

SAINT JOHN DAYS

June 24- December 27

The Craft values the days of St. John the Baptist (June 24) and St. John the Evangelist (December 27) for their historical and symbolic significance in Freemasonry. It is unclear why these specific Christian saints were chosen over St. Thomas, the patron of architecture and building. Forgetting these days means losing a vital connection to the past and missing an opportunity to renew allegiance to ancient Freemasonry.

It is widely agreed among Freemasons that the selection of our ancient brethren was wise. St. John the Evangelist was believed to be incorporated into our *fraternal* system towards the end of the sixteenth century. The earliest known mention of St. John the Evangelist concerning Freemasonry is found in an authentic lodge minute from Edinburgh in 1599. However, there are earlier references to what may be considered relatives, if not ancestors, of our Craft. For example, "The Fraternity of St. John" was established in Cologne in 1430. "St. John's Masonry" is a unique term for Scottish Lodges. For instance, the Lodge of Scoon and Perth was often referred to as the Lodge of St. John in its early records, and the lodge room's east wall features a stunning mural of the saint.

During the period between the establishment of the "Ancients" in 1751 and the Reconciliation in 1813, there were several Lodges referred to as "St. John's Lodges" that were not affiliated with either the "Moderns" or the "Ancients."

There is an old legend in many historical accounts of the Craft that St. John the Evangelist achieved the title of "Grand Master" at the age of ninety. This story is said to have originated from a book published in 1789 by Richard Linnekar of Wakefield, which contained specific observations on Freemasonry, although it is more of a tribute. It is unclear whether Linnekar followed an existing tradition or created the tale. If the story is true, it would establish the existence of Freemasonry around the time of Christ.

One Grand Lodge has established that Sts. John's Days are Landmarks. Although each Grand Lodge has the authority to create its regulations, they do not possess the power to declare or revoke a Landmark. Landmarks are widely recognized as being passed down to us from *ancient* times, and Saints John's Days, as Masonic celebrations, are not particularly old or universal among Masons. In England, the day following St. George's Day is used, Scotland uses St. Andrew's Day, and Ireland uses St. Patrick's Day. As a result, we should focus solely on the Grand Lodge's intention to honor our patron saints rather than the legitimacy of their decision.

According to historians, it wasn't until the establishment of the Mother Grand Lodge in 1717 that Freemasons typically held celebratory gatherings on June 24th and/or December 27th.

Here are two addresses suitable for June 24 or December 27, along with a Masonic story.

ST. JOHNS' DAYS

The true reason for Freemasonry's association with the Sts. John can be traced back to the history of religion rather than the history of the Craft. The celebrations of these two saints are as ancient as the worship of fire and the sun.

Imagine traveling back to an era when humanity was young and lacked knowledge. The primal needs of humans were centered around satisfying their hunger, thirst, warmth, light, self-preservation, mating, and love for their children. Everything in nature was a wonder to the people of that age. They did not understand why the wind blew, what caused the rain, where lightning, thunder, cold, and warmth came from, why the sun rose in the morning and set at night, or what the stars were. They attempted to explain these mysteries using their daily experiences. When they were angry, they expressed their emotions through loud shouts and a desire to kill. It was natural for them to associate thunder and lightning with the anger of an unknown entity that held their lives and well-being in its hands. Ancient man would force the enemies they conquered out of their caves and into the open, where they would freeze, starve, or be eaten by beasts. It was natural for them to think that the wind, rain, and cold were manifestations of an angered and unseen presence.

Our ancient ancestors revered the sun as the most magnificent manifestation of nature. It graced the sky during the day, and its close relative, fire, provided warmth and comfort at night. The sun's gentle rays nurtured crops and caused rivers to swell. Its light kept wild beasts at bay, making their lives possible. For men just beginning to comprehend the world around them, worshiping the sun and fire was as instinctive as breathing.

It is believed that early observations of the sun's movement from north to south and back again were the basis for recognizing the changing of seasons. This led to celebrating midsummer's day as the longest day of the year, marking the start of the harvest and new life. Similarly, the winter solstice signaled the end of the sun's decline and the beginning of a new season of warmth, crops, and joy.

For many years, priests and their followers observed the solstices across various religions, cults, and mysteries in different locations. This is evident not just from historical accounts and ancient records etched on stones but also from myths and legends, such as the tale of Ceres seeking her daughter Proserpine and the allegory of Isis, Osiris, and Horus.

We often continue to practice ancient customs that have lost their origins. For example, we mention Yuletide during Christmas without realizing it was an ancient Scandinavian god, Juul. Children often say "By Golly!" when they tell the truth without knowing that it means they offer their hand (gol) if they are not truthful. The belief that breaking a mirror brings bad luck stems from a savage belief that throwing a stone into water, which reflects the face of an enemy, will break their heart just as the reflection is broken. Despite these outdated beliefs, people continue

to celebrate holidays that their ancestors have kept for countless generations, and it would be challenging to persuade them to give up these traditions.

When Christianity was introduced to the world, people were reluctant to let go of their traditional feasts and festival days, even if they had embraced the faith of the Cross. Therefore, wise individuals during the early days of Christianity adapted the pagan festivals to Christian practices, and the ancient celebrations of the summer and winter solstice transformed into the Saints John's Days of the Middle Ages.

As time passed, the people who marked the occasion gradually forgot about its meaning and instead focused on their interpretation. Nowadays, Freemasons hardly think about the reason behind celebrating St. John's Day in Winter, and many are unaware that the midsummer celebration of the same event is linked to ancient cavemen traditions.

During the Middle Ages, craftsmen often sought the protection of a saint from the church. In London, various trades aligned themselves with specific saints, choosing those who were thought to have a connection to their craft. For instance, the fishmongers chose St. Peter, while the drapers selected the Virgin Mary, who was associated with their trade's "Holy Lamb" or "Fleece" emblem. Goldsmiths looked to St. Dunstan, who was believed to have been a fellow artisan. Merchant tailors, another branch of the draping business, chose St. John the Baptist, who was associated with the "Holy Lamb" emblem. Many guilds also celebrated St. John the Baptist. As for why Freemasons adopted the two Saints John and continue celebrating their feasts, no historian can say for sure. However, these two saints fit in our system, given the spiritual significance of their lives.

Saint John the Baptist was known for his strict and fair personality. He did not tolerate lies, fake behavior, or any form of weakness. He was a brave and determined man who did not compromise with evil or short-term gain while remaining humble, sincere, and generous. He was a true hero, a noble person who stood out from others. The Greatest Teacher said of him, "There has not arisen a greater man than John the Baptist among those born of women."

Approximately a thousand books have been dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, the disciple whom Jesus loved. From students to ministers, teachers to historians, everyone has tried to find the right words to describe the personality of this kind of Fourth Gospel writer.

Competing with anyone is unnecessary, as Saint John the Evangelist is widely acknowledged as the apostle of love and light. He brings comfort to the sorrowful, courage to the weak, assistance to the helpless, and strength to those falling.

The wisdom of Freemasonry is gentle yet profound, surpassing that found in books. It honors the saint who prophesied the coming of the Son of Man and the saint who taught his law during his time in Galilee.

Many have been puzzled by "From whence come you?" and the answer "From the Lodge of the Holy Saints John at Jerusalem." However, Brother Joseph Fort Newton, known for his eloquent writing and musical voice, explained the inner meaning of this phrase beautifully and clearly. Although no historical evidence suggests that the two saints were members of the Craft, they were adopted as patron saints in the same way as it was done in the past. It is a good practice that Christian lands still follow. Nowadays, Lodges are dedicated to them instead of King Solomon as it was done before.

The concept of a sacred lodge in the Holy City, led by the Saints John, was a natural and ideal idea. Though such a lodge never physically existed, it was not mere fiction. Instead, it was an idea that added depth and meaning to our lives. The underlying message of the question and answer is that we originate from an ideal or Dream Lodge and enter the real world, where our ideals are tested.

It is unclear when and how Freemasonry adopted the Saints John. However, their days coincide with Christian adaptations of pagan festivals from when humans worshipped the sun as their supreme deity. On June 24 and December 27, we celebrate these festival days and follow in the footsteps of our ancient ancestors, showing gratitude and worship as they did. They worshipped the only god they knew for the glory of summer and the lengthening of days. We, in turn, thank the Grand Architect of the Universe for adopting the austere yet loving characters of two of the most extraordinary saintly men who taught about the Father of all Mankind in our gentle Craft.

Here is the second address:

POINT WITHIN A CIRCLE

In ancient times, lodges were dedicated to King Solomon, who is believed to have been the first Most Excellent Grand Master. However, modern speculative Masons dedicate their lodges to the memory of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. In every well-governed and regular lodge, there is a representation of a point within a circle. The point symbolizes the individual brother, while the circle represents the boundary of his behavior towards God and man. The brother must never let his passions, prejudices, or interests betray him beyond this boundary. The circle is bordered by two perpendicular parallel lines representing the two saints, and the Holy Scriptures are on top of them. While circumambulating the circle, a Mason touches upon the two lines and the Holy Scriptures. As long as a Mason is circumscribed, he cannot err significantly. This ancient symbol is not just one of many; it is among the most enlightening of the Entered Apprentice's degree and is familiar to every Mason.

Throughout history, a simple closed figure has represented the symbol of Deity. It is unclear when, where, or how this symbol began, but for some people, it is represented by a circle, while for others, it is represented by a triangle. Still, others use a circle or triangle with a central point. This closed figure represents the concept of a being who has no beginning or end. The addition of a triangle represents a triune nature. In our lodges, the Lesser Lights form a triangle representing Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. In certain jurisdictions, brethren form a circle

around the Altar when the lodge is closing, making it the focal point of the Supreme Blessing upon the brethren.

Symbols can hold multiple interpretations as long as they do not contradict each other. Different members of the Masonic community have assigned the point inside a circle various meanings.

The circular ruins of ancient temples dedicated to sun and fire worship are believed to be connected to the oldest religion - sun worship. These temples had a central altar, or "point," considered the most sacred space. The symbol of the circular temple can be traced back to ancient India, where its age is impossible to calculate due to the land's mystical nature.

In ancient times, the symbol of a dot and a circle had multiple meanings. One interpretation was that the dot represented the sun, and the circle represented the universe. This combination of a dot and circle also served as the astrological symbol for the sun and was connected to Masonic beliefs. Another interpretation from Indian culture portrayed the dot as the male principle and the circle as the female principle. Over time, the dot symbolized the sun, and the circle symbolized the solar system.

The concept of the two parallel lines in modern Masonry, which are said to represent the holy Saints John, dates back to ancient times and was not originally associated with the Christian patrons of Masonry. While it may be a pleasing idea, it lacks any factual basis—the holy Saints John existed and taught many centuries before Masonry was established and given its name. Those brethren who believe that King Solomon was the Grand Master of a Grand Lodge, created the system, and possibly wrote the ritual must be reminded of their chronology, as both Saints John lived long after the time of the wise king's "famous Fabric."

The symbol of the Alpha and Omega, or the representation of God, surrounded by two upright, parallel serpents, denoting the Creator's power and wisdom, can be traced back before Solomon to early Egyptian monuments. This symbol was often found in the center of a circle. The origins of this symbol can be found in the operative craft, which satisfies the mind in terms of logic and appropriateness. To understand how the point within a circle became a part of Speculative Masonry through Operative craftsmanship, we must first have a mental picture of the times in which the Craftsmen of the early Middle Ages lived and worked.

Most of them lacked education and were unable to read or write. This was not a concern for them since there were no books to read and no need for writing. However, they were skilled craftsmen, having undergone extensive apprenticeships and training in cutting and setting stones. Despite their expertise in manual labor and craftiness built over generations, they had no formal education.

The leaders, also known as The Masters, were not ignorant when planning and overseeing the great cathedrals of Europe. They possessed knowledge and expertise in their craft, including architecture, practical building, designing, and stone cutting and placement. These skilled

craftsmen were well-versed in all aspects of their work. It is likely that many of them also had a solid understanding of practical mathematics.

As the Master Builders shared their knowledge, it spread throughout the different levels of management, including superintendents, architects, overseers, and foremen responsible for specific construction areas. When hundreds or even thousands of workers were involved in building a significant structure, organization was crucial. It was also important to closely monitor the tools used in the construction process.

The Cathedrals' builders utilized various tools, including gavels, mallets, setting mauls, hammers, chisels, trowels, plumbs, squares, and levels. They also used a twenty-four-inch gauge to lay out their work to ensure accurate measurements. The squares, levels, and plumbs were constructed using wood, cords, and weights for the plumbs and levels, while the square was made solely of wood.

When wood comes into contact with stone, it wears down. Wood also becomes warped when it is exposed to damp air or water. The metal that connects the two arms of a square together can rust and potentially bend or break. Over time, squares will lose their right-angled shape and must be regularly checked. A standard must be established to compare squares, ensuring that Operative Masons' squares do not deviate significantly from the standard.

The square shape of the stones used in the Cathedral building was paramount, with a perfect right angle essential. In the days of Operative Masonry, each workman had to rely on their skills and craftsmanship without the aid of modern concepts such as interchangeable parts and micrometer measurement. Therefore, a flawless foundation was crucial to ensure the entire project's success. The Masters responsible for building these magnificent structures were able to create timeless temples by carefully checking and trying their squares.

In present times, even a schoolboy can easily comprehend the "secret of the square," which was once only known to the Masters and kept under close guard. Similarly, the functioning of a steam engine, which was once considered a marvel two centuries ago, can now be explained by any schoolboy. Moreover, with technological advancements, creating and using a wireless device considered a miracle 125 years ago, has become a common practice. Unsurprisingly, our ancient Operative brethren held the secret of a square in such high regard.

Draw a circle of any size on paper to create a perfect right angle. Then, draw a line across the circle's center with a straight edge. Next, place a dot anywhere on the circle and connect it to the line at both points where it intersects the circle. This will result in a perfectly formed right angle.

The Operative Master had a secret technique called "trying the square" that he used to test the tools and workmanship of fellow craftsmen. This ensured that their tools and work were free of material errors. The English brethren use a ritual of "opening on the center" in their lodges. Still, American lodges no longer use the old-fashioned language and only refer to the center as a

point within a circle. The original center line has been moved to the side and is now known as the "two perpendicular parallel lines" in Egypt and India. Our admonitions are no longer as they once were, but the principle remains the same: if a Mason circumscribes his square within these points, it is impossible for there to be material errors.

Today, we rely solely on our speculative interpretation of the Scriptures to guide our desires and passions. As symbolic Masons, we use the square to represent our values rather than its literal function. This guidance proves more beneficial to us than the ancient secret of the square.

This teaching of Masonry should not be taken lightly. It deserves great reverence, as it is one of the most important lessons. It is concealed within a symbol that is easy for anyone to understand, as long as they have Masonry in their heart.