THE INVESTIGATOR

(Based on the premise that we are all searching for that which was lost)

Presented by REC. Norman McEvoy Volume 1 Number 1 Sept 2009

Fraternal Greetings Companions

For the past 6 years I have been creating a monthly educational presentation on Freemasonry and emailing it to an ever growing distribution list. Based on the apparent success of *"The Educator"* I have decided to expand my research to include Royal Arch Masonry and share the results in the same format.

Looking to the future, I will be guided by the reaction of the audience as to its suitability and value.

To begin, the approach I have decided to take is to examine the history of each of the Four Degrees in sequence then move on to the Operative, Speculative & Esoteric sides of each Degree.

Obviously this can not all be done in one sitting and could quite possibly take some years, however, there seems to be only one place to start and that is at the beginning.

The Mark Degree

Anyone who enjoys wandering around old abbeys and cathedrals may have noticed these simple little hieroglyphics cut into some of the stones and Freemasons, in particular, ought to feel a certain kinship with the ancient craftsmen who laboured on those superb edifices with such loving care, and such faith, for many of them must have known they would never see their work completed.

These marks are their signatures and each one was the property of the man who indented it, and who was bound by oath never to change it. It was the means by which the wages due to him were calculated, and by which he acquires a place, albeit anonymous, in posterity.

There is some thought that the building up of a Masonic Degree around this process of marking stones, and leaving your own mark, began with the Operative Masons in Scotland, however, this early history is scant and difficult to trace.

To the old operative masons their craft was all important. Few of them could write, and their instinctive way of communicating an idea was by sketch, or plan, some of which have been found in the archives of old Lodges. The memories of these old masons, for names and words, must have been highly developed. They did not need written records or rituals, and because they were intensely jealous of their secrets, the little that was written was usually quickly destroyed.

The first documentary evidence we have of Mason's Marks being registered in books comes from a *"Code of Rules and Regulations for Operative Masons"* known as the Schaw Statutes, which ordained that when a Fellowcraft or Master was admitted, that is to say when he has completed his apprenticeship, *"the date thereof be orderly booked, and his name and mark be inserted in the same book"* The date of this regulation was 1598.

Over the next hundred years there are Minutes in existence which prove that the selecting of a Mark by a Fellowcraft was the usual practice in both Scottish and Irish Lodges and Chapters. But it is not until 1769 that we find real proof of a Mark Degree being worked in England, although it is presumed that some kind of Mark Masonry was in existence particularly in the North and the Midlands.

This evidence comes from the Minutes of a Royal Arch Chapter, *The Chapter of Friendship*, which worked in Plymouth. It states that *"Thomas Dunckerly brought the Warrant of the Chapter, and having lately received the Mark, he made the Brethren* ***Mark Masons & Mark Masters"***

Considering that Thomas Dunckerley was at that time the Pro-Grand Master of the "Moderns Grand Lodge in England" which was violently opposed to both the Royal Arch and Mark Masonry this situation must have been somewhat ironical. The interesting points which become clear from this Minute are, firstly that there was then some kind of Mark Degree available, though it is not know where Dunckerly got it from, and secondly, that this Degree was divided into two parts. It seems to have been usual for the Mark Degree to be conferred within Scottish Chapters as well as Craft Lodges.

From other Minutes of the late 18th Century we find that two English Craft Lodges, in Durham & London, were working the Mark, but during this period Mark Masonry in England suffered badly from the quarreling which as going on between the Ancients Grand Lodge & the Moderns Grand Lodge, for whereas the Moderns were

opposed to any but the three Craft Degrees, the Ancients considered the Mark and the Royal Arch so important that they allowed them to be worked under Warrants from both the Craft and the Chapter.
With the Union of these two Grand Lodges in 1813 and the creation of the United Grand Lodge of England, this new body only recognized three Craft Degrees, and it was not until 1851 that the first regular Mark Lodge was formed in London.
This very interesting as it appears it got its Warrant from a Scottish Chapter and when the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland found out they wanted it rescinded. The reality is that the London Chapter refused to give it back & within four years had enrolled no less than 120 Members.
In 1856 this Lodge felt strong enough to try to get recognition from the United Grand Lodge of England for the Mark Degree and the Board of General Purposes for UGLE initially approved it to form part of Craft Masonry. This unfortunately fell apart as, at the next Quarterly Communication of Grand Lodge, the motion was opposed by a brother on the grounds that it was *"making innovations in the body of Masonry".* His amendment was carried, and the Mark Masons' hope for recognition was shattered. Consequently, they did the only thing left to them and within one month they had formed an independent **Grand Lodge of Mark Masons** which exists in England to this day.
Once the Mark Grand Lodge was established it made an effort to get some uniformity into the working of the degree, which had become immensely varied, and included more than twelve different grades, or ceremonies, and bearing the titles of some sort of Mark. Doubtless the *Keystone Mark ritual*, as we know it, which is also the one now worked in Scotland and Ireland, evolved from this mass of material, but the date of its final adoption is unknown.
It is often said that the Mark is the continuation of the Fellowcraft Degree, although now it may only be conferred on Master Masons; and it is quite true that some of the Keystone Mark Ritual is an extension of the content of the Craft Second Degree. In the Mark Degree, where much of its Operative origin still lingers, a certain amount of confusion may be caused by the use of titles which we are accustomed to associate with Speculative Freemasonry. The Operative Grades were those of Apprentice and Master. The Apprentice had to work for seven years in the learning of his trade. At the end of this time he was expected to produce a *"Master Piece"*for the approval of his superiors. If this piece of work was considered sufficient proof of his skill he was declared a Master. This then allowed him to possess his own tools, to journey about the country, and even to venture overseas, in search of work, and, of course to receive a Master's wages.
On the day he became a Master he selected his Mark, so that wherever he might be stationed his work could always be identified. He was also entitled to call himself a Fellow-of- the- Craft, that is to say he was now a full member of the brotherhood of Stonemasons. So, among the Operative Masons in England, the grades or degrees, of Fellowcraft and Master were really one and the same.
The Mark sets out to demonstrate, among other things, that contemplation of the intellectual faculties is not in itself sufficient; whilst tracing the development of these faculties we must also to learn how to put them into practice. The degree is founded on a legend, which has as its principal character a well-meaning but over-enthusiastic craftsman. This part of the story is presented in the form of a small play, which is delightfully reminiscent of the old form of Morality Play.
This drama, by its very simplicity, is extremely effective in driving home the lesson that actions, taken in all good faith, may be mis-construed through lack of understanding, by those in authority, resulting in disappointment and frustration. It is a situation that few of us either, have not, or will not, experience at some time in our lives, and is one that can only be resolved by the mental effort needed to accept authority's ruling, however unfair it may seem, and the willingness to try again.
But a full understanding of the Mark shows that *"There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hewn them how we will"* and perhaps in no other degree do we get such a sense of a force working above and beyond ourselves. We are taught that man's condemnation of man, even though equitable, can be tempered by the mercy of a higher Judge, and punishment, administered through bigotry and ignorance can he transmuted into a reward.
The symbolism of the last part of the ritual is extremely beautiful, and gives a profundity to the whole which may perhaps be overlooked in our surprise at finding ourselves involved in such an apparently mundane course of events. But however worldly it may appear on the surface, from the prayers, and from certain passages of

Scripture which are read during the ceremony, there comes a feeling of that undercurrent of that religious thought that so many recognize from the Third Degree in Craft Masonry.

In every Jurisdiction in the World, except the English, the Mark is constitutionally a qualification for the Royal Arch. This means that the continuity of the Master Masons' Degree, and its completion, the Royal Arch Degree, must always be interrupted by the seemingly every-day atmosphere of the Mark. Whether this is a good thing or not is a controversial matter.

Some of those who come into the Mark find themselves very much in tune with the degree, and appreciate its relationship to the practical Fellowcraft Degree. A close study of this degree, which our predecessors fought so hard to establish, and saw rejected at the last minute, is a degree of as profound a psychological, ethical and mystical quality as any we possess.
This presentation has been adapted from a paper by **H.U. Maule** whose credentials are not given.

Building

(This little gem appeared in a Masonic Publication I received today:)

I watched them tearing a building down
A gang of men in a busy town
With a yo-heave-ho and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell

I asked the foreman "Are these men skilled-----
The kind you would hire if you wanted to build?
He laughed and said "Why no indeed
Just common labour is all I need.
They can easily wreck in a day or two
What builders have taken years to do"

I asked myself as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried today?
Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by the rule and the square,
Shaping my deeds by the well-laid plan.
Patiently doing the best that I can?
Or am I a wrecker who walks the town
Content with the labour of tearing down. Anonymous

Conclusion

I sincerely hope that this publication has been informative and of interest to you the reader.
Should you have any comments or suggestions for the future I would be delighted to receive same.

Have a wonderful day & God Bless You and Yours

Norm