation was Most Puissant General Grand Master Ben Mandlebaum, of the General Grand Council, Cryptic Masons International. Companion Joe Lewis, Attorney at Law, was instrumental in quickly getting the Foundation a tax-exempt status. CMMRF also had a tax attorney, James A. Hogue, PMIGM in Oklahoma. These men generously donated their time to the initial start-up of the Foundation. Earlier, at the meeting of the "General Grand Council Benevolent Foundation, Inc. held on November 11, 1985, Marion Keith Crum, Past Most Illustrious Grand Master of the Grand Council, Cryptic Masons of Indiana, was elected Executive Secretary of the Foundation. Most Illustrious Companion Crum continued to faithfully serve in this position until his retirement in October 2012, a period of almost twenty-seven years.

CMMRF funds research at Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Indiana. Initial research focused on the cause(s) and eventually a cure for atherosclerosis and its complications. In later years, the research has implemented adult stem cell therapies to address a variety of mature health issues but not necessarily restricted to the adult population. This research was previously funded by an Indiana corporation, which ceased to do business upon the death of Dr. Owen L. Shanteau, October 17, 1985. While CMMRF is not a part of that preceding organization and the General Grand Council was not its governing body, CMMRF is continuing the good work that it started. Dr. Shanteau met with Dr. Nils Bang at the Indiana University Medical Center in 1978 and discussed this new venture. Dr. Shanteau was able to give a grant of \$12,000.00 a year to this project, which was being done on a part time basis. The former Foundation gave the Medical Center grants totaling \$96,000.00.

Dr. Nils Bang, one of the founding researchers connected with the program, suggested that the most efficient way of investing the money donated by The Cryptic Masons International was to invest it in the salaries of young, talented investigators. Many of these investigators had papers summarizing their work accepted for presentation at the prestigious

national conference of the American Federation for Clinical Research. (In order to have papers accepted, the subject matter must have been about new findings, not previously published.) All of these Doctors have moved on to more substantial positions and are no longer at Indiana University. CMMRF assumes they are still using their experience in the various fields of research.

At the February 1996 Board of Trustees meeting in Washington D.C. The Board agreed to fund a Chair at the Indiana University Medical Center at the cost of one million dollars. CMMRF contributed two hundred thousand dollars a year for five years to endow the chair. The final payment was made in December of 2000. The University offered as an incentive to guarantee a five per cent income on the endowment plus matching it with a five percent payout from the endowment.

Sometime in 2001-2002 the CMMRF-sponsored laboratory became the Indiana Center for Vascular Biology and Medicine, (ICVBM). After a 3-year search for the best person to fill this newly created Chair, Dr. Keith March was selected. The creation of an endowed chair and this new Center attracted more than \$2,000,000 from non-Masonic sources. Dr. March served in this position until his resignation September 30, 2017. After an in-depth search, Dr. Jay Hess, Dean of the Indiana University School of Medicine, announced on July 17, 2018, that Dr. Michael P. Murphy had been selected as the next holder of the Cryptic Masons Medical Research Foundation Chair.

In 2007, a non-Masonic benefactor challenged CMMRF to match his \$50,000.00 donation to the Indiana Center of Vascular Biology and Medicine. By meeting his challenge, CMMRF contributed \$300,000.00 to ICVBM in 2007. In 2008 a Cryptic Mason donated \$20,000.00 which CMMRF matched and it enabled CMMRF to give \$240,000.00 to the Center for research. Today, upon requests, CMMRF will match \$5,000 donations, up to \$25,000.

Contributions are urgently needed. Most CMMRF donations are voluntary. So please join with us and support this worthy cause. Thank you!!!



*Commit to CMMRF*

CRYPTIC MASONS MEDICAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION



The mission of the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc. is to provide assistance to those who face loss of sight due to the need for surgical treatment without regard to race, color, creed, age, sex, or national origin provided they are unable to pay or receive adequate assistance from current government agencies or similar sources and to provide funds for research in curing diseases of the eye. This includes the correction of strabismus (cross-eyes) in children up to the age of 16 years.

Funds for the operation of the Eye Foundation are obtained in part from an annual assessment of each Knight Templar, contributions made by Masons from throughout the Masonic Family, fund-raising activities, memorials, wills and bequests, and donations from endowment funds or similar sources. Special award programs for contributions include the Grand Master's Sword of Merit (\$25,000), Golden Chalice (\$10,000), Grand Master's Club (\$1,000), Grand Commander's Club (\$1,000 in \$100 annual installments), Patron Certificate (\$100), Associate Patron Certificate (\$50), and Life Sponsor (\$30). Those who are designated as a Life Sponsor or above are relieved from the annual assessment.

Since 1956, over \$98 million has been spent on approved cases, and applications have been received from 80,000 people. Research Grants totaling in excess of \$9.2 million have been awarded to researchers working in the fields of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Ophthalmic Genetics.

Application for assistance from the Foundation can be made through a Knight Templar who is a member of one of over 1,200 Constituent Commanderies of the Grand Encampment. Information is available from the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc., 1000 East State Parkway, Suite I, Schaumburg, IL 60173, Phone (847) 490-3838; Fax (847) 490-3777. The Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc. is a co-sponsor of the Seniors Eye Care Program (formally known as the National Eye Care Project) with Eye Care America, a Public Service Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. The Seniors Eye Care Program helps those persons 65 years or over who do not have an Ophthalmologist. Anyone wishing to contact the Seniors Eye Care Program may do so by calling 1-800-222-EYES and telling them you were referred by a Knight Templar.

The Knight of Siloam special award program in Missouri was created by Sir Knights J. Edward Blinn, REPGC, and Danny L. Ferguson, REPGC, during the 93-94 Templar year as a means of recognizing those Missouri Sir Knights who make substantial contributions to the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, and to encourage others to do so. A special medal and patent is presented to those who donate \$500.00 or more to KTEF either in a lump sum or in installments. The jewel is designated as a meritorious service jewel and may be worn on the Knight.



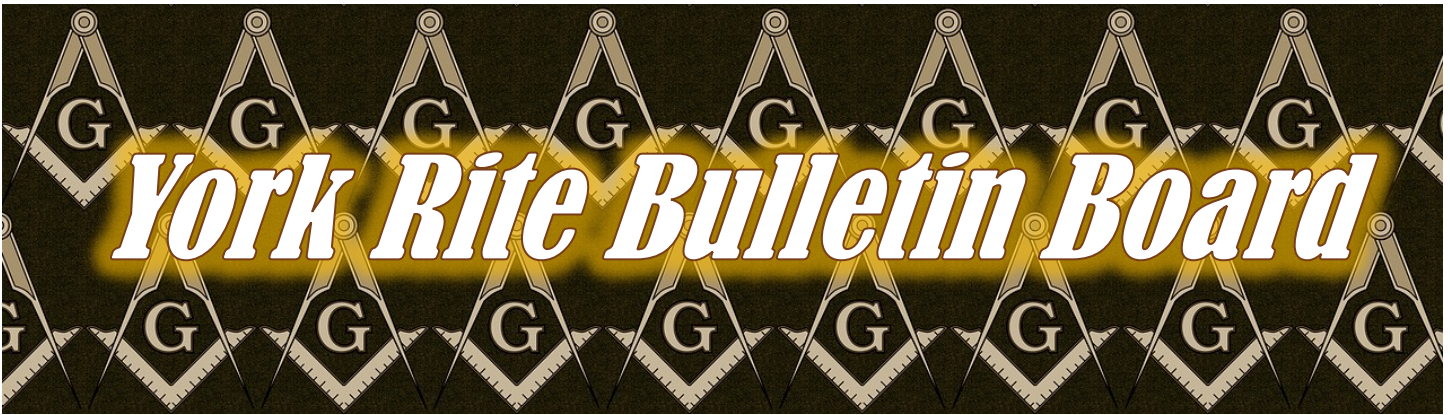
The Knights Templar Educational Foundation, Division of the Grand Commandery of the State of Missouri, provides financial assistance in the way of low cost student loans to college juniors and seniors, as well as trade school students.



The Missouri Holy Land Pilgrimage Fund is used to pay the expenses of sending a Minister to the Holy Land under the provisions of the Grand Encampment. The Holy Land Pilgrimage Committee of the Grand Commandery can provide more information about qualifying Ministers.

The Missouri Holy Land Pilgrimage Endowment Fund is an endowment, the interest of which is used to generate income for the Holy Land Pilgrimage Fund (above). Commandery Recorders are to ask each Sir Knight on their annual dues statement to remit at least \$3.65 towards the Holy Land Endowment Fund, and Commanderies are encouraged to have fund raisers to generate money for this fund.





### ***Interactive Maps for Local York Rite Bodies***

Exciting news all!!! The Grand York Rite of Missouri has now added interactive maps for Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies to help you easily find a meeting location, and find directions to assist you in planning your travels. We hope they help

You can find those maps at the following webpages:

<https://moyorkrite.org/royal-arch-chapters-in-missouri/>

<https://moyorkrite.org/councils-in-missouri/>

<https://moyorkrite.org/commanderies-in-missouri/>



Did you know that you can make changes to your own MMS Profile Page? You can!

Simply click this link: <https://www.masonic-web.com/mms/memberbio/default.aspx> and use your membership number which can be found on the side of any of your York Rite dues cards with your name and date of birth. You have only one Profile Page which links to each Chapter, Council, and/or Commandery where you have a membership.

The information on your Profile Page helps us stay in contact with each of you. Please carefully check the information on your Profile Page:

- Full name: First, Middle, and Last Name (No Abbreviations) with any prefix or suffix.
- Birth location: City and State.
- Current Address: Where mail comes.

- Phone Numbers: Home and/or Cell.
- Email Addresses: Home and/or Work.
- Spouse’s name: First, Middle, and Last Names.
- Her Date of Birth: Month and Day (We like to send birthday cards!)
- Your children’s Names: First and Last Names
- **Information about your job** (Optional)

Our office will not share this information with any person, business, or other institution. This is YOUR Profile Page. Thank you for your time.

### ***Past Grand Officers***

History is a wonderful thing. It reminds us of our great accomplishments and mistakes. Either way, we learn something from both. However, below are links to our Past Grand High Priest, Past Grand Masters, and Grand Commanders here in Missouri. Take a look, one of them might be a relative you did not know had been honored by these great positions.

[Past Grand High Priests:](https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-high-priests/)

<https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-high-priests/>

[Past Grand Masters:](https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-masters/)

<https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-masters/>

[Past Grand Commanders:](https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-commanders/)

<https://moyorkrite.org/past-grand-commanders/>



**ROYAL ARCH CHAPTERS  
IN MISSOURI**

**COUNCILS IN MISSOURI**

**MISSOURI COMMANDERIES**

## Grand Officers Coins for Sale

The Grand York Rite has numerous items for sale. One of which is the Grand Officers coins. For a small donation of \$20.00 you may obtain their coin or \$60.00 for all three coins through our Grand York Rite Offices (660) 248-5100.



## Distinguished Chapter Award

Chapter Secretaries and current High Priests will soon be able to access the updated Distinguished Chapter Award Form, which will include the new addition of the Chapter Proficiency Ritual Card section.

Every proficiency card newly earned or renewed will earn **100 points for the Chapter**. These points are unlimited.

This is being added to highlight one of MEC Ritter's goals for the year - his own goal of earning his Part 1 Ritual Card.

The Chapter Proficiency Ritual card plan can be found on the [moyorkrite.org](http://moyorkrite.org) website.

### Chapter Proficiency Certificate Plan:

<https://moyorkrite.org/DocsChapter/Chapter%20Proficiency%20Certificate%20Plan%202023.pdf>



2025-2026

MEC Kevin M. Ritter, Grand High Priest Coin



2025-2026

MIC Dennis W. Houck Grand Master Coin



2025-2026

SK Ronald L. Skiles, Right Eminent Grand Commander Coin

These coins are in limited production. So, hurry and purchase one now as they will soon be out of stock. All donations go to the Grand Officer's charity. Thank you for your consideration.

## Are you a Royal Arch Mason?

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The Royal Arch Magazine?  
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- ¥ Book Reviews
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Send to: Tina Miller, RAMM, PO Box 205, Maxwell, IN 46154-0205 along  
with a \$10.00 check and get started now!

*We request the honor  
of your presence...*

**175TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER NO.15  
R.A.M.**

**CHAPTER REDEDICATION  
CEREMONY**

CONDUCTED BY GRAND CHAPTER  
OFFICERS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
GRAND LECTURER

**SATURDAY  
16 MAY, 2026  
AT 10 O'CLOCK AM**

**RSVP TO:  
SPRINGFIELDYORKRITE@GMAIL.COM  
INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND NUMBER  
OF GUESTS**

**1930 W CATALPA  
SPRINGFIELD MO 65807**