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GET KNOWLEDGE – GET WISDOM – GET UNDERSTANDING

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The Broken Column

Author Unknown



The story of the broken column was first illustrated by Amos Doolittle in the "true Masonic Chart" by Jeremy Cross, published in 1819.

Many of Freemasonry's symbols are of extreme antiquity and deserve the reverence which we give to that which has had sufficient vitality to live long in the minds of men. For instance, the square, the point within a circle, the apron, circumambulation, the Altar have been used not only in Freemasonry but in systems of ethics, philosophy and religions without number.

Other symbols in the Masonic system are more recent. Perhaps they are not the less important for that, even without the sanctity of age which surrounds many others.

Among the newer symbols is that usually referred to as the broken column. A marble monument is respectably ancient - the broken column seems a more recent addition. There seems to be no doubt that the first pictured broken column appeared in Jeremy Cross's True Masonic Chart, published in 1819, and that the illustration was the work of Amos Doolittle, an engraver, of Connecticut.

That Jeremy Cross "invented" or "designed" the emblem is open to argument. But there is legitimate room for argument over many inventions. Who invented printing from movable type? We give the credit to Gutenberg, but there are other claimants, among them the Chinese at an earlier date. Who invented the airplane? The Wrights first flew a "mechanical bird" but a thousand inventors have added to, altered, changed their original design, until the very principle which first enabled the Wrights to fly, the "warping wing", is now discarded and never used.

Therefore, if authorities argue and contend about the marble monument and broken column it is not to make objection or take credit from Jeremy Cross; the thought is that almost any invention or discovery is improved, changed, added to and perfected by many men. Edison is credited with the first incandescent lamp, but there is small kinship between his carbon filament and a modern tungsten filament bulb. Roentgen was first to bring the "x-ray" to public notice-the discoverer would not know what a modern physician's x-ray apparatus was if he saw it!

In the library of the Grand Lodge of Iowa in Cedar Rapids, is a book published in 1784; "A BRIEF HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY" by Thomas Johnson, at that time the Tyler of the Grand Lodge of England (the "Moderns"). In this book the author states that he was "taken the liberty to introduce a Design for a Monument in Honor of a Great Artist." He then admits that there is no historical account of any such memorial but cites many precedents of "sumptuous Piles" which perpetuate the memories and preserve the merits of the historic dead, although such may have been buried in lands far from the monument or "perhaps in the depth of the Sea".

In this somewhat fanciful and poetic description of this monument, the author mentions an urn, a laurel branch, a sun, a moon, a Bible, square and compasses, letter G. The book was first published in 1782, which seems proof that there was at that time at least the idea of a monument erected to the Master Builder.

There is little historical material upon which to draw to form any accurate conclusions. Men write of what has happened long after the happenings. Even when faithful to their memories, these may be, and often are, inaccurate. It is with this thought in mind that a curious statement in the Masonic newspaper, published in New York seventy-five years ago, must be considered. In the issue of May 10, 1879, a Robert B. Folger purports to give Cross' account of his invention, or discovery, an inclusion, of the broken column into the marble monument emblem.

The account is long, rambling and at times not too clear. Abstracted, the salient parts are as follows. Cross found or sensed what he considered a deficiency in the Third Degree which had to be filled in order to effect his purposes. He consulted a former Mayor of New Haven, who at the time was one of his most intimate friends. Even after working together for a week, they did not hit upon any symbol which would be sufficiently simple and yet answer the purpose. Then a Copper-plate engraver, also a brother, was called in. The number of hieroglyphics which had be this time accumulated was immense. Some were too large, some too small, some too complicated, requiring too much explanation and many were not adapted to the subject.

Finally, the copper-plate engraver said, "Brother Cross, when great men die, they generally have a monument." "That's right!" cried Cross; "I never thought of that!" He visited the burying-ground in New Haven. At last he got an idea and told his friends that he had the foundation of what he wanted. He said that while in New York City he had seen a monument in the southwest corner of Trinity Church yard erected over Commodore Lawrence, a great man who fell in battle. It was a large marble pillar, broken off. The broken part had been taken away, but the capital was lying at the base. He wanted that pillar for the foundation of his new emblem, but intended to bring in the other part, leaving it resting against the base. This his friends assented to, but more was wanted. They felt that some inscription should be on the column. after a length discussion they decided upon an open book to be placed upon the broken pillar. There should of course be some reader of the book! Hence the emblem of innocence-a beautiful virgin who should weep over the memory of the deceased while she read of his heroic deeds from the book before her.

The monument erected to the memory of Commodore Lawrence was placed in the southwest corner of Trinity Churchyard in 1813, after the fight between the frigates Chesapeake and Shannon, in which battle Lawrence fell. As described, it was a beautiful marble pillar, broken off, with a part of the capital laid at its base. It remained until 1844-5 at which time Trinity Church was rebuilt. When finished, the corporation of the Church took away the old and dilapidated Lawrence monument and erected a new one in a different form, placing it in the front of the yard on Broadway, at the lower entrance of the Church. When Cross visited the new monument, he expressed great disappointment at the change, saying "it was not half as good as the one they took away!"

These claims of Cross, perhaps made for Cross, to having originated the emblem are disputed. Oliver speaks of a monument but fails to assign an American origin. In the Barney ritual of 1817, formerly in the possession of Samuel Wilson of Vermont, there is the marble column, the beautiful virgin weeping, the open book, the sprig of acacia, the urn, and Time standing behind. What is here lacking is the broken column. Thus it appears that the present emblem, except the broken column, was in use prior to the publication of Cross' work (1819).

The emblem in somewhat different form is frequently found in ancient symbolism. Mackey states that with the Jews a column was often used to symbolize princes, rulers or nobles. A broken column denoted that a pillar of the state had fallen. In Egyptian mythology, Isis is sometimes pictured weeping over the broken column which conceals the body of her husband Osiris, while behind her stands Horus or Time pouring ambrosia on her hair. In Hasting's *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS*, Isis is said sometimes to be represented standing; in her right hand is a cestrum, in her left hand a small ewer and on her forehead is a lotus, emblem of resurrection. In the Dionysaic Mysteries, Dionysius is represented as slain; Rhea goes in search of the body. She finds it and causes it to be buried. She is sometimes represented as standing by a column holding in her hand a sprig of wheat, emblem of immortality; since, though it be placed in the ground and die, it springs up again into newness of life. She was the wife of Kronus or Time, who may fittingly be represented as standing behind her.

Whoever invented the emblem or symbol of the marble monument, the broken column, the beautiful virgin, the book, the urn, the acacia, Father Time counting the ringlets of hair, could not have thought through all the implications of this attempt-doubtless made in all reverence-to add to the dignity and impressiveness of the story of the Master Builder.

The urn in which "ashes were safely deposited" is pure invention. Cremation was not practiced by the Twelve Tribes; it was not the method of disposing of the dead in the land and at the time of the building of the Temple. rather was the burning of the dead body reserved as a dreadful fate for the corpses of criminals and evil doers. That so great a man as "the widow's son, of the tribe of Naphtali" should have been cremated is unthinkable. The Bible is silent on the subject; it does not mention Hiram the Builder's death, still less the disposal of the body, but the whole tone of the Old Testament in description of funerals and mournings, make it impossible to believe that his body was burned, or that his ashes might have been preserved.

The Israelites did not embalm their dead; burial was accomplished on the day of death or, at the longest wait, on the day following. According to the legend, the Master Builder was disinterred from the first or temporary grave and reinterred with honor. That is indeed, a supposable happening; that his body was raised only to be cremated is wholly out of keeping with everything known of deaths, funeral ceremonies, disposal of the dead of the Israelites. The ritual which describes the broken column monument, before the figure of the virgin is "a book, open before her." Here again invention and knowledge did not go hand in hand. There were no books at the time of the building of the Temple, as moderns understand the word. there were rolls of skins, but a bound book of leaves made of any substance-vellum, papyrus, skins-was an unknown object. Therefore there could have been no such volume in which the virtues of the Master Builder were recorded.

No logical reason has been advanced why the woman who mourned and read in the book was a "beautiful virgin." No scriptural account tells of the Master Builder having wife or daughter or any female relative except his mother. The Israelites revered womanhood and appreciated virginity, but they were just as reverent over mother and child. Indeed, the bearing of children, the increase of the tribe, the desire for sons, was strong in the Twelve Tribes; why, then, the accent upon the virginity of the woman in the monument? "Time standing behind her, unfolding and counting the ringlets of her hair" is dramatic, but also out of character for the times. "Father Time" with his scythe is probably a descendant of the Greek Chromos, who carried a sickle or reaping hook, but the Israelites had no contact with Greece. It may have been natural for whoever invented the marble monument emblem to conclude that Time was both a world-wide and a time immemorial symbolic figure, but it could not have been so at the era in which Solomon's Temple was built.

It evidently did not occur to the originators of this emblem that it was historically impossible. Yet the Israelites did not erect monuments to their dead. In the singular, the word "monument" does not occur in the Bible; as "monuments" it is mentioned once, in Isaiah 65 - "A people...which remain among the graves and lodge in the monuments." In the Revised Version this is translated "who sit in tombs and spend the night in secret places." The emphasis is apparently upon some form of worship of the dead (necromancy). The Standard Bible Dictionary says that the word "monument" in the general sense of a simple memorial does not appear in Biblical usage.

Oliver Day Street in "SYMBOLISM OF THE THREE DEGREES" says that the urn was an ancient sign of mourning, carried in funeral processions to catch the tears of those who grieved. But the word "urn" does not occur in the Old Testament nor the New.

Freemasonry is old. It came to us as a slow, gradual evolution of the thoughts, ideas, beliefs, teachings, idealism of many men through many years. It tells a simple story—a story profound in its meaning, which therefore must be simple, as all great truths in the last analysis are simple.

The marble monument and the broken column have many parts. Many of these have the aroma of age. Their weaving together into one symbol may be probably is-a modernism, if that term can cover a period of nearly two hundred years. but the importance of a great life, his skill and knowledge; his untimely and pitiful death is not a modernism.

Nothing herein set forth is intended as in any way belittling one of Freemasonry's teachings by means of ritual and picture. These few pages are but one of many ways of trying to illuminate the truth behind a symbol, and show that, regardless of the dates of any parts of the emblem, the whole has a place in the Masonic story which has at least romance, if not too much fact, behind it.



FREEMASONRY SET FREE

Editor's Note - Although Prince Hall Freemasonry has been recognized by our jurisdiction for a number of years and full visitation is authorized, for many Brethren they know little about our Prince Hall Brothers. The following is one of a series of Grand Lodge of California articles discussing "Freedom" that you may find enlightening.

Deciphering the Connections Between Prince Hall Masonry & the Underground Railroad

By Tyler Ash – From the California Mason November/December 2016 Issue



For nearly 200 years, the Underground Railroad has been an elusive, almost mythical aspect of American history, shaping the way we view the cultural and sociopolitical landscapes of the American psyche during the 1800s. A key question continues to elude historians: How did such a large network of people help nearly 100,000 slaves gain their freedom while still maintaining a secretive and, almost clandestine, status? One fascinating insight may be found by studying some of the leading Prince Hall Masons in Boston during the pre-Civil War period through the post-Reconstruction era. As the sediment of time is gradually lifted from the artifacts of historical truth, researchers are rediscovering fundamental relationships between key conductors of the Underground Railroad and leaders of Prince Hall Freemasonry.

One of those researchers is James R. Morgan III, a past master of **Corinthian Lodge No. 18** and the worshipful associate grand historian and archivist of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. Morgan, who was also recently a keynote speaker at the 16th Annual California Masonic Symposium in June of 2016, is a scholar of African-American history and a member of the Phylaxis Society, the only independent research organization dedicated to the study of African-American Freemasonry.

"One of the formulating hands of Prince Hall Masonry was the trans-Atlantic slave trade itself and the effort of people of African descent to find their freedom and gain liberty," Morgan says. "It was in the best interest of Prince Hall Masons to aid that struggle." The relationship between Prince Hall Masonry and the Underground Railroad was symbiotic, says Morgan. A number of the earliest Prince Hall leaders were once enslaved themselves.

"Many of these men were considered 'runaways' even as they were advancing in Masonry," Morgan says. "They were aware that their freedom could be revoked at any time."

FROM SLAVES TO LIBERATORS

Lewis Hayden is one example. Born a slave in Kentucky in 1811, he taught himself to read. In 1844, he and his enslaved family were aided by white abolitionists Calvin Fairbank, a Methodist minister, and Delia Webster, a teacher from Vermont, along the Underground Railroad from Lexington, Kentucky to Ripley, Ohio. Assisted by additional abolitionists, the Hayden family continued north to Canada, where thanks to the Canadian Act Against Slavery of 1793, slavery was outlawed. After attaining their freedom, the Haydens moved to Boston – the center of the abolitionist movement at the time, as well as one of the most active communities of free African-Americans in the country. Boston was also where Prince Hall, the individual, founded African Lodge No. 1 (now No. 459) with 14 other African-American Freemasons in 1782.

Hayden soon became a key figure in Bostonian society and the Underground Railroad. He was extremely passionate about the abolitionist movement, even willing to risk his life in support of the cause. He sheltered more than 100 fugitive slaves at his Boston residence and clothing store, which became known as "the temple of refuge." John J. Smith, a freeborn African-American from Virginia, played another vital role. After testing his luck in the gold fields of California, Smith moved to Boston between 1849 and 1850, and became a barber. His shop soon served as a hotbed for abolitionist activity and as another key stopping point for runaway slaves. Like Hayden, he was a member of the first Prince Hall lodge, African Lodge No. 1.

As Prince Hall lodges became more established, the education they provided for their members offered a launchpad to higher social status, despite the prejudicial climate of American society in those days. Hayden and his Prince Hall contemporaries harnessed this newfound power to advocate for social justice and lift up brothers who tried to follow in their footsteps. In 1843, George Latimer, a fugitive slave from Virginia, escaped to Boston through the Underground Railroad but was captured upon his arrival and sent to state prison. Prominent Masons, including Hayden and Smith, began a blitzkrieg in the media. A group of abolitionists formed the "Latimer Committee," issuing several lengthy petitions to the Massachusetts State Assembly. This resulted in the Personal Liberty Act, or the "Latimer Law," which prevented officials from aiding slave catchers by detaining suspected fugitive slaves in state facilities.

After the ruling, Latimer was viewed as a hero in the abolitionist community and his freedom was purchased for \$400. Propelled by immense gratitude, he became a Prince Hall Mason himself and began aiding Underground Railroad efforts. One well-publicized example of Latimer's contributions is the freeing of a fugitive slave named Shadrach Minkins. In a daring rescue, Hayden, Smith, Latimer, and Edward G. Walker – all Prince Hall Masons within the Boston Vigilance Committee – forcibly retrieved Minkins from courthouse officials after he was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Through the Underground Railroad, they ensured his safety to Canada.

"The Latimer and Minkins rescues are perfect examples of symbiosis between Prince Hall Masonry and the Underground Railroad," Morgan says. "These men fulfilled a unique social role."

Without Prince Hall Masonry, there would not have been an Underground Railroad as it is understood today.

LAUNCHING A LEGACY

Boston's Prince Hall leaders continued to have lasting and widespread effects both in Masonry and in American politics – accomplishments that were, as Morgan notes, remarkable for their time. After founding numerous Prince Hall chapters, Hayden served twice as grand master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, from 1852 to 1855 and 1857 to 1858. After the Civil War, he published several works on Freemasonry in the African-American community and traveled throughout the Reconstruction-era South, working to create new Prince Hall lodges and to support those that had been newly established.

Smith went on to serve as a state legislator, a recruiter for African-American segregated regiments and cavalries during the Civil War, and as grand master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in 1859, the year after Hayden was reelected. Today, John J. Smith Lodge No. 14 in Massachusetts bears his name.

Walker exemplifies the value of Prince Hall Masonry to African-American men of his generation. He was one of the first African-American men to pass the Massachusetts bar exam, and later became one of the first African-Americans elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature. In 1896, he was nominated as a U.S. presidential candidate by the Negro Party.

The connections between Prince Hall Masonry, the Underground Railroad, and the rise in African-American social status continues to thrill contemporary historians. Secrets of this fascinating era are still being unearthed; yet, it is clear that without Prince Hall Masonry, there would not have been an Underground Railroad as it is understood today, and that other political and social achievements would have likely been delayed. "These men put their lives on the line to stand up for what they believed in," says Morgan. "It was a Masonic thing to do." And, as contemporary scholars may attest, early Prince Hall Masons' devotion to championing and living the Masonic ideals of freedom and equality profoundly impacted the course of our nation's history.

http://www.cafreemason-digital.com/cafreemason/november_december_2016/MobilePagedArticle.action?articleId=1045726&#articleId1045726

Sankey Lecture In Review

A partnership between the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario and Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario

On Saturday, March 26th, 2017 the eighth Sankey Lecture was held at Brock University in St. Catharines. Attendance was very good with close to 400 in the lecture theatre, including a good number of Brock students attending. Following the lecture many positive comments were received.

The day commenced with emcee, Dr. Renée Lafferty-Salhany a previous Sankey Lecturer, speaking briefly about the new third year history course that she is offering this year, entitled *Fraternalism and Freemasonry*. Many of the students enrolled in the course were in attendance for the lecture.

Dr. Aimee E. Newell, the guest lecturer, is the Executive Director at the Luzerne County Historical Society in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. For 10 years she was the Curator and Director of Collections at the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library in Lexington, Mass. She has also worked at Old Sturbridge Village and the Nantucket Historical Association. She holds a PhD. in History from the University of Massachusetts – Amherst, an MA in History from Northeastern University and a BA in American Studies from Amherst College. Newell is the current president of the Masonic Library and Museum Association. She is the co-author of *Curiosities of the Craft: Treasures from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Collection* and the author of *The Badge of a Freemason: Masonic Aprons from the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library*. She co-curated the 2016 exhibition, "Mystery and Benevolence: Masonic and Odd Fellows Folk Art from the Kendra and Allan Daniel Collection," at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. She has written and spoken widely about Freemasonry and fraternalism.

Dr. Aimee E. Newell spoke on *The Badge of a Freemason: New Stories from Old Aprons*. Called the "badge of a Freemason" in Masonic ritual, the fraternity's apron was adapted from the protective aprons worn by working stonemasons during the 1600s and 1700s. Over the next 200 hundred years, Masonic aprons evolved in shape and style, with influence from men's fashions and decorative preferences. The talk highlighted several examples of American aprons from the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library collection, exploring the stories of their makers and users. By looking at early aprons, we find patterns and trends in their use and design that not only differ from today, but teach us new things about Freemasonry of the past. Dr. Newell's lecture was followed by a very good question and answer period. Copies of Dr. Newell's book, *The Badge of a Freemason: Masonic Aprons from the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library* were available for sale following the lecture.



In the week leading up to the lecture, the book was featured in the Brock News <https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2017/03/sankey-lecture-to-focus-on-masonic-aprons/>.

Dr. Lafferty-Salhany's new course was also featured in the Brock News <https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2017/03/new-course-looks-at-fraternalism-throughout-history/>.

For those unable to attend, it is anticipated that the video of the lecture will be available on the Sankey Lecture website later in May 2017.