

# **HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY**

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**It is believed that Freemasonry existed in the time of King Solomon and the construction of the Temple, the story of which is found in the Old Testament. It is said that during the construction of the Temple, the masons, that is, the stonecutters, numbering eighty-thousand according to the Bible, who performed the actual stonecutting associated with the building of the Temple, organized themselves into Lodges, and that King Solomon, King Hiram of Tyre and Hiram Abif ruled over these lodges as equal Grand Masters. What transpired during the building of the Temple serves to dramatize the principles of Freemasonry, the lessons of which are taught to every Freemason during his travels in quest of enlightenment.**

**Nevertheless, despite the biblical roots to which Freemasonry ascribes, no one really knows when, where or why Freemasonry originated. Some believe that there is a direct connection between modern Freemasonry and the operative masons of medieval times, who grouped together to regulate their craft and developed initiation ceremonies for new apprentices. To protect the secrets of their trade, these operative masons adopted special words to prove that they that they were properly trained and a member of a lodge and thereby worthy of admission to a worksite. Others theorize that Freemasonry was founded in the sixteenth or**

seventeenth centuries by men who wished to promote tolerance and build a better world, and borrowed their forms and symbols from the operative builders and took their central allegory from the Bible, which describes the building of King Solomon's Temple. And yet another theory suggests that sometime in the seventeenth century Freemasonry developed in English box clubs, which were convivial gatherings of craftsmen within a particular trade. The members of these box clubs would contribute money into a communal box, which could be used to provide relief for its members during periods of hard times. At some point these box clubs began to admit members not of their trade and took on many of the characteristics of early Masonic lodges, such as simple initiation ceremonies and the use of passwords.

Despite the scarcity of hard evidence that firmly establishes the origins of Freemasonry, what is definitely known is where and when organized Freemasonry began. On June 24, 1717, four London lodges came together and formed themselves into a Grand Lodge and elected a Grand Master and Grand Warden. The formation of the Grand Lodge in London in 1717 was followed in 1725 by the founding of the Grand Lodge of Ireland; and in 1736 by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Subsequently Freemasonry spread from Great Britain and established itself throughout the world. The earliest American lodges were the First Lodge of Boston, established in 1733 and the lodge in Philadelphia, established about the same time. Today about three-quarters of all Freemasons in the world are

located in the United States; there are about five million Freemasons worldwide.

Many notable men in history have been associated with Freemasonry. They include Bud Abbott of the comedy team Abbott and Costello; General Henry “Hap” Arnold, commander of the U. S. Army Air Force during World War Two; Gene Autry, the “Singing Cowboy” and original owner of the Los Angeles Angels baseball team; Francis J. Bellamy, the Baptist minister who created America’s Pledge of Allegiance; Daniel Boone, early U. S. pioneer; Ernest Borgnine, film and television actor; James Buchanan, 15<sup>th</sup> President of the United States; Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister during World War Two; Samuel Langhorn Clemens (also known as Mark Twain), the writer who created the characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn; Ty Cobb, legendary U. S. baseball player; Nat King Cole, great pianist and singer; Jack Dempsey, heavyweight boxing champion; Duke Ellington, one of the greatest composers in the history of jazz; Manuelo Fernandez-Juncos, hero of Puerto Rico; Benjamin Franklin, one of the founders of the United States and one of 13 Masonic signers of the Constitution of the United States; Clark Gable, famous American actor; Lionel Hampton, one of the giants in the field of jazz; Oliver Hardy, of the comedy team Laurel and Hardy; J. Edgar Hoover, longtime director of the FBI; Andrew Jackson, 7<sup>th</sup> President of the United States; Al Jolson, star of “The Jazz Singer,” Hollywood’s first major “talking picture”; Benito Juarez, first

native-American president of Mexico; Marquis de Lafayette, French soldier and close supporter and friend of Brother George Washington; Charles Lindbergh, American aviator who made the first solo transatlantic flight; General Douglas MacArthur, commander of Allied Forces in the South Pacific during World War Two; Rowland Hussey Macy, founder of R. H. Macy & Company; George C. Marshall, who organized what is now known as the “Marshall Plan”; Thurgood Marshall, first African-American appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States; Dr. Charles Mayo, one of the brothers who founded the world-famous Mayo Clinic; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Austrian composer and one of the greatest composers in history; Audie Murphy, movie actor and the most decorated U. S. soldier of World War Two; Arnold Palmer, one of the greatest golfers in history; General John Joseph Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force during World War One; Manuel L. Quezon, first President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines; Charles Rangel, U. S. Congressman from New York City; Paul Revere, Revolutionary War hero; “Sugar Ray” Robinson, one-time welterweight and five-time middleweight champion of the world; Roy Rogers, Hollywood’s “King of the Cowboys”; Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States; Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States; Colonel Harland Sanders, founder of the Kentucky Fried Chicken food chain; Peter Sellers, English actor and comedian; Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church; Carl “Alfalfa” Switzer, star of the “Little Rascals” series; Strom Thurmond, longest-

serving United States Senator; Harry S. Truman, 33<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States; General Jonathan M. Wainwright, American hero of Bataan; Jack Warner, one of the brothers who founded the movie company Warner Brothers; George Washington, the first President of the United States; John Wayne, one of the most popular actors in history; Lawrence Wilder, first elected African-American governor, from Virginia; Bert Williams, early-20<sup>th</sup> century African-American actor and comedian; Cy Young, great American baseball pitcher; Darryl F. Zanuck, co-founder of the movie company 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox; and Florenz Ziegfeld, famous impresario and founder of the Ziegfeld Follies. Thus, when you become a Freemason you will join the ranks of these and numerous other famous and noteworthy men.

**Sources:**

Famous Freemasons, <http://www.masonicinfo.com/famous1.htm>.

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History of Freemasonry, [http://www.unioncylodge600.com/history\\_of\\_freemasonry.htm](http://www.unioncylodge600.com/history_of_freemasonry.htm).

Holy Bible, 1 Kings 5-7.

*This “short talk” is dedicated in memory of two of the greatest Masons ever produced by Arcana Lodge: Worshipful Ben Chassid and Worshipful Sam Weiss.*