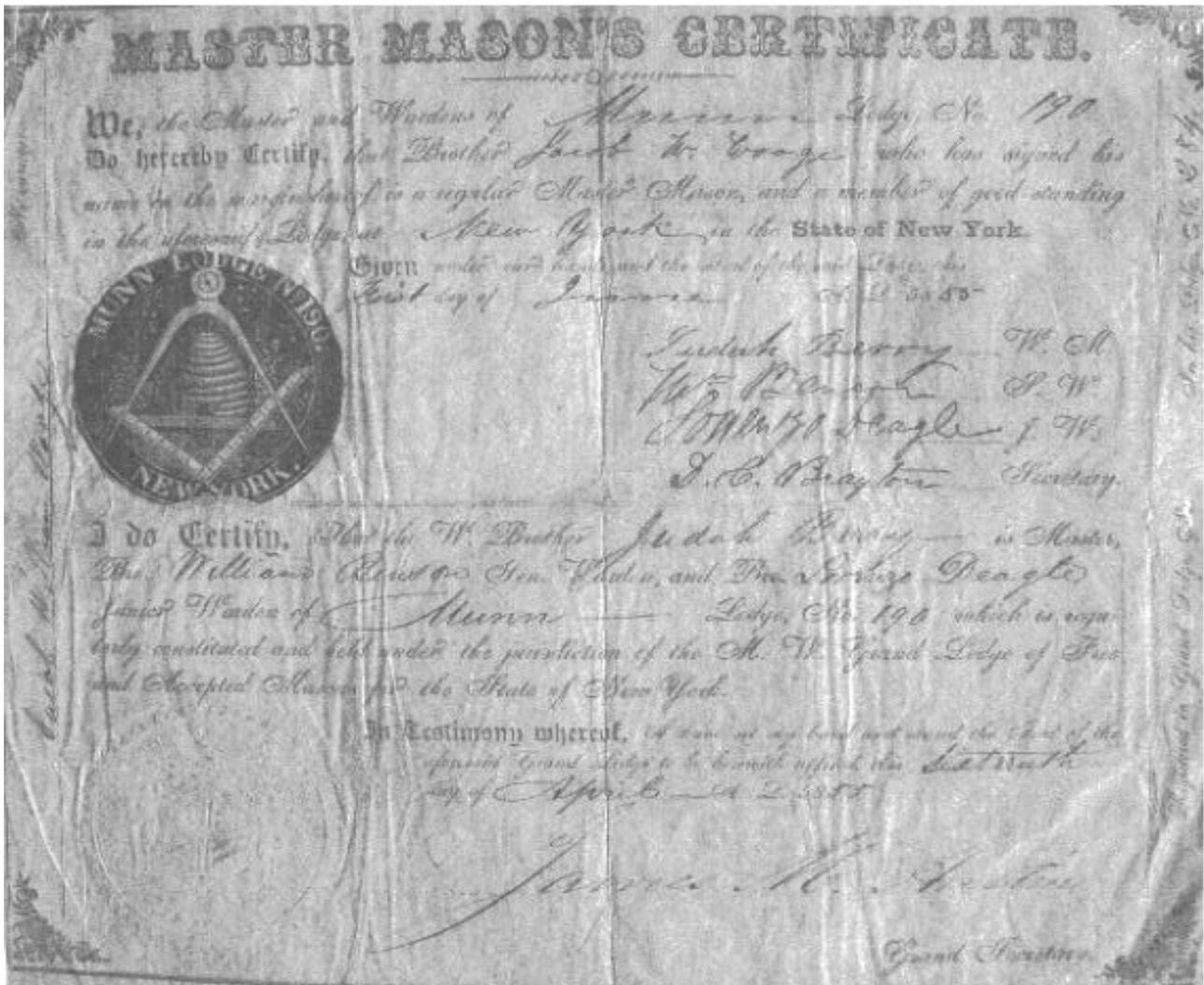


A BEE SKEP ON A MASONIC CERTIFICATE DENOTING GOD'S PROMISE
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1855 Master Mason Certificate, from New York City, New York

As a Mason for my entire adult life, I have seen many representations of a Bee skep which is generally defined as a "Bee Hive" which is usually a circular, domed hive for bees to gather. It is derived from the Old English word 'sceppe' {meaning basket} and further derived from the Old Norse word 'skeppa' {meaning bushel}. Beehives are places where bees live, raise their young, store food {honey and pollen}. A beehive is somewhat comparable to a bird's nest with the main purpose of protecting the dweller. Skeps are essentially baskets placed open-end-down and used for over 2,000 years. In ancient times, it was difficult for beekeepers to harvest the honeycomb. They had to either drive the bees out, sometimes using lighted Sulfur; but later designs of bee skeps allowed for a cap or roof to make it easier to inspect the comb and extract the honey. However, this method was still difficult. And, as of the year 1998, most U.S. States prohibited the use of bee skeps since they cannot be inspected for disease or parasites.



The traditional domed Bee skep or "Bee Hive" still remains a strong symbol of "Industry" and "Cooperative, Diligent Work" not just in Freemasonry, but in other areas of life. The State of Utah designates it on its State Flag and State Seal.

While it was common to see Bee skeps used on Masonic furniture, coins, and medals in Europe -- it is somewhat more rare to see in the United States. American Freemasonry still cherishes the Beehive as an important Symbol in our Third Degree. Early Masonic lectures denoted each lodge a "Hive" and its members were the loyal and participating "Bees" which collaborated in harmony to achieve productive results via cooperative 'labor'. Recently, I came across an old Masonic Certificate issued by Munn Lodge of the M.:W.: Grand Lodge of the State of New York, from the year 1855 --- over 160 years ago. {AUTHOR'S NOTE: Munn Lodge #190 was the home Lodge of the famous musical composer Irving Berlin). The Lodge's number has since changed to Munn Lodge #203 in New York City}. The unique aspect about the year 1855 Masonic Certificate is that it features a Beehive {specifically a Bee skep} within the traditional Square and Compasses. While this may sound unusual, its meaning is perfectly consistent with the letter "G" which can denote "God" or "Geometry" or a variety of other meanings or symbolism. The Bee skep interlaced with the Masonic Square and Compasses on the aforementioned certificate denotes Almighty God's promise of an abundant life via efforts generated by skill, talent, hard work, and prayers. I am impressed by this old Masonic Certificate which more deeply correlates the symbolism of the "Beehive" in our duty as Mason's in fulfilling Almighty God's promise of helping ourselves and others find that abundant, fulfilling life. I found the symbolism most meaningful.

Sources / References / Exhibits /Recommended Readings:

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33^o and a Knight Templar.
- Archives of The Masonic Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, Canada.
- Archives Grand Lodge of Kansas A.F. & A.M
- Macoy's Masonic Manual by Robert Macoy, 33^o and a Knight Templar. Fifteenth Edition. New York. Published in New York, Year 1861 by Clark, Austin, Maynard & Company located at 3 Park Row & 3 Ann Street, New York, New York. "A Pocket Companion for the Initiated".

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