

LAYING CORNER-STONES

In no instance is it proper for Masons to lay the cornerstone of any other than a public or Masonic edifice; and then only by special request from the proper authorities.

On the face or front side of the stone for Masonic buildings should be cut: Laid by the M.'. W.'. Prince Hall Grand Lodge of F.'. & A.'. M.'. State of Washington, _____, A. L. 59 _____. _____, Grand Master.

A cavity must be cut in the stone on the under side for the box of deposits.

A triumphal arch is usually erected at the place where the ceremony is to be performed. A convenient and safe platform should be built, for the officers and choir.

The ceremony is conducted by the Grand Master in person or by a Special Deputy, and can be varied according to conditions existing, the number present, and the character of the edifice to be erected. If it be a national, state or city public building, the chief executive officers may be assigned places of honor in the procession, but not as actual participants in the ceremonial exercises.

At the time appointed, the Grand Lodge will be opened in a convenient place; the brethren assume their proper clothing and jewels, wearing white gloves; the necessary instructions are given. Martial music should be provided.

GRAND MASTER: The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Washington has been requested to lay the corner-stone of _____. The Grand Marshal will form the brethren in procession, and we will proceed to the place designated.

The procession is then formed, under the direction of the Grand Marshal, and moves substantially in the following:

FORMATION

Grand Marshal	Band of Martial Music; Escort of the Day; Grand Tyler, with drawn sword; Grand Stewards, with white rods; Chief Magistrate and Civil Officials (if the building be for public purposes); Master Masons, by twos; Masters and Past Masters;
	Principal Architect, or Superintendent of Construction, with Square, Level, Plumb and Trowel; Grand Bible Bearer, with Great Lights; Grand Standard Bearer and Grand Sword Bearer; Grand Orator and Grand Historian; Grand Chaplain and Grand Lecturer; Grand Secretary, carrying box and roll containing list of deposits; Past Grand Officers, according to rank; Junior Grand Warden, with vessel of Oil; Senior Grand Warden, with vessel of Wine; Deputy Grand Master, with vessel of Corn; Grand Master, supported by the Grand Deacons, with blue rods.

The procession, on arriving at the arch, opens to the right and left, facing inward. The Grand Master (preceded by the Grand Marshal) advances between the lines, the officers following in reverse order, to the platform. The other brethren surround the platform, forming a hollow square.

The Grand Master, commanding silence, announces, in appropriate remarks, the purpose of the occasion; after which may be sung the following or other suitable

ODE

To Heaven's high Architect, all praise.
All gratitude be given,
Who deigned the human soul to raise
By secrets sprung from heaven.

CHORUS

Then sound the Great Jehovah's praise,
To Him the glorious structure raise.
Now swell the choir in solemn tone,
And hovering Angels join;
Religion looks delighted down
When Votaries press the shrine.

CHORUS

Then sound, etc.

Blest be the place, thither repair
The true and pious train;
Devotion makes her anthem there.
And Heaven accepts the strain.

CHORUS

Then sound, etc.

If the building be intended for public purposes, the architect, or person having its construction in charge, will address the Grand Master, stating the purpose for which the structure is designed, and requesting that the corner-stone be laid according to the ancient forms and ceremonies of the Craft; if the building be intended for Masonic purposes, the address will be varied accordingly. The Grand Master will make the following or some other appropriate response:

GRAND MASTER: From time immemorial it has been the custom of the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, on invitation, to lay, with their ancient ceremonies, the corner-stone of buildings being erected for the worship of God, for charitable, educational, or Masonic purposes, or for the administration of free government.

No man should ever enter upon any great and important undertaking without first invoking the blessing of Deity. Brother Grand Chaplain, you will lead us in prayer.

PRAYER

GRAND CHAPLAIN: Almighty, Eternal God, Creator and Upholder of the Universe, Who, in the beginning, laid the foundations of the earth! The heavens are the work of Thy hands; as children of Thy creation, we, too, create and make; plan and mould. By Thy kind Providence, we are assembled here today to lay this foundation stone. Thou, O God, knowest our needs in this present work; in Thee is our wisdom; in Thee is our strength; Vouchsafe to us, we implore Thee, grace, wisdom and understanding, that we may discharge the solemn duties of this hour to Thy honor and glory. We fervently implore Thy blessing on all who shall be engaged in the erection of this building. From this corner-stone, well tried, true and trusty, may the good work advance to completion in peace and harmony. And to Thy name will we give all the praise, both now and forever. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

Preparations are now made for laying the corner-stone When the stone is raised, the Grand blaster will say:

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Grand Secretary, it has been the custom, on occasions like the present, to deposit within a cavity in the stone, placed usually in the Northeast corner of the edifice, certain memorials of the period in which it was erected, so that if, in the lapse of ages, the fury of the elements or the slow but certain ravages of time should lay bare its foundations, an enduring record may be found by succeeding generations, to bear testimony to the energy, industry and culture of our time.

You will now deposit, in the corner-stone, the memorials prepared for that purpose, the list of which you will first read.

The Grand Secretary reads the list and deposits the box, containing the memorials, etc., in the aperture of the corner-stone, the Grand Lodge all standing, and the band playing.

MASTER ARCHITECT: Most Worshipful Grand Master, I present you the Working Tools of operative masonry, which are considered by our Craft the most valued jewels of the Lodge---symbols of important truths, and teaching lessons of wisdom and morality.

The principal Architect of the building then presents the WORKING TOOLS to the Grand Master, who retains the Trowel, and delivers the Square to the Deputy Grand Master, the Level to the Senior Grand Warden, and the Plumb to the Junior Grand Warden. The Grand Master then addresses his officers as follows:

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Brethren, with your assistance and that of the Craft, I will now proceed to lay the Corner-Stone of this building according to the custom of the Fraternity. Worshipful Grand Marshal, you will prepare to lower the stone.

The Grand Master then spreads the cement and the stone is lowered into place amid the strains of solemn music. The brethren may now be seated.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, what is the proper Jewel of your office?

DEP GRAND MASTER: The Square.

GRAND MASTER: What are its Moral and Masonic uses?

DEP. GRAND MASTER: To square our actions by the square of virtue, and to prove our work.

GRAND MASTER: Apply that implement to the corner-stone; attest its value and workmanship and make report.

The Deputy Grand Master, after applying the square to the stone at three places, reports:

DEP GRAND MASTER: Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be square and well fitted for its use. The craftsmen have performed their duty acceptably.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Senior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office?

GR. SR. WARDEN: The Level.

GRAND MASTER: What is its use?

GR. SR. WARDEN: Morally and Masonically, it teaches equality, and it is used to lay horizontals.

GRAND MASTER: Apply that implement to the corner-stone and make report.

GR. SR. WARDEN: *(after applying Level):* Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be level. The work of the craftsmen has been well done.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Junior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office ?

GR. JR. WARDEN: The Plumb.

GRAND MASTER: What is its use?

GR. JR. WARDEN: Morally and Masonically, it teaches rectitude of conduct, and it is used to try perpendiculars.

GRAND MASTER: Apply that implement to the several sides of the corner-stone, and make report.

GR. JR. WARDEN *(after applying Plumb):* Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be true and plumb. The craftsmen's work is well performed.

GRAND MASTER *(striking the stone three times with his gavel):* Brethren, this corner-stone has been tried and tested by the proper implements of Masonry. The craftsmen have well and skillfully performed their duty, and I do now declare this stone to be well formed, true and trusty, and correctly laid, according to the ancient ceremonies of our Craft. Let it now be consecrated.

CONSECRATION

The Deputy Grand Master then approaches with the vessel of Corn and, scattering it on the stone, says:

DEP. GRAND MASTER: I scatter this Corn as a symbol of plenty. May heavenly blessings be bounteously showered upon us, and ever inspire the hearts of our people with Virtue, Wisdom and Gratitude. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Senior Warden then advances and pours the Wine upon the stone, saying:

GR. SR. WARDEN: I pour this Wine as a symbol of strength and gladness. May the Great Ruler of the Universe bless and prosper our national, state and city governments, and may our Union of States be preserved and cemented in a bond of Friendship and Brotherly Love, which shall endure through all time. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Junior Grand Warden then advances and pours the Oil on the stone, saying:

GRAND JR. WARDEN: I pour this Oil as a symbol of peace and joy. May its blessings abide with us continually, and may our Father in heaven shelter and protect the widow and orphan; shield and defend them from the trials and vicissitudes of the world; and so bestow His mercy upon the bereaved, the afflicted and the sorrowing, that they may know sorrow and trouble no more. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Master, extending his hands, pronounces the following Invocation:

INVOCATION

GRAND MASTER: May the all-bounteous Author of Nature bless the inhabitants of this place with an abundance of the necessaries, conveniences and comforts of life; assist in the erection and completion of this building; protect the workmen against every accident, and long preserve this structure from decay; and grant to us all a supply of the Corn of Nourishment, the Wine of Refreshment, and the Oil of Joy. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Master then strikes the stone three times with his Gavel. The Public Grand Honors are given (3 x 3).

GRAND MASTER: Brother Architect, having laid the corner-stone of this structure, I now return to you these implements of operative masonry, having full confidence in ~our skill and ability to perform the important duties entrusted to you.

To the unmeditative man, the ceremony we have just performed may be barren and meaningless; but to the thoughtful student it is permeated with the symbolism of the building of human character.

In that sense, we all are architects; and as I return to you these implements, I admonish you to use them carefully in superintending the erection of this temporal building; and I also charge these, my brethren, to use them in a symbolical sense to try and to test each thought, each word, and each action, that no stones may go into their spiritual buildings that are not Just, Right and True.

Brother Grand Marshal, you will make proclamation that this corner-stone has been laid in *Ample Form*.

PROCLAMATION

GRAND MARSHAL: I am directed to proclaim, and I do now proclaim, in the name of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Washington, that the corner-stone of the _____, here to be erected, has this day been found Square, Level and Plumb, and has been laid in *Ample Form*, agreeably to the ancient usages and customs of the Fraternity.

An address by the Grand Orator (or other person selected for the occasion) follows. At the close of the address, sing "America" or the following:

ODE

Air: America

Let notes of gladness tell
Thoughts that each bosom swell, --
The work begun!
Hope's joyous thoughts we bring,
While to our Heavenly King
Friends now united sing,-
Hearts joined as one.

Where laid the Corner-Stone,
Ever in kindness known,
Be man's best good I
Though years shall pass away,
Though human works decay.

Ever by Heaven's own ray
Be truth renewed.

May in proportions true,
Rising to grateful view,
The work ascend!
Long may it safely stand,
Untouched by ruthless hand,
Till, true to Heaven's command,
All time shall end.

BENEDICTION

GRAND MASTER: The benediction will now be pronounced by the Grand Chaplain.

GRAND CHAPLAIN: The Lord bless us, and keep us: the Lord make His face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us: the Lord lift upon us the light of His countenance, and give us peace. Amen!

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The procession re-forms and marches to the hall, where the Grand Lodge is closed.