



Immediate Past Master

I.M.: Worshipful Brother I have the honour to invest you as Immediate Past Master of this Lodge, with the jewel of a Past Master (places collar with jewel on him). It is an office which is not in the power of the Worshipful Master, or the Lodge, to bestow, but is yours by right, having faithfully performed your duty as Worshipful Master of a Craft Lodge. To this jewel is appended a diagram representing the 47th proposition in Euclid's Elements of Geometry. This theorem was the work of the illustrious Pythagoras, and, Masonic 57 tradition informs us that during his travels in Asia, Africa and Europe, he was regularly initiated, passed and raised in the established degrees of Freemasonry, and that after paying all due and needful attention to his Masonic duties he eventually attained to the dignity of a Past Master. This great philosopher enriched his mind with all true and genuine knowledge, but more particularly in geometry; he proved many theorems, and solved many problems, and at length after long and laborious study worked out this 47th proposition. This illustrious example should stimulate all Freemasons, especially those in the exalted position to which you have now attained, to be lovers of true and genuine knowledge and diligent students of such arts and sciences as may be within the compass of their attainments. I now place you in your chair, that immediately on the left of the Worshipful Master. It will be your duty, and I feel sure it will be in accordance with your inclination, as far as may be possible during the ensuing year, to attend every meeting of the Lodge, in order that you may be ready to render to your successor such counsel and assistance as he may require and your own experience in the Chair will enable you to afford. If pressed for time, or if the I.P.M. is already a P.M., the following may be substituted: "..... Worshipful Brother, I have much pleasure in investing you with this jewel (places Collar on him) as the Immediate Past Master of the Lodge, feeling assured from the manner in which you have transacted the business of the Lodge during your Mastership, that should the Worshipful Master require assistance, his reliance on your co-operation will not be misplaced."

Installation, Canadian Work, Grand Lodge of British Columbia

Historical

An honorary Degree usually conferred on the Master of a Lodge at his installation into office. In this Degree the necessary instructions are conferred respecting the various ceremonies of the Order, such as installations, processions, the laying of corner-stones, etc. When a Brother, who has never before presided, has been elected the Master of a Lodge, an emergent Lodge of Past Masters, consisting of not less than three, is convened, and all but Past Masters retiring, the Degree is conferred upon the newly elected officer.

Some form of ceremony at the installation of a new Master seems to have been adopted at an early period after the revival. In the "manner of constituting a new Lodge," as practiced by the Duke of Wharton, who was Grand Master in 1723, the language used by the Grand Master when placing the candidate in the chair is given, and he is said to use "some other expressions that are proper and usual on that occasion, but not proper to be written" (Constitutions, 1738, page 150). Whence we conclude that there was an esoteric ceremony. Often the rituals tell us that this ceremony consisted only in the outgoing Master communicating certain modes of recognition to his successor. And this actually, even at this day, constitutes the essential ingredient of the Past Master's Degree.

The Degree is in the United States also conferred in Royal Arch Chapters, where it succeeds the Marl; Master's Degree. The conferring of this Degree, which has no historical connection with the rest of the Degrees, in a Chapter, arises from the following circumstance: Originally, when Chapters of Royal Arch Masonry were under the government of Lodges in which the Degree was then always conferred, it was a part of the regulations that no one could receive the Royal Arch Degree unless he had previously presided in the Lodge as Master.

When the Chapters became independent, the regulation could not be abolished, for that would have been an innovation; the difficulty has, therefore been obviated, by making every candidate for the Degree of Royal Arch a Virtual Past Master before his exaltation. Under the English Constitution this practice was forbidden in 1826, but seems to have lingered on in some parts until 1850. "The dis-use of the Virtual Past Master's Degree or Chair Degree in the British Isles has in no way interfered with its continued use in the United States, especially in the older Jurisdictions whose Freemasonry attests its Ancient origin (see the footnote on page 145, volume BViii, 1915, Transactions, Quatuor Coronati Lodge, by Brother W. J. Chetwode Crawley).

Some extraneous ceremonies, but no means creditable to their inventor, were at an early period introduced into America. In 1856, the General Grand Chapter, by a unanimous vote, ordered these ceremonies to be discontinued, and the simpler mode of investiture to be used; but the order has only been partially obeyed, and many Chapters continue what one can scarcely help calling the indecorous form of initiation into the Degree.

For several years past the question has been agitated in some of the Grand Lodges of the United States, whether this Degree is within the Jurisdiction of Symbolic or of Royal Arch Masonry. The explanation of its introduction into Chapters, just given, manifestly demonstrates that the jurisdiction over it by Chapters is altogether an assumed one. The Past Master of a Chapter is

only a quasi or seeming Past Master; the true and legitimate Past Master is the one who has presided over a Symbolic Lodge.

Brother [R. F. Gould](#) (Masonic Monthly, July, 1882) says in regard to the Degrees of Past Master and the Royal Arch, "The supposition has much to recommend it, that the connection of the secrets of the Royal Arch, is the earliest form in which any esoteric teaching was specially linked with the incidents of Lodge Mastership, or in other words, that the Degree of Royal Arch was the complement of the Masters Grade. Out of this was ultimately evolved the Degree of Installed Master, a ceremony unknown in the Modern System until the first decade of the nineteenth century, and of which I can trace no sign amongst the Ancient until the growing practice of conferring the Arch upon Brethren not legally qualified to receive it, brought about the constructive passing through the Chair, which by qualifying candidates not otherwise eligible, naturally entailed the introduction of a ceremony, additional to the simple forms known to Payne, Anderson, and Desaguliers."

Past Masters are admitted to membership in many Grand Lodges, and by some the inherent right has been claimed to sit in those Bodies. But the most eminent Masonic authorities have made a contrary decision, and the general, and, indeed, almost universal opinion now is that Past Masters obtain their seats in Grand Lodges by courtesy, and in consequence of local regulations, and not by inherent right.

A subtle distinction may be noted between the expressions Past and Pass'd Master. "The distinction in sense that had originally lain between Past Master and virtual Pass'd Master could make no headway against the similarity in sound. The Past Master was the Brother who 'had served his just and lawful time' as W. M. of a Lodge, and had thereby qualified for the completion of Master Degree. The Passed Master was a Brother who had been passed through a so-called Chair Degree, and had thereby been entrusted with certain equivalent secrets. The epithet Past is an adjective, conveying the idea of time expired: the epithet Pass'd is a participle conveying the idea of motion completed. Such verbal niceties did not trouble the Brethren of the eighteenth, or any other century" (footnote, page 144, volume xxvii, 1915, Transactions, Quatuor Coronati Lodge, by Brother W. J. Chetwode Crawley).

The usual jewel of a Past Master in the United States is a pair of compasses extended to sixty degrees on the fourth part of a circle, with a sun in the center. In England it was formerly the square on a quadrant, but is at present the square with the forty-seventh problem of Euclid engraved on a silver plate suspended within it. This latter design is also adopted in Pennsylvania. The French have two titles to express this Degree. They apply *Maitre Passe* to the Past Master of the English and American system, and they call in their own system one who has formerly presided over a Lodge an *Ancien Maitre*. The indiscriminate use of these titles sometimes leads to confusion in the translation of their lectures and treatises.

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

Past Masters Jewel



When and why was the Past Master's jewel adopted and what does it mean?

The 47th Proposition on the Past Masters Jewel

The modern Past Masters jewel was officially prescribed for the use of Past Masters in the first *Book of Constitutions* following the union i.e 1815 as follows;

“Past Masters ...*The square and diagram of the 47th prop 1st B of Euclid, engraven on as silver plate pendent within it.*”

But there is good evidence of the popularity of the 47th proposition in the Speculative Craft long before that time. Anderson used it in the frontispiece to his 1723 and 1738 *Constitutions* and it also appeared in Smith's *Pocket Companion* of 1735, an Edinburgh edition of 1752, and in *Multa Paucis*, 1764. There is no evidence, however, of its use as part of a Masonic jewel until the last decades of the 18th century.,

... Our main concern, however, is the reason for the selection of the 47th proposition and here too there is room for speculation because no official reason was ever given.

Geometry, in the designing of buildings and in the practice of the mason trade, had always been closely linked with the craft. Indeed the *Old Charges* constantly re-iterate the link between Geometry and Masonry even to the extent of outright declaration the “Geometry is now called Masonry”

When Dr. Anderson in his 1723 *Constitutions* (pp.20-21) averred that ... the 47th Proposition of Euclid's first book.. is the foundation of all Masonry, sacred, civil and military he was treating the

47th proposition as the *symbol of all Geometry*, and proclaiming the age-old link between the science and the craft.

Bernard E. Jones in his “Compendium” has written: “No one knows why or when it (P.M.jewel) was adopted as the insignia of a P.M. nor of any Craft ritual that offers any explanation of the proposition, or any philosophical lesson it may conceivably teach.” H.W. Rylands, Q.C. Vol. 14, p.32 says that in his opinion “no reason whatever was in anyone’s mind when the 47th proposition gradually came to be recognized as the distinguishing mark of a Past Master.

Instead of disposing of the jewel, these quotations tend to mask it in a mantle of mystery which invites investigation both of the rank of Past Master and of the jewel itself.

In the days of operative masonry the rank of Past Master did not exist. Speculative masonry, with its proliferation of new masters, produced an increasing number of masons who had been masters of a lodge. They received recognition and by 1739 the Immediate Past Master had become an important rank. Curiously enough the I.P.M. is not an officer of the lodge. He is not elected. No one appoints him. As if by natural sequence he assumes an office to which his experience, his knowledge and his skill in employing that knowledge entitles him.

On one thing Rylands, Klein, Greene and others who have written on the subject agree – when the rank of Past Master became well established in Speculative Masonry it became necessary to find a suitable badge.

Our ritual establishes a close relationship between “Wisdom” and the I.P.M. Klein says that since he has left the chair of King Solomon behind him the I.P.M. has completed the journey from W. to E. and in his heart knows he has found the object of his quest. Greene says that having completed his spiritual temple, the I.P.M. is in a position to give counsel and advise to those who are still engaged in building theirs. In these points of view there is a common denominator of such significance that an appropriate jewel would necessarily be a symbol of splendour.

In 1727 Grand Lodge decreed that the officers of private lodges should wear their jewels on white ribbons around their necks – a square for the Master, a level for the Senior Warden and a plumb for the Junior Warden. W.A. Ryland was of the opinion that in the first instance Grand Lodge officers’ jewels were of the same form as those worn in ordinary lodges. Jones appears to agree but adds that Grand officers’ jewels were of gold or metal gilt while those of private lodge officers were of silver.

Just when the Past Master’s jewel first masonic⁵ we do not know but the famous exposures of 1760 and 1762 both say that the Past Master “hath the Compasses and Sun with a line of chords about his neck”. The plumb of the Junior Warden and the level of the Senior Warden combine to form the square of the Master. Compasses, the instrument used to work with a center does seem appropriate for the Past Master. Indeed the Past Master’s jewel in Ireland consists of a

compasses added to the Master's square with a capital S in the centre.

In Scotland the Past Master's jewel is a compasses added to the Master's square with an arc of a circle. About 1800 however, the English jewel was changed to a gallows square with the 47th Proposition of Euclid pendant within it. In 1840 the gallows square was replaced by an equal arm square. It may be significant that a photograph in "Grand Lodge 1717-1967" shows the Duke of Sussex, Grand Master 1813-1943, wearing a jewel – compasses with an arc of a circle enclosing a blazing sun – to which the present day Grand Master's jewel is similar.

Perhaps the symbolic meaning of the compasses was so sublime that it was desired for the Grand Master's jewel so that a new one would have to be found for the Past Master. It isn't too unreasonable to suppose that since the Past Master graduated from the Master's chair, a suitable jewel would be the Master's jewel with something added. In England instead of the compasses and letter G as in Ireland, or the compasses and the arc of a circle as in Scotland, it was the 47th Proposition of Euclid.

After all, the 47th Proposition may not have been such a new and novel thing because the earliest jewel of rank on the United Grand Lodge museum is a Master's jewel – from possibly about 1730, a plain silver square with the figure of the 47th Proposition hanging from the angle.

A Passed (or Past) Master

A Passed (or Past) Master is a Master Mason who is no longer the installed Master of a lodge of Freemasons. He has "passed the chair" as the presiding officer of his lodge. But in the 16th century, a Passed Master was one who had been examined and passed as a Master; and was thereafter considered a highly qualified or accomplished Master of a trade, guild, society or corporation.

Today, the Past Masters, Worshipful Masters and Wardens (the traditional gatekeepers or sentinels of the realm, and later the regents who ruled in the King's absence—now vice presidents of the lodge), in addition to their hierarchical status within the structure of a lodge, also make up the body of the Grand Lodge, or state assembly of Masons, and are given the authority, on behalf of all members of their lodge, to collectively adopt the rules and regulations which govern all lodges in the state. These titled men represent the voice of the Grand Lodge when the Grand Lodge is not in session. This is the reason lodges can operate independently from Grand Lodges. Each lodge is a microcosm of the whole.

This is the hierarchical nature of the fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, and its authority in regard to the function and leadership of each lodge.

However, titles alone do not address the more important function of these offices in regard to the fraternity's ceremonies of initiation, passing, and raising. There must also be a transmission of knowledge, wisdom and insight in order for the new Mason to be transformed by his experience. The officers of the lodge are the metaphysical agents for this transmission.

Thus, the meanings of the ancient titles are carried forth by the honored men who presently carry these titles to those who are undertaking the process of becoming Masons.

The Entered Apprentice (Initiate) must be bathed in the pure and moral motive of the light; the Fellow of the Craft must be passed into an intellectual understanding of light; and the Master Mason must be raised by that light to an insight of truth which transcends rational intellectualism. This spiritual transmission can only occur through an agent who is capable of knowing and honoring the spiritual sanction and sacred lineage of his office.

Herein is a serious caveat of which we, as Masons, must be always vigilant.

The man who ascends to the East in his lodge, professing to know Masonry; yet knowing only the words of the ritual without any understanding of his role as the Initiator for the lodge, is not capable of transmitting the esoteric and metaphysical attributes of the inner work to the psyche of the Initiate. He has neither qualified himself as a Master, a man of scholarly authority in the mysteries; nor as worshipful, a man distinguished by the singularity of his spiritual understanding.

Having offered the above as only a caution, in the traditional sense, I believe the titles of Worshipful Master and Past Master carry much weight when properly understood. They are, and remain, honorable and not temporal in that those who have the titles are styled “Worshipful;” and are therefore invested with the responsibility of being the teachers of Masonry, and carrying the spiritual lineage of the lodge with them for all time.

Therefore, I think these titles were never intended to be given frivolously, but should be earned by work, study, contemplation, and lasting commitment to the ideal of awakening the consciousness of humankind; the unveiling of the mysteries. This is the reason that only the most qualified and capable of the Master Masons should ever hold these offices.

Likewise, only those who are “duly and truly prepared” should strive to become a part of the elect group. To be initiated, passed and raised, one must first be receptive to receive the transmission offered by a Master or Past Master.

How do you want to be perceived as a Past Master of your Lodge?

A PM should be

- Advisor
- Teacher
- Educator
- Listener
- Experienced
- Effective Administrator
- Leader
- Concerned (supporter)

From a survey conducted we noted under the question

What is your perception of a P.M.

- Experienced
- Knowledgeable
- Guiding Influence
- Positive Critic
- Active
- Participative
- Supportive

But also

- Dictatorial
- Inflexible

Good Characteristics of a PM

- Helpful
- Supportive
- Regular attender
- Adaptable
- Empathetic
- Courteous
- Mentor

Disappointing Characteristics of a PM

- Disrespectful of Protocol
- Super Critical
- Inflexible
- Overbearing
- Resentful to new ideas
- “Too many of them”

Must have these attributes

- be an historical link with the past of the lodge
- Accept responsibility, or blame where due, as well as accolades for the Lodge's performance

- Assist, but not stifle
- Make himself obviously interested in the younger members and be freely available to them at all times
- Assist and teach
- Have an obligation to Grand Lodge

PMs are your warmest friends and best supporters

A PM is one who must now tread the difficult path between forcing his opinions [interference] and when not to [silent support]

Assignment

Since the Immediate Past Master holds no rank within the lodge but a claimed right of position to the left of the Worshipful Master, how can he best support and help the lodge in its continuing journey.