

# *Education & Enlightenment*

*A Special Committee of*

*The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada*



## **The Landmarks of Masonry**

The purpose of Masonic Education is important because no matter how well the degree work is performed, it really only opens doors to knowledge. The true meanings and interpretations of the Craft are left to the individual Brother for further contemplation and reflection. Naturally each of us takes away a slightly different perspective and depending on that perspective the significance of different parts of the ritual will have varying importance. It is important that Masonic Education is available to all Brethren so that in the act of sharing our interpretations the Light of Understanding grows stronger for all of us.

Naturally there is an inherent danger, that in the act of too many interpretations, some of the original meanings and goodly intentions of Masonry could actually be lost. To prevent that unfortunate result a set of landmarks were established that form the foundation of Masonry.

Candidates for initiation, passing and raising are never exposed to these Landmarks during the ritual work., and for many years after the inception of the degree work, the Landmarks were never even actually recorded. Nevertheless these guidelines were considered as inviolate as the rituals themselves and their preservation and

adherence to, are still the duty of every Grand Lodge and for that matter, every Mason.

Two brilliant and well known Masons of yesteryear attempted to put their versions of these Landmarks to pen. Roscoe Pound stated that there were nine generalized points while Albert Mackey felt it was necessary to separate these tenets into twenty-five distinct items. Both men very clearly explained how Masonry should be conducted while at the same time exposing none of its actual secrets.

As these Landmarks are explained it becomes apparent how important and necessary each one is to the continuance of the Craft as we know it.

Landmark First. Modes of Recognition

Landmark Second. The Division of Masonry into Three Degrees.

Landmark Third. The Legend of the Third Degree and the Story of Hiram Abiff.

There is little debate about the methods that Masons are taught to recognize each other and our pass grips, words and signs have remained unchanged since the inception of Masonry. Although the exact wording may change due to language variations around the world, the division of Masonry into three degrees and the legend of Hiram Abiff have always been the foundation of our teaching.

Landmark Fourth. Government of the Craft by a Grand Master elected from the body of the lodges.

Landmark Fifth. The prerogative of the Grand Master to preside over every assembly of the Craft.

Landmark Sixth. The ability of the Grand Master to grant dispensation for the conferring of degrees of any special or irregular meeting.

Landmark Seventh. The power of the Grand Master to grant the opening or the holding of any lodge.

Landmark Eighth. The supreme power of the Grand Master to infer the degree of Mason on site.

The fourth through eighth Landmarks show the importance of having one Grand Master. This was deemed of paramount importance even before the creation of the first Grand Lodges and ensures that only one person, properly elected, may have the final power to make important changes.

Landmark Ninth. The importance and necessity of Masons to meet in Lodges.

Landmark Tenth. The governing of a Lodge by a Master and Two Wardens

Landmark Eleventh. The necessity that any Lodge be duly tiled when congregated.

Landmark Twelfth. The right of every Mason that he may attend any General Meeting of his Craft and to instruct his representatives of the same.

Landmark Thirteenth. The right of any Mason to appeal from the decision of his Lodge to Grand Lodge or a General Assembly of Masons.

The ninth through thirteenth Landmarks preserve the sanctity of the lodge as a meeting place and clearly state the rights and protections of every Masson.

Landmark Fourteenth. The right of every Mason to sit in any regularly assembled Lodge, anywhere.

The fourteenth Landmark is what makes Masonry a universal science which goes beyond borders and social strata. No Mason may be denied the right to visit any other lodge and by definition this

encourages all Masons to travel and enjoy the benefits of friendship and social intercourse all over the world.

Landmark Fifteenth. No visitor may enter Lodge unknown to the Brethren, without someone vouching for his proof or having passed the customary Examination as per Ancient Custom.

The fifteenth Landmark is a sensible method of proving the worthiness of any visitor to enter a Masonic Lodge. It is not meant as an affront to that visitor but only a test before a warm welcome.

Landmark Sixteenth. No lodge may interfere in the business of another lodge or grant degrees of Masonry to other lodges' members without specific permission.

Landmark Seventeenth. Even if a Mason is not a member of any lodge where he resides he must be amenable to the laws of that jurisdiction.

These two Landmarks help ensure the peaceful coexistence of adjacent lodges while preventing the disruption a non member might bring from introducing by-laws of another jurisdiction he calls his Mother Lodge.

Landmark Eighteenth. Certain qualifications of a candidate are understood to be a Landmark.

For reasons that were felt to be important to Masonry's founding fathers, the eighteenth Landmark assumes all candidates for admission come free born, of mature age and of good report. These simple requirements are the only stipulations and no others are asked or stipulated, accepting of course that the Order is restricted to men only.

Landmark Nineteenth. A belief in the existence of God as the Grand Geometrician of the Universe.

Landmark Twentieth. The belief in the resurrection to a future life.

Landmark Twenty-first. The Book of the Law shall be a part of the furniture of any lodge.

The nineteenth through twenty-first Landmarks spell out the requirements that are expected of every Mason and are reaffirmed by the oaths taken in each degree. Without the belief in a Supreme Being, the very act of taking such vows would be blasphemous. Because the Book of the Law may vary by jurisdictions it could more properly be said to be whatever Book of divine wisdom is preferred in each country whether that book be a Bible, a Koran, or a Torah. Masonry makes no claim on which book is correct.

Landmark Twenty-second. The equality of all Masons.

This tenet is probably one of the most important of all the Landmarks because it states that all Masons are equal. We are taught that Masons come from all manner of rank, fortune and circumstance, but in a lodge we are equal in the sight of the Supreme Being and each other.

Landmark Twenty-third. The secrecy of the Institution.

The necessity for secrecy has caused a great deal of misconception about Masonry in the general public, which from time to time believes that the society harbours dangerous political or dangerous moral beliefs. Although obviously neither the actual fact nor the intention, the very act of secrecy helps ensure the teachings are only made available to approved candidates and under the proper teaching.

Landmark Twenty-fourth. The foundation of speculative science upon an operative art, and the use of the tools of that art as symbols for moral or religious teaching.

This explains that the speculative art of Masonry is taught with operative tools. These tools and instruments remain the same and only their description may have been embellished since the very beginnings of Masonry.

Landmark Twenty-fifth. That the above landmarks can never be changed.

This may seem like a redundant statement but the final Landmark reconfirms the importance of not changing any of the previously stated guidelines.

One well-known dictionary has four basic definitions for the word landmark. It can be considered as a prominent identifying feature of a landscape, a fixed marker that indicates a boundary line, an event marking an important stage of development, or a building or site with historical significance worth preserving.

In a sense the landmarks of Masonry can actually be described by any one of the four above definitions. They are a prominent feature and the glue which binds the Craft together, they indicate a set of boundaries within which all Grand Lodges are expected to operate, they mark the culmination and perfection as we believe it to be of Masonic development, and like any historical building or site they are deemed by Masons to be worth preserving.

Indeed a system of teachings that has stood the test of time through centuries of political and religious change has thus proven the validity of its beliefs and the effectiveness of these Landmarks.

It should inspire us as Masons to ensure that the Craft is passed on to future generations in a pristine a form as it was presented to us.

Masonic Landmarks show us how to do that.