



The MASONIC INFORMATION CENTER

THE ORGANIZATION OF FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry is the oldest fraternal organization for men in the world, and its organizational structure shows its age. The basic organizational unit of the fraternity is the lodge. We believe the term comes from the lodges (shelters) constructed at the building sites of cathedrals and castles during the Middle Ages. Masons worked and lived in these shelters.

Each lodge is headed by an officer called the "Worshipful Master." "Worshipful" means "highly respected" or "honored" much like calling a judge "Your Honor". The term comes from the judicial system of England and carries no religious implication. "Master" means "leader "or" best qualified" as in "Concert Master" or "Master Architect."

Each officer of a lodge has a title that originated during the Middle Ages. These titles may vary somewhat from state to state, but in general the officers and their contemporary equivalents are:

Worshipful Master	= President	Marshal	= Master of Ceremonies
Senior Warden	= 1st Vice President	Deacon	= Messenger
Junior Warden	= 2nd Vice President	Steward	= Page
Treasurer	= Financial officer	Tiler	= Door Keeper
Secretary	= Recorder	Chaplain	= Chaplain

Until 1717, each lodge of Masons was autonomous. On June 24, 1717, four of the lodges operating in London met together to form the first Grand Lodge of England. It became the first administrative or policy-making body of Freemasonry.

Masonic lodges still retain autonomy over their finances, activities, officer election, fundraising, and joining ceremonies. But administratively, each State or Province has a Grand Lodge which coordinates activities, serves as a central source of record keeping, and performs other administrative and policy functions for the fraternity. The state president is called the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge or Most Worshipful Grand Master. He has broad powers in overseeing the progress of the fraternity and while there is no national spokesperson for the fraternity, within his own state (Jurisdiction) he is the chief spokesman.