

## EARLY HISTORY OF MARK MASONRY

The rejection and discarding of stones, at least, can be physically shown to have existed with olden masons. In Germany a custom is recorded, where if a stone was spoiled the stone mason was punched and the stone ceremoniously carried to a 'charnel house'. Just such a depository, 3.5 metres in depth, has been found near Regensburg Cathedral, Bavaria, which was built 1275-1530.

The Operatives had seven degrees. Two of these, Fitter and Marker, and Setter and Erector, equate to the two Mark degrees usually found in early speculative lodges, Mark Man and Mark Master. The Mark Man was associated with Fellow Crafts and Mark Master with Masters.

The Mark Master Mason Degree is thought to have originated as a ceremony of registering a craftsman's mark in his lodge of operative stonemasons. Its legend revolves around the completion of the Temple of Solomon and the placement of the keystone in the Royal Arch. The symbol of the degree is a keystone on which are engraved certain mystic letters, the collective meaning of which is explained in the ceremony.

In Scotland the famous Mother Kilwinning Lodge has a 20 December 1674 record of a John Smith being admitted and paying for his mark. From about the start of the 1760's it is 'evident' that Scotland had two Mark ceremonies, Mark Man for the Fellow Craft, and Mark Master for Master.

In Ireland a 1688 record lists every Freemason there who received his mark. In the late 1700's 'Arch' and 'Royal Arch' degrees in Ireland were quite different. The Arch was a form of early Mark, into which title the name eventually evolved.

In England a major Mark event occurred on 1 September 1769 when Thomas Dunckerley (1724-1795), an illegitimate son of George II, brought a fully fledged two degree Mark system to Portsmouth, on the southern English coast. These were Mark Man and Mark Mason - or Master. It is almost certain that Dunckerley obtained these degrees from the Inniskilling Dragoon's lodge. Most of the Royal Arch Chapter of Friendship were Irishmen. It held an Antient's warrant, and one from York. Dunckerley delivered the two Mark degrees to the Chapter. Both the Lodge and he were Moderns, but they were liberally minded.

In the United States the earliest record of the Mark Degree is 1783 at the Royal Arch Chapter in Middleton, Connecticut. Soon the Mark was adopted by Royal Arch Chapters as the first in their sequence of degrees. The Mark Master Mason degree entered the American (York) Rite largely through the efforts of Thomas Smith Webb (1771-1819), and his 'Monitor' published in 1797.

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