



The Overy Papers

Number 34 - The Square

Adapted from the GL of Manitoba's e-news (author unknown)

Fraternal Greetings Brethren

The Square is one of the most important and significant symbols in Freemasonry. As such, it is proper that its true form should be preserved. French Freemasons have almost universally given it with one leg longer than the other (like the one pictured) thus making it a carpenter's square.



North American Freemasons, while generally preserving the equal length of arms forming the square, have marked its surface with inches. This makes it an instrument for measuring length and breadth, which it is not.



It is simply the 'trying square' of a stone-mason. The angle, of course, is that of ninety degrees and is intended only to test the accuracy of the sides of a stone. In Freemasonry, the square is a symbol of morality. This is its general signification and applied in various ways:

1. It presents itself to the Entered Apprentice as one of the Three Great Lights.
2. To the Fellow Craft as one of his Working-tools.
3. To Masons as the official emblem of the Master of the Lodge.



In England the *G* is missing but they have also marked its surface with inches. As an English mason I had never seen the *G* until I came to Canada and worried members of my Board of Trial when I asked about it.

Everywhere, however, it inculcates the same lesson of morality, of truthfulness and of honesty. So universally accepted is this symbolism that it has gone outside of the Order, and has been found in colloquial language communicating the same idea.

In fact in History it has always had the same meaning. For example in about 481 B.C. Confucius relates that "by the age of 75 could he venture to follow the inclinations of his heart, without fear of transgressing the limits of the Square."

Then about 281 BC Mencius, a follower of Confucius gave us an impressive Masonic phraseology when he relates "The Master mason in teaching his apprentices, makes use of the Square and the Compasses. Ye who are engaged in the pursuit of wisdom must also make use of the Square and the Compasses."

Many years before Christ the bible told us "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you and this is called the principle of acting on the Square."

It is very interesting that the fact that the symbolism of the Square is mentioned equally by so many languages across the world, in which the Square has preserved its original symbolism...as the symbol of morality.

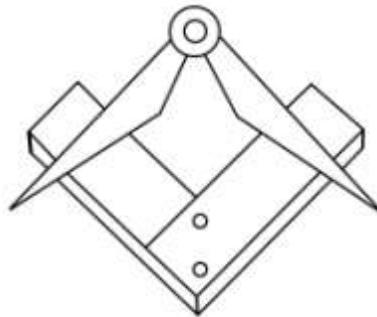
The Square, says Halliwell, means honest, equitable, as in "square dealing." To play upon the square is proverbial for to play honestly and in this sense it was familiar to the early Operative Masons.

In the year 1830, an architect, rebuilding a very ancient bridge called Baal Bridge, near Limerick, in Ireland, found under the foundation-stone an old brass square, much eaten away, containing on its two side surfaces the following inscription, "I. WILL STRIUE. TO. LIUE.--WITH. LOUE. & CARE.--UPON. THE LEUL.--BY. THE. SQUARE., and the date 1517.

You will notice the U being read as V in the inscription this was caused in the changing of the Alphabets from Anglo Saxon Runes through English Latin to Modern English. They had problems coping with differences in the Alphabets. My surname is OVERY and should be OFERY and means over the water ie Ferry, but then I digress, mind you I bet most of you thought it meant EGG, didn't you.

The modern Speculative Freemason will recognize the idea of living on the level and by the square. This discovery proves if proof were necessary, that the familiar idea was borrowed from our Operative Brethren of former days. The square, as a symbol in Speculative Freemasonry, has therefore presented itself from the very beginning of the revival period. In the very earliest catechism of the eighteenth century, of the date of 1725, we find the answer to the question, "How many make a Lodge?" is "God and the Square, with five or seven right or perfect Masons".

God and the Square, religion, and morality, must be present in every Lodge as governing principles. Signs at the early period were to be made by squares, and the Furniture of the Lodge was declared to be the Bible, Compasses, and Square. In all rites and in all languages where Freemasonry has penetrated, the square has preserved its primitive signification as a symbol of morality.



Thank you and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

Bro. Bill Overy

Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.