

YORK RITE – By Comp. Dean Bert

Why should you become a Royal Arch Mason? The answer is simple we want you to do so! The purpose of my little talk is to make you want to join a Royal Arch Chapter. You might ask, what is in it for me? I tell you, true! It is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to build, strengthen, and enjoy the experience and gratification of an ever-larger and closer relationship outside of the Blue Lodge with outstanding Masons who are Royal Arch Masons.

We believe that you are entitled, as an earnest seeker of truth, to receive all the Light of Ancient Craft Masonry; we believe that you have, to date, received that Light but partially.

Join us, and we will complete the Masonic Story, bringing you to still further Light in Masonry. I want you to stop and think about where you are now in Masonry. The Blue Lodge story is over. Although you now stand as a just and upright Master Mason, you are left with the knowledge that there is a Lost Word. Does this seem right to you? Does it seem right to end the Masonic Story, to end your journey in Masonry, without receiving the Lost Word? There is a gap here in the Story

Join us, and we will fill that gap. We don't want you to feel cheated that you have received Light in Masonry, but partially. You are entitled to receive all the Light that pertains to our Noble Craft.

In the dim past, no Ancient Craft Mason had any reason to feel that he had been cheated by not receiving the Lost Word. He received it, bringing him to full Light. This we do in the Chapter.

This we do to fill the gap, to complete the Masonic Story by giving you the lost word. I need to give you a few historical facts to assure you that we have the legal authority to restore what you were told is lost.

Blue Lodge Masonry is largely based on legends. Royal Arch Masonry came to fruition and evolved in the period of recorded history. What emerged was a mixture of legends and operative facts that transitioned over a period of 800 years into speculative Masonry.

A Chapter of Royal Arch Masons is a collateral body of Masonry. Its four degrees are appendant degrees, belonging as a right to the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, making these degrees neither higher nor lower degrees than the Blue Lodge degrees.

The term Chapter originally meant a meeting or assembly, a name first applied by King Henry the sixth (VI) of England in the statutes of 1425 AD that forbade the assembly of Masons in Chapters. We now meet as Royal Arch Chapters

The four degrees of a Royal Arch Chapter are the perfection and consummation of the three degrees of the Blue Lodge.

What was lost in the first three degrees is restored in the four Chapter degrees. In short, the Chapter degrees complete the Story. The Lost Master's Word is restored in due form and in a most reverential manner, exalting you to the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry

The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch was originally included in the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry.

Therefore, I am bold and safe to say that we have a legal right to exalt you to the Holy and Sublime Degree of the Royal Arch; and that you are legally bound to receive it. You may remember that in receiving your third Degree, you were told to gather instruction from thy youth up

You are, therefore, already obligated to seek the Light that I assure you is contained in Ancient Craft Masonry and explained to you in the four Royal Arch Degrees.

It was the speculative masons who, in 1717, formed the Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons in London, England.

These men, who were not operative masons, are responsible for your present condition, as it was their decision to leave you with a Lost Word. The 1717 Grand Lodge removed the Royal Arch from its Blue Lodge ritual.

This was done in spite of the previously established Grand Lodge of All England, founded in York in 1705 and the first organized Grand Lodge to be formed anywhere in the world. Its subordinate lodges were centered around the Town of York, a former Roman garrison town located 90 miles north of London,

The degrees of these York lodges included the Royal Arch as part of the Third Degree, the part, I said before, that was removed by the 1717 Grand Lodge. This removal of the Royal Arch from the third Degree was in direct violation of the Old Constitutions, Charges, and Articles of Ancient Craft Masonry; and led to the formation, in 1751, of a rival Grand Lodge that included the Royal Arch in its third Degree, adhering to the Old Constitutions, Charges, and Articles of Ancient Craft Masonry.

This Grand Lodge is referred to as "The Ancients," and it dubbed the older 1717 Grand Lodge "The Moderns" for the many innovations and exclusions that distanced its rituals away from Ancient Craft Masonry, excluding, as I said before, the Royal Arch from its third Degree.

These two rival Grand Lodges were united in 1813 into one Grand Lodge called the United Grand Lodge of England. I believe that this union absorbed the 1705 Grand Lodge of All England of York as the Constitution of the 1813 United Grand Lodge included the Constitution of the 1705 York Grand Lodge, stating:

"That pure Ancient Craft Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, those of Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Royal Arch." Thus, for a time was preserved in the Third Degree of the Blue Lodge, all that was included in Ancient Craft Masonry.

I have talked a lot about Ancient Craft Masonry. What is Ancient Craft Masonry?

Ancient Craft Masonry is the cornerstone, the headstone, and the chief stone of Masonry as we find it today. How did Ancient Craft Masonry originate?

It originated in 926 AD in the Town of York, where the great Cathedral of York Minster is.

The 10th Century in England was a troubled time. Finally, in 924 AD, King Athelstan united the rival kingdoms of England, and he became the First King of England. He recognized the value of and need for skilled masons. The Vikings were raiding England at will, burning houses and public buildings that were mostly made of wood. Attempts were made to construct stone buildings that could not be easily burned. The workmanship was crude, and the Craft had no discipline to organize, standardize, and govern their building efforts.

The King was alarmed enough to bring into England skilled masons from abroad to teach English masons. In 926AD, he issued a document called, The Charter of York, which established a General Assembly of Masons in York to meet regularly to educate masons and to promote Order in the Craft by setting rules and standards to govern masons and their building methods. From this charter, given to York in 926AD, Ancient Craft Masonry evolved. The rules and disciplines laid down became the basis for the rituals of Ancient

Craft Masonry. In spite of the Constitution of the 1813 United Grand Lodge that included the Royal Arch as part of the Third Degree, the Royal Arch was, at some time, separated from the third Degree

I know not when, but I think I know why. Someone, probably a speculative mason, decided that the Order of the Royal Arch was too important to be conferred only on Master Masons

A decision was made to restrict the Order of the Royal Arch, still a part of the Third Degree, to Past Masters only. To bring this about, the Order of the Royal Arch, then part of the third Degree, had to be taken out of the third Degree. So it was done. It was left to the existing Chapters to confer the Order; and to open the Degree, once again, to those who were only Master Masons.

Why have I spent all this time on the history of the Royal Arch? I want you to know that the Royal Arch is a most ancient and honorable institution whose members are held in great respect in and

out of Masonry. In conclusion, I have a little more to tell you to convince you to join us. There is no Catechism to memorize. Isn't that enough incentive for you to want to join

Most important of all, we support our Blue Lodges. We do not take anything away from our Blue Lodges. We stand ready to help in any way and to promote cooperation among individual Lodges as we move in circles outside of individual Lodges where we can see the big picture of how Masonry works on a State and National level connecting and uniting individual Lodges into one common mass or band of brothers cooperating together.

We support and fund medical research. We support, educate, and develop you as an individual to do more good work as a just and upright Mason.

We find for you what was lost and teach you how to preserve and put to use what you have found by giving you many opportunities to participate in our ritual work. You are free to select any part or parts to play in our rituals without regard to any station you might be sitting in

We have no rigid progression through our stations. As is your pleasure, you may serve in the east in one Degree and be outside the door with a sword in your hand in the next Degree. You may become part of a degree team that travels to other Chapters. If so, you will become a "traveling man," as ancient craft masons were. The cooperation and fellowship among Chapters will open a new and exciting masonic world outside of the Blue Lodge. You will increase Masonic knowledge.

Our only business in a Chapter is hands-on ritual work. Degrees are conferred in dramatic fashion with many props to foster realism and frequently in historical costumes.

As a candidate, you will portray an operative workman working and traveling in times long gone by. It's a hands-on experience. Meetings are once a month. Dues are nominal.

Join us, learn different parts, gain self-confidence, travel with us, enjoy the fellowship and respect that will come to you as a Royal Arch Mason, and have fun. You will have fun, I guarantee it!