

The District Light

*The information bulletin
of Niagara B District*

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bhodwitz@gmail.com

Suppose

Suppose that you wanted to install a bookshelf on a wall of your house. First, you would look for a board to use.

You would sort through your collection of boards, looking for one which was solid and free of defects.



Slight imperfections such as knots would be acceptable, adding character to the finished piece. Having made your choice, you would then work on the board to smooth it and shape it to suit your needs.

The work would be rewarding because you would have a goal in mind and you would be enjoying the progress you are making.

Suppose you could work with stone and needed to make a cornerstone for a building.

First you would need to find a block that could be shaped to the size you needed. You would have to determine that the stone was without major flaws.



Differences in colour would be acceptable, but the stone would have to be able to withstand the chiseling needed to bring it to the shape you wanted. It would have to be a good stone, ready to be made better.

Suppose you belonged to a club, and a person indicated that he wanted to join.

If your club was masonic lodge, you might compare the candidate to a rough ashlar – a good but rough-hewn stone – which can be made to fit into the structure of a magnificent building.



The Rough Ashlar

The rough ashlar can be a symbol of man's incompleteness, but can be seen as the foundation stone for the entered apprentice, upon which he begins to build his future character. The journey undertaken by the candidate from the rough towards the perfect ashlar represents the drama of life. It is made in the company of many other members who will offer him support by their enthusiasm, energy and knowledge.

The rough ashlar illustrates the mind of the candidate as he enters the world of Masonry. The stone was not casually picked up from the quarry, but is one that had been carefully selected..

The candidate, therefore, must be of a certain material which that can be worked with to produce a superbly finished product.

Masonry is not a conversion society; it seeks to enhance the good that is already present.

The Good That is Present

In all things, you will achieve a better product if you start with a good thing. Determining that a man is a good choice to become a mason depends on the judgements of the sponsors, the investigating committee, and the members who ballot.

Let's look at each . . .

The Sponsors

The two Masons who sign the petition have several responsibilities. They must have know the man for at least a year and be confident that he would be 'a good fit' in the lodge.

They commit to a moral obligation to be with him on his masonic journey.

They must be ready to assist him with his work and take an interest in his progress, ensuring that he fully understands the fine lessons of the degrees.

They should probably take a part in the work done in each of the degrees.

The Investigation

The committee which visits the applicant has obligations to both the man and the lodge.

They must inform the man of every aspect of the order so that he can make a reasoned choice. This should be easy to do if the sponsors prepared him as they should have.

They must satisfy themselves that the man's family will not be adversely affected by his joining and that the man is morally and financially ready to accept the requirements of membership.

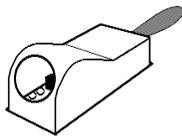
Guidelines for the members of the investigating committee may be found in the lodge. One such list will be distributed to the lodges for their use.

The depth of the inquiry varies but some lodges are known to require a credit check or police check or both of the prospective member.



Balloting

The final judgement of the applicant lies with the members. Each mason is asked to determine the suitability of the proposed man.



We aim for justice:

- ✓ Justice to the lodge – that only men fit for membership are accepted.
- ✓ Justice to ourselves – that the harmony of our lodge be preserved.
- ✓ Justice to the applicant – that he will be accepted for who he is and that his values will be embraced.



So Then What?



So you have a new member. What do you do with and for him?

A good host or sponsor would ask to determine what his guest would like to experience.

What does he want from masonry?

By offering a selection of instruction, education, social events, and a sharing of stories of the benefits of belonging to the Order, you can plant the seeds of interest which will grow into full involvement.

Visiting

The work done in the lodge sets the foundation of the over-all masonic experience, but it limits the experience to the 'club house'. Visiting other lodges expands the scope of understanding how widespread masonry is and reveals how many men find value in it.

Lodge officers and the friends of new masons should take members to visit other lodges.

Who Are You?

Wearing a name badge makes meeting and remembering people more comfortable.



Such badges can be purchased from several locations. In Niagara Falls, visit Alison's at 4300 Drummond Road. The badge can have a pin or a magnet for attaching to a lapel. The template for the badge is filed under "St. Mark's".

A hint: if you wear the name badge on your right-hand lapel, the name is more easily visible to the man who is shaking your hand.

Custom Embroidery

You or your lodge might want to place masonic symbols or member's names upon hats, shirts, or jackets. Louanne will do it for about \$5 per piece. Call her at 905-714-9173.

Expanding the Experience

The newly-made mason is hungry for further knowledge and enlightenment, so feed it to him.

Long-time members could use something to boost their interest and to remind them that they are a part of something greater. Take them out to some of the masonic events.

Sankey Lecture Series

This year's lecture in the annual series will be held at Brock University on Sunday, March 24, at 3:00 p.m. The topic will be *Native American Freemasonry: Joseph Brant to the 21st Century*.

Each of the previous such events have been good experiences. You are encouraged to attend.

Official Visits

Official visits are events which satisfy our desire for both formality and pleasant social interaction. They would be a good choice for introducing new masons to the district.

All Official Visits make a point of introducing the members of the visiting lodges. It's good for a lodge to make its presence known.

If you visit, you get visited.

Only two Official Visits of our District Deputy Grand Master have yet to occur. The next will be at Merritt Lodge in Port Colborne on March 11.

The last will be at Clifton Lodge in Niagara Falls on April 10. This will be the District Deputy's Homecoming meeting.

District Dinner



On Tuesday, April 16, the masons of the district will meet at the Kimono Restaurant in Welland for a dinner and to hear a guest speaker. Ask your secretary for the details.

District Church Service

On Sunday, April 28, masons will gather for the annual masonic service. This year it will be held at St. David's Anglican Church in Welland. Your lodge could car pool.

Friendly Get-Togethers

Masons and food are a natural combination. Several opportunities per month are available:

- Coffee and commentary at Williams Restaurant on Dorchester Road in Niagara Falls every week day at 10:00.
- Lunch on the third Thursday of every month. Family and friends are welcome.
 - > March 21 at the Kimono Restaurant in Welland.
 - > April 18 at the Four Brothers in Niagara Falls.
 - > May 16 at someplace else.
- First Friday Feast on the first Friday of every month at Chatter's Restaurant in Niagara Falls. Again, bring anyone you would like to be with.

What More Can We Do?

Every lodge member has wished that his lodge would do more to engage the brethren and expand on the visibility of masonry in the community.

If all you got at your meeting was the passing of accounts, you likely felt disappointed. We have to get beyond falling back on the slogan of "Somebody should do something".

First off, there must be a directed effort to get beyond the basic meeting protocol:

- An entertainment committee can be established.
- Men can be assigned an evening in which they must present some masonic education. (Don't wait for volunteers.)
- Devote part of one meeting to rehearse a masonic funeral service or the collecting of the password.
- Find inspiration from other sources. Our Grand Lodge's Cornerstone Project lists many ideas for lodge activities which enhance the masonic experience and foster brotherhood.

Information is on the Grand Lodge web site.

What Others Have Tried

Here is a partial list of activities that have been hosted by lodges. If you would like to learn more about how they did it, contact the lodge.

- Pancake breakfasts on Sundays (Phoenix)
- Fish Fry after a meeting (Macnab)
- Strawberry Social
- Widows' dinners (Palmer)
- Christmas Party (Dominion)
- Picnic
- Yard Sale
- Caroling (Palmer)
- Movie Night fund-raiser. (Palmer)

Contact the Boutique Theatre in Ridgeway for details and to see the current movies: 905-894-9911 information@boutiquemovies.com

