



THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE  
OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS  
OF  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

# MASSACHUSETTS MASONIC PROTOCOL

2010

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## **MASONIC PROTOCOL**

All Masons should know and observe the rules of proper Masonic protocol. Protocol is a formal code of etiquette that has been long honored and practiced within our Fraternity. Protocol encompasses standards for conducting Lodge business and for maintaining a level of dignity and decorum that serves to promote harmony and respect within the Lodge.

Rules of protocol represent standards for officer and member attire within the Lodge, the wearing of aprons and jewels, how officers and members are addressed during meetings, and how the Master is recognized when Masons enter and leave the Lodge.

Regular attention to proper etiquette and protocol is a defining characteristic of Masonic meetings. It is an important part of showing respect to the Brethren and to the Fraternity and, as such, should be practiced and encouraged by the Master at all times.

In the Grand Lodge, the Grand Marshal is responsible for interpreting and enforcing proper protocol. At the District level, the District Deputy Grand Marshal is responsible for protocol within the District. Within the Lodge it is the Master who is responsible to ensure his Lodge is following the proper protocol. The Master may assign this duty, but he is ultimately responsible for breaches of protocol within his Lodge or among the members.

### **1.0 DRESS**

Masonry is a conservative fraternity and Masons should dress appropriately to the organization's standards, traditions, values, and practices.

#### **1.1 Member Attire**

The preferred attire for a Mason attending Lodge or other Masonic meetings is either a business suit or a sports jacket and slacks, with a white or colored dress shirt and conservative necktie. "Business casual" or other attire may be appropriate for some social events, as well as other Lodge or community activities. It is recommended that no more than one lapel pin be worn on business suits or sport jackets. Always remember, Masonry is special and the membership should dress accordingly. Masonry regards no man for his outward appearance, so any appropriate attire is always acceptable for a Lodge member.

#### **1.2 Lodge Officer Attire**

The proper attire for Lodge Officers is a single or double breasted, notched lapel, black tuxedo with a black bow tie (or bow tie adopted by the Lodge), and black cummerbund or black vest. The cummerbund or vest is not worn with a double breasted coat. Proper attire with a double breasted coat is that it is never left unbuttoned or open. Some Lodges may require their officers to wear full evening dress (tails).

Shirts should be white with a flat pleated front and lay down collar and plain or French cuffs. Wing or tab collars, colored shirts, frilly lace, ruffles and colored piping are not appropriate. Suspenders of any appropriate design or color are optional. Wing collars on tuxedo shirts are only acceptable with full evening dress (tails).

Shoes should be plain-toed black with black socks. Penny loafers, wing-tip shoes, or cowboy boots (even if all black), are not appropriate for wear with a tuxedo.

Lapel pins of any sort are not to be worn when serving as a Lodge Officer or attending on a Visiting Suite.

A dark business suit is appropriate for Masonic funeral services and for meetings conducted during daytime hours. Tuxedos should only be worn after 6:00 P.M. at Masonic funeral service if it is prior to or after a Lodge meeting or if it is a lodge tradition to have the officers conducting the service wear tuxedos.

Lodge Officers are expected to wear tuxedos when the Grand Master, District Deputy Grand Master or other Grand Lodge Officer is in attendance.

### **1.3 District Officer Attire**

Dress requirements for District Officers are the same as Lodge Officers, with a single or double breasted, notched lapel, black tuxedo with a black bow tie, black cummerbund or black vest. The cummerbund or vest is not worn with a double breasted coat. Proper attire with a double breasted coat is that it is never left unbuttoned or open.

Shirts should be white with a flat pleated front and lay down collar and plain or French cuffs. Wing or tab collars, colored shirts, frilly lace, ruffles and colored piping are not appropriate. Suspenders of any appropriate design or color are optional.

Shoes should be plain-toed black with black socks. Penny loafers, wing-tip shoes, or cowboy boots (even if all black), are not appropriate for wear with a tuxedo.

Lapel pins of any sort should not be worn when attending on a Visiting Suite.

Tuxedos should be worn to Fraternal or Official Visits to daylight lodges.

The District Deputy Grand Master should wear his Tuxedo when attending the District Lodge of Instruction. All other District Officers should wear a dark business suit or sport jacket and slacks to the Lodge of Instruction, unless they are an Officer of said Lodge of Instruction.

Whenever the District Deputy Grand Master travels out of his district after 6 P.M. (or if the function will end after 6 P.M.) he should wear a tuxedo. All other District Officers when traveling out of their district should wear a dark business suit or sport jacket and slacks.

For a Masonic Funeral Service, a dark business suit with a white shirt and conservative necktie is appropriate.

All District Officers should arrive at the Lodge fully attired and remain so until they have left the Lodge building. Although aprons, collars, white gloves, and pocket jewels may be removed upon leaving the Lodge room, removal of bow ties, jackets, etc., should not occur unless the district officer is involved in other duties of the Lodge, such as, working in the kitchen or serving.

During the daytime hours and at Grand Lodge meetings and the Quarterly Communications, the District Deputy Grand Masters should be attired in a dark business suit, white shirt with purple tie with square and compasses tiepin (or tie tack), black socks and shoes, exception would be for a Visit to a Daylight Lodge. For processions, white gloves and District Deputy Grand Master apron and collar should also be worn.

## **1.4 Grand Lodge Officer Attire**

For Masonic events beginning or ending after 6 P.M., Grand Lodge Officers will be similarly attired as Lodge or District Officers in a single or double breasted, notched lapel, black tuxedo with a black bow tie, black cummerbund or black vest. The cummerbund or vest is not worn with a double breasted coat. Proper attire with a double breasted coat is that it is never left unbuttoned or open.

Shirts should be white with a flat pleated front and lay down collar and plain or French cuffs. Wing or tab collars, colored shirts, frilly lace, ruffles and colored piping are not appropriate. Suspenders of any appropriate design or color are optional.

Shoes should be plain-toed black with black socks. Penny loafers, wing-tip shoes, or cowboy boots (even if they are all black), are not appropriate to wear with a tuxedo.

For Masonic events beginning and ending prior to 6 P.M., the proper attire for Grand Lodge Officers is dark gray morning suit coat with striped trousers, white shirt with lay down collar, purple tie with Square and Compasses tie tack, and light gray vest, black socks with black plain toed shoes.

NOTE: Morning clothes are to be worn during the day and evening for the Annual Installation and Feast of St. John the Evangelist.

Direction as to the correct attire for Grand Lodge events will be given by the Grand Master's office or by the Grand Marshal.

## **1.5 Use of Top Hat**

The hat is a time-honored symbol of authority in Masonic Lodges. The type of hat worn by presiding Masters varies by jurisdiction, but in Massachusetts a black, tall cylindrical shaped hat with a flat top (top hat) has been adopted for the Master to wear as an emblem of his office. The top hat may be fixed or collapsible, but no other style or color of hat should be worn, even for special occasions. It is strongly recommended that the Master wear his hat from the opening through the closing of the Lodge.

### **1.5.1 Top Hat - Master of a Lodge**

In a Masonic Lodge, only the Master is privileged to remain covered, except when the Most Worshipful Grand Master or his official representative is present. Only one Brother may be covered in the Lodge at any time. As the District Deputy Grand Master enters the Lodge room, the Master uncovers and remains so until the District Deputy Grand Master removes his own hat or retires from the Lodge room. If the Master has duties to perform from the Master's station, he may wear his hat with the permission of the District Deputy Grand Master. If present, the Grand Master will be wearing his tricorne and no other hat should be worn unless permission is granted by the Grand Master.

### **1.5.2 Top Hat - District Deputy Grand Master**

The District Deputy Grand Master wears a top hat for all Fraternal and Official Visits to the Lodges in his district only. The only acceptable top hat is a tall black silk hat. The hat may be fixed or collapsible, but no other style or color of hat should be worn, even for special occasions. He will wear his top hat when processing into, presiding over or retiring from a Lodge in his district only.

The District Deputy Grand Master may continue to wear his top hat while the Master occupies the Oriental Chair, but if the Master is conferring a degree on a candidate, the District Deputy Grand Master should remove his top hat and to allow the Master to don his. Never should both be covered at the same time.

The District Deputy Grand Master should not withhold permission for the Master to wear his top hat if the Master is performing degree work.

If the Grand Master is present, he will be wearing the tricorne and no other hat should be worn within the Lodge.

### **1.5.3 Being Covered in the Lodge**

As stated in 1.5.1 above, only the Presiding Officer in a Lodge may be covered. When Degree Teams or uniformed Units or Organizations who may have hats are present, they may wear their hats into the Lodge Room when entering or being received, but should remove them immediately after assuming their positions, whether in a station or on the sidelines. The Master, District Deputy or Grand Master will remain the only one covered during the meeting or work.

## **2.0 REGALIA**

### **2.1 Aprons and Collars**

All Brethren must wear an apron when attending Lodge meetings, and should also do so at installations. During meetings, when the Lodge is at work, the apron is a symbol of a working Mason.

In Massachusetts the apron is worn outside the jacket, not underneath. The apron is never worn under any garment. Any Master Mason should gently remind his lesser informed Brother of this fact.

The only exception to this is when wearing tails or full dress tuxedo; the apron belt is worn under the coat tails.

Blue-bordered aprons are worn by Lodge members and plain white aprons are worn by visitors to the Lodge. A Master Mason apron may also be worn. The Master Mason apron design is specified in *Section 817 (B) of the Grand Constitutions*. Only white aprons are worn at Masonic funeral services, except for the Lodge officers who are performing the ceremony.

All officers of a Lodge, when serving in that capacity, must wear the apron and collar of the station in which they are serving. A Past Master or Past Grand Lodge officer may wear either the apron belonging to the Lodge office or the apron of his highest Masonic office, but must wear the collar of the office in which they are serving. A Past Grand Master will wear the Past Grand Master's collar.

It is preferred, however, if a Past Master or Past Grand Lodge officer is installed or is otherwise serving as a Lodge officer, he should wear the apron of the Lodge office in which he is serving. He may wear two pocket jewels of his choice. (See Section 2.3) This shows respect for the office of Master and indicates to the candidates and members that the office of Master is the highest position within the Lodge.

The only exception to above is a presiding Grand Lodge officer when serving as a Blue Lodge officer should wear the apron and collar of the Grand Lodge office to which he has been installed and not the Lodge officer apron and collar.

A Lodge Ambassador may wear his neck jewel with blue ribbon at any Masonic meeting or event anywhere in the jurisdiction. He may also wear his neck jewel when representing the Lodge at public ceremonies or meetings outside of the Lodge.

## **2.2 District Officers – Use of District Regalia**

Aprons worn by the District Officers, other than the District Deputy Grand Master, will be plain white with purple edging.

The District Deputy Grand Marshal will always use the gold plated baton furnished in the regalia case. With the exception of when he is escorting someone, the District Deputy Grand Marshal should freely swing his baton with the natural motion of his right arm as he strides along in the performance of his assignments in the Lodge.

The aprons and collars of the District Officers are only to be worn when on business with the District Deputy Grand Master within their own district. The district apron and collar should not be worn in their own Lodge in place of their Lodge apron, unless the District Deputy is visiting the Lodge on official business. They should also not be worn when visiting other Lodges or districts, even if the DDGM is present.

The District Deputy Grand Master is expected to wear his apron and collar anytime he travels inside or outside of his district. However, the other district officers may not wear their purple aprons and gold collars outside of their district. Similarly, if the Grand Master or his official representative is in attendance within their district, the district officers are not to wear their district aprons or collars. They should be attired in Past Masters' or Master Masons' aprons.

Only Blue Lodge or Grand Lodge regalia should be worn on the District Deputy Grand Master's suite.

The exception to this would be if the jurisdictional head of a Body (e.g.: York or Scottish Rite) were to be a guest on the District Deputy's suite, in an official capacity, he may wear his Body's regalia. It is recommended that, unless he is performing in an official capacity, he should wear his highest Blue Lodge or Grand Lodge apron and jewels when on a District Deputy Grand Master's suite.

There are no other exceptions except by dispensation of the Grand Master.

A District Ambassador should only wear his neck jewel and purple edged apron when serving with the District Deputy Grand Master on official business within his district. He should not wear his neck jewel when the District Deputy is not present or at any public ceremonies. This is also true for the other District Officers, as well.

## **2.3 Pocket Jewels**

Many Masons have the privilege to wear a pocket jewel such as the traveling jewels of the Master and Wardens, a Past Master's jewel, Grand Lodge jewels or medals given to Masons for their service to the Craft. Pocket jewels should only be worn inside the Lodge building as a means of member recognition within the Craft and, as such, are not for public display.

Masonic protocol limits the number of pocket jewels or medals to be worn to two. The jewel of the higher office should be worn closer to the heart. The other jewel may be a Lodge jewel or medal of choice.

In Massachusetts there are only four (4) recognized 'jewels' (from highest to lowest): a Past Grand Master's jewel; a Grand Officer jewel (Deputy or Warden), a District Deputy jewel; and a Past Master's jewel.

The 'medals' which are recognized within Massachusetts are (from highest to lowest): the Henry Price Medal; the Joseph Warren Distinguished Service Medal; the Veteran's Medal; a Lodge Medal, such as a Centenary Medal, a Lewis medal or a Lodge specific medal. Lodge specific medals are usually worn on a ribbon around the neck.

For example, the jewel worn closer to the heart may be a Past District Deputy Grand Master jewel and the other jewel could be a Past Master's Jewel, a Lewis Medal, a Masonic Veteran's Medal, a Joseph Warren Distinguished Service Medal, or Henry Price Medal.

It is strongly recommended that if a Past Master has two Past Master's jewels he refrain from wearing both at the same time. It is redundant and serves no practical purpose. Additionally, wearing two medals when one also has a jewel, be it a Past Master's Jewel or a Past Grand Officer jewel should also be discouraged. The preferred choice for items to be worn would be the highest jewel with the highest medal next to it.

A Lodge specific medal may be worn within the Lodge or when representing the Lodge on a District Deputy Suite or to a meeting of another Lodge.

It is preferred that neck jewels or neck medals not be worn when wearing an officer collar.

## **2.4 District Deputy's Jewel**

The District Deputy Grand Master may be presented with a District Deputy's jewel during his term in office. Each Lodge or district has its own tradition of presenting a jewel. It is preferred that the jewel be presented at the District Deputy Grand Master's first Fraternal Visit to the Lodge he represents, which is often his Mother Lodge.

Some Lodges acquire the jewel on their own. In other districts, it is a shared expense between the Lodges of the district. There may be a jewel available for refurbishing from a deceased District Deputy Grand Master. At other times, a new jewel may need to be ordered. In either case, it takes some time to have the work and engraving done. The design for a District Deputy Grand Master Jewel is specifically described in *Section 803 of the Grand Constitutions*.

## **3.0 RANK AND PRECEDENCE**

### **3.1 Ranking Officer**

The Master of the Lodge is the ranking officer within his Lodge, except when the Grand Master, the Grand Master's official representative, or the District Deputy Grand Master is present.

The District Deputy Grand Master is the ranking officer within the district he represents when the Grand Master or the Grand Master's official representative is not within the district. An official representative of the Grand Master would be any current Grand Lodge officer acting as Grand Master or an assigned representative, if so designated by the Grand Master.

The ranking officer at any Masonic event is entitled to all the courtesies that would be afforded the Grand Master, were he present.

### 3.2 Introductions

The Master of the Lodge should recognize and introduce an installed Grand Lodge officer present, even if the Grand Lodge officer is a member of the Lodge. This can be done at the beginning of the meeting, during the business meeting, or near the end of the meeting.

When introducing a member of the Craft, it is sufficient to announce his name and the full title of his highest office only. It is unnecessary to announce a long list of past and present titles.

Prominent visitors and other guests may be welcomed as a group or individually. Masonic guests should be invited to occupy seats in the East depending on their present or past Masonic rank, if space is available. The same courtesy should be extended to other visiting dignitaries.

### 3.3 Use of Masonic Titles

It is important to know when to use titles and to whom they apply. Masonic titles should always be used in Masonic meetings or activities and discriminately used in public. Masonic titles should never be used on the outside of an envelope or package when mailing or delivering. The inside letter may contain the title, if needed.

Within the jurisdiction of Massachusetts the titles recognized are Brother, Worshipful, Right Worshipful and Most Worshipful. Visitors from other jurisdictions when serving in an official capacity for their jurisdiction should be addressed by their proper title. Honorary titles granted by another jurisdiction are not to be used within this jurisdiction.

There are two ways to properly address a Brother. It is appropriate to say the person's Masonic rank and full name, *e.g.*, Most Worshipful Jeffrey Hodgdon, Past Grand Master, or to shorten the introduction to Most Worshipful Brother Hodgdon. The term Brother should be used whenever just the last name is used. Whenever the first name is omitted the word Brother must be inserted.

When a Brother serves as Master of his Lodge, he is addressed as "Worshipful Master" or "Worshipful Brother (last name)." If he does not take a station after his term as Master, he continues to be addressed as "Worshipful Brother (last name)," *i.e.* "Worshipful Brother Jones" or "Worshipful Charles Jones" not "Worshipful Charlie". In this Jurisdiction we do not use the term "Worshipful Sir", "Right Worshipful Sir" or "Most Worshipful Sir" while the Lodge is in session.

Any Mason serving as an officer in the Lodge is to be addressed as "Brother (name of station)," *e.g.* "Brother Senior Warden" or "Brother Marshal." This holds true even if the Brother occupying the station is a Past Master or Grand Lodge officer and even the Grand Master, if he is doing Lodge ritual.

The District Deputy Grand Master should be addressed by his title "Right Worshipful" at all times when the Lodge is in session and throughout the evening except while performing ritual as a Lodge officer. At other times such as in non-Lodge settings, he may be addressed informally.

A Brother may be named by the Grand Lodge of another jurisdiction to be its Grand Representative near our Grand Lodge. He is responsible for maintaining communications with his counterpart in that Grand Lodge and is addressed as "Right Worshipful" while he serves in that capacity. His title returns to Worshipful or Brother upon completing his service as a Grand Representative unless he has served in one of the above mentioned Lodge or Grand Lodge positions. The titles of Grand Treasurer and Grand Secretary are treated the same.

If a Brother is elected and installed as Junior or Senior Grand Warden, or is appointed by the Grand Master to be the Deputy Grand Master, District Grand Master or a District Deputy Grand Master, his title shall be Right Worshipful and he should be addressed as such. He will retain this title for life.

Similarly, if a Past Grand Warden or Past Deputy Grand Master is installed as Grand Master, he is thereafter addressed as Most Worshipful Grand Master or Grand Master (during his term), Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, or Brother (last name) after the completion of his term of Office.

Within Massachusetts we have only one Grand Master and he should be referred to as, "Grand Master" (preferred), "Most Worshipful" or "Brother". A Past Grand Master should be referred to as "Most Worshipful" or "Brother", but never as "Grand Master".

### **3.4 Position in Suites and Processions**

When lining up a District Deputy Suite, the position of the officers according to rank is defined on the card provided to the District Deputy Grand Marshal. For the Suite of the Grand Master or other Grand Officer the rank of Grand Lodge Officers is defined in *Section 208 of the Grand Constitutions*. The Suite is always by rank with the senior officer on the right when in double file. On a visiting suite, the officer would take rank according to his highest previous office. In a procession for a ceremony, the officer would take rank as the office in which he is serving in the ceremony. At all times the final decision as to position is that of the District Deputy Grand Marshal or the Grand Marshal.

## **4.0 VISITS OF THE DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER**

The District Deputy Grand Master should always be received in a tyled Lodge with the exceptions of a public installation or public dedication where the Lodge will have been opened and then called to recess. He should be attired in tuxedo and regalia and wearing his top hat. He may be received on any Degree to allow for all present to attend.

### **4.1 Greeting Everyone**

The District Deputy Grand Master is the Grand Master's personal emissary and should conduct himself accordingly. He should attempt to speak to everyone and shake their hand before he is received. If this is not possible, he should ensure he spends extra time to greet the members after he has completed his visit.

If possible, the District Deputy Grand Marshal should ensure that there is sufficient seating in the Lodge room with seats reserved for the suite. If the ladies are invited, he should escort the ladies of the members of the suite to seats into the Lodge room prior to organizing the suite. (Or see that it is done)

Brethren on a suite or those on the reception committee should refrain from small talk and shaking hands while the District Deputy Grand Master is introducing his suite. Also, be quiet on the sidelines if the Master of the Lodge introduces his Reception Committee. This is important in order to keep the focus on what is going on in the East and minimize noise and distractions.

#### **4.2 Invitations to Suites**

The District Deputy Grand Master is the only one who may invite someone to be on his suite. The Master of a Lodge does not have the right to invite any Brother to attend on, or be a part of the District Deputy Grand Master's suite.

In years past, the District Deputy Grand Master's suite included no one below the rank of a Lodge's Junior Warden. In recent years, invitations have been extended to all Lodge Officers. The courtesy of an invitation to be on the District Deputy Grand Master's suite is usually extended to a visiting Past Master or Masonic dignitary who is properly attired. An invitation to attend on the District Deputy Grand Master's suite is ONLY by direction of the District Deputy Grand Master.

If the Grand Master or anyone in the capacity of "Acting Grand Master," or "Grand Masters Representative" attends any function of a Lodge, they will always take rank over the District Deputy Grand Master, and will personally invite those who he wants to attend on his suite. The District Deputy Grand Marshal, District Deputy Grand Secretary or other district officer, are usually not invited to participate on those suites. They should be aware they most likely will not be included. They should expect to be seated on the sidelines as a Master Mason.

#### **4.3 Reserved Parking Space**

Each Lodge that extends an invitation to the District Deputy Grand Master or Grand Master to attend one of their functions should arrange a reserved parking place for him near the door of the building at which the event is to take place. At times reserved parking cannot be provided due to restrictions beyond the control of the Lodge; however, every effort should be made to accommodate the District Deputy Grand Master or Grand Master.

As a courtesy, it is important that the Master appoint someone to see that parking is provided for the District Deputy Grand Master or Grand Master and, if possible, greet him at the door and to otherwise make his visit respectful and enjoyable.

#### **4.4 Prior to Receiving the District Deputy Grand Master**

Before receiving the District Deputy Grand Master, the Master should first greet him informally in the outer apartments, welcome him to the Lodge and express the hope his visit will be enjoyable. (Refer to the *Masonic Trestle-board* booklet for the procedures, ritual and protocol pertaining to an Official Visit by the District Deputy Grand Master)

It is a common courtesy for a host Lodge to have a non-alcoholic punchbowl and finger foods prepared for the District Deputy and his suite for his Visit. However, this is not mandatory.

#### **4.5 When Ladies are Present**

At functions where ladies are present, the District Deputy Grand Marshal should see to it that the District Deputy Grand Master's lady and the ladies of the District Officers are properly introduced to other ladies present. It is improper for the ladies of the District Deputy Grand Master and the District officers to remain apart or segregated because somebody did not know the proper etiquette of hospitality.

#### **4.6 Times for Visits**

The usual appointed time for a Visit of the District Deputy Grand Master is 8:00 P.M.. However, the Visit may be scheduled at other times according to the schedule or traditions of

the Lodge or district. The District Deputy must be received at the appointed time to ensure all those who may want to attend know in advance.

The appointed time is the time when the Deputy is to be entering the Lodge-room. It is not the time for the Master to send the Lodge Marshal to bring in the District Deputy Grand Marshal. It is not proper protocol for the Master of a Lodge to keep the District Deputy Grand Master waiting outside the door beyond the appointed hour, unless there are justifiable circumstances. These circumstances should be explained to the District Deputy prior to the start of the evening so he does not cause his Marshal to make a demand at the door.

If the District Deputy Grand Master is kept waiting for no apparent reason, he should instruct the District Deputy Grand Marshal to make a demand at the tyled door. *Refer to Section 353 of the Grand Constitutions* for action that can be instituted for failure of the Master and Wardens to affirmatively respond to a summons of the District Deputy Grand Master.

If the Lodge is still at labor (*i.e.*: holding a business meeting) at the appointed time for the District Deputy Grand Master to be received, the Lodge business meeting must be suspended. After being received, the Deputy may relinquish the East to allow the Master to conclude his business – otherwise the unfinished business must be completed after the District Deputy Grand Master has retired.

If the Lodge is running late due to the conferral of a degree, the Lodge should request a slight delay in receiving the District Deputy Grand Master, but this should be avoided whenever possible and must be communicated to the District Deputy prior to the appointed time of the visit.

#### **4.7 Receiving the District Deputy Grand Master**

The Master may appoint a committee to escort the District Deputy into the Lodge. The committee is usually composed of Past Masters, generally with the most senior Past Master present serving as chairman. However, the Worshipful Master may designate any Master Mason he desires to be chairman of the committee. The same process is used to receive the Grand Master or other dignitaries.

If the Lodge is serving a dinner on an evening when the District Deputy Grand Master has a scheduled Fraternal or Official Visit or when he attends other Lodge functions, the Master should extend an invitation to the District Deputy Grand Master to be the guest of the Lodge. The District Deputy Grand Marshal and District Deputy Grand Secretary should be given the same courtesy.

On ladies' nights, open installations and other special Lodge occasions, the District Deputy Grand Master and his lady should be invited as guests of the Lodge. Other district officers and suite members may be invited to attend the functions as guests, if the Lodge so desires.

The District Deputy Grand Master and his suite may retire upon concluding the Official Visit duties and before the Master closes the Lodge, however he is not required to. He usually remains in the Lodge room through the closing ceremony on Fraternal Visits. As a matter of courtesy when the District Deputy Grand Master has not indicated his intention to remain in the Lodge, the Master should ask the District Deputy whether he wishes to retire or stay through the closing ceremony, and be governed accordingly. The District Deputy Grand Master should always be the last to speak or make any announcements if he stays within the Lodge.

The District Deputy Grand Master must conduct the Official Visit ceremony at all of his Official Visits including his final Official Visit at his Mother Lodge.

An Official Visit should not include a reception or social function to congratulate or honor the District Deputy Grand Master. If an event for this purpose is desired, it may be scheduled at some other time, but should not interfere with the official business of the Visit.

## **5.0 PROTOCOL AT DINNER**

It is improper and hazardous to reserve your seat by tipping your chair to the table. Instead, take the napkin from the place and drape it over the back of the chair.

### **5.1 Head Table**

It is not mandatory to have a head table at all meals. Round tables create a friendly atmosphere and encourage conversation among those at the table.

If you are planning an event where a head table may be appropriate, the following sections will apply.

#### **5.1.1 Head Table Setup**

General seating in this manner  
(Facing out from head table)

##### LEFT SIDE SEATING

Senior Warden  
Junior Warden  
\* Treasurer  
\* Secretary  
Chaplain  
Candidates  
\* Past Masters  
D.D.G. Marshal

##### RIGHT SIDE SEATING

Master  
D.D.G. Master  
Past Grand Masters  
Guests of D.D.G.M.  
Permanent Members & G.L. Officers  
\* D.D.G. Secretary  
\* Dist. Awareness Officer  
\* Dist. Service Officer

\*Optional if there is not adequate seating.

#### **5.1.2 Arrangements**

Seating at the head table must often be limited. There should be a reasonable balance between the number of persons seated at the head table and those seated at other tables. Past Masters and other guests may be seated at designated reserved tables when space in the banquet hall limits the size of a head table. On occasions when ladies are invited, each lady at the head table should be seated at the right of her escort, except ladies should never be seated at the end of a head table. If ladies are seated at the head table, a courtesy skirt must be placed in front of the table.

Other than the District Deputy Grand Master, district officers will not be seated at the head table when the Grand Master is present. The Grand Marshal will arrange seating for the dinner and will advise the Lodge on necessary protocol for the evening. Be guided by his advice.

#### **5.1.3 Head Table Protocol**

It is improper protocol for anyone in the audience to approach the head table to talk with those at the table. These conversations should wait until after the dinner is over.

When seated at a head table, protocol dictates you remain seated until the District Deputy Grand Master or Grand Master stands to leave.

#### **5.1.4 Introducing The Head Table**

If the head table is to be introduced, it is the responsibility of the Master to do it prior to dinner being served. When introducing those at the head table, the Master should introduce himself and then introduce the person on the far left and proceed toward the center with the Master's lady having the honor of being the last introduction on that side. He would then begin at the far right and proceed to the center and the last person to be introduced would be the ranking officer or honored guest at the head table who should be seated immediately to his right.

When ladies accompany Masons sitting at the head table, the couples should be introduced together. The Master of the Lodge should ensure he understands the relationships of the ladies and Brothers and how each lady would like to be introduced before he begins the introductions. The Lodge Marshal or District Deputy Grand Marshal can inquire as to how they would like to be introduced.

A principal guest speaker would normally not be introduced with the head table, but just prior to their speech. The background, titles and other accomplishments of the speaker should be incorporated into the introduction, usually giving his name last.

### **6.0 BEHAVIOR IN THE LODGE**

When the Brethren are assembled prior to the Opening or after the closing of the Lodge, friendly discussion and social enjoyment are entirely proper. It is good protocol to attempt to greet everyone present with a handshake. Boisterous and unseemly or undignified conduct is to be avoided.

#### **6.1 Entering Lodge during a Meeting**

When entering or leaving an open Lodge, Brethren should always enter through the Tyled door and go to the west of the altar and give the appropriate due-guard and sign. The Tyler should inform any late arrival of the degree the Lodge is open on.

However, if a Brother is entering a Lodge and is not certain of the degree on which the Lodge is open, he should observe the placement of the Square and Compasses before giving the due-guard and sign.

Brethren should always enter and exit through the tyled door, but should never enter nor leave a Lodge while it is being opened or closed or while the Lodge is at prayer or is balloting on candidates.

#### **6.2 Addressing the Master**

All Masons should stand when addressing the Master or presiding officer and should not speak in Lodge until permission is received from the Master who presides over the meeting. All comments to other officers or members in the Lodge should be directed through the Master and not directly to the other member or members.

#### **6.3 Side Line Conversations**

There should be no talking on the sidelines during the meetings or degree work. Sideline discussions and unsolicited comments disrupt the harmony of Lodge meetings.

#### **6.4 Position at Prayer**

When at prayer all in attendance should stand respectfully with heads bowed. They may place their hands in any fashion which they feel helps them convey their prayers to the Supreme Being. Lodge Officers should stand at attention with heads bowed with their right hand at the tops of their aprons. The Marshal and Wardens will hold their truncheons and baton at a comfortable angle at the top of their aprons. The Master should uncover with his left hand during prayer and should hold his gavel in his right hand at the top of his apron.

#### **6.5 Proper sitting as an Officer**

As an officer serving in the Lodge the proper seated position is upright with both feet placed flat on the floor in front of you. Hands should be on the arms of the chair or on the top of the legs. Crossing of legs, ankles or arms or leaning on one's elbow or slouching is not appropriate while serving in station.

#### **6.6 Applause and/or Standing Ovations**

The conferral of degree work is taken seriously by the fraternity and it is important that any applause or standing ovations be done judiciously. If the officers of the Lodge have done a good job on their ritual it would be appropriate to give them a round of applause after the conclusion of the degree work. A standing ovation is unnecessary. It is not appropriate to interrupt the ceremony with any applause.

Additionally, candidates at the conclusion of each of their degrees may be afforded a round of applause.

Standing ovations should be used judiciously and only for very special occasions, such as a visit from the Grand Master or the District Deputy Grand Master; the presentation of a Joseph Warren Medal for Distinguished Service; or Veteran's Medal; or the retiring of an outgoing Master of the Lodge.

While it has become somewhat popular in this jurisdiction, Masters and District Deputy Grand Masters should refrain from the use of conducting members once around the lodge to applause or standing ovation. Members in the East should be conducted to a chair in the Lodge by the Marshal, without any further fanfare.

#### **6.7 Use of the Gavel**

The Master uses his gavel during meetings to give instruction to one or more of the Brethren and to gain the attention of the Brethren and his officers. The Master raps the gavel once to seat the Lodge, or to gain attention before giving instructions to a particular Lodge officer, or to declare acceptance of a vote or report. All Lodge officers stand when the Master raps twice and all Masons stand on three raps of the gavel. The Master never uses the gavel when directing the Marshal to perform his duties around the Lodge.

When non-Masons are present the gavel should not be used, i.e.: installations, or other public ceremonies. The Master may indicate the desired action by using his hands or by giving verbal instructions.

#### **6.8 Behavior at a Table Lodge**

A Table Lodge is a Lodge Meeting and should be treated as such. The Lodge is usually opened within the Lodge Room and a business meeting or other business is conducted. The

Master will recess the Lodge and the Brethren will adjourn to the Banquet Hall where the Master will call the Lodge back to labor before conducting the Table Lodge.

There is no consumption of alcohol on the premises prior to or after a Table Lodge. At the Table only wine or grape juice may be served and only seven (7) one ounce toasts are allowed. No other consumption of alcohol is permitted. **NO ONE UNDER LEGAL AGE IS ALLOWED TO CONSUME ALCOHOL.**

### **6.9 Behavior while on a Visiting Suite**

It is improper to talk or make any disturbance while entering on a visiting suite. The tradition of shaking hands with those along the suite lines should be kept at a minimum. Absolutely no talking or greetings should take place while passing through the lines of the suite. The Lodge, District or Grand Marshal should announce this when forming the suite or committee prior to the reception.

### **6.10 Wearing of White Gloves**

Lodge Officers and visiting dignitaries on Visiting Suites wear white gloves. Once white gloves have been put on, they should not be removed until the meeting or ceremony is completed. The tradition of removing one glove to shake a bare handed Brother is not appropriate. After being received and seated in the Lodge it is permissible for the Suite Members to remove their gloves. If called on to speak or to take part in any work, presentation or ceremony, the gloves should be put back on.

## **7.0 ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

### **7.1 Grand Lodge Quarterly Communications**

The Master and Wardens of all Lodges in this jurisdiction are voting members of the Grand Lodge and are expected to attend all Quarterly Communications of the Grand Lodge. The business of the Grand Lodge cannot properly represent the Lodges in the jurisdiction if the Masters and Wardens do not attend.

Each Lodge must elect a Proxy to represent the Lodge should the Master and Wardens not attend. It is the Master's responsibility to ascertain if he or a Warden will be in attendance at the meetings of Grand Lodge. If not, he must ensure the Proxy will be present at the Grand Lodge to represent the Lodge. The Lodge Officers and Proxy must ensure they have signed in at Grand Lodge to have their attendance counted.

The District Deputy Grand Master is required to attend all Grand Lodge Quarterly Communications.

The District Deputy Grand Master is invited to the District Deputies' meeting with the Grand Master on the morning of the day of the Quarterly. The Grand Master and other officers and committeemen will make various presentations. The District Deputy Grand Master is expected to be present, unless excused by the Grand Master. The request to be excused should be in writing.

### **7.2 Absence from the District**

The District Deputy Grand Master must inform the Grand Master, in writing, as soon as practical, if he will be absent from his district longer than 24 hours. He may suggest to the Grand Master the name of a suitable substitute while he is away. This assignment is at the discretion of the Grand Master. If the District Deputy Grand Master is going to be away, but

will be accessible, he should also inform the Grand Master's office with instructions how he may be contacted. (*See Sect 224 of the Grand Constitutions*).

### **7.3 Visits by the Grand Master**

It is proper protocol to send a written invitation to the Grand Master at least sixty (60) to ninety (90) days prior to the expected visit. The invitation should provide as much information on the event as possible. The Administrative Assistant to the Grand Master will send detailed instructions to the Master of the Lodge after the invitation has been approved by the Grand Master.

The Grand Marshal is responsible for final arrangements and protocol for the visit. The Grand Marshal will follow up with the Lodge on details as the date for the visit gets closer.

Prior to a visit by the Grand Master, the Master should consult with the Administrative Assistant to the Grand Master on arranging the visit and inviting guests to accompany the Grand Master.

It is proper protocol for those who may be invited to attend on the Grand Master's Suite to accept or decline the invitation in a timely manner. Those who have not been invited or have declined the invitation should not attend the event, unless prior approval has been granted by the Grand Master.

## **8.0 CORRESPONDENCE**

It is always good protocol to submit official requests and/or invitations by written letter. Email is not an acceptable method of formal communications and should be used sparingly.

**NOTE: Letters and/or Email messages to the Grand Master are to be only addressed to him. NO COPIES ARE TO BE MADE OR SENT TO ANY OTHER PERSON.**

Requests for dispensations, invitations to the Grand Master or any other Official Correspondence must be sent ONLY in writing to the Grand Master, at the Grand Lodge Building, 186 Tremont Street, Boston, MA, 02111, preferably sixty (60) days in advance of the event. **DO NOT SEND EMAIL.**

Emails should only be sent to the Grand Master at the Grand Lodge and not to his home or personal Email.

### **8.1 Protocol for Correspondence**

The use of titles on the outside of the envelope is not appropriate. Always address envelopes to "Mr.". Masonic titles should NOT be used on envelopes.

On the letter itself, you may write the abbreviated rank of the person to whom the letter is being written, followed by his name (usually first name, middle initial and last name) and then the full name of his title.

The salutation is always: "Dear Brother (last name)."

### **8.2 Protocol for Email Correspondence**

When composing and sending Emails a full salutation and signature should be used and proper titles observed. Therefore, you should begin your Email with "Dear Most Worshipful Brother Hicks". To begin your Email with, "Hi Don," is not acceptable.

Also, fully sign each Email with your name and title. Assuming someone may know your cryptic Email address is poor judgment on your part. Emails that appear anonymous will usually be ignored or deleted.

It is always a courtesy to reply to acknowledge receipt of an Email and to confirm that you have read it.

### **8.3 Official Letters of Correspondence**

When a Brother writes a letter to another Mason about some Masonic business the correspondence should follow proper Masonic protocol.

The heading of the letter is to include the Brother's proper Masonic title, *i.e.* Worshipful, Right Worshipful, Most Worshipful or Brother. Regardless of the title, the proper salutation should be "Dear Brother (last name)". The letter should be closed with "Fraternally," "Sincerely" or "Cordially and fraternally." Do not use "C&F" or some other abbreviation. It looks insincere.

Envelopes should never include Masonic titles. Only use the term "Mr.". For example, if you are writing a letter to the Grand Master, the envelope would be addressed:

Mr. Hiram Abif  
Masonic Building  
186 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02111

#### **8.3.1 Letters to the Grand Master:**

The letter itself should follow the rules for a proper business letter. The date should be at the top of the letter, followed by the proper title and address to which the letter was sent. For example:

M.W. (Full name as above), Grand Master  
Masonic Building  
186 Tremont St.  
Boston, MA 02111

[Salutation] Dear Brother (last name) (See comments above)

#### **8.3.2 Letters to the District Deputy Grand Master:**

R.W. [Full name], District Deputy Grand Master  
(District number)  
(Address)

[Salutation] Dear Brother (last name)

#### **8.3.3 Letters to the Master of the Lodge:**

Wor. [Full name], Master  
(Lodge name)  
(Address)

[Salutation] Dear Brother (last name)

### **8.3.4 Interjurisdictional Correspondence**

Protocol dictates that Masonic correspondence to another jurisdiction is in all cases done through the office of the Grand Secretary. This means by Letter or by Email. Please contact the Grand Lodge BEFORE making any contact with another jurisdiction. (*Please refer to Section 703 of the Grand Constitutions*)

### **8.4 Protocol for Social Networking and other Electronic Media**

The Masonic presence on various social networking sites is growing exponentially and it is drawing attention to the fraternity. By participating on these sites, we should strive to make the attention as positive as possible. It is important to remember that when we represent ourselves as members of the fraternity, we become someone's impression of Masonry. As such, it is important we represent ourselves accordingly and subscribe to the lessons we are all taught as Masons in terms of how we communicate and interact with others on these sites.

## **9.0 PROCEDURES**

### **9.1 Membership**

The jurisdiction of Massachusetts allows for both plural and dual memberships. A plural member is one who belongs to more than one Lodge within the same grand jurisdiction. A dual member is one who belongs to more than one Lodge in different grand jurisdictions. There are many jurisdictions which do not allow for dual memberships. It is advisable to check with the Grand Secretary's office before assuming the possibility to affiliate with a Lodge in another jurisdiction.

### **9.2 Candidate Balloting**

The Brethren must understand it is their responsibility to ballot unless excused by vote of the Lodge.

The ballot box may be placed on the altar or on a table to the West of the altar for Balloting. The Deacons may also pass the ballot boxes to the Brethren in Lodge. Either method is acceptable.

Side conversations and visiting are not acceptable during balloting. No one is allowed to leave or enter during balloting. The process should be kept as serious as possible to avoid any unfavorable reactions to a negative vote.

The procedure for balloting should follow the sequence below:

- 1) Master instructs the Junior Deacon to tyle the door and asks the Tyler if there are any members waiting to enter to ballot.
- 2) The Junior Deacon and Tyler tyle the door for ballot. The door cannot be opened until after the ballot has been completed. The Tyler remains outside the door and DOES NOT VOTE. If the regular Tyler wishes to vote, a substitute Tyler may be assigned and in place prior to the start of the ballot.
- 3) Once the Master calls for the Report of the Investigating Committee the application MUST go to ballot. The Master has the option not to ask for the investigation report and hold the ballot for another time if further investigation is required.
- 4) The Deacons may pass the ballot boxes or place the boxes at a location for the Brethren to ballot individually.

- 5) All members of the Lodge are required to vote.
- 6) The Deacons guard the ballot boxes to ensure only members vote and that they only vote once.
- 7) The ballot is presented to South, West and East and then the Master calls for the results. If the ballot is not clear it is proper protocol for the Junior Warden to stand after viewing the ballot to warn the Master of the impending vote.
- 8) The Master will call on the Junior Warden, then the Senior Warden and then report himself on the results of each ballot. The report should state the ballot is either “Clear” or “Not Clear” or “Favorable” or “Not Favorable” or “Clear and Favorable” or “Not Clear and Not Favorable”, depending on the traditions of the Lodge. The report should be the same words for the Master, Senior and Junior Wardens.
- 9) After each ballot is complete, the Master asks the Deacons to “Prepare the Ballot” if another Ballot is to be taken or to “destroy the ballot” if all balloting is complete.

There should never be a delay or recess called during any single ballot. Once the report of the Investigating Committee has been called by the Master, the ballot must go to completion. If the Master does not wish to hold the ballot, he should NOT call for the Report.

If a black cube is thrown for any candidate, the Master MUST read *Section 412 of the Grand Constitutions* on Factious Balloting prior to any further Ballot. The Master may choose to hold up to three (3) ballots on any one candidate, but no more. If after three ballots the black cube is still present, the candidate is rejected.

### **9.3 Funeral Services**

A Lodge should respond favorably to all requests for a Masonic Funeral Service or Memorial Service by the family of a Brother Mason, regardless of his standing in the Lodge. The Service is really for the family and they may not know of the Brother’s standing in the Lodge. This is a public ceremony and an opportunity for us to demonstrate for the family and friends of this Brother how much we care for our Brethren in the Fraternity.

All members should be attired in dark business suits with a conservative necktie. Tuxedos should not be worn to Masonic Funeral Services unless attending prior to or after a Lodge meeting or if it is a lodge tradition to have the officers conducting the service wear tuxedos.

Only white aprons are to be worn by all Masons except for the Lodge officers performing the Masonic funeral service.

The officers acting in the office of Master, Senior Warden; Junior Warden; Chaplain and Marshal may wear the apron and collar of the office in which they are serving.

No pocket jewels or medals, Past Master aprons, Grand Lodge aprons, Steward’s or Deacon’s rods, or other regalia should be worn to a Masonic Funeral Service.

It is recommended that only one small sprig of evergreen be used in the ceremony and the Master should discreetly place it in the casket or on a table near the casket or cremation urn.

## **9.4 Worship Services**

The order of processions formed for attending religious worship service is the same as that for Official Visits as contained in the *Masonic Trestle-Board*. If the Grand Master is present the procession will be formed at the direction of the Grand Marshal according to Grand Lodge precedence.

No pocket jewels or medals should be worn at a Masonic Worship Service.

## **9.5 Parades**

Permission must be first obtained from the Grand Master before committing to participate in any parade or public ceremony. In general, Masonic regalia may only be worn with permission of the Grand Master, but pocket jewels or medals should not be worn in public.

## **9.6 Dedications**

In most cases the Grand Lodge officers will perform all dedication ceremonies.

Permission must be first obtained from the Grand Master before committing to participate in any public ceremony. In general, Masonic regalia may be worn with permission of the Grand Master, but pocket jewels should not be worn in public.

The ritual for the dedication ceremony must be obtained and approved for use by the Grand Master.

# **10.0 MISCELLANEOUS**

## **10.1 Visiting Other Lodges**

A visitor from another Lodge or jurisdiction can only attend a Lodge in Massachusetts if he is vouched for by a member of the Lodge who has sat with him in a tyled Lodge or has been thoroughly examined. He should also have in his possession a valid dues card from his Lodge or jurisdiction. The jurisdiction and Lodge should be listed in the "*List of Lodges Book*" which should be kept in the Tyler's desk. If his Lodge is not listed, his Masonic membership should be suspect. Any questions should be referred to the office of the Grand Secretary.

If a member of the Lodge is not able to vouch for the visitor's membership, he should be thoroughly examined to ensure he is a true Mason. He should be examined as to the position of the "great lights" and the grips, signs and words of the several degrees. He should also be expected to communicate the Grand Masonic Word on the five points of fellowship.

If the examining committee feels comfortable as to his membership, he should be greeted within the Lodge as a welcomed Brother. If they are not able to confirm his membership, he should be politely asked to leave. He should not be permitted to attend the meeting.

If you are travelling to other Lodges inside or outside of this jurisdiction you should be prepared to be examined as above.

If you are travelling to another jurisdiction you should request a Letter of Introduction from the Grand Secretary's Office. The letter with your dues card may eliminate any question as to your membership in this jurisdiction.

Many jurisdictions ask all visitors to recite the Tyler's Obligation as a requirement for admission into the Lodge. Massachusetts does not require the Tyler's Obligation to be admitted. The Tyler of the Lodge you are visiting may ask you to recite it from memory or give you the cipher to interpret.

For those who may be asked to recite the Obligation, here is the cipher:

I, A... B..., in th pr of Al Go, do hey an  
hen so sw th I ha be re in an En Ap, pa  
to th de of Fe Cr an ra to th su de of Ma  
Ma in a re an du cod Lo of Fr an Ac Ma;  
tht I am no no un th ba of su or ex; an  
kn of no re wh I sh not vi th or an  
re an du cod Lo of Fr an Ac Mas.  
So he me Go.

## **10.2 Inviting District Officers to Lodge Functions**

The District Deputy Grand Master should always be accorded the same courtesies as the Grand Master. When invited to a function, the invitation should be made in writing.

The District Deputy Grand Master, the District Deputy Grand Marshal and the District Deputy Grand Secretary, or their ladies should not be expected to pay admission for any social events in a District to which they have been invited. However, they should be willing to pay if they know their presence could create a hardship on the Lodge.

Wherever they travel in their District, the District Deputy Grand Marshal, District Deputy Grand Secretary, the District Awareness Officer, District Service Officer and District Ambassador should accompany the District Deputy Grand Master for his visits. However, only the top three District Officers should be afforded complimentary dinners or admissions. The other officers should either pay for their own dinners or not attend the meal or function.

## **10.3 Grand Lodge Officers visiting their own Lodge**

A District Deputy Grand Master or installed Grand Lodge Officer is not required to wear a tuxedo and regalia when attending any Lodge of which they are a member unless participating in the work or on a visiting suite. They may wear a business suit and a Lodge member apron or they may wear the apron of their highest office. They should not wear their collar or white gloves. They may wear pocket jewels according to proper protocol.

## **10.4 Proper Protocol for Receiving Lodge Notices**

It is proper protocol for a Lodge Notice to arrive in time to allow a member to review the contents well before the meeting. This will allow him time to contact the Master should a question or concern arise about a candidate or potential vote of the Lodge.

The acceptable time for this would be: the notice should be in the hands of the members not less than ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which any business may take place.

## **10.5 Alternative to the Words, "Holy Bible"**

In some cases where a book other than the Bible may be used upon the altar, alone or with the Bible, the Master may want to use the term, "Volume of the Sacred Law" in place of the term, "Holy Bible". This is a more general term and better to describe a sacred volume. No other terms should be used.

## **11.0 MASONRY IN ORDINARY LIFE**

### **11.1 Conduct**

A Mason should conduct his daily life in a way that reflects his membership in the Craft. He should act in a way that presents a positive image of his membership in Freemasonry to the world.

As a Mason, he must be aware his conduct may influence the world with a positive or a negative opinion about him personally and also about any organizations to which he belongs.

Therefore, his actions outside of the Lodge should reflect the highest standards of morality and trustworthiness he would practice within the Lodge.

### **11.2 The Secrets of Freemasonry**

Every Entered Apprentice should be informed of the following basic principles and information.

#### **11.2.1 What You Can Discuss With a Non-Mason**

Masonry is not a secret society. Members of our lodges are not in anyway forbidden from telling others that they are Masons. While every Mason should remember his obligations to secrecy, yet we want to inform non-Masons about who we are, what we are, and what we do.

Therefore, it is important that every Mason understand clearly which things he can talk about and which things he cannot.

#### **11.2.2. What is a Masonic Secret?**

What are the things we call the secrets of Masonry?

The first secret is the ballot of a Mason. No one can know how a Mason votes, unless that Mason tells him, and that is considered un-Masonic conduct. The right and privilege of casting a secret ballot are universally respected in this country by Masons and non-masons alike.

Other secrets are:

- The modes of recognition (signs and words);
- The obligations or vows of each degree;
- The procedure of conferring the degrees, and;
- The legend of the Third Degree.

These four items are usually considered to be the "real" Masonic secrets. But we should all realize that any interested party can go to the public library or bookstore and obtain books which reveal all these things. Clearly we cannot consider these to be secrets in the true sense of the word. There is no way we can keep these books from the public.

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