

APOLLO TABERNACLE #2
Grand Chapter Of Royal Arch Masons Of Ohio
THE PECULIAR STONE



*A Newly Modified Version by Dedicated Craftsmen of the
Fourth Capitular District – Last Update 05-18-2010
First Rewritten on October 22, 2006*

Cast of Characters:

Adoniram – An enlightened Mark Master. Speaks intelligently and with authority.

Reuben – A Craftsman. He is somewhat skeptical, animated and unrefined.

Enoch – A Craftsman. He is the most philosophical of the craftsmen.

Shadrack – A Craftsman. He is curious and inquisitive. Wants to learn more.

Hiram Abif – One of the three Grand Masters and chief architect of the Temple.

Candidate – A Craftsman. He acts as a devious fellow, looking for a chance to get ahead with little effort. An opportunist who quietly listens and observes carefully to what is going on around him, almost as if lurking in the shadows.

Costumes:

All cast members are clothed as working craftsmen—clothed as a Fellow Craft with brown leather aprons, hats and sandals. Varied hairpieces and beard styles. Hiram Abif wears a red or blue (not purple) king's robe and crown or turban, under which is a Fellow Craft costume with leather apron as the other cast members.

Paraphernalia:

Tables and working tools (square, chisel, mallet) for the three craftsmen and Candidate in the West; a table and same working tools on the Southeast side of the room for Adoniram, the Mark Master. Rough and Perfect Ashlars are placed on the craftsmen's tables. A Perfect Ashlar with a Mark enscribed upon it is placed on Adoniram's table. A table with a Keystone upon it is placed in the Northeast, with a chisel, mallet and compasses (no square). A

trestleboard with a chalk drawing of the Keystone is also placed in the Northeast. The trestleboard is covered with a white sheet.

Setting:

Daytime in the stone quarries near King Solomon's Temple during its construction.

This new adaptation of *The Peculiar Stone* is designed to be presented at meetings of Master Masons as a York Rite membership recruitment tool. However, it can be used for almost any occasion: an education night, ladies night, friendship night, etc. for either Symbolic Lodge, or a York Rite or Scottish Rite body. There are no "secrets," therefore, it can be used in either a tiled or non-tiled meeting.

Hiram Abif is now a character in this dramatization. Therefore, all references to "the substitute" in the original version have been removed since Hiram Abif is still alive. This version is also more generalized for all of York Rite, rather than being Royal Arch exclusive. It includes references to the Cryptic Degrees as part of its purpose to promote the completion of Ancient Craft Masonry through the York Rite.

This version also removes the use of an actual candidate. The "Candidate" character is actually another cast member portraying a Craftsman, who is symbolically representing a candidate for the Mark Master degree.

This short skit should be followed by a brief talk by a well-versed speaker. While the topics will vary according to the audience and nature of the meeting, the talk should include the purpose and symbolism of the York Rite; how it fits into the Masonic system of degrees and directly ties into the Symbolic Degrees; how the degrees improve Masonic education, develop officer and leadership abilities thereby making better *lodge* officers and members; broadens Masonic friendships and associations; York Rite bodies meeting times & locations; upcoming degree work, festivals, etc.; York Rite philanthropies. Depending on the audience, the "interesting ending" (swapping of the stones) may be pointed out and that it is a prelude or segue into the Mark Master degree.

This version was rewritten by Donald W. Owens and John H. Donohoo, with additional input from other members from the Fourth Capitular District.

Act I

Three craftsmen (Reuben, Shadrack and Enoch) along with the “Candidate,” enter and go to the West side of the room where tables are set up with Ashlars (Rough and Perfect) and working tools (Square, Chisel and Mallet). They begin working on the Rough Ashlars. (They can optionally have the paraphernalia on the floor, kneeling down to perform their work, rather than providing tables.)

A few moments later, a Mark Master (Adoniram) and Hiram Abif enter and go to the East side of the room where tables are set up with ashlars, the Keystone, trestleboard and working tools. As they pass, they point to and acknowledge to each other the working craftsmen in the West. The Craftsmen don’t notice or acknowledge their entrance, but rather are busy working. As the two arrive in the East, they confer briefly and then Adoniram takes his place Southeast and Hiram Abif takes his place Northeast. Hiram Abif removes and lays aside his kingly robe and crown, revealing the Fellow Craft’s clothing and leather apron underneath. He then removes and lays aside the white sheet from the trestleboard, revealing the chalk drawing of the Keystone.

They then begin to work, separate from the others. They act very studious and meticulous in their work. During the skit, Hiram Abif occasionally takes the Keystone to the Trestleboard to compare it with the drawing, using the compasses to check dimensions, etc.

After a few moments of labor, Reuben (the most animated, unrefined of the Craftsmen) stops work, wipes away the perspiration with a groan, sets his work aside and says to the other craftsmen and candidate:

Reuben:—We have been working here in the quarries for more than four years now making stones for King Solomon’s Temple. Will we ever finish this work?

Shadrack, Enoch and the Candidate take the opportunity for a short rest. All set their work aside except the Candidate and assume various postures of repose. During the following conversation, Adoniram and Hiram Abif continue their work in the East end of the room.

Reuben:—(Waits a moment for the other craftsmen to stop working) Right angles! Square work! Chip, chip, chip! (If prop is available, a “trick” mallet head flies off the handle.) I’ve worn out a dozen chisels and mallets! I imagine it will be dozens more by the time our labor on the Temple is completed!

Shadrack:—(Shadrack is the most curious and inquisitive of the Craftsmen) It takes a lot of work and a lot of time to produce a Perfect Ashlar (Points to or holds one up); but it’s certainly worth it! Have you seen the Temple? Every sixth day of the week when I go up to the South Gate to present my work, I observe its finished parts. It’s going to be beautiful when completed! Fit for a King; or even for God to dwell in!

Enoch:—(Enoch is the most philosophical of the Craftsmen) Brother Reuben, the results of our labor will be viewed by future generations with wonder and admiration. Look, (Enoch and other craftsmen stand up and Enock points) there are thousands of craftsmen at labor, all working toward the completion of their portion of the work. I would like to participate in other parts of the project so I can see how our work is being used in the construction of the Temple.

Reuben:—I wonder about that too, Enoch. None of us really know how our work is used in the Temple. The Masters gives us a trestleboard with designs upon it and we do our best to produce it, perfect and square. I don't know what's going on in the other parts of the quarry. (As an example of his point, he motions toward Adoniram, the Mark Master) What is that craftsman over there doing?

Shadrack:—I have no idea. Well, I know our work is good because it has never been rejected by the Overseers as unfit for use! Even so, we should always strive to learn more and do better—to improve ourselves in Masonry.

Enoch:—(Focusing in on Adoniram) I've been watching that craftsman over there for quite a while, Shadrack. He seems to be putting a mark of some sort on his stone. I've noticed he has done that with each piece of work he has wrought.

Shadrack:—I have too. (Brief pause, then points to Hiram Abif) Why is our Grand Master Hiram Abif working in the quarries? Isn't that a bit unusual? He's working on a very peculiar stone; a design of which I am unfamiliar.

Reuben:—(Nodding in agreement) I've had my eye on him too. It's not oblong or square like ours. It's a singular piece of work. Look how beautiful it is! I have never seen anything like it before! For what could it possibly be used? He must be on a special assignment from King Solomon.

During next lines, Hiram Abif gives a final check of the Keystone and the drawing on the trestleboard, nods in approval and sets down the Keystone on the table (or on the trestleboard beside the drawing). He then replaces his king's robe and crown or turban and then exits the room, leaving the Keystone behind.

Shadrack:—Seeing him here makes me wonder another thing also. When are we to receive the secret of a Master Mason?

Enoch:—I asked about that one time and was told that all those who are found worthy will receive the secret when the Temple is completed.

Shadrack:—I have also heard that King Solomon, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abif must all be present to give us the secret. What would happen if something were to happen to one of the three Grand Masters?

Enoch:—I don't want to think about that. Look, Grand Master Hiram Abif is gone; and he left that peculiar stone behind! Should one of us take it up to the Temple?

Shadrack:—Not me! He will probably come back for it.

Reuben:—Yeah.

Shadrack:—Let's find out what that Craftsman is doing over there.

Enoch:—Yeah; and let us find out what that mark is all about.

During Shadrack's and Enoch's following discussion, Reuben acts somewhat skeptical about the whole matter, but goes along with it nonetheless. Craftsmen and Candidate walk toward Adoniram. The Candidate, carrying his ashlar, lags slightly behind, snooping around during the discussion. Throughout the entire skit, he is a loner, present in the action, but does not participate directly in the conversations. The other Craftsmen act almost as if he isn't even present.

Shadrack:—Hail, brother! We wondered if you would be so kind as to answer some questions for us. (Adoniram stops work) We've noticed that you are a very skilled craftsman and are curious about the mark you place on your work.

Enoch:—And we are curious about a peculiar stone upon which we have seen our Grand Master Hiram Abif working—a form and shape of which we are unfamiliar. We're interested in gaining additional Light in Masonry in order to be of better service in the building of the Temple. What can you tell us?

Adoniram:—I'm pleased that you're interested and will attempt to answer any questions you may have. A brother should always be eager to assist another in gaining more Light in Masonry.

Shadrack:—(Inquisitively) You appear to be a Master. Are you a Craftsman?

Adoniram:—Brethren, we are all Craftsmen laboring to complete our Temple. You saw our Grand Master Hiram Abif here earlier? Even though he is our Grand Master, he too, is still a craftsman. To answer your question, I am a Royal Arch Mason and a Royal and Select Mason.

Craftsmen look and nod at each other as if they're impressed by this.

Shadrack:—(Very fast and excited) Wow! What is a Royal Arch Mason? Can I become a Royal Arch Mason? What is a Royal and Select Mason? How do you...

Other Craftsmen put hand on Shadrack's shoulder as if trying to contain him.

Adoniram:—Hold on! (Chuckles) One question at a time! First, Royal Arch Masons are a group of Master Masons who have continued their search for more Light; and through hard work and dedication to the Craft have been duly rewarded. There are four degrees conferred in a chapter of Royal Arch Masons—

the Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master and the Royal Arch Mason degree. These degrees build upon your Masonic education and provide more Light, Knowledge and Information to the Master Mason to help him better understand and appreciate the lessons received thus far. The Mark Master degree amplifies upon the Fellow Craft Degree and teaches the importance of industry, fidelity, skill and honesty. The Past Master degree teaches that he who would rule must first learn the lesson of self-discipline and obedience; and that leadership qualities are developed through service to others. The Most Excellent Master degree teaches us how to complete the moral and spiritual edifice within the Temple of our own heart. Finally, in the Royal Arch Mason degree, out of the ruins of a destroyed Temple is found that for which we have so long wrought, symbolizing the ultimate victory over death and the rewards received from the hands of the Supreme Grand Architect of the Universe, as promised to us as a right and key to it by our Most Excellent King Solomon upon the completion of the Temple—the secret of a Master Mason. The Royal Arch degrees are called Capitular Degrees, as they represent the capstone of Freemasonry. The Royal and Select Mason degrees are referred to as the Cryptic Degrees because they allude to the preservation of the secret that may be lost.

Reuben:—(Surprised) I had no idea there was so much to learn in Masonry beyond what I have already been taught.

Enoch:— (Pointing finger as if challenging Adoniram) Are you telling us that we may never receive the Secret of a Master Mason?

Adoniram:—That is correct, you may never receive it. The prophets have told us that this Temple we are now building will at some future time be destroyed. It therefore becomes necessary for us to preserve the secret of a Master Mason for future generations to rediscover and bring to light. That is what the Royal and Select Mason degrees are about—the preservation of the secret.

Shadrack:—Wow! There is so much more for us to learn! (Pointing toward the Keystone) I almost forgot. What is that peculiar stone upon which our Grand Master Hiram Abif was working? Do **you** know?

Adoniram:—What I can tell you is that stone is of great importance and is required to complete the Temple—but more than its physical necessity, it has a moral and spiritual significance.

Enoch:—We were complaining a little while ago that we didn't know what is going on with the building of the Temple. Now, we are finding out that the work of our hands is being used to safeguard a precious and important secret for future generations—a secret that we may never learn, unless we become Royal Arch Masons.

Adoniram nods in concurrence with Enoch's revelation.

Shadrack:—(Pointing toward Adoniram's ashlar) I have another question. Why do you put a mark on all your work?

Candidate looks inquisitively at Adoniram's ashlar and alternately at his own during the following line by Adoniram.

Adoniram:—When you become a Mark Master, you will be given the opportunity to choose your own personal mark to place upon your work. No one will have a mark like yours. It identifies you and relates you to your work. (Pauses and looks around for any other questions)

Enoch:—Let's get back to work. (Pauses and states reflectively:) Brother Adoniram, we thank you for your information. (Pauses for another instance) I have just one last question. How do we become Royal Arch Masons and Royal and Select Masons?

Adoniram:—You just took the first step by asking and wanting to learn more. I have important work at the Temple tonight, so I have to go, but I will be in touch. (Pauses) Thanks for asking. We need more zealous craftsmen like yourselves.

Craftsmen begin to return to their work area in the West by way of the Northeast, passing the work area of Hiram Abif, with the Candidate again quietly lagging behind. Adoniram exits the room along the South side. The Candidate stops at Hiram Abif's work area examining the Keystone and trestleboard, while the others continue on.

Reuben:—(He's a convert now. Musing:) Just think that years from now, people will find stones in the Temple with my mark on it and they'll know that I'm the one who did the square work.

Enoch:—(Playfully pushes Rueben) Hey Rueben, you're not a Mark Master yet!

Reuben:—Maybe not, but I will be!

Shadrack:—Yeah, me too!

Shadrack playfully knocks Reuben's hat off. They both, like children, start to run out, but then Shadrack holds out his arm to stop Reuben.

Shadrack:—Hey! It's the end of the sixth day of the week! We had better get this work up to the Temple for inspection!

Everyone takes up their work and begins to exit. Shadrack and Reuben move ahead and chase each other as they playfully leave the lodge room. The Candidate remains at Hiram Abif's work station, pondering his work and the Keystone.

Enoch:—(Enoch stops, turns back, walks a few steps toward the Candidate, annoyed, says:) Hey, are you coming?

Candidate:—Yeah, I'll be right along.

Enoch turns and exits, shaking his head in disgust.

The Candidate starts to walk out, stops and returns. The candidate picks up the Keystone and compares it with his own work, indicating that he is coveting the Keystone. He deviously looks around checking that no one sees him.

Candidate:—Hey, wait for me!

The Candidate places his ashlar where the Keystone had been. Hiding the Keystone under his arm, he runs to catch up with other craftsmen.

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