

Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

Chartered January 18, A.D. 1888, A.L. 5888



April, 2023



STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple

4 Martin Luther King Blvd.

St. Augustine, FL

1ST & 3RD Thursdays

Meal – 6:30 p.m.

Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2nd & 4th Thursdays

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

St. Johns Food Bank

Ashlar continues traveling around the district. In March, we visited Bunnell Lodge on March 21st. We also hosted this month's District Association meeting on March 22nd.

Brother Terrell and I will be visiting Pineland Lodge, the friendliest lodge in Florida on Thursday 4/20 with any interested Brothers. Feel free to contact one of us for details. We can carpool or meet you there. We will arrive before 6:30pm.

We will also be traveling to Middleburg on Wednesday, April 26th for the District Association meeting.

I am also planning a Family and Friends evening on May 18th (the third Thursday of May). Please bring your family and/or friends for a night of socializing and fun. RW Oscar Patterson has agreed to do his lecture on 18th Century Surgery. It is fascinating and perhaps a bit gruesome!

We hope to see you in lodge or throughout the district soon.

Fraternally,
Brother Tom Torretta

FROM THE EAST

Hello my Brothers,

Two of our newest Master Masons have returned their proficiencies this month and were presented their aprons. Brother Jim has already stepped in as our musician. I'd like to congratulate Brothers Jim Saghir and Tom Street for their great work!

Depending on when this Trestleboard is published, you may be able to witness or only hear about the initiation of RW Kent Warman, DDGM as the newest Rainbow Girl. It will take or has taken place on Wednesday March 29th at Ashlar Lodge at 6:30pm. It will be or was a fundraiser for the Rainbow Girls. Hopefully you can/did attend. If not, I am sure there will be photos.

April 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 OES	4	5 RAIN-BOW 7 PM	6 STAT-ED COMM 6:30 PM	7	8
9	10	11 SHRINE CLUB 7:00 pm	12 District In- struction Lake No. 72 6:30 pm	13 Lodge Instruction MM Degree 6:00 pm	14	15
16	17 OES	18 YORK RITE CHAP- TER/ COUNCIL 6:30 PM	19 RAIN- BOW 7 pm Open Books Pineland No. 86 6-9pm	20 Dark Visit to Pine- land No. 86 6:30 pm	21	22
23/30	24	25 YORK RITE COM- MANDERY 6:30 PM	26 Dist. Assn. Middleburg No. 107 6:30 pm	27 Lodge Instruc- tion MM Degree 6:00pm	28 Fried Chicken Shrine Club	

From the West

The Charity Committee will have met and discussed our charities for the next year and also have a proposed budget to present to the craft. We have already had a couple of request of the Charity Committee, more will be shared very soon with the Craft.

Also, I would like to invite our Brethren to go with Worshipful Tom and myself when we visit other Lodges in our District and the District Association meetings. There is a lot of information to be had, and a great opportunity to meet other Brothers of like mind and also have great fellowship. If any are interested, please talk to myself or Worshipful Tom as we have met in the past and car-pooled together.

I am And really looking forward to what this year has to bring for Ashlar Lodge No. 98

Respectfully yours
Terrell W Jones SW

May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OES	2	3 RAIN- BOW 7:00 PM	4 STAT- ED COMM 6:30 PM	5	6
7	8	9 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	10 District Instruction Pineland No. 86 6:30 pm	11 Lodge Instruc- tion MM Degree 6 pm	12	13
14	15 OES	16	17 RAIN- BOW 7:00 PM	18 FAMI- LY & FRIENDS NIGHT 6:30pm	19	20 Open Books Pine- land 86 9AM -NOON
21	22	23 York Rite Chap- ter/Council 6:30 pm	24 Dist. Assn. Cabul No.116 6:30 pm	25 LODGE INSTRUC- TION TBD	26 Fried Chicken, Shrine Club	27
28	29 GRAND LODGE ORLAN- DO	30 GRAND LODGE ORLAN- DO	31 GRAND LODGE ORLAN- DO			

FROM THE SOUTH

J.W. G. Maultsby

Masonic Jewelry

“Any Mason may use . . . Masonic jewelry for personal adornment as there is no law which forbids their use except a civil law enacted a few years ago, which forbids the use of emblems of societies to be worn or displayed by one who is not a Member.

Many Brethren inquire as to the proper manner in which the Masonic ring should be worn. Some Brethren like to wear the emblem so that the square and compasses are in the same relative position as when the wearer first saw them. Others prefer to wear it so that another person looking at the emblem will see it as it is normally seen by Brethren in the Lodge. In this instance, the compasses have their points away from the wearer. Either way is correct, for the manner in which the ring is worn is a matter of personal choice and there is no law or regulation the manner of display.” From GL 217 7.3 Masonic Jewelry

Witches, Magicians, Demons, and the Demise of the Templars
Myths create history as much as they transmit versions of the past needed in the present.

Margaret C. Jacobs

It is difficult in the twenty-first century to understand fully the magical ideas that permeated the world of medieval and Renaissance man and carried over into the beginnings of the Enlightenment. The phenomena that arose included widespread, concerted beliefs in demons and witches who could use powers inherent in nature but not monopolized by the Christian church to influence and subvert human behavior and, through the use of magic or *maleficia*, result in the destruction not only of people but also of governments and the church itself. The “witchcraft craze” arose in the thirteenth century based on the writings of Thomas Aquinas and was most virulent in continental Europe. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 500,000 human beings, about eighty-five percent of whom were women, executed. In England, the last “witch” burned at the stake was Alice Molland in 1684. Janet Horne suffered the same fate in Scotland in 1722. The “witch craze” was not isolated to one region or, even, nation. It demonstrates that, when social and political conditions are right, indefensible things can happen.

The Protestants of Scotland and England were as willing to prosecute and burn witches as were the Catholics of Poland, Germany, France, Holland, and Switzerland. What is interesting is that the Catholic nation with the blackest reputation for “burning at the stake”, Spain, was least likely to use this form of punishment for witches, reserving it for heretics or those Jews who converted to Christianity and were suspected of reverting to their former faith.

As quickly as the craze arose, it dwindled and, by the mid-seventeenth century had disappeared. The social, political, and religious tensions that fueled the craze for three hundred years had abated. Europe became more prosperous. The plague and other natural occurrences came less frequently and with less virulence. The Wars of Religion ended, and national boundaries became more set. Above all, what had been perceived as imminent threats to the Christian church and Christian world receded as governments became more centralized and man more enlightened. The religious ideology that led the witch hunts became conceived of as the antithesis to true Christianity. Reason began to overpower the minds of men; the scientific revolution coupled with advancements in medical care leaped forward; and the concept the world was a rational, orderly place in which scientific law governed came to the forefront.

The end of the phenomena in Europe was not the result of any new arguments being put forth but rather to overall rational objections which had originated as early as the mid-1500s. Religious conflict had fanned the persecutions. *Malleus Maleficarum* or *Hammer of Witches* written by [Heinrich Kramer](#) (Henricus Institoris) was the handbook. The academic case against such acts was impotent and lacked leadership.

Scholarly, rational opposition to the belief in witchcraft was led by Johanne Weyer, Reginald Scot, and Balthasar Bekker followed by Thomasius of Halle, Bacon, and Goethe with the final blow being struck by Descartes. The decrease in convictions and burnings for witchcraft appear related to the legal difficulty of proving the case as the judicial system became more sophisticated and less controlled by archaic religious zealotry. While some degree of acceptance of the existence of witches remained, they were perceived of more as fakes and charlatans profiting on the gullibility of an ill-informed public. Accompanying this rejection of witchcraft went a parallel rejection of demonology with the assertion that natural events have natural causes. Nature was no longer supernatural but natural. Theologians, with a greater understanding of languages, returned to the Gospel accounts and began to suggest that belief in demons was pagan, not Christian.

Belief in witches and demons and their powers was, in its time, a water-tight case. Nothing could counter the evidence and rebuttal could result in a charge of witchcraft of itself. There was no defense, no search for facts, no evidence, no plea bargains. The “witch” was presumed guilty—period. Typically, witchcraft charges arose from some type of personal misfortune, or in select cases, political and/or religious persecution. The Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon or Knights Templar seem to have fallen into this latter category. The clear majority of those accused of witchcraft were intellectually inferior individuals, generally illiterate and unable to understand the charges brought against them. They were commonly considered “dullards” or “stupid.” The Order had admitted into its ranks just such individuals. Men of the lowest knightly rank, most of whom could not read nor write, and who, at trial, were unable to explain Templar rituals. They spoke, predominately, French and had no knowledge of the language of the courts or the church—Latin. Their learned accusers were convinced that they were the devil’s agents and the more loudly they protested their innocence or lack of understanding, the more surely they were led to the stake.

Essential to magic and witchcraft are plots, secrets, concealment, and conspiracy. The witch was a social pariah feared by their clients. Even intellectuals and political leaders during the period lived in a world filled with magical powers of which they had no doubt. These powers were infinitely varied and so long as society thought it could contain such powers to humble or socially unacceptable groups, the practice tended to go unnoticed. When society, especially political and religious powers, began to feel threatened, the response was to defend through

attack and destruction.

Philip IV or Philip the Fair was King of France from 1284 to 1315. The quarrel he had with Pope Boniface VII was of long-standing and focused on relations between the medieval Church and the state. Philip sent Guillaume de Nogaret to arrest Boniface and return him to France for trial. Boniface was freed by his supporters within days, but died a few weeks later to be replaced by Pope Benedict XI. Philip refused to acknowledge any part in Boniface's capture and, while Philip was soon removed from interdict, Nogaret remained an excommunicate. The file against Boniface had been completed prior to 1307, the year in which the Templars were arrested, with the most heinous charges being that he had conversed with demons, used their assistance, and worshiped them. Templars were among Boniface's palace guard and were at his side when Philip's troops captured Anagni. The trial of Boniface was, therefore, closely related to the trial of the Templars who were also accused of practicing witchcraft, communing with and worshipping demons, and, above all, conspiracy.

Boniface VIII and the Templars were presented as being deceiving, heretical sorcerers who were the enemy of both church and state. Both worked in secret and performed magical, heretical rituals. Such charges of magical powers became common in King Philip's court around 1307. They appear to have originated from a small group of powerful courtiers and civil servants heavily involved in various money lending transactions. The fear of witchcraft continued rife during the pontificate of John XXII whose legal decisions incorporated witchcraft into the more heinous crime of heresy. John, though a good lawyer skilled in canon law and theologically well-educated, was also a good hater, as was Philip.

Essentially, accusations of witchcraft when subsumed into heresy formed a supernatural attack which, when coupled with conspiracy, assured conviction and execution unless a confession was obtained, and repentance followed. The Templars were accused not only of magic and witchcraft, but also of conspiracy to destroy the established order.

On Friday, October 13, 1307, French agents arrested all known Templars in that nation. Initial reports were that about two thousand members of the Order were taken. However, it was later revealed that only fourteen knights were among the 138 Templars questioned by the Grand Inquisitor. Those interrogated by the Inquisition in Paris ranged in age from sixteen to eighty and included shepherds, carpenters, stewards, and farm workers. Seventeen were priests and another forty-one were either sergeants or serving brothers. The published confessions demonstrate ignorance, confusion, and multiple inconsistencies coupled with contradictions.

Basically, the charges were that the Templars denied Christ, God, the Virgin, and the saints in a secret ceremony; engaged in sacrilegious acts on the cross; were sodomites; did not believe in the sacraments; and that the Grand Master, not priests, absolved brothers from their sins. They were even accused of worshiping an idol named "Baphomet" or "Mahomet" with the implication being made that this practice was "picked up in the East" and the idol represented Muhammed. It was irrelevant that no such idol existed and that Islam had an even stronger prohibition against images than did Catholicism.

Templar practices made their case almost impossible to defend. The Order met secretly and only at night. This, coupled with the natural aloofness of the knightly class and their segregation from the general population, had not made them particularly popular with the public. In Cyprus, their rule was marked by great severity. They were quickly and roundly hated by Cypriots by their harsh exactions and taxation. On Easter Day, 1192, the islanders attempted a general massacre of the knights which failed when the Templars attacked "sparing neither age nor sex". Even though the rebellion was ended, they found Cyprus an untenable position and asked Richard I to take it back. He agreed, and the Templars retired to Syria.

There was also the medieval mind-set that equated success in battle with God's favor and the Templars had lost more battles than they won including that for Jerusalem. It was totally unacceptable that God's warriors could be defeated and vanquished from the land. Defeat was, obviously, the result of moral weakness and sin. The Templar's failure to retake the Holy Land from the infidels was clearly a reflection of God's displeasure with their practices and had to be addressed by church and state authorities in Europe. Finally, the very nature of the men admitted into the order contributed to their demise in that they lacked the intelligence and knowledge necessary to defend against such charges, if any defense was possible, which is questionable. They were, as one witness at the English trials is quoted as saying: "stupid."

The indictment against the Templars read "great scandal has been generated against the Order in the minds of important people, including those of kings and princes, and indeed among the whole Christian people." Philip, very much a feudal king, was incensed at the disobedience of those he presumed to be his vassals. He was also influenced by a combination of greed and envy as well as his desire to free himself from Templar debt. The Templars originally created to protect Christian pilgrims in the Levant had morphed themselves into banker and financiers as well as suppressors as in Cyprus. This precipitous slide from protectors of the weak and needy to financier of the strong and powerful coupled with issues of Biblical admonitions against usury served to weaken the Templar's position. There should be no doubt, however, that those who accused the Templars were in their own consciences and minds convinced that they fought for God against the Devil and his work.

Templars possessed no special wisdom; no magical practices; and never attempted to build a Temple of Wisdom based on secret teachings and esoteric writings. The forces that led to their demise were simple: mediocrity, failure, lack of nerve, and, ultimately, becoming superfluous. Their *raison d'être*—the Latin Kingdom—no longer existed. One contemporary writer noted that the “Temple perished for having forgotten Jerusalem.”

Is there a cautionary tale in the demise of the Templars? Possibly. Voltaire, a Freemason, wrote that the end of the Templars was caused by “the evil effects of a period of ignorance and barbarism.” And William Burke wrote “men have sometimes been led by degrees, sometimes hurried, into things of which, if they could have seen the whole together, they would never have permitted the most remote approach.” The claim of some form of continuity with the Templars and their secret knowledge led to government and public distrust of Freemasons in Europe and may have contributed to a similar distrust in America which resulted in George Washington coming out in support of the Society. In an analogous manner, the admission into Freemasonry of men ill prepared to understand its allegories, symbols, and rituals parallels the admission into the Order of men likewise ill equipped.

Medieval Templars were ordinary men and strikingly so. They were ordinary in their outlook and in their vision for their society. They were common men representing common men. They were not uncommon, mystical visionaries. They possessed no special knowledge, and, in many cases, were less informed than others in the larger community.

Much speculation has centered on the purported relationship between the medieval Templars and modern Freemasonry. Robert L. D. Cooper, Curator of The Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland founded in 1736, in his book *The Rosslyn Hoax?* states explicitly: “The myth of a direct lineal connection between the medieval Order of the Knights Templar in a Scottish context was invented by a Scottish Freemason, Chevalier James Burnes, for his fellow Freemasons who were interested in creating a Masonic Order which mirrored their attitudes and their own 19th century chivalric ideals.” A similar statement could be made about English Freemasonry and the writings of Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay. Ramsay was born the son of a butcher in Ayr, Scotland in 1686 and spent most of his adult life in France where he converted to Catholicism. He was tutor to the grandsons of James II of England and James VII of Scotland who was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and was living at that time in Rome.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was initiated into Beneficence Lodge in Vienna, Austria on December 14, 1784 and became a Master Mason the next year. Mozart also attended True Concord Lodge which was considered the largest and most aristocratic in Vienna. His best-known opera, *The Magic Flute*, contains strong Masonic undertones. The opera gives a vision of a Temple of Reason. This form of world-wide harmony is basic to Freemasonry, but it was not among the ideals of medieval Templars. Neither is there a strong, powerful, secret leadership in Freemasonry as espoused in the secret society myth. The problem lay not in the Templars as originally conceived any more than it does in Freemasonry, but with propagandists and conspiracy theorists, often aided by ill-informed members, who espouse the scheme that the world can be changed miraculously and for the better by “performers of wonders” who possess “secret knowledge.”

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- Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. “Witch Craze of the 14th to 17th Centuries: A Sociologist’s Perspective.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 86 no. 1.
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- Partner, Peter. *The Murdered Magicians: The Templars and Their Myth*. London: Oxford University Press, 1981.

LODGE OFFICERS 2022

Worshipful Master

Thomas Torretta 602-881-3206

Senior Warden

Terrell Jones 904-669-5249

Junior Warden

George Maultsby 703-956-0228

Secretary

Troy Usina 904-451-5283

Treasurer

Oscar Patterson III 904-955-9175

Senior Deacon

Mark Williams 904-669-9694

Junior Deacon

Darrell Lindsey 904-814-7158

Chaplain

Robert Harry, Jr. 904-806-1255

Tyler

Russell Sellers 512-801-7831

OTHER 11th MASONIC DISTRICT LODGES

Palatka No. 34

Palatka—2nd & 4th Mondays

Lake No. 72

Crescent City—1st & 3rd Mondays

Pineland No. 86

Peniel—1st & 3rd Thursdays

Melrose No 89

Keystone Heights—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Middleburg No. 107

Middleburg—1st & 3rd Tuesdays

Cabul No. 116

Green Cove Springs—2nd & 4th Thursdays

Hastings No. 183

Hastings—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Bunnell No. 200

Bunnell—1st and 3rd Tuesdays

Fraternal Notices

O.E.S. Chapter #12.....1st & 3rd
Mondays

Rainbow Assembly #42.....1st & 3rd
Wednesdays

York Rite Bodies.....3rd & 4th
Tuesdays