

“The Lancaster Masonic Mural”

Introduction

In an unassuming brick building next to the square in Lancaster Pennsylvania sits the old Lancaster Masonic Hall. On the ceiling of the main lodge room is a wall to wall mural rich with color, symbolism, and meaning.

The Lancaster Masonic Hall on King Street has a long and storied history. It had been used by numerous Masonic bodies off and on from the late 1700s until 1972. In 1972 they moved to their current location on West Chestnut Street, Lancaster.

After the Masons left, the City of Lancaster retained ownership. Over the next four decades, the city used the building for various purposes. These included some retail spaces and most recently the Lancaster Heritage Museum. The museum displayed various items from Lancaster County’s history including the old Masonic Mural. Unfortunately, the museum could not remain in operation and closed its doors a few years ago. The space occupied by the museum is currently vacant and the city is reviewing its options. The building will likely be sold, leaving the future of the mural in flux.

It is the purpose of this paper to document the mural and its symbols for future generations of Masons. It is my hope that regardless of the mural’s future, its lessons will continue.

A Brief History

In the early 1930s, the brothers of Lodge No. 43 decided they needed to upgrade the furnishings in their lodge room. The lodge appointed a committee with a mandate to decorate the room. The decorations were to meet the approval of the members and demand the admiration of every person. To accomplish their task the committee looked for inspiration and examples. One of the places they visited was the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania's Masonic Temple in Philadelphia. From that visit they derived the needed inspiration and soon hired J. Bagattin of Philadelphia. Mr. Bagattin's was paid \$4,200 to complete the decoration.

The mural was completed in 1933 as part of the decoration campaign. The artist was G. L. Zambon of New York. The painting includes a ceiling mural, a ceiling wrap, and a few wall decorations. The theme of the painting was Masonry Triumphant.

The mural was commissioned to inspire and teach. Candidates were no doubt impressed by the painting. Their own learning and growth was amplified by the pictures and symbols on display for every lodge meeting. The mural also served as a reminder to older members of the lodge. It kept the lessons fresh in their minds.

The space as it looked for lodge is shown below:



Symbols Around the Lodge Hall

This section of the paper covers the smaller paintings. These smaller paintings are on the ceiling wrap and include various Masonic symbols. The symbols and their meanings are detailed below.

All pictures in this paper are of the parts of the mural.

At the east end of the Lodge room are two paintings.

The painting shown in this picture commemorates the issuance of Lodge No. 43's original Warrant. The Warrant signifies permission of the brothers to form a lodge and have a meeting.



The Warrant must be on display at all lodge meetings.¹

In this case The Provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania issued the Warrant. The Provincial Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania operated under the authority of the Ancients Grand Lodge of England until September 26, 1786. On that day the current Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania was established.²

On October 16, 1786, the newly formed Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania voted to issue all existing lodges new warrants. All lodges, including 43, were required to surrender the old provincial warrants in exchange for



¹ Carpenter, William A., The Exemplar A Guide to a Mason's Actions, 1985, pg. 59

² www.wikipedia.com, "Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania", July 1, 2014

the new charter. The new charter was issued to Lodge No. 43 on July 14, 1787.³ The painting shown on the previous page commemorates this event the issuance of the new charter.

The tools pictured to the right are the working tools of a Royal Arch Mason. They are the shovel, pickax and crow. As with all the other tools in Freemasonry, they have operative and symbolic uses. Through the symbolic use of these tools a Freemason is taught to better prepare his own temple for life after death.

Shovel, Pick Ax, Crow



The Shovel teaches a Mason to remove the rubbish of passions and prejudices.⁴

The Pickax teaches a Mason to loosen from his heart the hold of evil habits.⁵

The Crow is used by operative masons to scribe circles; every part of every circle is equal distant from the center. It reminds a Mason that every creature is equally near and equally dear to God. ⁶

³ Welchans, George R., Hershey, Andrew H, Frain, Samuel R., 175 Years of Ancient York Masonry in the Western World 1785 – 1960. History of Lodge No. 43, F.&A.M., Lancaster, PA 1961, p. 32

⁴ www.phoenixmasonry.org, "Glossary", 1999-2014

⁵ www.phoenixmasonry.org, "Glossary", 1999-2014

⁶ Duncan, Malcom C., Duncan's Ritual of Freemasonry, Random House, 1976, p 265.

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Shown on the right is the cross and crown. It is the symbol of the Knights Templar Grand Commandries.⁷

Individually, both symbols have significant meanings. The crown is a symbol of authority. The cross has different meanings depending on use, region and religion. For a Knight Templar, it is the symbol of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Combined they represent the reward waiting all good men after death. The cross secures it and the crown assures the reward will be there.⁸

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This picture shows an hour glass, scythe and wings. They all relate to death. These serve to remind a Mason that his time on earth is short. A Mason needs to make productive use of that time in both his efforts to prepare his own temple and his relief of others.

The Hour Glass – Reminds a Mason that time that is lost is lost forever. Time is a commodity that can never be

Crown and Cross



Hour glass, Scythe, Wings



⁷ www.pagrandcommandery.org, "Home page", 2010-2013

⁸ www.travelingtemplar.com, "The Crown and the Cross", September 9, 2012

recovered.⁹ He should use each moment to the fullest extent possible. A Mason should note that hourglass is also reversible. This reminds him of the reversal of death and the promise of life after death.

The Scythe - A symbol of Death itself, it reminds a Mason that death is ever present.

Wings – These are symbolic of the wings of an angel. They teach a Mason that there is life after death. They also remind a Mason of the immortality of the his soul.

Taken together the tree symbols teach a Mason that time is short and death is certain. However, if a Mason is a man of good character, works to improve is temple, and serves his fellow man, there is life after death.¹⁰

The painting shown here is located at the south side of the hall above the station of the Junior Warden. The picture is of an operative mason's plumb. The plumb is used in Freemasonry as a working tool and as the jewel of the Junior Warden.



As a working tool of a Freemason, the plumb symbolically teaches him to walk upright in our duties before God and man. A Mason should strive to excel in all worthy efforts especially the development of his own temple.¹¹

⁹ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 79

¹⁰ www.symboldictionary.net, "Symbols of Death and Time"

— The level shown to the right is located in the west over the Senior Warden's station. It is the jewel of the Senior Warden.

As a working tool of a Freemason, the level teaches a Mason that we all travel along the level of time toward that undiscovered country from which no man returns.

The level symbolizes equality, labor and opportunity. It urges us to join with others and assist each other as we travel the level of time. ¹²

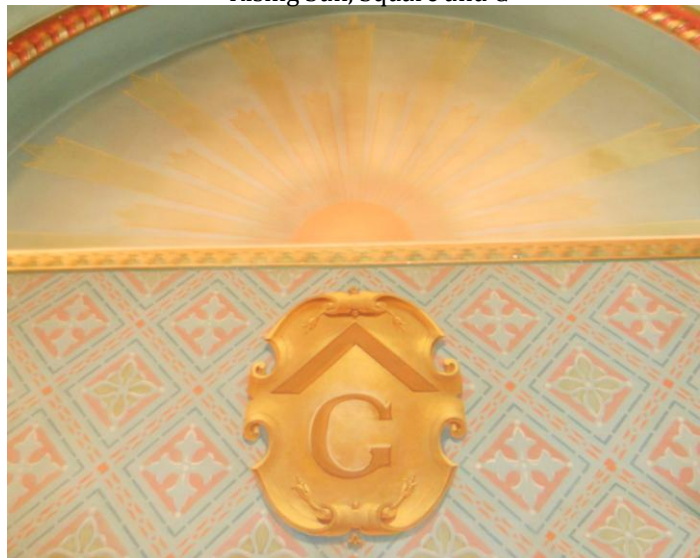
— The rising sun, square and G are in the east above the station of the Worshipful Master. They are shown in the picture to the right.

The square has numerous meanings in Lodge. It is one of the Great Lights, the symbol of the Worshipful Master and a working tool of a Fellowcraft Mason.

Level



Rising Sun, Square and G



¹¹ Carpenter, William A., The Exemplar A Guide to a Mason's Actions, 1985, pg. 76

¹² Carpenter, William A., The Exemplar A Guide to a Mason's Actions, 1985, pg. 73

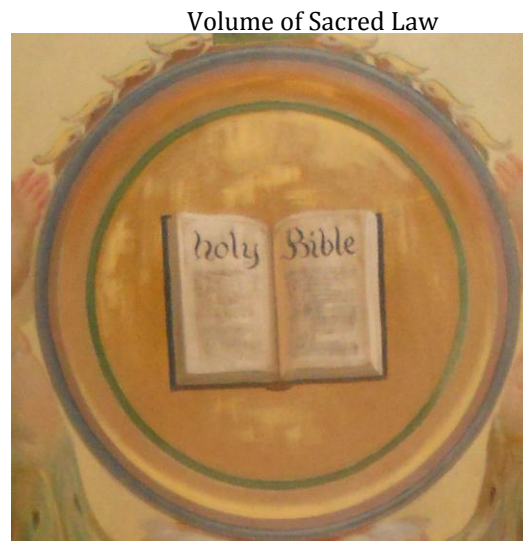
As a working tool of a Freemason, the square teaches a Mason to square his actions with the square of virtue; to act morally. This teaching has found its way into common language via statements like “Act on the square” and “get things squared away”.

The rising sun also has several different meanings. The sun is symbolized by one of the lesser lights. It reminds a Mason of the intellectual light of which he is to be in constant search.¹³ The sun is a symbolic reminder that the Worshipful Master should open and rule his lodge with the same regularity as the rising sun.

The letter G has always been an important symbol of Freemasonry. Geometry forms the basis of Freemasonry, as a result the letter G is often identified with Geometry. A Mason is also taught to relate the Letter G to God.¹⁴

The Volume of Sacred Law is one of the three Great Lights. It sits open on the altar for all lodge meetings. A Mason is taught to seek the truth contained in the volume.

Each religion has its own volume. The Holy Bible shown in this picture is the Volume of Sacred Law for both Christianity and Judaism.



Additionally, the Volume of Sacred Law symbolizes Truth, Faith, and Hope.¹⁵

¹³ www.phoenixmasonry.org, "Glossary", 1999 - 2014

¹⁴ Carpenter, William A., *The Exemplar A Guide to a Mason's Actions*, 1985, pg. 73

¹⁵ Roberts, Allen E., *The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism*, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 22-23

— The pot holding incense appears above a number of the other symbols. It is a symbol of sacrifice. It reminds a Mason that he needs to sacrifice his pleasures, time and possessions for the betterment of his fellow man.¹⁶

Additionally, the pot of incense also reminds a Mason to keep his heart pure. He should always be honest, sincere and genuine in his dealings.¹⁷

The picture shown above is typical of several paintings. It's positioning above other symbols reminds a Mason that each of the lessons taught by the attached symbol must be accompanied by honesty and sincerity.

— The Ark of the Covenant (shown to the right) was the reason for the construction of Solomon's temple. When the temple was completed, the Ark was placed in the Sanctum Sanctorum.

Because the Ark of the Covenant

Incense



Ark of the Covenant



¹⁶ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 72

¹⁷ www.themasonictrowel.com, "Pot of Incense", March 22, 2014

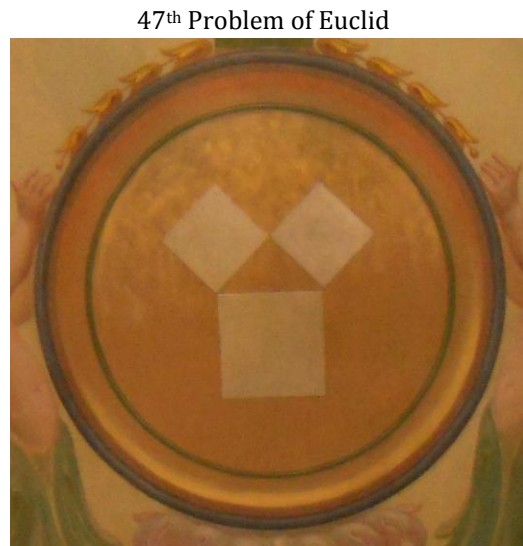
contained a number of holy items, including the Ten Commandments, it was believed that the presence of God was more prevalent wherever the Ark was located.

In a Masonic Lodge, the altar and the Greater Lights represent the Ark, and the presence of God.¹⁸

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The painting to the right depicts the principles of the 47th problem of Euclid.

The 47th problem of Euclid was an important part of an operative mason's work. Through the application of the 47th problem, an operative mason was able to prove squares. Its application is the basis of navigation and geometry.



The presence of the 47th problem of Euclid in lodge reminds a Mason of Pythagoras. Pythagoras was a teacher and scientist. He is credited with a number of mathematical discoveries. A Mason is to follow Pythagoras's example in persevering in his search for truth.¹⁹

In Pennsylvania, the 47th problem is also the jewel of a Past Master.

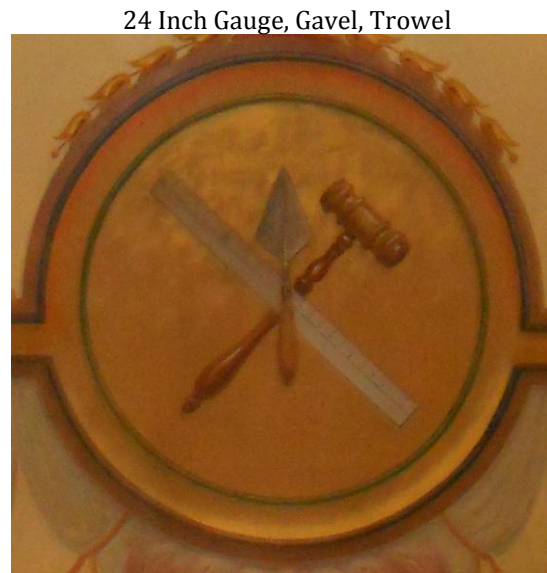
¹⁸ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 71

¹⁹ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 76-78

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The twenty-four inch gauge, common gavel, and trowel are shown to the right. They are some of the working tools of both an operative mason and a Freemason.

The trowel is the working tool of a Master Mason, it teaches him to spread the cement of brotherly love and affection. Through spreading love and affection the fraternity becomes unified.²⁰



The twenty-four inch gauge and the common gavel are the working tools of an Entered Apprentice Mason. The gauge teaches a Mason to divide the 24 hours of the day into three equal parts; 8 hours for rest, 8 hours for work, and 8 hours for relief of his fellow man and devotion to God.

The common gavel teaches a Mason to knock off the rough corners of his life. Thus better fitting themselves as living stones in the Eternal Building in the heavens.²¹

Combined they remind a mason to continually work to improve themselves, the fraternity, and the world.

²⁰ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 65

²¹ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 37-38

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The letter in the ring (pictured to the right) is the Hebrew letter Yod.

Qabalists believe the letter is an emblem of divine power. It is a symbol of that divine power creating in its own image.²²

In symbolic Freemasonry the letter G has replaced Yod. In this picture



Yod is encased in an equilateral triangle. The triangle is symbolic of the three attributes of the Great Architect of the Universe – Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Omniscience.

This painting is of ring of a 14th degree mason. A Scottish Right Mason of the 14th degree is entitled to wear this ring. The circular nature of the ring symbolizes unending commitment and loyalty.²³

Taken together the painting reminds a Mason to be loyal to God.

²² Case, Paul F., The Masonic Letter G, Macoy Publishing, Richmond, VA, 1981, p67

²³ www.phoenixfreemasonry.org, "Masonic Pyramid w/ 14 Degree Scottish Rite Ring Paperweight", 1999-2014

— This painting depicts a keystone which is a central symbol of York Rite Freemasonry.

According to legend, the purpose of the keystone was lost with the death of Hiram Abiff. The keystone was thrown out as rubbish until King Solomon rediscovered its use.

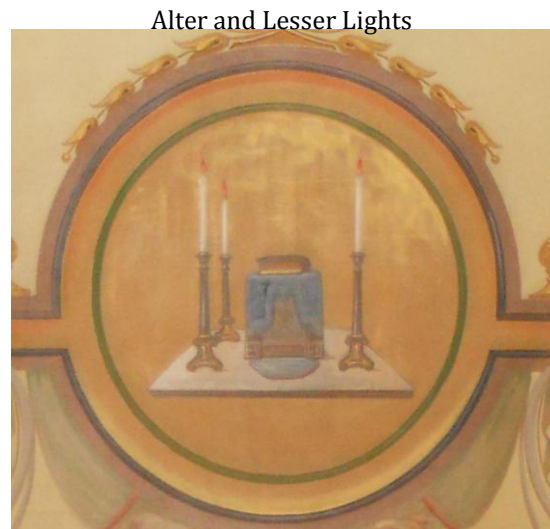


In this picture the Royal Arch Keystone inscribed with HTWSSTKS. These letters stand for “Hiram The Widows Son Sent To King Solomon”.²⁴

To an operative mason, the Keystone is the last piece of an arch. Similarly, a Freemason is taught to never stop building his own temple. By constantly building his own temple, he will have a strong foundation. Ultimately the temple is only completed by death, but a good foundation will not be destroyed by death.²⁵

— The picture to the right should be familiar to all Masons. It shows the lesser lights and the altar where every Mason knelt for his oath and obligation.

The lesser lights are configured in a triangular shape around the altar. As



²⁴ www.symboldictionary.net, “Keystone”

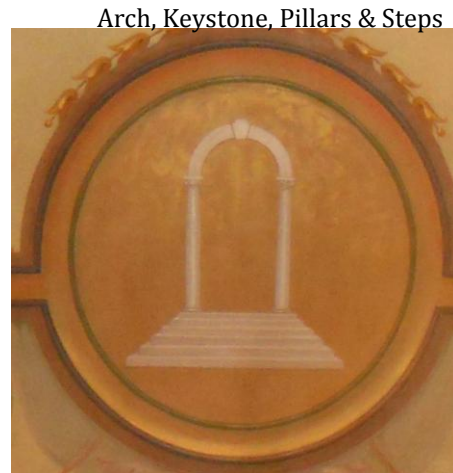
²⁵ www.royalarchmasonsAlberta.com, “The Symbol of the Keystone”, 2009

stated above, the triangle symbolizes the presence of God.²⁶

The lesser lights or burning tapers themselves represent the Worshipful Master, the Sun and the Moon. The sun governs the day, the moon governs the night, and the Worshipful Master governs his Lodge.²⁷

The arch, keystone, two pillars, and steps shown in this painting each have different meanings.

Taken together they teach a Mason they are always in the process of transition and change. Transitioning from his current earthly life, to one after death. We will eventually pass through the final arch to meet our creator. ²⁸



This is a painting of The All Seeing Eye. The All Seeing Eye has been a symbol of God for almost all of history.

It reminds a Mason that the Great Architect of the universe sees all, knows all, and controls all. ²⁹



²⁶ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 64

²⁷ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 32

²⁸ www.travelingtemplar.com, "Symbols of Royal Arch Masonry – Part 2", 2012

²⁹ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 75-76

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The seven branch candle stick shown in this painting has several meanings. It is a central piece of furniture in Royal Arch Lodge and is a reminder of the candlestick that Moses made for use in the Tabernacle.

In the Jewish faith it is also symbolic of the planets. The sun is the central candle and the six known planets revolving around the sun.³⁰ At the time there were only six known planets, the others were added through the use of new technology.

The Seven Branch Candlestick reminds a free mason of the seven deadly sins. The lights on top of the candle represent the Holy spirit that keeps watch over a just man and keeps him from falling.³¹

Seven Branch Candlestick



³⁰ Hunt, C. C., The Seven Branched Candlestick, 1924

³¹ Waite, Arthur E, A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry. Vol. 1, Cosimo, Inc, 2001, p 229

The painting to the right shows a Brass Pot with fire.

The Brass Altar of Burnt offering was used in the tabernacle Temple to reconcile man and God.³²

Additionally, a bowl of fire is a symbol of divinity. Some believe the original right hand column (Jachin) was topped with a bowl of fire to represent the Divine. Over time this was changed to a celestial Globe.³³

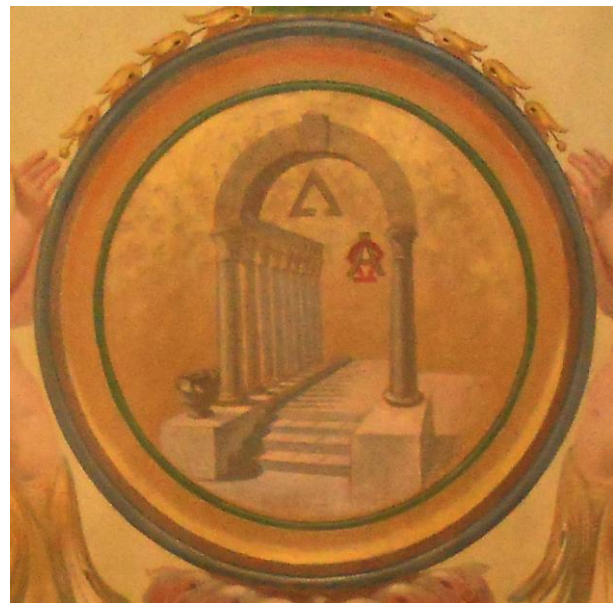
Burnt Offering



This painting includes several different symbols, each combining to remind a Freemason that he is not alone in his travels.

The broken triangle represents life. In all aspects of life, some parts must go while others stay. The equilateral triangle represents our Three Grand Masters.³⁴ The missing side represents the death of Hiram Abiff.

Arch, Stairs, Columns



³² www.phoenixmasonry.org, "Biblical History of King Solomon's Temple", 1999 - 2014

³³ Hall, Manly P., Secret Teachings of All Ages, 2005, p 262

³⁴ www.mastermason.com, "York Rite"

Three steps are representative of the Junior Warden, Senior Warden and the Worshipful Master. These steps remind you that you are not journeying alone.³⁵

Behind the arch are seven columns. The number seven has several different Masonic meanings. Most obvious is the days of the week, seven deadly sins, and the number of years it took to build the temple. The seven columns here remind a Mason of the seven Liberal Arts; Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.³⁶

Taken together, this picture reminds a Mason, as he journeys through life he is not alone. Everyone, including Hiram Abiff, as crossed over to the temple not built with hands. Along the journey a Mason should study the seven liberal arts. He should learn their lessons and be prepared for when the journey ends.

³⁵ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 51

³⁶ Roberts, Allen E., The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism, Richmond, VA, Macoy Publishing, 1974, p. 53

The Main Painting On the Ceiling

Primary Mural

To the right is the primary painting on the ceiling. The artist called it “Masonry Triumphant”.

On the lower cloud Father Time records the good deeds of Freemasonry. Father Time also reminds a Mason that his time on earth is short, and to make the most of it.

On the next cloud sits Justice and Perseverance. Through perseverance a Mason

can accomplish anything. Justice reminds a Mason that he should always seek to do the right thing.

On the next cloud sits Freemasonry. Not shown in this picture but at the top of the picture is an eagle. The eagle is acting as Freemasonry’s guide.



Conclusion

It is no secret that Freemasonry seeks to teach lessons through symbols, allegory and legends. The Brothers of Lodge No. 43, Lancaster Pennsylvania wanted a lodge hall that exemplified these lessons. In the early 1930s, they commissioned a painting and accomplished their goal. For almost 40 years the Lodge Mural taught lessons, guided candidates, and provided inspiration.

The symbols of the mural are a combination from various different Masonic bodies and degrees. It is likely that a Mason who did not recognize one of the symbols would be prompted to ask a fellow Mason. This conversation undoubtedly lead the inquiring Mason to further instruction and more degrees.

Acknowledgements

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