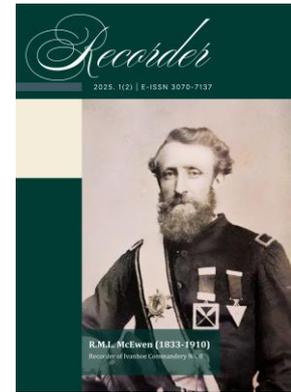




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Leafing Through Antique Books

Thomas Smith Webb ‘The Freemasons Monitor of Illustration of Masonry’. Chapters VI–VII

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Abstract. Thomas Smith Webb (1771–1819) was one of the most influential figures in early American Freemasonry and the Knights Templar. Serving as the first Deputy Grand Master of the General Grand Encampment from 1816 until his death, he played a decisive role in shaping the York Rite. His seminal work, *The Freemason’s Monitor; or, Illustrations of Masonry* (1797), underwent five revised editions during his lifetime and became foundational for the development of Masonic ritual in the United States. The rare 1816 edition represents the culmination of his editorial efforts. In this section, we continue presenting Webb’s remarkable book by offering Chapters VI and VII.

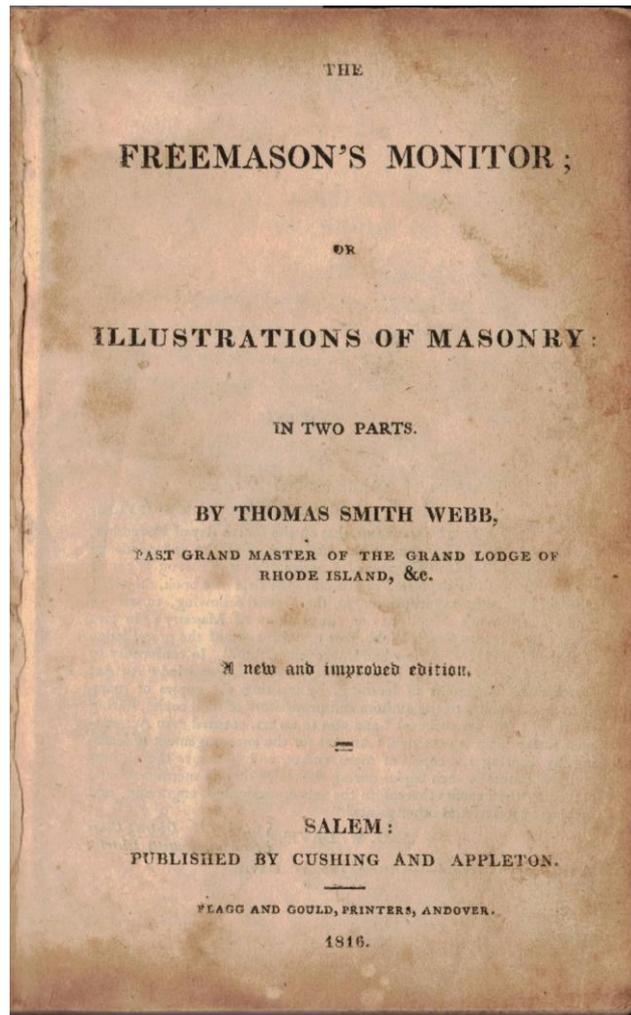
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Thomas Smith Webb (1771–1819) — a prominent Freemason and Knight Templar. In 1816, he became the first Deputy Grand Master of the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in the USA, a position he held until his death in 1819.

In 1797, Thomas Smith Webb published the principal work of his life — “*The Freemason’s Monitor, or Illustrations of Masonry*.” This book had a profound influence on the development of Masonic ritual in America, particularly within the York Rite.

During the author’s lifetime, the book was revised and expanded five times. The penultimate edition, published in 1816, is now considered a bibliographic rarity. We continue to acquaint the reader with this remarkable book and present to your attention Chapters VI and VII.



THE FREEMASON'S MONITOR

PART FIRST

BOOK I

...

CHAPTER VI¹.

Charges and regulations for the conduct and behaviour of Masons.

A rehearsal of the ancient charges properly succeeds the opening, and precedes the closing, of a lodge. This was the constant practice of our ancient brethren, and ought never to be neglected in our regular assemblies. A recapitulation of our duty cannot be disagreeable to those, who are acquainted with it; and to those, who know it not, should any such be, it must be highly proper to recommend it.

¹ To be continued. See the beginning in Recorder. 2025. 1(1): 36–40.

ANCIENT CHARGES.

On the management of the craft in working.

Masons employ themselves diligently in their sundry vocations, live creditably, and conform with cheerfulness to the government of the country in which they reside.

[The most expert craftsman is chosen or appointed master of the work, and is duly honoured by those over whom he presides.

The master, knowing himself qualified, undertakes the government of the lodge, and truly dispenses his rewards, giving to every brother the approbation which he merits.

A craftsman, who is appointed warden of the work under the master, is true to master and fellows, carefully oversees the work, and his brethren obey him.]

The master, wardens, and brethren, receive their rewards justly, are faithful, and carefully finish the work they begin, whether it be in the first or second degree; but never put that work to the first, which has been accustomed to the second degree, nor that to the second or first, which has been accustomed to the third.

Neither envy nor censure is discovered among true masons. No brother is supplanted, or put out of his work, if he be capable to finish it; as no man, who is not perfectly skilled in the original design, can, with equal advantage to the master, finish the work begun by another.

All employed in masonry meekly receive their rewards, and use no disobliging name. Brother or fellow are the terms or appellations they bestow on each other. They behave courteously within and without the lodge, and never desert the master till the work is finished.

Laws for the government of the lodge.

You are to salute one another in a courteous manner, agreeably to the forms established among masons¹; you are freely to give such mutual instructions as shall be thought necessary or expedient, not being overseen or overheard, without encroaching upon each other, or derogating from that respect, which is due to any gentleman, were he not a mason; for though, as masons, we rank as brethren on a level, yet masonry deprives no man of the honour due to his rank or character, but rather adds to his honour, especially if he has deserved well of the fraternity, who always render honour to whom it is due, and avoid ill manners.

No private committees are to be allowed, or separate conversations encouraged; the master or wardens are not to be interrupted, or any brother speaking to the master; but due decorum is to be observed, and a proper respect paid to the master and presiding officers.

These laws are to be strictly enforced, that harmony may be preserved, and the business of the lodge be carried on with order and regularity.

Amen. So mote it be.

Charge on the behaviour of masons out of the lodge.

When the lodge is closed, you may enjoy yourselves with innocent mirth; but you are carefully to avoid excess. You are not to compel any brother to act contrary to his inclination, or give offence by word or deed, but enjoy a free and easy conversation. You are to use no immoral or obscene discourse, but at all times support with propriety the dignity of your character.

You are to be cautious in your words and carriage, that the most penetrating stranger may not discover, or find out, what is not proper to be intimated; and, if necessary, you are to wave a discourse, and manage it prudently, for the honour of the fraternity.

At home, and in your several neighbourhoods, you are to behave as wise and moral men. You are never to communicate to your families, friends or acquaintance, the private transactions of our different assemblies; but upon every occasion to consult your own honour, and the reputation of the fraternity at large.

You are to study the preservation of health, by avoiding irregularity and intemperance, that your families may not be neglected and injured, or yourselves disabled from attending to your necessary employments in life.

If a stranger apply in the character of a mason, you are cautiously to examine him in such a method as prudence may direct, and agreeably to the forms established among masons; that you may not be imposed upon by an ignorant, false pretender, whom you are to reject with contempt, and beware of giving him any secret hints of knowledge. But if you discover him to be a true and genuine brother, you are to respect him; if he be in want, you are to relieve him, or direct him how he may be relieved; you are to employ him, or

¹ In a lodge, masons meet as members of one family; all prejudices, therefore, on account of religion, country, or private opinion, are removed. In a lodge, masons meet as members of one family; all prejudices, therefore, on account of religion, country, or private opinion, are removed.

recommend him to employment: however, you are never charged to do beyond your ability, only to prefer a poor brother, who is a good man and true, before any other person in the same circumstances.

Finally: These rules you are always to observe and enforce; and also the duties which have been communicated in the lectures; cultivating brotherly love, the foundation and capstone, the cement and glory, of this ancient fraternity; avoiding, upon every occasion, wrangling and quarrelling, slandering and backbiting; not permitting others to slander honest brethren, but defending their characters, and doing them good offices, as far as may be consistent with your honour and safety, but no farther. Hence all may see the benign influence of masonry, as all true masons have done from the beginning of the world, and will do to the end of time.

Amen. So mote it be.

CHAPTER VII.

Prerequisites for a candidate.

By a late regulation, adopted by most of the grand lodges in America, no candidate for the mysteries of masonry can be initiated without having been proposed at a previous meeting of the lodge; in order that no one may be introduced without due inquiry relative to his character and qualifications.

All applications for initiation should be made by petition in writing, signed by the applicant, giving an account of his age, quality, occupation, and place of residence, and that he is desirous of being admitted a member of the fraternity; which petition should be kept on file by the secretary.

Form of a petition to be presented by a candidate for initiation.

“To the worshipful Master, Wardens, and Brethren of ——— Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons.

“The petition of the subscriber respectfully sheweth, that, having long entertained a favourable opinion of your ancient institution, he is desirous of being admitted a member thereof, if found worthy.

“His place of residence is ——— his age ——— years; his occupation ———.

(Signed)

A. B.”

After this petition is read, the candidate must be proposed in form, by a member of the lodge, and the proposition seconded by another member: a committee is then appointed to make inquiry relative to his character and qualifications.

Declaration to be assented to by a candidate, in an adjoining apartment, previous to initiation.

“Do you seriously declare, upon your honour, before these gentlemen,* that, unbiassed by friends, and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, you freely and voluntarily offer yourself a candidate for the mysteries of masonry?” I do.

“Do you seriously declare, upon your honour, before these gentlemen, that you are prompted to solicit the privileges of masonry by a favourable opinion conceived of the institution, a desire of knowledge, and a sincere wish of being serviceable to your fellow creatures?” I do.

“Do you seriously declare, upon your honour, before these gentlemen¹, that you will cheerfully conform to all the ancient established usages and customs of the fraternity?” I do.

After the above declarations are made, and reported to the master, he makes it known to the lodge, in manner following, viz:

“Brethren,

At the request of Mr. A. B. he has been proposed and accepted in regular form; I therefore recommend him as a proper candidate for the mysteries of masonry, and worthy to partake of the privileges of the fraternity; and, in consequence of a declaration of his intentions, voluntarily made, I believe he will cheerfully conform to the rules of the order.”

If there are then no objections made, the candidate is introduced in due form.

Resurse: Webb T.S. (1816). *The Freemasons Monitor of Illustration of Masonry*. In two parts. Salem: Published by Cushing and Appleton. P. 25-31.

¹ The stewards of the lodge are usually present.