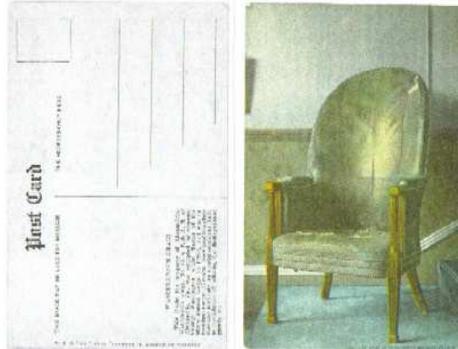


George Washington's Master's Chair and his Masonic Aprons

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George Washington's Masonic Chair

When I was a young boy in the 1960's, my late Dad took my mother and me to an "open" Installation of Officers at Sunflower Lodge #86 A.F. & A.M. in Wichita, Kansas. Being an inquisitive kid, I asked my Dad a couple of questions that stood-out in my young mind. I asked my Dad: "Why is only that ONE MAN wearing a hat in this room; while nobody else has a hat on?" And, as a follow-up, I asked my Dad: "Why does that man sit in that great BIG CHAIR over there?"

My Dad always treated me as if I were an adult. By that, I mean that my Dad always talked to me on "an adult-level". He replied to my questions in the exact same manner that he would have, if a middle-aged person had asked the same questions. I still vividly recall my Dad's answers: "That man is the only person wearing the Hat because he is in-charge; and he sits in that big Chair in the East since that where the Presiding Officer sits in the room." Lastly, I asked my Dad (quietly/discreetly) why the man rapped the gavel once. My Dad whispered: "To get people to be quiet and pay attention." My memory falters after that---I don't think the gavel was used any more during the Installation Ceremonies. From that point onward, it was all verbal commands such as "The Audience will please rise," or "The Audience will please be seated." Yet, the single sound of that gavel-rap made a profound influence on my young mind.

Remarkably ---even at that tender-age, I caught-on. Being quite young and innocent and even naive, I had no idea of the Symbolism. However I could readily relate to men whom I had seen on the street who wore hats: Some were policemen; some were firemen; some were Utility workers with Hard-hats; still others were commercial bus-drivers. Their hat signified their Authority (even if it was 'benign authority'). And, the 'space' they sat at: whether it be inside a police squad-car, or in a fire-truck, or in that Master's Chair reflected their Area of Expertise. Where those people sat, was clearly a designation of the Authority they held and their ability to be "in-charge."

In today's world, fewer young people have positive role-models which they can really point to, as being "leaders" or "Pillars of the Community." I am just thankful that in my youth, I DID. Within the Lodge Room of Sunflower Lodge #86, there was a portrait of President (and Brother) George Washington in his Masonic Apron and other Masonic regalia. That was probably my first introduction to the fact that many of the men who built America as our nation's "Founding Fathers" were Masons.



The renowned Masonic scholar Dr. Albert G. Mackey in his "Encyclopedia of Freemasonry," notes that 'The Chair' is a "technical term signifying the Office of Master of a Lodge." He notes that German Freemasons refer to "der Meister im Stuhl, or the Master in the Chair." Mackey further goes on to note that since Lodge Rooms were customarily rectangle in shape and positioned in a West-to-East configuration. The Master (the Presiding Officer) rising from the Chair in "the East" being emblematic of the rising sun to open and govern his Lodge. The Chair was also referred to as "the Oriental Chair of King Solomon." Mackey notes the relatively rare expression of "Passing The Chair," which was a special ceremony reserved for inducting a Master-elect into his Office. This ceremony is still retained by some State Grand Lodges. It is also conferred within Royal Arch Masonry of the American York Rite as the degree of "(Virtual) Past Master." Nearly two centuries ago, it was the traditional requirement that only actual "Past Masters" be admitted to the Holy Royal Arch, which is enunciated as the true completion of the Third Degree of Ancient Craft Masonry. Because of so many applicants, the degree of (Virtual) Past Master was created as adjunct to satisfy that Statute. However, since George Washington had a Masonic Apron with the "Mark Master Mason" emblem embroidered thereon; and because he was an "actual Past Master," this gives wide credence to the belief that George Washington was, in fact, a Royal Arch Mason. At that time, the Royal Arch Degrees were conferred by special Warrant by some Blue Lodges.

'The Master's Chair,' which W. Bro. George Washington used while Master of Alexandria Lodge #22 (now Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22) in the years 1788-1789, was kept in constant use by that Lodge for 117 years. The Lodge members, being concerned about its potential for wear and tear, discontinued its use. It is now kept in a glass case and used only on special occasions.

At the first installation of Officers which I attended as a kid, I was impressed by the men wearing the plain white Lambskin Apron. Seeing my Dad also wearing the white Lambskin Masonic Apron revealed a peaceful serenity within me that, to use my youthful jargon: "All of these guys are friends and in the same group." Little did I realize that I hit the nail on the head. The multitudes of men wearing the pure white Masonic Lambskin Apron revealed an "Equality" among "friends" who were also "fraternal Brothers." They were tied together by the Mystic Tie of Brotherhood. It was at that setting that I think I first heard the phrase: "Masons believe in The Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God." At the conclusion of the event, the Lodge Chaplain gave a prayer and it ended in the conventional "Amen." I was impressed that all the Masons also added: "So Mote It Be." I had never heard that before. I asked my Dad what it meant. He asked me if I heard the "Amen". I said that I did. He replied, "Well, it is an intensifier word from Old English customs which means: "So May It Be." Once the new Master of the Lodge was "installed," I still remember the great big smile that came across his face when first seated in "The Chair." Even a kid could feel the joy that seemed to radiate from the occupant of that chair.

From my days in the youth-group of DeMolay for Boys, to my current journeys in Masonry, I always marvel at the beauty of ancient architecture and furniture.

Lodge Chairs (especially "The Master's Chair") often have a flair that is reminiscent of an elegant or even regal position. Although several Presidents of the United States, Prime Ministers of Canada and Great Britain, as well as Kings of Scotland, England, Sweden, Hawaii, and other countries have been Freemasons - most of them presided with dignity and met their Brethren on the level as a Brother Mason. Some portions of Freemasonry have a patriarchal or



hierarchical "organizational flow chart;" yet, the Fraternity prides itself on "Equality" among all Brothers in our gentle Craft.

Later on, when I read Masonic books from the 1800's, nearly every book and article would say that Masonry is NOT a religion; yet, every Mason must believe in a Supreme Being = Almighty God. The noted scholar Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33^o, and a Knight Templar, often wrote, "Masonry is a system of Morality illustrated by (honorable) Symbols and veiled by (honorable) Allegory." As I grew older, I began to learn that Masons use ancient and honorable ritualistic procedures to teach honorable lessons which can be applied to today's modern life.

Sadly, today, many of our young people have deviated to routinely utilize cuss words/curse words, and outlandish dress and/or crazed music as their "intensifiers" of choice, to draw attention. "Shock Value" has replaced the unified, dignified decorum when I first heard the sound of the Master's gavel. The Latin phrase: "Ordo ab Chao" (bringing 'Order out of Chaos') has been replaced by often impromptu emotional impulses. Fewer and fewer young people know about parliamentary procedure and scarcely any have heard of "Robert's Rules of Order." Today's, "Social Media Chat-rooms" have somewhat displaced traditional Meetings or Assemblies of business, professional, fraternal, journalistic, and even religious groups. Some of the newest Interactive Internet websites may have 'Administrators,' but they cannot hold a candle to "a leader;" "a boss;" "a chief executive;" or "a Presiding Officer," who brings a sense of stability and purpose to an otherwise rudderless group. That is the subtle Symbolism of George Washington's Chair: It was where the man "in-charge" sat, who wore the Masonic Apron, and who held the Gavel-of-Authority in his hands.

To discuss George Washington's Masonic Aprons: He is said to have had, in his later life, at least three (3) different Masonic Aprons in his possession, which are differentiated as follows - by those entities who either own (or display) them currently. Namely ----

1. **The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania** (which in some of its sponsored web pages still suggests that their apron was a **gift** from Lafayette).

2. **Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22** (which has relinquished any claim to the apron they hold as being from Lafayette, but a strong claim as to the apron actually having been **owned** by George Washington).

3. **Mount Nebo Lodge in Shepherdstown, WV**, (which has creditable claim that their apron was **owned** by George Washington and possibly having been conveyed by Lafayette during his 1784 visit.

In this Presentation, I shall discuss the characteristics of each Apron, but out of order. I shall discuss aspects of Apron #2, Apron #3, and lastly Apron #1. See addendum for chronology of Washington's Masonic journey.

MASONIC APRON #2---

The Masonic Apron Washington was received by George Washington in 1782 from fellow Freemasons Elkanah Watson of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and his partner, Monsieur Cassoul, of Nantes, France. The apron is clearly identified in Mr. Watson's book, *Men and Times of the Revolution*, or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, (New York, 1856, pages 135-6), stating: "Wishing to pay some mark of respect to our beloved Washington, I employed, in



conjunction with my friend M. Cassoul, (Catholic) nuns in one of the convents at Nantes to prepare some elegant Masonic ornaments and gave them a plan for combining the American and French flags on the apron designed for this use." An autograph acknowledgment was written by Washington – the letter was purchased from the Watson family and is in the possession of the Grand Lodge of New York.

It is very pleasing that the crossed Habsburg/Hapsburg and American Flags are entwined on that Masonic Apron. Further, it is gratifying that Catholic Nuns played a part in the silk embroidery. Francis I, Holy Roman Emperor, was initiated in 1731 into Freemasonry by the Grand Lodge at England, at a specially convened Lodge at 'The Hague.' During a subsequent visit to England, he was Raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. He was founder of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty...an Alliance that was to prove beneficial to the British American Colonies who sought Independence, long after Francis' death. Francis's son Joseph II, apparently never joined Freemasonry, but nevertheless was friendly towards it, until his death in 1790. In July of 1782, Pope Pius VI paid Joseph II a visit. Joseph II's assistance to America was a major key to the United States of America achieving full Independence as a new and sovereign nation. Therefore, an odd fraternal dance occurred with mixtures of English Masonic customs and French Masonic customs being interjected into the Fraternity here in America. For the most part, our American Grand Lodges have gleaned the best and most virtuous aspects of each. For the most part, American Grand Lodges have always instilled a sense of Honor and Legitimacy in pronouncements of "Regularity" in giving Official Recognition or "Treaties of Amity" to any foreign Masonic Bodies. Freemasons in the United States of America have not been shy in denouncing spurious groups as clandestine. Washington's Masonic Aprons with crossed Flags inculcate "patriotism" and "loyal alliances." However, any alliance (even a fraternal alliance) is always subject to review. Fraternal Relations are always subject to constant vigilance to preserve Brotherly Harmony.

MASONIC APRON #3---

A little known Masonic apron believed to have been George Washington's was unveiled at the Mount Vernon Estate, Museum, and Gardens on February 19, 2011. Owned by Mount Nebo Lodge No. 91 Ancient Free & Accepted Masons, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, the apron was on public display in Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center until May 19, 2011. Presiding Master of the lodge, George Alwin said, "In commemoration of the bicentennial in 2011 of Mt Nebo Lodge, we are pleased to loan this national treasure to Mt Vernon. It has been our honor to preserve this important piece of Masonic history in our lodge."

The apron's origins and how it came into Brother Washington's possession are subjects of ongoing research. According to Mt. Nebo Lodge history, the apron was a gift to General Washington from the Masonic Grand Lodge of France. Marquis Lafayette was said to have conveyed it to Washington in 1784 when Lafayette returned to America and visited Mt. Vernon. By design, symbolism and construction the apron is indeed French. The crossed U.S. and French Bourbon flags date the apron after 1776 and before 1789. The apron lacks Washington and French Masonic documentation but this may be due to revolutions, wars and Nazi occupation over the last 230 years.

The apron's known history begins after George Washington's death in 1799. The inventory of his estate, compiled in early 1800, lists among the contents of his Study, "1 Japan Box containing Masons apron" valued at \$40 and "1 Piece of Oil Cloth contg. orders of Masonry" at \$50. The inventory taken after Martha



Washington's death in 1802 does not itemize the Study's contents, so no Masonic aprons are listed. However, a record of personal property sold out of the Washington estate after Martha died lists two Masonic aprons: one was purchased for \$5.00 by Burdett Ashton (1747-1814), husband of Washington's niece, Ann (1752-1777); the second was purchased for \$6.00 by Thomas Hammond (1770-1820), husband to Washington's niece, Mildred (1772-1805). There is no reference in this sales list to any box corresponding to "Japan Box" listed in George Washington's inventory.

Soon after purchasing Washington's second apron, Thomas Hammond and his wife Mildred moved to the Appalachian foothills of Virginia. In 1811 the Grand Lodge of Virginia granted a lodge charter to Freemasons in Shepherdstown. Called Mount Nebo No. 91, it retained the same name and number when it came under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of West Virginia in 1872. According to lodge history, Thomas Hammond became a Freemason in Mt. Nebo in 1815. In appreciation for his initiation he donated the second apron to the Lodge. Despite the Anti-Masonic Period of the 1830s, the Civil War, and countless other dangers, the lodge kept the apron safe.

Meanwhile, the apron purchased by Burdett Ashton is believed to have passed to his wife's cousin, Lawrence Lewis (1767-1839), a nephew of George Washington's who had married Martha Washington's granddaughter, Eleanor (Nelly) Parke Custis (1779-1852). On June 3, 1812, Lawrence Lewis donated a Masonic apron, sash and a japanned box to Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22 in Alexandria, Virginia. It is generally accepted that this embroidered apron is the famous "Watson-Cassoul Apron," which takes its name from the two commercial agents, American Elkanah Watson and Frenchman Francois-Corentin Cassoul, who commissioned it while working in Nantes, France during the War of Independence. In 1782 they sent it along with a signed letter to General Washington. Washington received the apron while encamped at Newburgh, New York. His thank you letter, the envelope it was mailed in, and Watson's and Cassoul's initial letter all still exist. It is assumed President Washington wore this apron at the 1793 cornerstone ceremony of the U.S. Capitol. The apron and sash remain in the care of Alexandria-Washington Lodge and are rarely exhibited. The Japanned Masonic box may be viewed in the Lodge's Replica Room within the George Washington Masonic Memorial.

IF the dating of both the Mt. Nebo apron (1784) and the Alexandria-Washington apron (1782) are correct then it is not surprising they are similar in shape, style and high craftsmanship. Both display exquisitely embroidered crossed flags, and a knotted and tasseled cable-tow with a suspended gavel on white silk. The central motifs, however, are quite different. Mt. Nebo's apron has a square and compasses with one leg above and one below the square. A sprig of acacia intertwines the square. In the center is a skull with crossed bones and dagger. According to European Masonic scholarship this apron design is not uncommon with the central symbols referring to the murder of Master Builder of King Solomon's Temple, while the acacia symbolizes immortality. The apron is trimmed with black silk ribbon and backed with black silk.

The design similarities may be the root cause for confusion between the two aprons. Indeed the controversy began at least as early as Marquis Lafayette's tour of the United States as "the Nation's Guest." According to Lodge history, in 1825 he visited Alexandria-Washington Lodge and upon seeing the Watson-Cassoul Apron, declared it to be the one he had given to Washington nearly four decades before. Age 82 and a survivor of the French Revolution, Napoleon's regime, and two



Bourbon restorations, the Marquis may be forgiven if he mistook one apron for another. Yet it remains unclear if it is Mt. Nebo's apron or Alexandria-Washington's apron that Lafayette conveyed to General Washington.

Since 1844, however, Mt. Nebo's apron is well documented. According to the Lodge's minute books the first public appearance was May 16, 1844 in Charlestown. It was displayed at a banquet celebrating the 90th anniversary of a legendary Masonic meeting in a local cave. The minutes state: ". . . an apron black silk velvet, presented more than half a century to Gen. Washington by the Grand Lodge of France, through the person of this early friend, brother and companion in arms, Bro. Gilbert M.D. Lafayette."

In 1847 the apron traveled to the District of Columbia. It was worn by Mt. Nebo Lodge brother S. McElroy at the Masonic cornerstone ceremony of the Smithsonian Institution. Three years later the Grand Master of Virginia, James Points, wore the apron in Richmond at the Virginia Statehouse, George Washington Monument ceremony. President Zachary Taylor also attended. The Grand Lodge of New Hampshire's 1867 Proceedings reported the apron, as well as President and Bro. Andrew Johnson, were present at the cornerstone ceremony of Grand Lodge of Maryland's new temple in 1866. Ten years later, the local newspaper The Shepherdstown Register ran a full story on the apron.

The apron's last major public appearance was in Minnesota. In 1892 Bro. Wynkoop Lemen, a dual member of Mt. Nebo Lodge No. 91 and Warren Lodge No. 150, Warren, Minnesota, gained permission to bring the apron west. It came first to Warren Lodge then appeared at the annual Grand Lodge of Minnesota meeting in St. Paul. Before returning to Shepherdstown, the Grand Lodge commissioned a beautiful hand-carved Masonic framed case. The apron then traveled to Chicago where it appeared at two lodges. The national publication, Voice of Freemasonry ran an illustrated article of the apron and its case. It is curious that its description of the apron is lifted from the 1877 The Shepherdstown's Register's piece.

The Voice's article led to the apron to appear in a well-known 1896 lithograph. The Chicago firm of Kurz & Allen produced a pair of prints "Franklin Opening the Lodge" and "Washington Closing the Lodge." Both are more Masonic fantasies than historical accuracy and are modeled after Emanuel Leutz's 1856 portrait "Washington as Master Mason." Yet, unlike the Leutz painting, Washington is wearing the Mt. Nebo apron. Furthermore, Franklin's apron has a similar square, compasses and acacia sprig. These prints were quite popular and hung in numerous lodges and are still available through the Internet. Perhaps the last major public appearance was at the 100th commemoration of Washington's death. On December 14, 1899, under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Virginia more than 300 Freemasons representing every grand jurisdiction in the country attended a special service at Washington's Tomb at Mount Vernon. Afterwards President and brother freemason William McKinley addressed the brethren from the east lawn. According the November 1899 Grand Lodge of West Virginia's annual communication, Mt. Nebo Lodge planned to have the apron present at the commemoration.

After 1900 the apron slipped out of Masonic and public awareness. Mt. Nebo kept the apron in the Minnesota frame and hung it on the north lodge wall. On a few special occasions it was brought out for public view and appreciation. Periodically local newspapers and town histories wrote about the apron, but word of the apron did not spread beyond the mountains. Past Grand Master of Virginia William Mosely Brown in his excellent book, George Washington: Freemason (1952) acknowledged the apron's existence, but did not follow up with further comment.



Until 2009 the apron lived quietly in the Lodge. Now, in celebration of their 200th anniversary, the brethren of Mt. Nebo Lodge have returned the apron to George Washington's home and to public light for everyone's benefit and delight.

MASONIC APRON # 1 ---

According to Dr. Albert G. Mackey, 33^o and a Knight Templar, the other Washington apron and sash (which I refer to as "Apron #3) came into the possession of Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, at Alexandria, Virginia, on June 3, 1812, and as recorded in the Lodge of Washington (page 90), were presented, with the box made in France which contained them, by Major Lawrence Lewis, a nephew of Washington, on behalf of his son, Master Lorenzo Lewis. The pamphlet, *George Washington the Man and the Mason*, prepared by the Research Committee, Brother C. C. Hunt, Chairman, of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1921, raises the question as to the number of degrees conferred upon Brother Washington.

Fredericksburg Lodge No. 4, Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Brother Washington received his Masonic Degrees, conferred the Royal Arch Degree under the authority of its Lodge Warrant. In fact, the first known record of this degree being conferred anywhere is in the Minutes of this Lodge under date of December 22, 1753.

There is a reference to the degree by the Grand Committee of the Ancient, September 2, 1752, and the books of Vernon Lodge, No. 123, Coleraine in Ireland, show that "a Master and Royal Arch Mason" was proposed for membership, April 16, 1752, and also that a Royal Arch reception was held on March 11, 1745 (see *Miscellanea Latomorum*, volume ix, page 138). **On the flap of the apron presented to Washington are the familiar letters H T W S S T K S arranged in the usual circular form. Within the circle is a beehive which may indicate the Mark selected by the wearer.**

The above pamphlet points out that as this apron was made especially for Washington it is probable that he was a Mark Master Mason at least, and that it is not likely that this emblem would have been placed on the apron had the facts been otherwise. Certainly the beehive as an emblem of industry was an appropriate **Mark** for Washington to select.

Continuing my discourse on what I refer to as Masonic Apron #3:

This Apron was presented to The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania by the Washington Benevolent Society on July 3, 1829 and is now on display in the Grand Lodge Museum at the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia. It is a study in symbolism. For example, **the apron border colors of red, white and blue are the national colors of both the United States and France**. Symbols are silent emblems having meaning only when interpreted. Given the unique character of the interpretation process, it can be understood that no symbol has absolute meaning.

In preparing the following, the late Bro. Frank W. Bobb, Grand Lodge librarian and curator, has used those meanings most widely accepted by Masonic scholars in interpreting the symbolism of the Washington Apron.

1. **RED**, symbolizes courage, zeal, the blood of life, and fire. It is the color of Royal Arch Masonry.
2. **WHITE**, has throughout the ages represented purity and innocence.
3. **BLUE**, has been esteemed since antiquity as a beneficent color, denoting immortality, eternity, chastity and fidelity. It is the color of Symbolic Masonry, "the Blue Lodge."
4. **ALL-SEEING EYE**, a symbol of watchfulness and of the Supreme Being.
5. **RAYS or GLORY**, symbolic of the power of the Supreme Being to penetrate the innermost reaches of the human heart.



6. **RAINBOW**, is sometimes associated with the Royal Arch. It is also part of the architectural arch, being the 9th arch under Solomon's Temple. It is supported by two Pillars (see No.8). Another interpretation calls it the **Arch of Heaven** supported by pillars (Job 26:11). The pillars which support the arch are emblematical of Wisdom and Strength.
7. **MOON**, one of the Lesser Lights in Freemasonry. The Moon governs and rules the night.
8. **PILLARS OF ENOCH**. Enoch, fearing that the principles of the arts and sciences might be lost, erected two pillars, the one of marble to withstand fire, the other of brass to resist water. On each he engraved that which he feared would be lost. The Globes are symbols of Unity and Peace and Plenty. (See also No.37)
9. **PILLARS B. AND J.** were within the porch of King Solomon's Temple. Boaz the name of the left pillar means "in strength"; the right pillar, Jachin, means "God will establish" (see also No.38). The globe on the left pillar represents earth, that on the right, heaven. These brazen pillars with their globes are today the columns of the Senior and Junior Wardens.
10. **DOVE**, in early Masonry is a symbol of Noah's messenger. In ancient symbolism, the dove represented purity and innocence.
11. **FORTY-SEVENTH PROBLEM OF EUCLID'S** first book of geometry. It is said that when Pythagoras solved the problem he exclaimed, "Eureka!" which signifies "I have found it." It is, however, not a problem, but a theorem. It has been adopted as the symbol on the Past Master Mason's Jewel in Pennsylvania (The Ahiman Rezon, Art. XVI, Sec, 3 & 4).
12. **HOPE** is sometimes shown as a female with an anchor, also as an anchor near the ark. **ANCHOR**, an emblem of a well-grounded hope and a well-spent life. With hope, an Anchor holds the soul both sure and steadfast.
13. **PLUMB**, the proper Masonic Jewel of the Junior Warden, admonishes us to walk uprightly before God and man. It is one of the working tools of operative Masons, used to try perpendiculars.
14. **JACOB'S LADDER**, without a clouded canopy or star-decked heaven, which he saw in a vision ascending from earth to heaven. The three principal rungs are denominated **FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY**.
15. **SQUARE WITHIN BOUNDS**, is a symbol formed by four stonemason's squares of equal arms superimposed one on the other to form a central square. This symbol has not been found in American or English books of Masonic symbolism and therefore may well be of French origin. There has been no interpretation found for it to date.
16. **LIGHTS or BURNING TAPERS**, like the three principal Lodge officers, refer undoubtedly to the three stations of the sun, its rising in the East (Worshipful Master), its meridian in the South (Junior Warden), and its setting in the West (Senior Warden). (See also Nos. 30 & 31)
17. **TROWEL**, a working tool of the operative mason, is used symbolically for spreading the cement of Brotherly love and affection.
18. **FIVE-POINTED STAR**, represents the five points of fellowship. Within the star is **the letter "G,"** a well-known symbol of Freemasonry representing both God and geometry.
19. **MOSAIC PAVEMENT**, a representation of the ground floor of King Solomon's Temple. The Masonic Pavement is emblematical of human life, checkered with good and evil.
20. **STEPS**, are usually three in number. **The six steps are said to represent degrees Washington received.**
21. **HOLY BIBLE**, the great light of Freemasonry.
22. **COFFIN**, has always symbolized death. It is found on tracing boards of the 18th century and, in that time, constituted a part of the initiatory symbolism of mortality.
23. **SKULL AND CROSS-BONES**, are symbols of mortality and death and are so used in French degrees.



24. **SPRIG OF ACACIA**. The acacia tree is supposedly the shittah wood of the Old Testament. The name is sometimes spelled Cassia. It has long been used as a symbol of immortality.
25. **SQUARE**, is the proper Masonic Jewel of the Master of the Lodge. It is one of the Great Lights in Freemasonry. It is the stonemason's square of two equal arms.
26. **COMPASSES**, the proper Masonic emblem of the Craft, and one of the Great Lights in Freemasonry.
27. **BRICK WALL**, appears to represent the place in the Lodge occupied by the Altar. **The Holy Bible, Square, and Compasses rest upon it**, as do the three Lesser Lights. It composes nine rows of bricks, one upon the other. To give the symbolic meaning of the wall would be mere speculation.
28. **ARK**, is emblematical of that Divine Ark which safely carries us over this tempest-tossed life. It is often shown with the Anchor.
29. **SETTING MAUL**, in operative Masonry, is used for setting stones, that is, tapping them to a firm seat in the mortar or urging them sidewise into place. It is considered by some to be a symbol of untimely death.
30. Same as #16
31. Same as #16
32. **TREASURER** of the Lodge wearing the Apron of his office and holding the emblem of his office, Crossed Keys.
33. **TWENTY-FOUR INCH GAUGE**, symbolizes the twenty-four hours of day divided into three equal parts devoted to God, usual vocations, and rest.
34. **SWORD POINTING TO A NAKED HEART**, demonstrates that justice will sooner or later overtake us; and that although our thoughts, words and actions may be hidden from the eyes of man, they are not hidden from the All-Seeing Eye of Almighty God.
35. **TASSEL**, consists of a cord with tassels on the ends. It alludes to the Care of Providence which surrounds and keeps us within its protection while we govern our lives by the four cardinal virtues: temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. The tassel may also represent the Mystic Tie, that sacred bond which unites men of diverse opinions into one band of Brothers.
36. **LEVEL**, the proper Masonic Jewel of the Senior Warden, symbolizes equality and reminds us that we are traveling upon the level of time, It is one of the working tools of an operative mason.
37. Same as # 8
38. Same as # 9
39. **SUN**, one of the Lesser Lights, as a source of light, it reminds the Mason of that intellectual light of which he is in constant search.
40. **SEVEN, SIX-POINTED STARS**. The number SEVEN represents the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences: Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. The **SIX-POINTED STAR** symbolizes Divine Providence, the **Star of David** or Shield of David. It comprises two interlaced triangles, which have a number of Masonic interpretations.
41. **LETTERS**, used symbolically in the **Mark Master Mason's degree, (H.K.T.S.T.K.S.) Chapter of Royal Arch Masons**.
42. **BEEHIVE**, is the emblem of **industry**. It teaches us that as we came into this world, rational and intelligent beings, so we should ever be industrious ones.
43. **APRON**. The Masonic Apron, which derives from the working apron of the stonemason, is in itself a symbol. It is an emblem of innocence, and the badge of a Freemason.

General, President, and Brother George Washington is one of the few personages in American History that people of all ages and persuasions can easily identify with. In my visits to many Masonic Lodges throughout this Nation, I usually see portraits of Bro. George Washington in a Masonic Apron prominently displayed...sometimes with 'The Master's Chair' ---sometimes, just a portrait of Washington freestanding without any other adornment. However, I regard his Masonic Apron(s) and his Master's Chair, as going hand-



in-hand. As the Merriam-Webster Dictionary states: a Chair can be defined either as a seat or means of support for the human body to sit or recline. And, other definitions of 'Chair' as: -- "an official seat of authority, state, or dignity".....or as a "chairman" or "one who occupies a seat or power or governance." In other words: A LEADER. Washington being a Master of a Lodge (roughly equivalent of its Chairman) was dependent on his qualifications and his election as Master. Conversely, if Washington did not possess all the skills, virtues and attributes symbolized on his Masonic Apron(s), he wouldn't have the Wisdom, Patience, and Proficiency to occupy The Chair.

This should be a lesson to our own Lodges today: that ONLY men who are Worthy, Well-Qualified, and Proficient should occupy The Master's Chair of ANY Lodge. As Masons: We meet on the Level, and Part upon the Square. But, let us always be proud of the man-in-charge with the hat who sits in 'The Chair.'

Sources / Exhibits / Recommended Readings:

- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33^o and a Knight Templar.
- "A WASHINGTON APRON RE-DISCOVERED" by Mark A. Tabbert, Director of Collections, George Washington Masonic Memorial, Alexandria, Virginia. In his address given 24 March 2011 . Permission to quote excerpts given by The G.W.M.N.M. to Frater James A. Marples, VII^o , on 05 May 2013.
- Archives. Masonic Grand Lodge of New York.
- Archives of Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22, under The Grand Lodge of Virginia. Notation: The Lodge officially changed its name from Alexandria Lodge #22 to Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22 in the year 1805 to honor its distinguished (and then recently deceased) Past Master.
- Archives. Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

About the Author:

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.

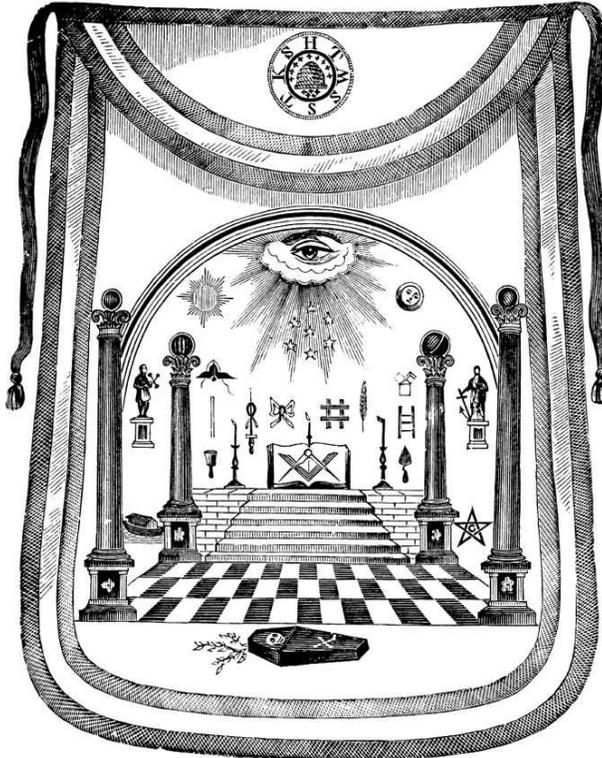
Companion and Sir Knight Jim is a Life Member of the Wichita York Rite Bodies (Wichita Chapter #33 R.A.M.; Wichita Council #12 R.& S.M.; and Mt. Olivet Commandery #12 K.T.). He is also a Life Member of the Lincoln Nebraska Scottish Rite Bodies; The Robert-the-Bruce Association (California); The George Washington Masonic Stamp Club; Masonic Order of the Gordian Knot (Indiana); Masonic Order of the Sword of Bunker Hill; Kentucky Chapter #134 of National Sojourners and Heroes of '76; North Texas York Rite College #118 of Sherman, Texas; and Nebraska College S.R.I.C.F.



He is a Regular Member of The Allied Masonic Degrees; Grand College of Rites; St. David Conclave of The Red Cross of Constantine; Shawnee County Kansas Square and Compass Club; and Holyrood Council #61 of Knight Masons (Nebraska).

EXHIBIT:

Representation of Washington's Masonic Apron #3



ADDENDUM:

CHRONOLOGY:

* February 22, 1732 (by present Gregorian calendar): George Washington is born in Westmoreland, Virginia, in what was then termed "the Virginia Colony" (being one of the original 13 Colonies of what was then-designated as "British America.")

* November 4, 1752, George Washington, at age 20, is initiated as an Entered Apprentice at Fredericksburg Lodge #4, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

* March 3, 1753, Washington is Passed to the Degree of a Fellow Craft at Fredericksburg Lodge #4.

* August 4 1753, Washington is Raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason at Fredericksburg Lodge #4.



- * Subsequent year of unknown date: Washington receives Mark Master Mason Degree. He selects as his 'Mark,' the Beehive.
- * Subsequent year of unknown date: Washington is believed to have received the degree of Royal Arch Mason; which was already conferred at Fredericksburg.
- * July 4, 1776. The "Declaration of Independence" declares the United States of America to be an Independent and Sovereign Nation.
- * Year 1788: Named Charter Worshipful Master of Alexandria Lodge #22, when a new Charter from the Grand Lodge of Virginia was issued. He was unanimously re-elected Master on December 20, 1788 for one year. (This Lodge was originally established in 1783 as "Lodge #39" when founded by warrant by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.)
- * U.S. Presidential Term: April 30, 1789 to March 4, 1797
- * Year 1789: Elected honorary member of Holland Lodge #8 of New York City, New York.
- * September 18, 1793, as "Acting Grand Master," Washington laid the cornerstone for the U.S. Capitol in the Federal City (now Washington, D.C.).
- * December 14, 1799, Washington dies at his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia.
- * December 18, 1799, Washington is buried at Mount Vernon with Masonic graveside rites conducted by Alexandria Lodge, as well as those of the Episcopal Church.

