

Preparing a Lodge History

Freemasonry is by its nature a repository of history and tradition. Whether you are of the school that considers Freemasonry began with the building of King Solomon's Temple or that not until 1717 was there such an entity as Freemasonry, there are history and traditions to be discovered and recorded. Whatever your beliefs, Freemasonry has history and traditions to be discovered and recorded for now and for future generations.

The private lodge of any Masonic jurisdiction is no exception. Each lodge, whether it is the first lodge formed or the newest lodge just warranted, has a history waiting to be told. In many cases, the interest is there, but the effort has been lacking. To create a history, one member of a private lodge has to take hold and be the catalyst to create that history for future generations of Masons to know what went before.

Each Master of a Lodge with a written history, as he assumed his office, should ensure the history is updated on a regular schedule. The Master of a Lodge without a history should form a committee and have his lodge's contribution to Freemasonry and to the community recorded.

There is no reason why one person should be asked to write the lodge's history; actually a committee appointed by the Master of three interested members might possibly work out better. One member, to be responsible for each of the different tasks; reference sources, composing, editing, graphics or pictures, etc. The whole committee, working together, as one, with a common goal.

It is suggested a target date be set to present a draft to the lodge. A lodge history is a constantly evolving story, therefore a preliminary cut off date should be considered. For example, if the lodge was erected in 1870, possibly the first end date or target date might be 2002. A five year update program should be established.

The questions that should be answered:

1. When, where, who erected the Lodge
2. Under what Grand Lodge Register?
3. Who was the first Master?
4. Who was the first slate of officers?
5. The first members?
6. When were the first members accepted, initiated, passed and raised?
7. What ritual was used was it recorded?
8. How did it vary from what we work to day?
9. What official visits were made to the lodge?
10. Were there visitations between Lodges?
11. Was the Lodge involved in Lodges of Instruction, where were they held?
12. Was all degree work by the Lodge or did other lodges or Grand Lodge members assist?
13. Did any of the past or present Lodge members hold a Grand Lodge Office?

14. Did the Lodge minutes record charitable works, aid to distressed brethren, the widows and orphans?
15. Was there any community involvement?

All such questions need answers. Where may they be found? Old Lodge minute books, old correspondence files, attendance registers, lodge notices, Grand Lodge proceedings, scrapbooks, old photographs, newspaper clippings, archives, county museums, the memories of the older members, etc., are all sources for the historian's material.

What should be contained in a Lodge history? The following is suggested:

1. **A narrative description including such items as:**
 - a. **The beginning**
 - Who were the movers and shakers who formed the lodge?
 - Who were the first Master, Wardens, Officers and members?
 - Who warranted the Lodge originally: England? Ireland? Scotland? Nova Scotia? Was it a Grand Lodge or was it a District Grand Lodge?
 - Where did the lodge first meet? In a Brother's home? A Hall? An upper room of some Inn?

2. **Growth and decline**
 - a. Growth and decline, year by year?
 - b. Initiations, passing, raising, affiliations?
 - c. Suspensions, expulsion, re-instatements?

3. **Social Activities**
 - a. Masonic public functions?
 - b. Banquets with the members and non-Masonic guests?
 - c. Divine Services?

4. **Officer and membership lists**
 - a. As appendices? or
 - ii. as a separate chronological event?
 - Woven into the narrative?

 - b. **Personalities**
 - a. Short biographical sketches of woven into the fabric of the Lodge history in an appropriate place, or even as a separate section or chapter

- Especially active Masters or members who served the lodge with distinction
- Members who served in Grand Lodge with distinction.

A lodge history can be a simple point-by-point recitation of events, or woven as a story of achievement and dedication of those who have gone before, to be a defining lesson for future generations.

The content of a lodge's Masonic history is only restricted by the imagination of the members of the committee and the encouragement of the Worshipful Master and lodge members. Don't do it for yourself, do it for those who will come after you.