

IS THE IRISH 4-LEAF CLOVER A ROSICRUCIAN SYMBOL ALL OVER?

By James A. Marples, VII°
Nebraska College M.S.R.I.C.F.

I am often intrigued by the use of signs and symbols which help illustrate principles and virtues, as well as guiding us along the pathway of life. When a person is intently searching for the 'meaning' of symbols, they usually are looking for solutions to problems, seeking answers to questions, or thirsting for knowledge which would give a glimmer of hope which would allow them to persevere and continue their labor and toil in life, OR reinforce their hope in an after-life.

In today's world, many detractors of Freemasonry misconstrue the meaning of "Light" in Masonry. Similarly, those same detractors misunderstand the meaning of "Knowledge" in Rosicrucianism. Masonic Light and Rosicrucian Knowledge are found by those who search for the same. In the Book of Genesis in the Holy Bible, Almighty God said "Let there be light, and there was light." Later, it records how God created the earth and the sea, and the earth brought forth grass. Still later in Genesis, it records how God created man in His own image. Masonry and Rosicrucianism have long acknowledged that God is the Author of all that is good and virtuous. The fraternal circle of Masonic Rosicrucians is a band of Brothers and Fratres who have formed a fraternal alliance dedicated to following the signs and symbols God gave us when He created the universe, as well as the signs and symbols noted in the Holy Bible to enable mortal man to heed the Commandments and live a virtuous life in the eyes of our Creator.

Springtime often brings a sense of renewal and rebirth. The grass mentioned in the Bible; as well as other plants, fibers, and herbs begin to show their green radiance - revealing nature's fertility and abundance. The color green also denotes calmness, peace, and well-being. It is no coincidence that American paper money is green (i.e., "greenbacks") to show abundance as a monetary marker. Farmers are usually pleased to see the green farm fields, which reflect that they have planted well. Wheat farmers may observe their crops growing into a seemingly promising harvest, yet the crop could be hailed-out and ruined as little as a few minutes before scheduled harvest. This is a reminder that nothing in nature should be taken-for-granted. Clover is grown by farmers and extensively cultivated as a fodder-plant to be consumed by animals. A four-leaf clover is a rare variation of the common three-leaf clover. Soil composition, water, pollution and other factors determine optimum growing conditions. According to legend, each leaf of the clover represents something virtuous or desired.

The 1st leaf is for "hope;" the 2nd leaf is for "faith;" the 3rd is for "love;" and the 4th leaf is for "good luck."

An old saying, "To be in clover," means to live a carefree life, free of worry, in comfortable surroundings, and in the midst of plenty. Again, in North American stock markets, the color green is used to denote a rise in stock prices. The color green is quite evident in Masonry, especially the degrees of the Knight Masons (which are commonly called "the Green Degrees"). From a Rosicrucian standpoint, the 4-leaf clover reminds us of the 4 main elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. It reminds us of the 4-arms of the Cross on which the Saviour died. And, it reminds us that the quest for human productivity should extend to the ends of the earth: hence, East, West, North, and South.

The country of Ireland, has a deep Masonic history; yet even the scholar Brother Albert G Mackey, 33°, and a Knight Templar, admits that this history is buried in the "deepest obscurity." I believe that Masonry & Rosicrucianism came to Ireland just as Saint Patrick did --from Great Britain. Mackey indicates that a Lodge may have existed near Trinity College in Dublin. I believe that the University setting was also the principal place where Rosicrucians met at the time. Today,



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Ireland organizes its Masonic Degrees in a highly structured manner. It is a simple, yet straightforward, pyramid. At the base is Ancient Craft Masonry. This is the foundation of it all, with approximately 36,500 Craft Masons in Ireland today. Master Masons are encouraged to join Royal Arch Masonry, with some 12,900 members. Next, a man must be a Royal Arch Mason for at least 4 years before becoming eligible to become a Knight Templar; and a further 2 years as a K.T. before being eligible to be elected to receive the Rose Croix (18°). The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite degrees in Ireland are limited to a total of 111 Brethren. A man must, at the least, hold the office of Warden before advancing higher. The majority are Past Most Wise Sovereigns of some years' seniority. There is a maximum of 35 members in the 28°; 30 members in the 30°; 21 members in the 31°; 16 members of the 32°; and only 9 members holding the 33° (all of whom are Active Members of The Supreme Council, 33°, for Ireland). I believe that at one time Ireland had Masonic Rosicrucians --however, since the number was 8 members (or fewer), the Order fell dormant.

I was recently told by The Grand Secretary General of The Supreme Council,33°, for Ireland ... Illustrious Brother Matthew W. Walker, 33°, that there are no Masonic Rosicrucians in Ireland today. It is my hope that Masonic Rosicrucians will be re-established in Ireland in the future. However, there are approximately 3,542 members currently in the Grand Council of Knight Masons. To be nominated in Ireland, a man must be a subscribing member of a Royal Arch Masons' Chapter (also a Mark Master Mason) of at least one year's standing. The degrees of Knight Masonry are based on the building of the Second Temple by Zerubbabel after the return of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin from their seventy years of captivity in Babylon, circa 563 B.C.E. This is the oldest Knighthood in Ancient Irish Symbolic Masonry. There are Knight Mason Councils in Hong Kong, Jamaica, South Africa, and the U.S.A. In a subsequent letter to me from Bro. Walker, he says, "Freemasons in Ireland do not regularly perform Cornerstone-laying Ceremonies; and the only one I have attended was when we were erecting a new Masonic Centre in Limerick City." Brother Walker sent me a copy of the March 2006 "Grand Lodge News" published by the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. Masons of Ireland. In it, an article tells of an ancient brass square recovered from the foundations of Baal's Bridge in Limerick when the bridge was being rebuilt in 1830. It is inscribed, "I will strive to live with Love and Care Upon the Level by the Square" and bears the date 1507. This square is reputed to be one of the earliest Masonic items found in Ireland.

When I first saw mention of that inscription, I wondered if it is an example of Rosicrucian poetry? Let us examine the words Love, Care, Level, and Square closely and compare with the meanings behind the 4-leaf clover. How do they compare with hope, faith, love and good luck?

- * If we extend brotherly love, we will receive love in return.
- * If we care about ourselves, our fellow man, and our God - we will have faith.
- * If we walk uprightly and meet on the level - we will have hope for today and tomorrow.
- * If we measure our actions according to the square, we will live happy & productive lives and truly "be in clover" with the good luck & blessings given to us by our Creator.

In closing, I would urge all of us to fully examine all the signs and symbols we encounter in our lives. Masonry uses the tools and skills of the ancient stonemasons to enable us as Speculative Freemasons to apply them for more noble and glorious purposes of molding and refining our lives. As Rosicrucians, we constantly are on the quest for knowledge and wisdom to shape and purify our lives. Let us appreciate the legacy of Ireland and I hope all of us will have that "good luck" symbolized by the 4-leaf clover. As Masonic Rosicrucians, we appreciate the old Irish saying, "A handful of skill is better than a bagful of gold."



Sources / Suggested Readings:

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry
- Postal Letter correspondence from Matthew W. Walker to James A. Marples dated 04 January 2006.
- Postal Letter correspondence from Matthew W. Walker to James A. Marples dated 22 February 2006.
- Postal Letter correspondence from the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. Masons of Ireland to James A. Marples, dated 12 January 2006.
- Postal Letter correspondence from Sean P. McCabe, Grand Scribe of the Grand Council of Knight Masons of Ireland to James A. Marples dated 12 January 2006.

"Grand Lodge News", Official Newsletter of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. Masons of Ireland. March 2006, Issue, page 3.

Author's Note: In addition to Ireland having a simple pyramid structure to its Masonic degrees, it is nice to see that all of the Bodies heretofore mentioned are housed under one roof with headquarters of each at Freemasons' Hall, 17 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

About the Author: James A. Marples, VII°, is a life member of the York Rite and the Scottish Rite Bodies, and The Royal Order of Scotland. He is also a member of the Knight Masons, Allied Masonic Degrees, York Rite College, and The Red Cross of Constantine.



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