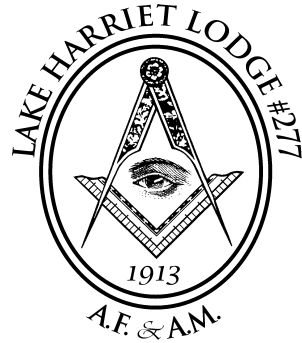


Table Lodge Program

Lake Harriet Lodge #277

A.F. & A.M. of Minnesota

Adopted in this form, 2001



This document contains the order of events, forms and language relative to hosting a Table Lodge in traditional fashion. This ceremony is in keeping with the ancient customs handed down to us from military lodges of yore. As written, it includes notes for the service of a formal dinner, time for awards and speech making. It may be appended to include an Entered Apprentice degree should the host lodge desire to perform such additional and ceremonious labors. Vivat!

The script for the evening begins after this page. Following the script is a 4-page handout for Table Lodge attendees that will explain many of the terms used in this traditional program along with an informative essay. Finally, a dining room layout plan is included which you may use in preparing the room.

Thanks to Minneapolis #19, Aurora Lodge #100, Ark Lodge #176 & Joppa #300 for compiling original material for this document.

☞ Order of Events

- Social Hour
- Opening of Table Lodge
- Charge to the Brethren at the Opening
- Explanation of the Ceremony of the Seven Toasts
- Practice
- Introductions
- Dinner and Seven Toasts
- Address by the Grand Master, or Designate
- Awards
- Closing of Table Lodge

🌀 Overview for Timing of the Evening

This program may be amended to fit the needs of the lodge - this is an example. The toasts are listed here by title, and complete scripts follow on subsequent pages.

**Opening Ceremony, through Explanation of the Ceremony of the Seven Toasts,
Practice and Introduction of guests
Order Table Captains to monitor cannons of guests
Serve the salads (*Advise guests when they may begin eating*)**

1. To Our Country W. Master

Pledge of Allegiance (*If not done after the Charge, offer the Pledge here*)

Song: “God Bless America” or National Anthem, optional

Clear salad plates

JW – Offer a two-minute summary of the successes of the year

2. To the Founders of Ancient Craft Masonry Jr. Warden

Serve main course

Chaplain – Offer a recitation of the names of any brothers deceased this year

3. To the Memory of our Departed Brethren Chaplain

Grand Master’s or Grand Officer’s remarks

4. To Our Grand Master Grand Officer or Past Grand Officer
(Note, the Grand Master DOES NOT propose toast to himself)

Clear dinner plates

Past Master – Offers congratulations to the officers & volunteers on the year

5. To Our Lodge A Past Master

Serve dessert and coffee

Sr. Warden – Recognize new Life Members, 10-, 25- and 40-year awards

6. To Our Visiting Brethren Sr. Warden
(Note, the Visiting Brethren toast each other, but not themselves individually)

Master – With Grand Lodge Officer(s), recognize 50-year members or higher, and optionally, those earning the Master’s Tip ‘o the Hat, Mason of the Year, and Hiram Award winners

7. To All Freemasons Wheresoever Dispersed Tyler or Secretary

Clear desert plates

Recognize setup crew, servers & dinner crew, thank participants

Close the Table Lodge

Song: “Auld Lang Syne”

🌀 Social Hour

Serve appetizers etc., prior to start while the officers welcome and attend to guests as they arrive. Seating should be assigned with an officer present at each table.

🌀 The Opening

W. Master *(Rises and raps once. Raps hereafter noted by *)*
Brethren, it has been the custom among the Fraternity of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, at an appropriate time in the activities of the Lodge, to adjourn to the banquet room and there open a Table Lodge for the purpose of celebrating the traditional “Ceremony of the Seven Toasts.” In accordance with this ancient custom, my Brethren, will you please rise as our Chaplain delivers the invocation? * * *

Chaplain Let us pray. Most holy and glorious Lord God, we reverently ask thy blessing as we gather around this festive table in the spirit of universal friendship and brotherhood. We have assembled here together to rededicate ourselves to the principles and ideals of our beloved Fraternity. As each of us endeavors to erect our spiritual temple agreeably to thy laws, may the beauty of Thy light give us strength to build with wisdom. Amen.

Brethren So mote it be!

W. Master Brethren, please be seated. *(WM remains standing)*

Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, be pleased to satisfy yourselves that all participating on the columns of the North and South are Entered Apprentice Masons. *(They do so by observation.)*

S. Warden W.M., all on the column of the North are Masons.

J. Warden W.M., all on the column of the South are Masons.

W. Master Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, be pleased to invite our Brethren on the columns of the North and South to assist us in opening a Table Lodge of Entered Apprentices.

S. Warden Brethren in the North, assist us in opening a table Lodge of Entered Apprentices.

J. Warden Brethren in the South, assist us in opening a table Lodge of Entered Apprentices.

W. Master Brother Senior Warden, are you a Mason?

S. Warden All my Brethren know me as such.

W. Master Why are we met together?

S. Warden To erect temples to virtue and dig dungeons for vices.

W. Master How are the temples erected?

S. Warden By the blessing of God.

W. Master To whom are they dedicated?

S. Warden To the Holy Saints John: our brothers John the Baptist and John the Evangelist.

W. Master How long must we work?

S. Warden From Midday to Midnight.

W. Master What is the hour?

S. Warden Almost Midday, or high twelve, Worshipful Master.

W. Master * * * Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, in consideration of the hour, inform our Brethren on the columns of the North and South that a Table Lodge of Entered Apprentices is now open, and we are about to begin our work in the usual manner.

S. Warden Brethren on the column of the North, a Table Lodge of Entered Apprentices is now open, and we are about to begin our work in the usual manner.

J. Warden Brethren on the column of the South, a Table Lodge of Entered Apprentices is now open, and we are about to begin our work in the usual manner.

☞ Charge to the Brethren at the Opening

W. Master Brethren, in this solemn hour, I charge each of you to rededicate yourself as a Freemason to the noble and glorious purpose of bringing light to dispel darkness... To the service of Him in whom you put your trust... To the precepts set forth in that Great Light of Masonry, the Rule and Guide of your faith. I charge you to keep your apron an emblem of innocence, unspotted before the world... To practice that most excellent gift of charity... To make constant and proper use of the Square of Virtue, the Level of Equality, and the Plumb of Rectitude.

Craftsmen in the quarries, I summon you to greater loyalty to your lodge and your Fraternity. To integrity in all your dealings with your fellow men... To study, to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed.

Guard against vain innovations, my Brethren. Preserve the Landmarks. Maintain the reputation of our Fraternity. Aid and succor the needy. Remember your brother's welfare. Be circumspect always in speech. Assist and support him who is falling. Whisper good counsel in the ear of him who needs encouragement.

Let each of us make use of the Trowel to spread the cement of brotherly love and affection. Let us labor with the Common Gavel that these Rough Ashlars may become Perfect Ashlars. And finally, my Brethren, remembering how once you stood in the Northeast corner a just and upright Mason, I give it you strictly in charge ever to walk and act as such. Amen.

Brethren So mote it be!

W. Master *(Here, or as otherwise appropriate.)* Now Brethren, join with me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.
(Flags brought up and Pledge Given)

* * *

☞ Ceremony of the Seven Toasts

W. Master *(Briefly explain the history of the Ceremony and the order of toasts to be given throughout the evening. You may use the section entitled "History and Protocol of the Table Lodge" to prepare your remarks, but it is by no means necessary to read it in its entirety to your guests. Some may have participated in such an event before; others may not need much in the way of introduction to the ceremony and will prefer to become familiar with it over the course of the evening. Provide reprints of the History section for those who wish to read further.)*

(It will be especially useful to your guests to describe the Manner of Prayer used by Masons, the nature of a Toasting Cannon, and the curious way in which early lodges adopted the Table Lodge as a common custom for their meetings, borrowing it from ancient military rituals. Such intertwining was natural -- it is reported all of Brother Geo. Washington's generals were Freemasons, men he could trust.)

(The following are the traditional speakers for each toast. You may substitute toast-givers as necessary, given the audience, if doing so will make the toast more meaningful.)

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | To Our Country | W. Master |
| 2. | To the Founders of Ancient Craft Masonry | Jr. Warden |
| 3. | To the Memory of our Dear Departed Brethren | Chaplain |
| 4. | To Our Grand Master | Grand Officer or Past Grand Officer |
| 5. | To Our Lodge | Past Master |
| 6. | To Our Visiting Brethren | Sr. Warden |
| 7. | To All Freemasons Wheresoever Dispersed | Tyler |

🔗 Practice

W. Master

Brethren, we will now rehearse the work of the evening with a practice toast. *(If you have not already done so, explain the basic terms as found on the History & Protocol sheet.)*

Charge and align your cannons. *(Cannons filled and aligned.)*
Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire.

(Done by inspection)

S. Warden

All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.

J. Warden

All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.

W. Master

And they are charged and aligned in the East.

At this point, honored guests, one of the seven toasts of the evening will be offered, to which you will respond by repeating it. Let's try it:

Brethren, To This Practice! *(Repeat in unison, To This Practice!)*

Fire! And you'll drink one third. *(Drinks one third.)*

Good fire! And you'll drink a second third. *(Drinks again.)*

Sharpest of fire! Now, drink the last of it. *(Drains cannon.)*

Brethren, taking your time from me...

(All recite in a smart pace, and point forward, left and right with empty cannon in right hands; first above in the area of the neck, then in the area of the chest, and the third time in the area of the waist.)

Brethren

Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!

W. Master Return, arms! *(Cannons returned sharply to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!

Brethren *(Grand Honors, with great enthusiasm.)*
Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!

W. Master At ease, Brethren.

☞ Introduction of Guests

- *Compliment the guests on the practice session.*
- *Remind them that they are in the care of a lodge officer at their table, should they require any assistance. These officers will serve as wine stewards for the evening.*
- *Introduce the Wardens, who should pass out the Table Lodge “Explanation of Terms” sheet to those who wish to see it.*
- *Introduce the head table, beginning with the ranking Grand Lodge officer, if present, and working in order, introduce from your left to your right.*
- *Introduce yourself last.*

☞ Dinner, and Order of Service

At this juncture, signal the kitchen staff to begin dinner service. They should have a copy of this entire program to help in timing courses. Toasts will be interspersed during the dinner -- the more courses served, the better. At appropriate junctures, you will interrupt dinner to begin or resume the Ceremony of the Seven Toasts. Also, intersperse the awards and speeches between the evening’s toasts. It is preferable that awards and speeches come later in the program, in order to close out on a “high note”. You can construct a program based on the overview and sample agenda found at the beginning of this document.

☞ First Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled and aligned)*.
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to our Country. I claim for myself the words of command. Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
- Brethren**, I give you our Country, the United States of America. Our wish is for its honor and prosperity in peace, and for its continued sovereignty, independence, and freedom. We pledge anew our undivided loyalty. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- Present, arms!
- With me my Brethren, to Our Country!**
- Brethren** To Our Country! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

☞ Second Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled and aligned)*.
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to the Founders of Ancient Craft Masonry.
Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
You will now attend to the words of our Junior Warden.
- J. Warden** **B**rethren, I give you the Ancient and Gentle Craft of Freemasonry, and the memory if its founders. The mystic tie unites us in a brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- W. Master** Present, arms!
- J. Warden** **W**ith me my Brethren, to Founders of Ancient Craft Masonry!
- Brethren** To Founders of Ancient Craft Masonry! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

☞ Third Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled, etc.)*
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to the Memory of our Departed Brethren.
Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
You will now attend to the words of our Chaplain.
- Chaplain** **Brethren**, I give you the Memory of our Departed Brethren. Their labors here on earth have ended, but we shall always cherish the memory of their fidelity, kindness, and brotherly love. May their contribution to our brotherhood inspire us to more earnestly dedicate our lives to the service of our fellow men. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- W. Master** Present, arms!
- Chaplain** **With me my Brethren**, to the Memory of our Departed Brethren!
- Brethren** To the Memory of our Departed Brethren! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

🍷 Fourth Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled, etc.)*
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to the Grand Master. Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
You will now attend to the words of our Grand Officer.
- Gr. Officer** Brethren, I give you the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Minnesota, symbol of our continuing relationship to an Ancient Craft and to the Grand Lodge of which he has been called to preside. May he lead and deliberate with wisdom, decide with justice, and plan with a vision worthy of the great Fraternity he serves. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- W. Master** Present, arms!
- Gr. Officer** With me my Brethren, to Our Grand Master!
- Brethren** To Our Grand Master! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

🍷 Fifth Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled, etc.)*
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to Our Lodge. Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
You will now attend to the words of our Past Master.
- Past Master** **B**rethren, I give you our precious Lodge, so close to the hearts of its members and to the brotherhood that has existed through the years. It has commanded an interest and loyalty unshaken by adversity and unspoiled by prosperity. May we all ever reflect its integrity and stability of principle in our daily lives. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- W. Master** Present, arms!
- Past Master** **W**ith me my Brethren, to Our Lodge!
- Brethren** **T**o Our Lodge! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

☞ Sixth Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled, etc.)*
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to Our Visiting Brethren. Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)* Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)* You will now attend to the words of our Senior Warden.
- S. Warden** Brethren, I give you our Masonic guests of the evening who will not doubt the cordial hospitality of our welcome. May this occasion persuade them to share again in our hospitality whenever circumstances permit. I invite you to deliver your fire as handsomely as possible.
- W. Master** Present, arms!
- S. Warden** With me my Brethren, to Our Visiting Brethren!
- Brethren** To Our Visiting Brethren! *(Repeat in unison)*
- W. Master** Fire! *(Drinks one third.)*
Good fire! *(Drinks again.)*
Sharpest of fire! *(Drains cannon.)*
Brethren, taking your time from me...
- Brethren** Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!
- W. Master** Return, arms! *(Cannons returned to the firing line.)*
“Three times three,” Brethren!
- Brethren** Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
- W. Master** At ease, Brethren.

☞ Seventh Toast

- W. Master** *(Rises)* Brethren, charge and align your cannons *(glasses filled, etc.)*
- Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, *(Wardens rise)*, you will see that all cannons on the columns of the North and South are properly charged and aligned for fire. *(Done by inspection.)*
- S. Warden** All cannons on the column of the North are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- J. Warden** All cannons on the column of the South are properly charged and aligned for fire.
- W. Master** And they are charged and aligned in the East. We will now fire our volley to All Freemasons, Wheresoever Dispersed. Attention, my Brethren! *(All rise)*
Carry, arms! *(Raise glasses from firing line to chest.)*
You will now attend to the words of our Tyler.
- Tyler**
(Note: Brethren may join speaker in the last line of each stanza.)
- Then to fire our final volley tonight, our cannons freely discharge.
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.
- The Mason's social brotherhood, around the festive board,
Reveals a truth more precious far, than the miser's hoard.
We freely share the bounteous gifts, that generous hearts contain,
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.
- We meet as Masons free and true, and when our work is done,
The merry song and social glass, is not unduly won.
And only at our farewell pledge, is pleasure mixed with pain,
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.
- Amidst our mirth we drink, to all poor Masons o'er the earth,
On every shore our flag of love, is gloriously unfurled.
We prize each brother near or far, who bears no moral stain,
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.
- We Masons prize that noble truth, the Scottish peasant told,
That rank is but a guinea stamp, the man himself the gold.
We meet the rich and poor alike, the equal right maintain,
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again.
- Dear Brethren of the mystic tie, the night is waning fast,
Our work is done, our feast is o'er, this toast must be our last.
Good-night to all, once more good-night, again that farewell strain,
Happy to meet, sorry to part, happy to meet again. *(end of poem)*

W. Master Present, arms!

Tyler With me, my Brethren, to All Freemasons, Wheresoever Dispersed!

Brethren To All Freemasons, Wheresoever Dispersed! (*Repeat in unison*)

W. Master Fire! (*Drinks one third.*)
Good fire! (*Drinks again.*)
Sharpest of fire! (*Drains cannon.*)
Brethren, taking your time from me...

Brethren Point, left, right! - Point, left, right! - Point, left, right!

W. Master Return, arms! (*Cannons returned to the firing line.*)
“Three times three,” Brethren!

Brethren Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!

W. Master At ease, Brethren.

☞ The Closing

W. Master Brethren, our work is now completed. We will close this Table Lodge in the usual manner. Brother Chaplain, you will lead us in prayer.

Chaplain Almighty and Eternal God, we thank Thee for the opportunity that Thou hast granted us to gather around this festive board as Freemasons. And as we are about to retire, help us to keep our hearts full of love. Help us to forget ourselves and think of others, so that, the searchlight of truth will show to the world, that Freemasonry truly is, the Brotherhood of Man, under the Fatherhood of God. Amen.

Brethren So mote it be.

☞ Charge at Closing

W. Master Brethren, you are now to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue to mix again with the world. Amidst its concerns and employments, forget not the duties you have heard so frequently inculcated and forcibly recommended in our lodges: Be diligent, prudent, temperate, discreet. Remember that around our altars you have promised to befriend and relieve every worthy brother who shall need your assistance. Remember that you have promised to remind him, in the most tender manner, of his failings, and aid in his reformation. These generous principles are to extend further: Every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. Do good unto all. Recommend it more especially to the household of the faithful. Finally, Brethren, be ye all of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of Love and Peace delight to dwell with and bless you.

(by Bro. The Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris, ca. 1792, Grand Lodge of Massachusetts)

W. Master Brothers Senior and Junior Wardens, are all the Brethren in order?

S. Warden All on the column of the North are in order.

J. Warden All on the column of the South are in order.

W. Master What is the hour?

S. Warden Midnight, or Low Twelve, Worshipful Master.

W. Master In consideration of the hour, inform all Brethren on the columns of the North and South that this Table Lodge is now closed.

S. Warden Brethren on the column of the North, this Table Lodge is now closed.

J. Warden Brethren on the column of the South, this Table Lodge is now closed.

W. Master Brethren, go in peace. *



❧ History and Protocol of the Table Lodge

Essentially, a Table Lodge is a Masonic banquet with toasts, and yet it is much more than that. It is a special Lodge ceremony in itself, very ancient, with a ritual, formalities, and a special terminology, which is of considerable interest. It was born from the idea of the feast, and the desire to promote a greater degree of fellowship and kinship in Masonry. Both the affection of friends and the love for the fraternity flourished within its walls. Its meetings were more like a reunion than a regular Lodge meeting, and it became a center of relaxation, celebration, and inspiration in Freemasonry.

The history of Table Lodges can be traced back over two hundred and fifty years in English and French Masonry, even long before the records of organized masonry. The oldest feasts of Masonic origin that are on record, were the feasts upon being 'entered and being passed to a fellow of the craft.' In fact, the Premier Grand Lodge of the World, the Grand Lodge of England, was originally organized in the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse at London on St. John the Baptist's Festival day (June 24th) in 1717 in order "to revive the quarterly communication and hold the Annual Feast." This was a means for the members of the four London lodges to come together socially for the enjoyment of a "Grand Feast." The first few Grand Festivals were held in taverns, but soon moved to the hall of one of the great livery companies until the first Freemasons' Hall was completed in 1776. The individual lodges, however, met in private rooms in taverns or coffeehouses, the community social and intellectual centers of activity in the 18th century.

During the earlier operative period in the days of the trade guilds and the livery companies of the 15th century, ale-drinking, dinner and feasts were an important part of each operative Lodge meeting. With the decline of the operative era during the Reformation, slowly the Lodges evolved into social organizations, which began to admit nobility, gentry, and merchants. Gradually, the speculative era of Freemasonry emerged.

The majority of Freemasons' early meetings were held at eating-houses or wine merchants' premises. The tavern preferred was one whose landlord and waiters were initiates of the Order. The landlord of the tavern supplied the mugs from which the Brethren drank their ale, while the Lodge supplied glasses for wine. The base, or sole, of these drinking vessels had an extraordinary thickness (several inches of solid glass), which was essential to the vogue of "firing" while drinking a toast. The so-called "fire routine" was a time-immemorial practice of great merriment performed at Masonic festivals. It developed into a definite Sequence of movements during toasting and drinking, performed jointly by the Brethren, with much pomp, delightful uniformity and perfect timing. It ended with a thunderous bang as the empty goblets were simultaneously banged down on the table.

Similar ceremonies quickly found their way into American Masonry, and Masonic history informs us that during the American Revolution Washington regularly attended these feasts during the time he was leading the Continental Army. In our colonial days, the Table Lodge was Freemasonry's greatest asset. It buoyed up the spirit of the Brethren when the spirit of the colonists was low.

Even though the repast may have been limited during these times, say, to bread, cheese, and wine, the fervor was there. The first known meeting place of a Pennsylvania lodge was at the Tun Tavern. The first lodge in Boston was constituted at an inn at the Sign of the Bunch of Grapes, on King Street. Table Lodges were presided over by a “Toast Master” and offered a combination of exuberance and good fellowship with high-minded discussions of the important topics of the day. The instruction enlightened the mind, touched the heart, and engaged the will of the men.

The Table Lodge was so common in the early 18th century that it may be presumed that most meetings were of that character. The Lodge Feast was close to the very heart of the Lodge. The Feast loomed so large in the life of the Lodge that, in many of them, the members were seated at the table when the Lodge opened and remained at the table throughout the entire communication, even when the degrees were conferred. The Lodge simply met for dinner and as they sat around the table, eating and drinking, the degree was conferred. The catechetical lectures were divided into sections, between each of which a formal toast would be drunk, often accompanied by a song. It is not surprising that lodge minutes frequently stated that, “the lodge was closed with feelings of true harmony and brotherhood.”

One of the most curious things about these Table Lodges is the vocabulary used. The instant that the Lodge is opened, a change takes place in the names of things, and no person is permitted to call a plate a plate, or a knife a knife, or anything else by the ordinary name. The vocabulary of the Table Lodge came from French Masonic banquets with the French military terminology translated into English. To “fire a volley” meant to “drink a toast,” to “charge your cannon with red powder from a keg” meant to “fill your glass with wine from a bottle.” The following are several terms that were used:

Military Terms:	Common Meaning:	Military Terms:	Common Meaning:
To Charge/Load.....	To Fill	Swords.....	Knives
To Fire/Discharge.....	To Drink	Pickaxes/Mattocks.....	Forks
To Hew.....	To Carve	Trowels.....	Spoons
To Masticate.....	To Eat	Flags.....	Napkins
		Platforms.....	Dishes
Cannons.....	Glasses/Goblets	Stars.....	Lights/Candles
Barrels/Casks/Kegs.....	Bottles	Pincers.....	Snuffers
Tiles.....	Plates	Standard/Veil.....	Tablecloth
Volley.....	Toast/Health	Workshop/Tracing-board.....	Table
Mallet.....	Gavel	Stalls.....	Chairs
Fulminating Powder.....	Brandy or Liquor	Rough Ashlar.....	Bread
Strong/Red Powder.....	Wine or Punch	Material.....	Meat/Food
Yellow Powder.....	Cider or Beer	Sand.....	Salt
Black Powder.....	Coffee	Dust.....	Pepper
Weak/White Powder.....	Water	Paint.....	Mustard

Military Commands:**Common Meaning:**

“Charge your cannons”	Fill your glasses/goblets
“Align your cannons”	Set cannon 1/2 diameter of tile (plate) from edge of table
“Fire your volley”	Present toast
“Take your powder/ Attention”	All rise
“Carry arms”	Cannon held over the heart
“Present arms”	Cannon raised and extended for the purpose of a toast
“Right hand to arms; Ready; Aim”	All bring cannons to mouth
“Fire; Good Fire; Sharpest of Fire”.....	First, second and final draughts, taken from a glass, in the manner of a toast
“Return, arms”	Cannons slammed (in unison) on firing line
“At ease”	All are seated

The practice was derived from a discharge of musketry during the celebration of an important toast. For example, at a public performance of Preston Guild, England, in 1582, as the mayor and his procession halted at the principle Bars (gates) and the Market Place, at each halt a barrel of nappy (strong, heady) ale was broached, and the health of the King, the Queen, and the Nobility and Gentry was drunk, each toast being attended with a volley of a shot from the musketeers attending (hence, the term “obligatory health” for “obligatory toast”). Our French Brethren, in the early 1700’s, also succumbed to this joyful and jubilant practice. In France it seems to have originated in the Army. Those Brethren in the Infantry used the term “musket” for a “glass,” and the Artillery used the term “cannon” for “glass.”

French Freemasons prescribed a very formal system of rules for what they call a Loge de Table, or Table Lodge. The room in which the banquet took place was tyled just as a lodge room today would be tyled for a meeting. Table Lodges were always held in the Apprentice’s Degree (Latin craft terminology), and none but Freemasons were permitted to be present. Even the waiters for the banquet had to be members of the first degree. Particular care was taken to see that the observance was conducted in the proper spirit of the occasion, with enthusiasm and military precision, yet with dignity and decorum.

The table was in the form of a horseshoe or elongated semicircle. The Master sat at the head of the table, the Senior Warden at the northwest extremity, and the Junior Warden at the southwest. Symbolically, the circle represented a full year, or the complete revolution of the earth around the sun, so the semicircle represented half that revolution, or a period of six months. Six months is the time interval between the two solstices of summer and winter, or the two great festival days of the Fraternity: St. John the Baptist’s Festival on June 24th and St. John the Evangelist’s Festival on December 27th. The summer and winter solstice feast days are, of course,

older than Christianity, and still are the most important time of the year for Table Lodges, which were always held on those two days. These are the only true traditional holidays of Ancient Craft Masonry, the feast days of the Holy Saints John, the Saints to whom all Lodges are now dedicated.

*The Table Lodge was formally opened with an invocation to the Grand Architect of the Universe and closed with a song. During the banquet, seven toasts were given, each followed by a response or a song. These toasts were called *Santes d'obligation*, or obligatory toasts. There were seven such toasts in the French ceremony, toasts similar to those made by the ancients in their banquets in honor of the seven known celestial spheres: the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn, and the seven days of the week which are named after them.*

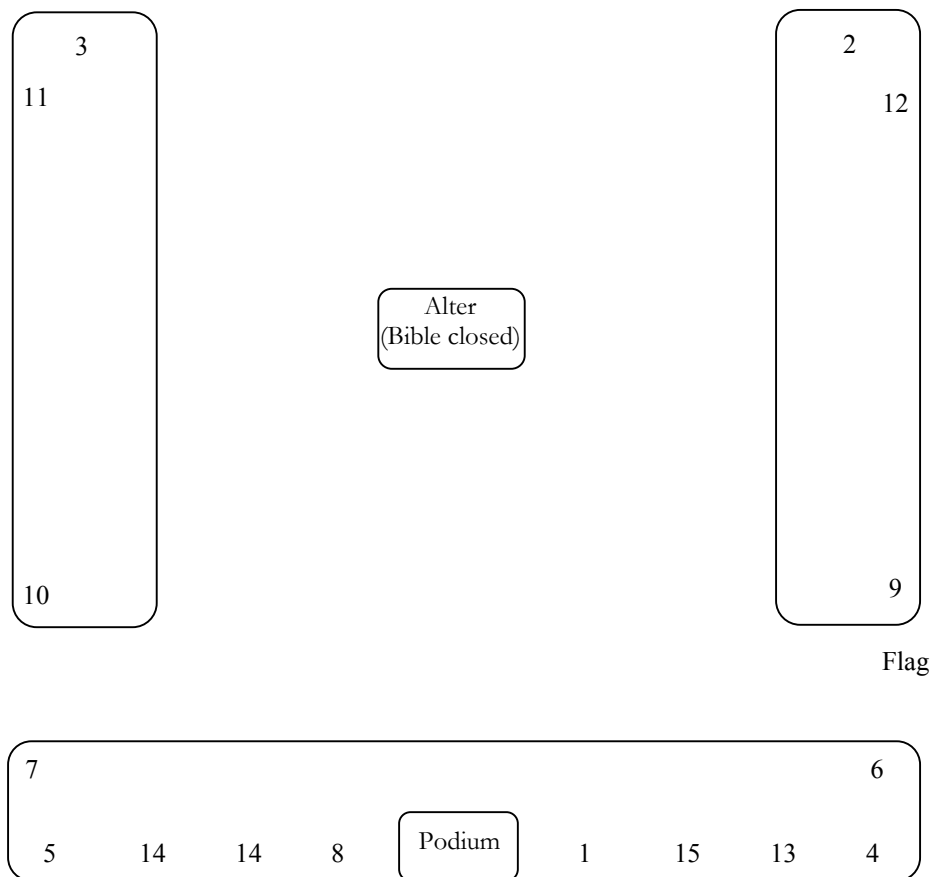
The Table Lodge is a heritage of our past. It has been stated that, "the Table Lodge is the summary of Masonic Doctrine." It prescribed reverence for divinity and moral law. It strengthened the devotion that Masons held for Lodge and Country. It increased the unity and fellowship for the craft. Tonight we will participate in the Table Lodge "Ceremony of the Seven Toasts." We will renew our allegiance as Masons to the cause of freedom and love of Country, dedication and devotion to our Lodge, and respect and toleration for our fellow man. Join me and your Brethren in a traditional ceremony that will add a much-needed element of grace, civility, and conviviality to the work, life, and mission of our beloved Gentle Craft, a ceremony that could help with the regeneration, renewal and survival of our fraternity. Let us return to the Festive Board that was so important to our Brethren of the past. ❧

☞ Dining Room Arrangement

An example of a proper Table Lodge room layout. Among Masonic lodges who have revived the tradition, Table Lodges are often held to commemorate the conferral of awards, end-of-year celebrations or other special purposes; hence, patriotic and fraternal decorations are encouraged & entirely appropriate.

Other table arrangements are permissible and may be necessary to accommodate the facilities.

Here, too, it is possible (and even desirable) to make some modifications to adapt this program to the lodge situation and the wishes of the individuals in charge of the program. There are many permissible variations of the Table Lodge.



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| 1. W. Master | 6. Sr. Deacon | 11. Tyler |
| 2. Sr. Warden | 7. Jr. Deacon | 12. Marshall |
| 3. Jr. Warden | 8. Chaplain | 13. Guest Speaker |
| 4. Treasurer | 9. Sr. Steward | 14. Other Guests |
| 5. Secretary | 10. Jr. Steward | 15. Grand Master |

If an Entered Apprentice Degree is to be held in conjunction with a Table Lodge, allow six or seven feet behind the tables, and leave breaks between tables to facilitate movement and floor work.