

Mark Master Degree

The first degree in Royal Arch Masonry is the Mark Master Degree, which is a wonderful expansion of the Fellowcraft Degree. It explains the payment of wages in much greater detail and the necessity of displaying your skill in the quarries in order to earn those wages. Each craftsman must design his own peculiar mark and receives a pointed lesson regarding how this mark is used to bond brother Mark Masters to each other. Finally a lesson is given regarding “abiding the law,” even when it does not please us.

Past Master Degree

The Past Master Degree is a modern accommodation to the ancient custom that only those who have presided over a Lodge could receive the Royal Arch Degree. This degree provides several pointed lessons regarding one's difficulties, rights and responsibilities when presiding over a Lodge and confers upon the candidate the title of being a “virtual” Past Master. The Grand Lodge of Virginia considers these lessons so important that the conferral of this degree is required before a Brother can be installed as Warden in his Lodge.

The Council Degrees: Select Master and Royal Master Degrees

The two Council Degrees (Select Master and Royal Master) are shorter in length than the other degrees in Royal Arch Masonry and are usually conferred at the same meeting. In most other Grand Jurisdictions they are not included in the Royal Arch degrees but come under a completely separate organization called the Cryptic Council. These degrees are referred to as “cryptic” because they introduce the candidate to a secret work which took place underground and to a conversation which took place on the evening prior to the death of one of our first three Grand Masters. The candidate learns of the leader of a plot to extort certain secrets and why this conversation caused him to recant. In Virginia these degrees are included in Royal Arch Masonry because they are a very necessary piece of the puzzle which is solved at a later time in the Royal Arch Degree.

*For those who seek to expand their knowledge and understanding of the first three degrees of Masonry, the Royal Arch degrees offer the **best first step** in that search for more light.*

Most Excellent Master

The Most Excellent Master Degree is peculiar to American Masonry. It is the rich story of the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple and a re-enactment of the ceremonies surrounding that event. Those craftsmen found worthy were received and acknowledged Most Excellent Masters by King Solomon.

Royal Arch Degree

The Royal Arch Degree begins with a recounting of the destruction of the Temple, the taking of the Jews into Babylonian exile, the overthrow of Babylon by King Cyrus of Persia, and his order that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt. The candidates portray three Most Excellent Masters returning from that exile to aid and assist in that rebuilding. While clearing some rubbish, they discover the secret underground work described in the Select Master Degree, and in spite of the difficulties and dangers involved, eventually discover the lost secrets referred to in the second section of the Master Mason Degree. The lost is finally found and restored. This degree also teaches that there is no substitute for truth and that the discovery of concealed things comes through hard work, persistence, and personal risk.