

OLD MASONIC CALLING CARDS: TIMELESS FRATERNAL GREETINGS

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John McCullagh calling card 1886

Samuel Briggs calling card c. 1890s

Only in recent years have I fully appreciated the beauty and significance of older Masonic "calling cards" or "introduction cards". I especially like those of the Victorian-era. They command a person's attention, **they intrinsically promote Masonic Education**, and **they are often impressive works-of-art**.

Masonic calling-cards should not be referred-to as "Masonic business-cards", since most Grand Lodges discourage (and even forbid) the using of one's fraternal membership for undue advantage in the workplace. All Masons, (when we were mere candidates) petitioned a Lodge or related Masonic Organizations without fear, prejudice, or hope for selfish financial gain. Our motives were too pure and without ulterior motive. We all want to "elevate our own Character and thus improve ourselves in Masonry". Therefore, all Masons, where-so-ever dispersed, are encouraged to remember their promises, vows, and obligations --- all of which instill honorable ideals, values, virtues, and actions, without the slightest whiff of impropriety. As a result, Masonic Calling Cards were confined basically to introducing one member to another. For many people (including myself), it takes "time" to learn to associate a "name with a face". Masonic Calling Cards bridged that gap by helping to jog one's memory.

Despite honorable intentions, it may be fair to say that not all Masons have utilized such Calling Cards in such a neutral or unbiased manner. However, most Masons do try to abide by Masonic Landmarks, Edicts, Rules, and Regulations. A century ago, the word "**networking**" as we know it in today's business-word, didn't even exist. Once an acquaintanceship or friendship was started, a Mason might know, (via verbal conversations or by casual social interaction) that his fellow member was a plumber, farmer, doctor, lawyer, or college-professor. If he had a 'need' for such areas of expertise, a man might call upon his fellow Mason who specialized in that sphere of activity; however the Calling Card itself was NOT to be used for shameless self-promotion of a person's personal trade or vocation; nor, for campaigning for Office. It was designed primarily for initial Introduction; as well as possible future Reference.

On the other side of the coin, **the very best use of Masonic Calling Cards was for sojourning/traveling Masons who visited other Lodges or other Masonic Bodies** in distant areas. The Masonic Calling Cards generally always listed the name of the bearer and normally his town of Residence, along with the names of the various Masonic Bodies with which he was affiliated. The Calling Card "introduced the visitor" during his stay or visit;



plus, it was a nice keepsake for later reference. Quite often, lasting-friendships were re-kindled due to Masons being "reunited with each other" via their Calling Cards.

The very first Masonic calling-card that I ever purchased was that of Sir John A. McCullagh. His card, describes him as being Senior Warden of the Grand Commandery of Kansas in the year 1886. The card was printed in St. Louis, that year, so it is **genuinely of the "Victorian-era."** It bears the logo of St. Bernard Commandery #10 of Knights Templar at Independence, Kansas.

I contacted The M.: W.: Grand Lodge of Kansas, and was informed that Bro.: John McCullagh was admitted to Erie Lodge #76 on May 26, 1870. He demitted in 1872 to Fortitude Lodge #107 in Independence, Kansas, and later served as Master of that Lodge in 1874 and 1875. Furthermore, he was Grand Senior Deacon of the Kansas Grand Lodge in 1874. Companion McCullagh was Exalted as a Royal Arch Mason in 1873 in Keystone Chapter #22 R.:A.:M.:; he was dubbed a Knight Templar in St. Bernard Commandery #10 in Independence, Kansas. Sir Knight McCullagh served as Eminent Commander in 1884; and as Recorder in 1886 and 1887.

As mentioned previously, his Masonic Calling Card describes him as Grand Senior Warden of the Grand Commandery of Kansas in 1886. He continued up the Officer-Line until his untimely and sudden death on February 9, 1888. I am thankful that I obtained his Masonic Calling Card which was handed-out so close (within two years) of his death.

The 2nd Masonic Calling Card which I obtained was for Bro.: A.G. Humphrey who resided in Chesterton, Indiana. It has the unique feature of the old-time Mystic Shriners logo. **That logo has the Rosicrucian-influenced "winged-heart" on the Scimitar (noted in a previous presentation to Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.) which was entitled "The Mystical Symbolism in the Emblem of The Mystic Shriners," presented in October of 2008.** However, this emblem has a slight variation. This Masonic Calling Card shows the Knight Templar Cross and Crown dangling beneath the Crescent (instead of the Christian "Star of Bethlehem" below the Crescent as most Shrine emblems depict). The Calling Card features Bro. A.G. Humphrey's affiliations: Calumet Lodge; Valparaiso Chapter and Commandery, and Orak Shriners in Hammond, Indiana. This Brother was undoubtedly proud of his York Rite and Shrine memberships.

Most recently: I obtained a Masonic Calling Card for Bro.: Samuel Briggs. He belonged to Mount Moriah Lodge, Western Sun Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, and Jamestown Commandery # 61 of Knights Templar in Jamestown, New York; plus, it bears his signature. My eyes literally "bugged-out" or lit-up at the sight of that card -because there was a famous Mason also named Samuel 'Sam' Briggs (also born in New York and whose signature was remarkably similar) Quite likely, the two men were possibly related by kinship. The 'famous' Sam Briggs was the second Imperial Potentate of the Shrine of all of North America. Briggs succeeded Dr. Walter M. Fleming, M.D., 33^o, Past Commander of Columbian Commandery No 1, in New York City; who was the very first Imperial Potentate. Fleming co-Founded the Mystic Shriners in North America along with his friend: the famous actor William J. "Billy" Florence, 33^o, and a Knight Templar of Pittsburgh Commandery #1 in Pennsylvania.

The cycle comes full-circle when Billy Florence communicated the Shrine Ritual to Samuel Briggs, who eventually moved to Cleveland, Ohio. William J. Florence suggested that the new Shrine Temple in Cleveland be named "Al Koran Shrine Temple" and it was named accordingly as such. Sam Briggs served as the local Potentate from 1876 to 1901. This gentleman whom I refer to as "the famous Samuel Briggs" **died December 22, 1904.** Ironically, "the other Samuel Briggs" listed on the Masonic Calling Card **died in 1908.** So, both men, having the same first & last names; both having lived in New York State, both were Freemasons --- and, lastly, both men died within a comparatively few years of each other. Remarkable indeed.

The man who served as Imperial Potentate of The Shrine was born in the city of New York on April 12, 1841, the son of Isaac Varian Briggs and Elizabeth Barker. As noted previously, he died December 22, 1904. Sam Briggs was prominently connected with various Railroads. He was admitted to Weber Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Cleveland,



Ohio, in 1868. He became a Knight Templar in Oriental Commandery and later became Eminent Commander of Holyrood Commandery in Cleveland. He was made a 32^o Mason in 1873 and in the year 1885 was honored with receiving the 33^o from the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the USA. He and his wife had one daughter (Mrs. Arthur Seaton). He was also a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.

The Sam Briggs listed on the Masonic Calling Card has been described in biographies, "as a man of strict integrity and upright life, devoted to home and family, winning the friendship of all who knew him." Somehow, I sense that some of the same traits were also characteristic of Past Imperial Potentate Sam Briggs as well. However, I was told two funny stories about Imperial Potentate Sam Briggs. It seems that during early-day Shrine Ceremonials and other Shrine festivities, when the laughter, levity, and decibel noise reached such a din as to not enable his voice to be heard by the Audience, he slammed China plates or dinnerware onto the floor and/ or threw fine Crystal glassware into the fireplace. Needless-to-say: the startling sound of breaking chinaware or breaking glassware quelled the boisterous activity. Briggs knew how to get an Audience to quiet-down to the point where he 'regained the Floor' and resumed the regular Order-of-Business.

With regard to the Samuel Briggs of the Masonic Calling Card: **I wish to draw everyone's attention to the elaborate (and highly symbolic attributes) of his card.** It was composed of a hybrid Templar Cross forming a traditional red Passion Cross, with "The All-Seeing Eye of Almighty God" at the top 'arm' of the Cross. On the left 'arm' was a tiny 'Passion Cross'. On the right 'arm' was the Craft Degrees' Masonic Square and Compass' emblem. On the bottom extremity of the cross appears the Masonic 5-Pointed Star. Atop the entire Cross is an 'armored Knight's Head' signifying the whole superstructure from the Blue Lodge to the Chivalric and Christian Orders of Masonic Knighthood.

Masonic Calling Cards had a distinctive flair in-their-day. Yet, they also serve as a reminder for us in the modern era to: "Let our Light shine" before our fellow members (as well as before the general public at-large). The 'image' we project is liable to be the 'image' that we are remembered for.



A.G. Humphrey calling card c. 1880s

Sources / Exhibits / Recommended Readings:

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D, 33^o and a K.T.
- Masonic Calling Card of John A. McCullagh
- Masonic Calling Card of A. G. Humphrey
- Masonic Calling Card of Samuel Briggs



- Archives of the Grand Lodges of Kansas, Ohio and New York State.
- Archives and Records of Al Koran Shriners Center; Cleveland, Ohio.
- Personal telephone conversations between Frater James A. Marples and Bro.: David McClenachan, 2012 Year Recorder of Al Koran Shriners Center in Ohio.
- History of Jamestown, New York; William Richard Cutter, American Historical Company, 1922.
- "Year Book of the Ohio Society of the Sons of the Revolution."
- "Parade To Glory" by Fred Van Deventer.
- **Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F. Presentation** of October 23, 2008: "The Mystical Symbolism In The Emblem of The Mystic Shriners" by Frater James A. Marples, VII^o .
[website page: http://www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf/papers/marples/marples-symbolism.of.the.mystic.shrines.emblem.pdf](http://www.masonic.benemerito.net/msricf/papers/marples/marples-symbolism.of.the.mystic.shrines.emblem.pdf)

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Frater James A. Marples, VII^o, is a Perpetual Life Member of Mulvane Masonic Lodge #201 A.F. & A.M. in Mulvane, Kansas. He is a Life Member of The International Peace Gardens Lodge of Freemasons (Canada-USA) and also an Honorary Member of Golden Rule Masonic Lodge #562 in Willard, Ohio; as well as an Honorary Member of Nelson Masonic Lodge #77, in Nelson, Nebraska, which has recently consolidated with the Superior Masonic Lodge at Superior, Nebraska.

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