

ROYAL ARCH.

We find in Bernard E. Jones Book, "Freemasons' Book on the Royal Arch" the following.

There has been long argument on how Royal Arch masonry came into existence. Was it present in some slight form in the earliest fabric of speculative masonry or was it, frankly, just an innovation in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Those accepting the first possibility believe that long before the earliest recorded dates of Craft Masonry there was a legend or series of legends from which was developed.

(a) The Heramic Degree which working in a few Lodges certainly by as early as the 1720s; (b) The Royal Arch Degree known to be working by the 1740's and 1750' and (c) some additional degrees. All these were thought to have come from one common source and, although developed on very different lines, to have running through them a recognizable thread.

We find that in the late Middle Ages there were in manuscript and printed print many allusions and references which may be interpreted as relating to the main idea or dominant motif of the Royal Arch. Perhaps the earliest was an endorsement (now lost) in one of the Old Charges, the Grand Lodge No. 1. M.S., bearing the date December 25, 1583. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word Was God."

There is reference to a lecture delivered on December 27, 1726 to The Grand Lodge of All England, at York, in the presence of the Grand Master, Charles Bathurst. This reference was to Josiah and repairs to the Temple including the re-building of the Temple by Zerubbabel and Herod."

It has often been advanced that the early 'Scots' Degrees contained matter which today is found not only in the Royal Arch, but in the Mark Degree. There seems little doubt that in the 1740's the Scots Degree or degrees was a 'fourth' ceremony, one dealing with the rebuilding of the Temple of Zerubbabel and bringing into prominence the occasion when builders worked with sword in one hand and trowel in the other. But then, by that time, the R.A. itself was known to be working in England.

The earliest date on which we have definite and undisputed knowledge of the Royal Arch in England is March 4, 1752.

We have Thomas Dunckerley's own assertion that he was exalted in a Portsmouth Lodge in 1754. The Antients were at this time very busy with the Royal Arch, and we find in 1757 a minute of their Grand Lodge summoning "Masters of the Royal Arch" to meet in order to regularize regulate things relative to that most valuable branch of the Craft.

The first known English minute recording the raising of a brother to the R.A. is, perhaps unexpectedly, of a 'Moderns Lodge' at Bristol, in 1758, but it would be wrong to rush to the conclusion from this isolated evidence that the Moderns worked Royal Arch earlier than the Antients.

On Sunday, February 7, 1762, a Royal Arch Lodge was opened at the Punch Bowl Inn, in Stonegate in York, by members of the Punch Bowl Lodge No. 259. Four members opened the Royal Arch Lodge, so providing an early instance of a separate organization specially formed for the working of the Royal Arch ceremonial. Under the Antients, and legally so, that ceremonial was worked in their Craft lodges, while under the Moderns, at that time the Royal Arch Degree was irregular and, if worked, quite unofficial. But the Punch Bowl Lodge was not a Moderns Lodge, it was a Lodge working under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge at York.

A most important era in Royal Arch masonry began on June 11, 1766, on which day 27 companions witnessed the Exaltation of Cadwallader, Lord Blayney, into a new chapter. Later the Excellent Grand and Royal Chapter- entered into a Charter of Compact which brought into existence the first Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, the first not only in England, but in the World. The Charter was signed in 1766.

It is obvious at this early date, there was no esoteric Installation of ~~Principals~~ Principal Officers. The manifesto with its regulations followed by a set of severn resolutions, evidently of the same date (1765),

The officers were as follows: P.H.; P.Z.; P.I. (Excellent Grands) ;
Principal Sojourner; E and N (Secretaries)

In soem cases the third Principal was given as J.P. and even I.H.P. In all these titles the letter P stands for "Prince, Prophet, and Priest.

On June 11, 1766, after exaltation, Lord Blayney, automatically, it appears, became head of Royal Arch and First Principal of the Chapter. He was the first Moderns Grand Master to acknowledge and foster the Royal Arch, but not the first Grand Master to become a Royal Arch mason, for the Hon. Brinsley Butler was exalted during his year of office as Grand Master of Ireland.

The eighth 'clause' of the Charter states "that none calling themselves Royal Arch Masons shall be deemed any other than Masters in operative Masonry"

The Grand Chapter began to issue charters to Lodges authorising them to work the Royal Arch, the charter to be attached to the warrant of the Lodge and so setting a pattern or custom in that respect strictly followed today.

In Grand Chapter itself the ~~Zerubbabel~~ Zerubbabel was, according to the minutes, "appropriately Invested and Installed," but we have no means of knowing what the Installation ceremony actually was, although it is strongly held that the Zerubbabel chair carried no secrets with it until the turn of the century, and in most cases places much later.

Sunday Meetings (often in private rooms) were, over a long period, regarded with great favour by Royal Arch Masons. Grand Chapter issued an official ban on Sunday meetings in 1811, and no new warrants were issued to Chapters wishing to meet on a Sunday. Following the Union in 1817, Supreme Grand Chapter expressed its disapprobation of Sunday meetings. In any case, it appears that Sunday meetings on licensed premises were illegal, for in 1806, as an example, the Bolton magistrates fined a landlord twelve shillings for permitting a chapter to meet at his inn on a Sunday.

Soon after the creation of the premier Grand Chapter it ~~seems~~ seems likely that the "Antients for the first time found the scales tilted against them, and and, although to them any separate control of the Royal Arch was of no advantage, they obviously felt compelled to counter the efforts of their rivals by creating their own Grand Chapter. So, in 1771, they replied to Lord Blayneys gesture, but their Grand Chapter was nothing more than a nominal body; it is not known to have had minutes before 1781. As with the Premier Grand Chapter the Antients in their regulations stated no one could be exalted to Royal Arch unless he had passed thro through the three progressive degrees and has filled and performed the office of Master in his Lodge, to the satisfactory of the Brethren.

Rule 14. (note laid down that nine Excellent Masters, to assist the Grand Officers, in visiting Lodges (Chapters), etc. were to be elected in October of each Year.

Chapters: It is not to be lightly assumed, however, that the change-over from 'Lodge' to 'chapter', 'Master' to 'Principal'; AND SO ON, WAS A SMOOTH, automatic process, for, as already shown, the Grand Chapter called itself for a time in the 1790's a 'Grand Lodge of Royal Arch Masons', and in 1801 the head of 'Supreme Grand Chapter' was a 'Grand Master.'

Companion: Royal Arch Masons were still Brethren in most places until late in the 1770's and in some Lodges for long afterwards.

^AExalt: The term exalted is in the Charter of Compact in 1766, but editions of the laws produced by the first Grand Chapter late in the eighteenth-century have a ~~lengthy~~ lengthy preamble addressed "To all the Companions of that estate but more particularly to INITIATES." So, apparently, not until early in the nineteenth century did it become really customary to use the familiar word 'exalte'

Sojourners: As from the formation of the first Grand Chapter the sojourners were among officers who were elected Annually, but there grew up in some chapters a custom by which the elected Principal Sojourner exercised a privilege of appointing his two assistants. Indeed, a rule to this effect appears in the Royal Arch Regulations of 1823, this remaining in force until 1886, when power of election returned to the Chapter.

Janitor: In early Chapters the 'Janitor' was called the ~~Tyler~~ 'Tyler', as in the Craft, and it is likely that the new term was adopted merely to make a distinction. Literally the word 'Janitor' is quite apt, for it means 'Doorkeeper,' from the latin janua, 'a door'.

Among the most important regulations made by the United Chapter are those acknowledging all chapters registered before December 27th, 1813, and one requiring every regular chapter ~~registered~~ existing prior to that date unattached to any regular Lodge to unite itself to a regular warranted Craft Lodge, take its number, hold meetings at a separate time from the Lodge, and keep its records and accounts apart from those ~~of~~ of the Lodge.

It appears that many chapters had disinclination or difficulty in complying with the new regulation, for there was a considerable delay on the part of ~~any~~ many of them in naming the Lodges to which they had attached themselves. We find that the Quarterly Communications of Grand Chapter in May 1817 requiring that such chapters as were existing prior to May 1817, and had not yet made known to which Lodge they were attached, be allowed until the Grand Chapter in May 1822 to supply the ~~informant~~ information, each of them to receive a new charter free of expense.

It would appear that for some years after the Union, Royal Arch Masonry was in a somewhat chaotic condition. Many Chapters continued to work as they had done before the union, and some of the Antients continued to work Royal Arch in the Craft Lodges.

The regulations of the United Grand Chapter published in 1823 did away with the Installed Master qualification in Candidates for Exaltation and required merely that the Candidate should be a Master Mason of twelve months standing. In course of time arose an arrangement by which the twelve months could be reduced to four weeks by dispensation, and in November 1893 the qualification was definitely made four weeks standing as a Master Mason, and so it remains to ~~day~~ this day.