

# A TIMELY MASONIC PERSPECTIVE



*An Initiative Sponsored by*  
The Masonic Stamp Club of New York, Inc.

## Introduction

Since 1960, the Masonic Order in the United States has lost about 71% of its registered members (those on lodge records and paying dues). There has likely been a corresponding decrease in other Masonic bodies and organizations. The Masonic Stamp Club of New York has lost about 80% of its members.

Naturally, as lodge membership goes, so goes all other Masonic-related concerns. Our Order is simply not keeping up with deaths, demits and suspensions.

The main problem with this issue is that the fewer active Masons we have, then the fewer there are to cultivate new members—an ever decreasing circle, as it were.

We have reasoned that most Masons are likely not aware of our Order's critical condition, and need to be aware of it so that it may be resolved. Although most lodge members likely receive Grand Lodge literature, by far the most important correspondence they receive is their lodge bulletins—if they read anything, they read their bulletins.

We believe that if lodge bulletins were to contain pertinent and pointed information on the state of the Craft, ideas for improving Masonic processes, and encouraging facts, we may arouse more interest in Freemasonry at the member level.

To this end, a series of articles has been prepared for use by lodge secretaries. The articles are posted to our website and can be easily downloaded.

They are presented in this booklet for convenience.

In an effort to give more exposure to Freemasonry and arouse Masonic interest, our Club has created the stamp set, *Freemasonry Forever*, illustrated on the following page.

The stamps are on gummed paper with sixteen (16) stamps per sheet. The designs show our “Masonic Creed” in a circle, which is readable without enlargement. Freemasons will, of course, be familiar with the symbolism.

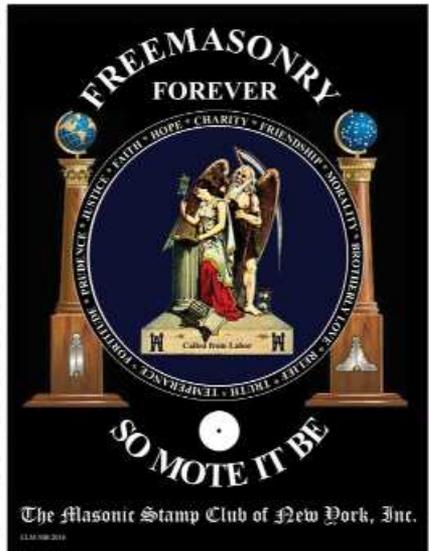
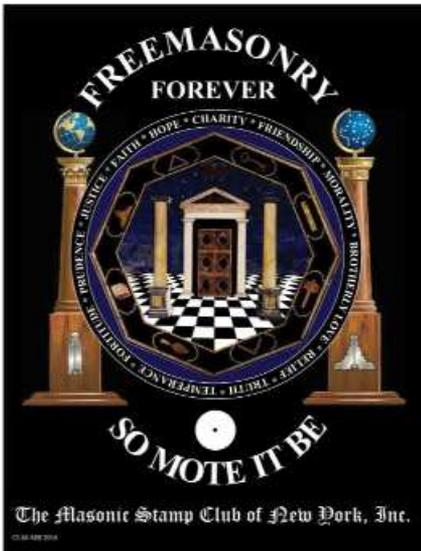
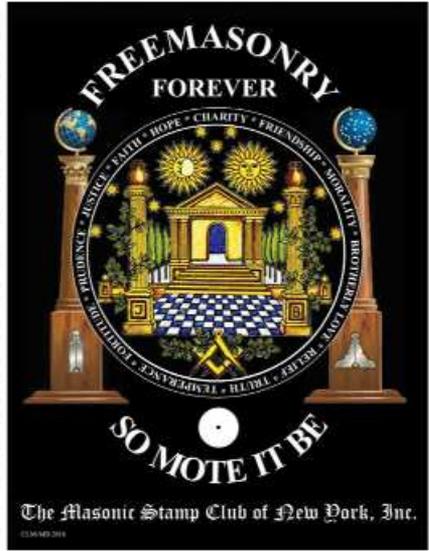
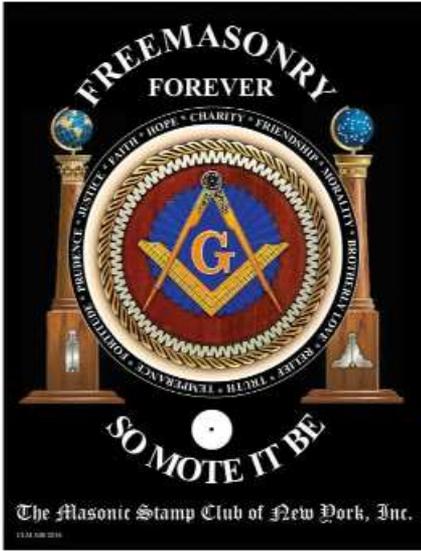
Our hope is that Grand Lodges and lodge secretaries will use the stamps on their correspondence. Our Club is not in a position to provide the stamps; however, they are inexpensive and easy to order.

The cost is about \$100 for 1,000 stamps. They are printed on sheets showing all four designs. The contact for further information or orders is as follows:

**YOURSTAMPS**  
**Juergen Schwarz**  
**Berlepschstr 50**  
**14165 Berlin**  
**Germany**  
**Phone +49-30-76803146**  
**Email: <orders@yourstamps.de>**

If Grand Lodges would make this booklet known to lodge secretaries (it is posted on our website) we believe our initiatives may help towards bringing about a resolution to the Masonic crisis.

# Freemasonry Forever Stamps



The actual size of the stamps is 1.48 inches by 1.88 inches.  
Use description to order a single stamp design; from left to right: Square and  
Compasses, Temple, Doors, Called from Labor.

# Articles for Lodge Secretaries



**NOTE:** The articles are for placement on a 5.5 inch by 8.5 inch page. They may be downloaded as an image, a WORD document, or a pdf. Please go to the following website and page down to the illustration shown above.

**<http://www.mscnewyork.net/>**

## Our Wonderful Fraternity is in Trouble

For certain, the most pressing issue at this time is the critical state of Masonic membership in the United States. Our net loss of members every year is about 50,000 members. What this means is that far more members are leaving our Order (deaths, other reasons) than are joining.

At this time we have 1.2 million registered Freemasons. This is the lowest number since 1924. In 1959, our membership peaked at 4.1 million members, so we have lost 2.9 million members since that year. One does not need to be a mathematician to see that if the current decline continues, we will essentially “run out of members” in just 24 years.

Of course, this dire prediction is simply based on numbers. Our Order will survive in some form, but it will be far removed from what it has been, and still is for the moment.

The question of why we continue to have a net loss has been debated for 57 years. Obviously, things changed in American society where-by our Order became less known and less attractive to young men. In other words, what we offer failed to compete with other things. Naturally, “what we offer” cannot really be known until a man becomes a Freemason, so we are at a great disadvantage here. There are no pamphlets or websites that can properly communicate the true meaning and

benefits of Freemasonry. All we can do is lead by example and promote our Order (talk about it). If we see, or sense interest in a relative, friend or associate, then such should be “cultivated.” We do not solicit new members, but there is nothing wrong with saying that any man may become a Mason and explain things a little. By far, most new members are the result of this process.

There is also something else that needs to be addressed. Our decreased lodge attendance has greatly diminished our ability to properly and timely confer degrees. When such is the case, the impression left with candidates is poor and more often than not, he does not carry on as a lodge member. Although there are no statistics available, an estimate of demitted, not active (any reason) members is about 270,000.

What might be a solution here? Perhaps districts should be considering dedicated degree teams that either travel or consolidate the conferring of degrees (along the same lines as the AASR).

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CRAFT, it is important that lodges start looking at the issues raised in this article. Time is not on our side Brethren.

**The latest chart of membership from the Masonic Service Association of North America is presented on the next page.**

## Masonic Membership - Actual Lodge Members USA

YEAR	U.S. TOTAL	YEAR	U.S. TOTAL	YEAR	U.S. TOTAL
1924	3,077,161	1955	4,009,925	1986	2,839,962
1925	3,157,566	1956	4,053,323	1987	2,763,828
1926	3,218,375	1957	4,085,676	1988	2,682,537
1927	3,267,241	1958	4,099,928	1989	2,608,935
1928	3,295,872	1959	<b>4,103,161</b>	1990	2,531,643
1929	3,295,125	1960	4,099,219	1991	2,452,676
1930	3,279,778	1961	4,086,499	1992	2,371,863
1931	3,216,307	1962	4,063,563	1993	2,293,949
1932	3,069,645	1963	4,034,020	1994	2,225,611
1933	2,901,758	1964	4,005,605	1995	2,153,316
1934	2,760,451	1965	3,987,690	1996	2,089,578
1935	2,659,218	1966	3,948,193	1997	2,021,909
1936	2,591,309	1967	3,910,509	1998	1,967,208
1937	2,549,772	1968	3,868,854	1999	1,902,588
1938	2,514,595	1969	3,817,846	2000	1,841,169
1939	2,482,291	1970	3,763,213	2001	1,774,200
1940	2,457,263	1971	3,718,718	2002	1,727,505
1941	2,451,301	1972	3,661,507	2003	1,671,255
1942	2,478,892	1973	3,611,448	2004	1,617,032
1943	2,561,844	1974	3,561,767	2005	1,569,812
1944	2,719,607	1975	3,512,628	2006	1,525,131
1945	2,896,343	1976	3,470,980	2007	1,483,449
1946	3,097,713	1977	3,418,844	2008	1,444,823
1947	3,281,371	1978	3,360,409	2009	1,404,059
1948	3,426,155	1979	3,304,334	2010	1,373,453
1949	3,545,757	1980	3,251,528	2011	1,336,503
1950	3,644,634	1981	3,188,175	2012	1,306,539
1951	3,726,744	1982	3,121,746	2013	1,246,241
1952	3,808,364	1983	3,060,242	2014	1,211,183
1953	3,893,530	1984	2,992,389		
1954	3,964,118	1985	2,914,421		

# How Much Do We Need To Worry About This?

**USA Lodge Members by State - Gain/Loss 2014 to 2013**

STATE	2014 MEMBERSHIP	2013 MEMBERSHIP	GAIN/(LOSS)
ALABAMA	25,148	25,885	(737)
ALASKA	1,753	1,796	(43)
ARIZONA	7,544	7,812	(268)
ARKANSAS	12,026	12,301	(275)
CALIFORNIA	54,612	59,240	(4,628)
COLORADO	8,627	9,311	(684)
CONNECTICUT	10,104	10,576	(472)
DELAWARE	4,704	4,843	(139)
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	4,280	4,420	(140)
FLORIDA	39,848	41,134	(1,286)
GEORGIA	41,442	42,938	(1,496)
HAWAII	1,721	1,784	(63)
IDAHO	3,422	3,586	(164)
ILLINOIS	60,996	62,951	(1,955)
INDIANA	56,373	58,363	(1,990)
IOWA	18,574	19,359	(785)
KANSAS	19,260	20,176	(916)
KENTUCKY	40,435	42,024	(1,589)
LOUISIANA	18,955	19,874	(919)
MAINE	18,990	19,454	(464)
MARYLAND	14,893	15,429	(536)
MASSACHUSETTS	30,115	30,861	(746)
MICHIGAN	31,801	32,997	(1,196)
MINNESOTA	12,662	13,057	(395)
MISSISSIPPI	16,845	17,565	(720)
MISSOURI	40,862	42,850	(1,988)
MONTANA	5,226	5,416	(190)
NEBRASKA	10,899	11,405	(506)
NEVADA	3,974	4,085	(111)
NEW HAMPSHIRE	5,831	6,094	(263)
NEW JERSEY	20,660	22,514	(1,854)
NEW MEXICO	4,479	4,669	(190)
NEW YORK	39,766	41,259	(1,493)
NORTH CAROLINA	41,333	42,291	(958)
NORTH DAKOTA	2,913	2,885	28
OHIO	91,040	94,878	(3,838)
OKLAHOMA	22,601	23,851	(1,250)
OREGON	8,341	8,648	(307)
PENNSYLVANIA	105,227	107,731	(2,504)
RHODE ISLAND	3,294	3,444	(150)
SOUTH CAROLINA	35,623	36,689	(1,066)
SOUTH DAKOTA	5,555	5,654	(99)
TENNESSEE	38,515	39,943	(1,428)
TEXAS	78,834	81,340	(2,506)
UTAH	1,860	1,935	(75)
VERMONT	5,488	5,694	(206)
VIRGINIA	35,451	36,335	(884)
WASHINGTON	14,174	14,774	(600)
WEST VIRGINIA	19,784	20,251	(467)
WISCONSIN	11,065	11,459	(394)
WYOMING	3,258	3,418	(160)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,211,183</b>	<b>1,257,248</b>	<b>(46,065)</b>

This chart shows the number of lodge members gained or lost by state for the year 2014 compared to 2013. Only one state, North Dakota, shows a gain (28 members).

The very least the Gain/Loss figure should be is zero (0), which would indicate a state has stayed even.

Where are all the lost members going? The answer is Deaths, Demits, and Suspensions. We don't have any statistics for these categories, and we don't know how many members either demitted or suspended have now passed away.

Whatever the case the numbers show the "State of the Craft" and we are far from staying even with our total membership.

Decreasing permanent or long-term demits and suspensions would help, but only marginally. If we want to keep our total membership at its current level, it is impera-

tive that for every death, we have a new member. When we attend lodge and the WM calls for a moment of silence for a member who has passed on to the GLA, that is the signal that the lodge must replace him. This has to be made a lodge priority. The next lodge bulletin has to inform the total membership that it needs to start "cultivating" a relative or friend. This is done by simply talking about our

Order in the course of normal association. Questions will be asked, and it is then that you can expand your conversation.

How much do you need to worry about this? If our Order were a patient in a hospital, his health would be reported as "Serious" (Vital signs may be unstable and not within normal limits. Patient is seriously ill. Indicators are questionable).

## Putting the Cards on the Table

Generally speaking, if you want to know what is going on with most other people, just think about what is happening in your own world. We are all pretty much the same, so about 80% of the problems you are having are the same as others are having (money, children, health, time restraints, age, and so forth).

Like you and I, in all probability fewer than two out of ten lodge members reading this have attended lodge within the last three years. This is not going to change, although I don't think it will get much worse.

The Grand Lodge of New York has 61 districts that comprise 39,751 members. If we assume for the sake of argument that each district has about the same number of members, this comes out at 652 members per district. As fewer than 20% of members attend lodge, the average district has 130 members carrying the entire load. If there are 10 lodges in a district, the average lodge does not have enough members turning out to meetings to even fill the chairs. These numbers need to be refined, but even if the number of attending members doubled, there would still not be enough to run an efficient lodge (i.e., just 26 members average turnout).

What we need to come to grips with is that names on a lodge roster are simply that, besides payment of dues. It is the number of members who attend lodge and do the necessary work that counts.

The bottom line on all this is that there must be at least 650 members "on the roster" to run a lodge. This provides 130 members to cycle through the chairs, put

on degrees and attend to all the other lodge functions. Keep in mind that there will always be sickness and absences for other reasons, so one will never have a full complement of "available" members.

Although difficult to do, it appears every Grand Lodge should regroup so that every lodge has at least 650 members on their roster. The alternative is lodge officer burnout and lodges becoming defunct.

Many eminent brethren have provided suggestion on increasing lodge attendance, but the writing is on the wall; one will not likely get more than 20% of lodge member out to meetings no matter what is done, and only a portion of that number will want to, or be able to, take on responsibilities.

Resorting to "laments" that members are just not responsible anymore and things like that is of no use, and is incorrect to begin with. What has happened is, times have changed, and so have our priorities. Age is also a factor, and we have let things "slide" to the point where the average Mason is about 69 years old. This means that about half of us are getting very low on "energy."

If we cannot "regroup" as suggested, then the least we should do is remove the degree work from individual lodges (have district degree teams). This should, of course, be on a voluntary basis. This work is too important to allow it to be inefficiently performed or untimely—those new members are our future. Let's make certain they want to become a part of the 20%.

This paper essentially puts all the cards "on the table." It's time to see exactly where we are, decide our strategy, and redeal.

## Due Bounds

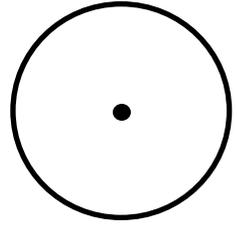
The primary objective of Freemasonry is to unite men in a common bond for a better world. Such men then lead by example and other men are impressed and inquire about the Order—we do not solicit new members; we cultivate them.

When a man becomes a Freemason, there is absolutely nothing in our rules, regulations or rituals that says he **MUST** attend lodge, be in a lodge, participate in lodge processes, participate in lodge ritual, go through the chairs, advance in the Order, or join other concordant bodies. All of these things are totally his choice. That he has become a Freemason and has been provided with our philosophy totally meets our Order's objective and reason for existence.

The reason our Order has carried itself so well for some 300 years (up to 1960) is because it is so well "designed" that many men choose to take part in its processes or "great work," and help to maintain or further its objective (unite men in a common bond).

Generally speaking, less than 10% of men in a fraternity will choose to fully participate in its operation (goes as low as 4%). Perhaps another 10% will participate at a lower level (including simple attendance at meetings). The reason for this is that most men do not have the aptitude or time for the things required (administration, ritual work, public speaking, and so forth). This is a simple fact of life.

When such men are given the impression that they are **OBLIGED** to participate in lodge processes (do something they don't want to do) they will likely not attend lodge, and not "cultivate" other men to become Freemasons.



Although there are likely many reasons for the greatly decreased number of new members since 1960, what is said here could be one of the main reasons. It may therefore be important to ask only new members to participate in lodge functions if they have indicated that they wish to do so. Perhaps give them a year to experience Freemasonry without any interference, and then ask them at what level (if any) do they wish to participate—lodge administration (be on the board), simple presentations (working tools etc.), doing lectures or going through the chairs. In this way, members who wish to simply attend lodge and enjoy Freemasonry may do so without feeling guilty for not providing higher participation—always keep in mind that not every man is "cut out" for doing lodge work. Easing their minds will probably make such members more likely to be proud of their membership and thereby act as an incentive for others to join the Order.

## The Emperor's New Clothes A Masonic Point of View

There can be little doubt that everyone reading this knows the story about the emperor's new clothes. The lesson in the story is that we are often afraid to say something for fear of being thought of as being ignorant or not fully aware of all the facts.

It would be interesting to know how many Freemasons are like the little boy in the story with regard to Masonic ritual and processes. In other words, they can see the things that are contributing to our "decline," as it were, but prefer to remain silent for fear of ridicule or "being put down."

Most of us (estimate about 80%) do not go to lodge. We still remain a member and pay our dues, but are inactive for many reasons. Furthermore, a large segment of our members has demitted or become suspended for non-payment of dues. Obviously they had a problem with something. Make no mistake, these members are still Freemasons.

One thing that has been questioned for many years is the memory work required by lodge officers. That which is needed for the opening and closing ceremonies is not excessive, and not beyond the capability of anyone. The degree work, however, is another story. Although memorization has its rewards, it could be that most members would rather not get involved with it—



thus a problem getting officers, and low lodge attendance (fear of being asked to do something). I will mention here that degree examinations can be too much for some candidates, and although they struggle through, they seldom return to lodge.

Many senior Freemasons insist on keeping the status quo on memory work. Are they like the emperor in our story? Can they not see that their position has possibly become untenable? Then again, it could be other things causing our decline (fewer and fewer new members).

Perhaps a national confidential survey is needed. In this way all members can be the little boy in the story and tell us exactly what they see, or don't see.

Of course, we can simply carry on and pretend our emperor is resplendent in his new clothes, but very soon we are going to be jolted into reality.

## Birds of a Feather...

The fact that Freemasons become united in a common bond was enough to ensure high lodge participation in early times, and even right up to the late 1950s. We now have difficulties in getting 20% of our lodge membership out to meetings. Keep in mind that preferably 14 officers are needed to conduct lodge, and when fewer than 25 brethren show up to a meeting, it's discouraging. In cases where one of those brethren is a new Mason, we leave a very poor impression.

In early times, lodge meetings had a very high "fraternal" content. One had an opportunity to find out what was going on in the "neighborhood" and learn about the situation with many friends and associates. This was sufficient to attract a high number of members to lodge.

With the advent of electronic media (television, Internet, email, Skype, hand-held communications devices) personal or physical contact became unnecessary. One can keep up with the "news" on television, and remain in contact with as many people he or she wishes virtually at the speed of light.

Is there a quick solution to this dilemma? The short answer is NO. It might be alleviated somewhat by lodges having "specialties." In other words, a preponderance of lodge members interested in the same thing (photography, stamps, coins, and so forth). This is in effect with lodges that cater to certain professions or occupations



(actors, police, military etc.). We are attracted to things that directly interest us and will be inclined to go to meetings where there will be men with the same interests (Birds of a Feather...)

There is still very high participation in recreational clubs (bowling, curling, golf, etc.) so people do "get out and about" if the attraction is there.

Might there be an "electronic" solution to a problem electronics created? Perhaps on-line lodge meetings? Here one would connect by his computer to a lodge session. He would watch the proceedings and be able to participate, essentially as though he were there. As to privacy (how do you lock the door?), a reasonable measure of security could be provided, but never 100% like a tyled lodge.

If the sessions were conducted as "open lodge meetings," security is not a problem (lodge business is not conducted). Such would be valuable, as they would allow a measure of contact with probably 80% of members. Hopefully this would result in more members wanting to physically participate in lodge functions.

## The Great Masonic Crisis A Past Master's Perspective

How many members do you need on your roster to run an efficient lodge? Naturally you must have enough so that the incoming dues pay the lodge's expenses; but forget about money for the moment because it's seldom a problem.

There are three types of members in a lodge:

A. Those who never or seldom go to lodge

B. Those who always or nearly always go to lodge

C. Those who fully participate in lodge functions (officers and others). These members are part of the second type (B).

In most lodges, a minimum of 14 officers are needed, but backup is required for deaths, sickness and absences; and additional members are desired for degree work, administration, and social functions. If we make the bare bones number 25, the "magic number" for total, minimum lodge membership (the roster) is 125 members.

This is based on a "fact of life," which says that only 20% or less of a given number of members will fully participate in lodge work. Recent findings in lodges indicate this is as low as 11%, but we will stay with 20%.

We will call this lodge a "Skeleton Lodge" because there is no "meat on the bones," as it were. It will get by for one year and then it must start the "recycle"



process. Theoretically, a Past Master becomes the Tyler and everyone moves up a notch. If the thought is (and usually is) to plow through the roster and find another member to become fully active and fill a chair/position, this seldom works. The only hope is that a new member will want to become an active member. Under the current conditions, the chances for this are about 2 in 10. To solve the problem, you therefore must increase the roster by 5 members every year, in addition to the number needed to cover deaths, which will be about 4 replacements a year. Consider this impossible.

As a result, our "Skeleton Lodge" is now fully into the recycle mode. Given it can cover deaths (4 candidates a year) it will continue to operate for several years.

However, the load gets heavier and heavier and there is little or no time for anything but putting on degrees. Keep in mind that 4 candidates equal 12 degrees, unless they can be combined. There will essentially be one business meeting, and one emergent meeting each month. Also, some officers and a member will be on the Board of General Purposes. How much time can you ask a man to put in? This lodge is on the road to failure.

Somehow, you must lessen the load, but the only way this can be done is to increase the roster (total number of members); but this becomes a Catch 22 situation because the more candidates the more work required.

The only way our "Skeleton Lodge" can survive is with a "bail out." In other words, an influx of new and fully ready "active members." This process, of course, is the rationale behind lodge amalgamations, which unfortunately have a dubious success rate.

Whatever the case, all amalgamations do UNDER THE CURRENT SITUATION in the United States, is buy time. Statistics show that US lodges cannot keep up with the rate of deaths and lost members (demits and suspensions). As a result, even amalgamated lodges slowly decline to "Skeleton Lodges" and must either re-amalgamate or fold.

The only plausible answer to this situation is to CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES. Not only must lodges compensate for their net loss of members, but must also increase membership to bring in "new energy." It must be ENSURED that at least 2 new members out of 10 undertake lodge work. Also, the load on lodges must be significantly reduced.

To "hang on to what we have" it is necessary to amalgamate lodges to at least 250 members on the roster. If over time the membership climbs to 500, then given there were two lodges involved, they can de-amalgamate and go back to their original individual lodges.

Candidate ritual requirements have been mentioned as something that needs to be looked at. However, few of us want to significantly change such. One thing that can be done is to have District Degree Teams that process candidates on a scheduled basis. There is little doubt in my mind that this will ensure the needed "new energy" (increase interest).

Mathematically, this paper is difficult to challenge, other than to say that the figures are optimistic. Generally, if the math is not there it's "ballgame over." Nevertheless, Brother George Washington beat the odds, so nothing is impossible.

Your author was secretary of his lodge when it folded in 1999. It had about 150 members and could not sustain itself with fewer than 25 members carrying the entire load. The current WM was in his third term. Everyone simply got too tired to carry on. Amalgamation was offered, but could not be effected. Money was not a problem. The lodge building was owned and had a clear title. The lodge's assets netted \$480,000 in cash and the money was given to various charities.

This situation does not have to repeat in other lodges. We have the ability to resolve "The Great Masonic Crisis" if we work together.

## Brother George Washington A Source of Great Pride in the Masonic Order

If you need one name to reflect your pride in being a Freemason, it is “George Washington.” We all know he was the first recognized President of the United States, and most of us learn that he was a Freemason when we first became interested in joining the Masonic Order.

Brother Washington is the most famous man in world history, and the main reason for this is that his leadership brought about the first and greatest democracy in the world—The United States of America.

What may not be known to many of us is that Brother Washington’s membership in the Masonic Order played a major role in his remarkable achievement. Few historians deny this, and those who do simply show their ignorance of Freemasonry.

During Washington’s time Masonic membership was extremely well-regarded and in the colonies many men were members. We now know just how many such men were associated with Washington—they virtually surrounded him. Freemasons enjoy a very high degree of trust in each other, far more than that in any other organization, including religious denominations. Washington knew and depended on this. He



could “meet on the level” and part knowing that what he said or confided would not find its way to the “other side,” as it were.

People who live in democratic countries are very proud of their citizenship, and Freemasons can be extremely proud that Brother Washington is counted in their ranks.

One does not have to look far for an image of Brother Washington. He is depicted on currency, stamps, and is seen in untold other works of art.

In your travels, if the subject comes up about how lucky we are to live in the USA or other democratic countries, perhaps mention that George Washington made this possible, and by the way, “Did you know he was a Freemason?”

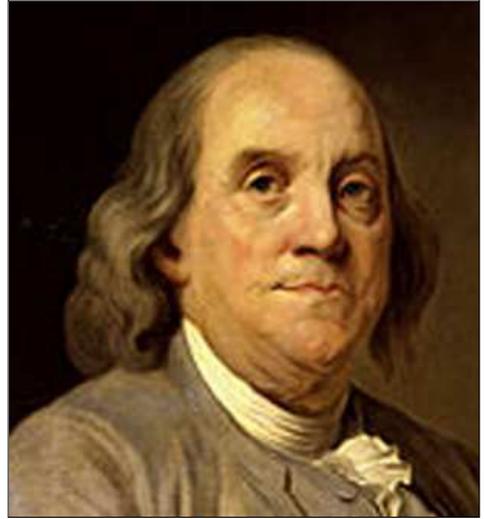
## Benjamin Franklin “The First American” An Astounding Freemason

Our distinguished Brother, Benjamin Franklin, is historically considered “The First American” for his early and indefatigable campaigning for colonial unity. However, this is just one of the numerous attributes to this amazing man—they are so numerous and well-known, there is no need to list them.

Generally speaking, most school children are well aware of Franklin and his astounding life by about age 10 (Grade 5), and remarkable that was the extent of Franklin’s formal education; from then on he did everything himself.

Franklin’s fields of endeavor were so extensive that we have difficulty coming up with a word for him. He was one of the most intelligent men to grace our planet. I suppose the word “genius” is fitting, but this is generally applied to only one field of specialty. The only word we have for Brother Franklin is “polymath”—a person of encyclopedic learning. The word “learning,” of course brings to mind documented knowledge (books), but during Franklin’s time (1706–1790) books for higher learning were scarce. We can only conclude that he simply had the ability to conceptualize and apply reasoning and logic far beyond that of ordinary people.

The most notable polymaths in history are; Plato, Aristotle, Benjamin Franklin, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Alexander von Humboldt, Gottfried Leibniz and



Leonardo da Vinci. It might be noted that von Goethe was also a Freemason.

Originally, Franklin was skeptical of Freemasonry, and even published articles pretending to reveal Masonic “mysteries.” However, for reasons not known, he applied for membership and once a member did more for Freemasonry than any man in history.

What we can gather from this is that Freemasonry taught him something he did not know, despite his astounding knowledge, and once he “saw the light,” dedicated a significant part of his life to the Craft.

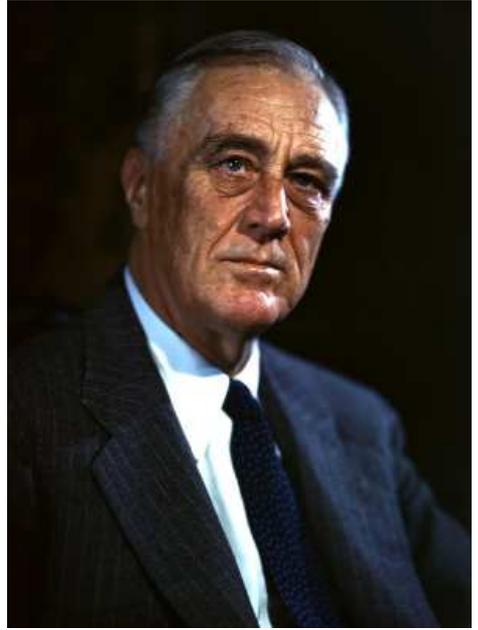
Like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin is an exemplary tribute to the integrity of the Masonic Order. Keeping this in mind is important when we are asked about Freemasonry.

## Brother Franklin Delano Roosevelt The Most Beloved President

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) had a rare distinction. He was so popular that people virtually “loved” him—much the same as with George Washington, but in a much more populated country. When Roosevelt died, people grieved as though they had lost a family member, and in many ways he was exactly that. Where does he rate among the country’s presidents? Scholars put him in the top three, along with Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.

Brother Roosevelt had to contend with the Great Depression and the Second World War (WW II). In addition, we need to keep in mind his personal challenge—he had been paralyzed from the waist down in 1921 as a result of contracting polio. He died 5 months before the end of WW II—he virtually worked himself to death.

He became a Freemason in 1911 at age 29 and he was highly active in the Masonic Order, including the AASR. We can reason that his greatest qualities were associated with the Masonic virtues of “relief” and “fortitude.” In the first instance he came to the rescue of millions of Americans, and indeed millions of people worldwide in ending the Great Depression. In the second instance, he essentially guided the allies through WW II using the strength and resources of the United States. His great British counterpart, Sir Winston Churchill, was



also a Freemason, and there can be little doubt that this “helped” both men.

If we as Freemasons need to look for Masonic inspiration, Brother Roosevelt is at the top of the list of great Freemasons with George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. That they all chose to become Freemasons is beyond an endorsement for the Masonic Order; it is a recommendation.

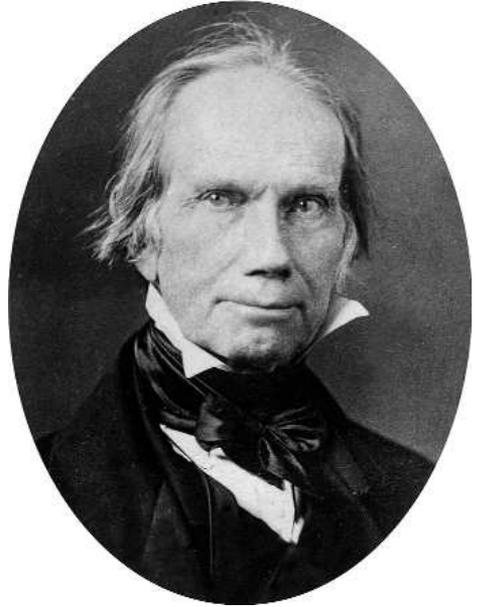
What these men saw in Freemasonry was a great hope to end world strife and suffering. What the Masonic Order stood for during their times is still the same today. All that has changed is our desire to redirect ourselves to keep it strong and vibrant.

## Brother Henry Clay The Great Compromiser

The greatest skill a politician or any leader can have is ability to get a compromise. By definition this means an ability to listen to two sides in a dispute, and devise a solution acceptable to both. In American politics, Brother Henry Clay (1777–1852), Speaker of the House for the 12th, 16th, and 18th Congress, is considered the greatest compromiser of all times. He was so good that he delayed the American Civil War by about 10 years. This was very significant because had the war broken out ten years earlier, the South would have had a much greater chance of winning—the strength of the North was much less at that time. Abraham Lincoln was a great admirer of Clay, saying he was “my ideal of a great man.” In 1957, a Senate Committee selected Clay as one of the five greatest U.S. Senators, along with Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Robert La Follette, and Robert A. Taft.

In Freemasonry the trowel teaches us, “that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.” This is a very old way of saying that Masons are required to compromise. Clay became a Freemason at about age 21, and we might conclude that he applied this lesson to everyone he dealt with throughout his entire life—he looked for ways to get agreement rather than resorting to the position of, “let’s just agree to disagree.”

At one time, our Order was so good



at “getting agreement” that it resulted in the formation of the United States. Somehow the little lesson has now become stagnated; we don’t seem to be able to agree on much, and new ideas are treated as an affront to tradition.

Nature has a ruthless way of addressing this problem: if you don’t change your ways (evolve) you will become extinct. There is no such thing as “agreeing to disagree.”

The Masonic Order is at the greatest crossroad since its inception. If we don’t take a lesson from our “Great Compromiser” (get agreement to change) we may not see the dawn of 2030, *AL 6030*.

## Taking a Lesson from the Professionals

Our creative and talented Brothers, Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, knew how much people liked to be entertained. In the latter part of the 1800s, their productions were the talk of the town.

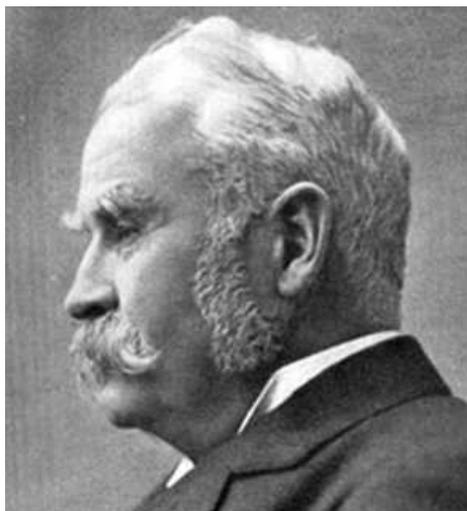
In addition to entertainment, plays can be, and generally are, highly educational. More often than not, they leave a lasting impression. Many of us can recall plays (and movies) that we will never forget.

This fact answers the question as to why our early Brethren chose to make plays a part of our Masonic ritual—they are the absolute best way to impart something that will never be forgotten. Keep in mind that all three Masonic Degrees are “plays.” The fact that a candidate actually becomes a character in the plays was a stroke of genius.

The problem with this concept is that if the quality of a play is poor, then so will be the impression it leaves. We quickly forget plays we did not care for.

Most of us have likely seen our “plays” performed at various levels of efficiency—generally very poor (sometimes they even cause embarrassment). This could be (and likely is) the reason many candidates fail to carry on in our lodges.

Although we can sort of get by with the actual conferring of degrees, the Ritual of the Third Degree is a different story. It is a properly choreographed production, such as what would be created by the eminent Brethren featured here. In their time, things were very different,



William Gilbert (1836–1911)



Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900)

and if they were to see what we are now doing they would not be pleased.

The answer to this dilemma might be to have dedicated degree teams within a district or Grand Lodge jurisdiction. As the old saying goes, we need to clean up our act.

# The Masonic Stamp Club of New York

## Overview

The Masonic Stamp Club of New York was organized in 1934 and grew to become one of the largest non-profit stamp clubs in the United States. A quarterly magazine, *The Masonic Philatelist*, was published since 1944, which continued to be a major publication in the field of philately up to, and including this year 2016.

Until 2000, Club membership was limited to Freemasons, with proof of Masonic membership required. However, over the years widows of our departed brethren and others had contacted the Club and stated they wished to join.

At that time, Christopher L. Murphy was President of the Club, and Dr. Allan Boudreau was the Editor/Publisher. It was reasoned that because there was nothing “sensitive” in Club processes or in the material the Club published, opening the Club to non-Masons should not be an issue. Indeed, it actually gave our Order very positive exposure.

In 2013, the decision was made to create a proper (private domain) website for the Club, and the following year the site was opened. Throughout the next two years, many efforts were made to increase interest in the Club and obtain subscriptions to its publication. Results were disappointing, and it then became apparent that the critical condition of Masonic membership in the United States was a primary reason. Research on this problem was conducted and thus the publication of this booklet

At this time, there is insufficient interest and funding for the Club to enable it to continue. The Masonic Stamp Club of New York will cease operations on January 1, 2017, except for maintaining our website over the near term.

Member participation and involvement with our Club over these many decades is deeply appreciated, and we wish our readers well with good memories and continuing Masonic philatelic activities.



Please visit us at  
<http://www.mscnewyork.net/>

**The Masonic Stamp Club  
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### **Contacts**

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**Both are members of Composite Lodge No. 819, New York City.**