

A Masonic Minute

What is a Lodge?

“The lodge has always, from the earliest times to the present, been the centre of Masonic activity and interest.” – Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia, revised edition, 1955.

The word ‘*lodge*’ in the vernacular of Freemasonry has several meanings.

Historically, it is derived from the temporary structure erected by our ancient operative brethren on the construction site during the building of the great cathedrals, abbeys, and castles. In it the transient stonemasons took shelter and refreshment, stored their tools, received instruction, and younger craftsmen learned the trade secrets from the senior masters. We still use the term in that sense when we take ‘*lodging*’ as a place for rest and sleep.

In modern Freemasonry, the term is also used to designate the building or the room in which we meet. When we say that we are ‘going to Lodge’ there is a double meaning implied. We are going to a place that we call ‘the Lodge’ and gathering with others to form an organization, also called ‘the Lodge.’ It is this latter meaning that is most significant. Like our predecessors, the operative Brethren, the Lodge is still a place of learning.

Freemasonry is not an abstract. The Lodge is men; men of like minds that come together for a common purpose. Indeed, the history of Freemasonry is what those men have accomplished and are now engaged in doing. Adopting and adapting the terminology and tools of the stonemasons, we are also builders – builders of character. Just as the ancient operative stonemasons placed a mark or ‘character’ on the quarried stone to identify their work, so we as philosophical Freemasons attempt to ‘make our mark’ building a better person, a better community, a better society, a better world.

The Lodge is the primary unit of the organization. A man petitions a Lodge for membership therein. He becomes a Freemason by being accepted as a member of a Lodge. Freemasonry lives, moves, and has its being in the constituent Lodges. This fact is a given. The fraternity flourishes or fails on the floor of the Lodge. Success is in direct proportion to the combined efforts of the Master, Officers, and Brethren of the Lodge to put into practice the lessons inculcated in the charges and lectures recited in our Rites and Ceremonies. Do we understand the profound meaning of those charges and lectures? Do we believe what we say? Most important, do we practise what we preach?

Precepts may lead, but examples draw. [Mahatma Gandhi](#) (1869-1948), Indian nationalist and social reformer, wrote: *“We do not need to proselytise either by our*

speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives. Let our lives be open books for all to study. A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history."

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