

THE RITE WAY

An Introduction to the Massachusetts York Rite



Companion Daniel E. Burns

Pentucket Royal Arch Chapter Haverhill, Massachusetts 2022

foreword

The following pages describe an introduction to the Massachusetts York Rite presented in a degree-style format. What makes the York Rite unique is that its Chapters, Councils and Commanderies function like local Lodges. Many Brothers, new and old, ask what York Rite is about and how it differs from other appendant bodies. It can be difficult to describe, especially when trying to convey how our ritual and traditions parallel so closely those of Blue Lodges. The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the work done in York Rite in a format that is familiar to them.

There are two versions of this presentation. The Short Form covers the four Capitular Degrees; it is meant to be delivered as an educational component in a Blue Lodge meeting or stand on its own at a Lodge of Instruction. It should take about fifteen minutes to perform. The Full Form covers the seven Degrees and three Orders—from Mark Master to the Order of the Temple. It is meant to be delivered at a Lodge of Instruction and take about 30 minutes to perform.

There are some practical considerations to take into account. It is this author's opinion that this presentation will be most effective while being delivered with the participants wearing each body's respective regalia. The Massachusetts Masonic Protocol Manual does not allow for appendant body's regalia to be worn in Blue Lodge, save the head of a Body as a guest on the District Deputy's suite in an official capacity (Section 2.2, District Officers – Use of District Regalia). Short of dispensation by the Grand Master, a potential work-around is for the presiding Master to recess the Lodge prior to this presentation and for him to call it back from recess at its conclusion. If the Commandery Orders are being presented, no head coverings should be worn. These pages describe the formal presentation; time should be allowed, and the participants should be prepared, for questions and an informal discussion afterwards.

This presentation is not meant to be a deep dive into the esoteric meanings and rich symbolism of the Degrees and Orders of the York Rite, but, rather, as a device to introduce our Blue Lodge Brethren to the bodies, and, perhaps, to pique their interest in exploring them further. It is designed to complement the recently released, printed marketing material from the Massachusetts York Rite, *The Rite Way Forward*.

Officers & Regalia

Participants should be wearing tuxedos. If he is a Past High Priest, Past Illustrious Master, or Grand Chapter or Grand Council officer, he may wear the apron of those offices. Commandery uniforms should consist of a Sir Knight's coat and belt, but no chapeau, gloves, or sword.

CHAPTER

Office High Priest (RWM) King (WSW) Scribe (WJW) Captain of the Host (Mar) Principal Sojourner (SD) Exemplar

Regalia High Priest Apron & Collar King Apron & Collar Scribe Apron & Collar Captain of the Host Apron & Collar Principal Sojourner Apron & Collar White Apron

COUNCIL

Office Illustrious Master (IM) Deputy Master (DM) Conductor of the Council (CC) Exemplar

<u>Regalia</u> Council Apron & Illustrious Master Collar Council Apron & Deputy Master Collar Principal Conductor of the Work (PCW) Council Apron & Principal Conductor of the Work Collar Council Apron & Deputy Master Collar Royal Arch Apron

COMMANDERY

Office Eminent Commander (C) Prior (P) Sovereign Master (SM) Warder (W) Exemplar

Regalia Commandery Uniform Malta Tunic & Cape Green Sash Commandery Uniform Royal Arch Apron

The Rite Way

"An Introduction to the Massachusetts York Rite"

SHORT FORM

The presentation team processes in from the untiled door starting with the RWM and followed by WSW, WJW, Marshal, Exemplar, and SD. The RWM drops off in the East, the WSJ in the South, and the WSW in the West. They each bow to their corresponding Blue Lodge officers who cede their chairs. The RWM, WSW and WJW stand in front of their respective chairs. The Marshal ends in the West, facing East, with the Exemplar beside him on his left. The Senior Deacon ends in the West facing East.

RWM — * (WSW and WJW sit)

RWM — My Brothers, York Rite Masonry is composed of three bodies: Chapter, Council and Commandery. Your journey begins with being initiated into a Royal Arch Chapter. The second step, should you choose to take it, is to join a Council of Royal and Select Master Masons. The third and final step is acceptance into a Commandery of Knights Templar. What makes the York Rite unique is that its Chapters, Councils and Commanderies all function like local lodges.

Tonight, we will introduce you to the four degrees in Capitular Masonry: Mark Master Mason, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and the Royal Arch.

You may not be aware of this, but, as Blue Lodge Masons, you are already part of the York Rite System. When the two factions of Masonry in England merged in 1813 to create the United Grand Lodge of England, one area of compromise was the Royal Arch Degree, which the Ancients required but the Moderns did not. Their resolution was to include the statement in their Constitution: "…pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, [namely], those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch."

When the Ancients and Moderns merged in Massachusetts in 1792, this was not an area of contention, so Blue Lodges did not continue to confer the Royal Arch Degree. It was moved to Royal Arch Chapters, which also conferred the Mark Master and Most Excellent Master Degrees—essentially, giving us the system we practice today.

In the Third Degree you were raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and there is no higher degree. However, the Hiramic Legend leaves us with some questions: How does a Fellow Craft receive his wages? Was the Temple ever completed? What is the real Grand Masonic Word? These, and many other questions, are answered in the Capitular Degrees.

We will now proceed with our presentation.

RWM sits.

SD — (Turns to face Marshal and Exemplar)

Mar — ***

- SD Who comes here?
- Mar A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and now wishes further promotion by being advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason.
- SD (Turns to face the sidelines)

And so, my Brothers, continues a Mason's journey through the York Rite. The degree of Mark Master Mason is probably the most ancient degree in our Masonic System. It is a continuation of the Fellowcraft degree and was worked in Scotland long before the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717.

The Candidate represents one of the Craftsmen at the building of King Solomon's Temple. This room represents a quarry in which the stones for the building are hewn and squared. When the hour arrives for the Craftsmen to carry up their work for inspection, The Mark Master Mason Degree teaches us the use and lessons of the "Mark" each Craftsman used to distinguish his work in the erection of the Temple and demonstrates how they received their wages.

SD proceeds clockwise around the Altar followed by the Exemplar then the Marshal. The Marshal drops off at the Marshal station and sits. SD and Exemplar stop in the South.

- SD ***
- WJW *(Stands)* * Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated and Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, and now solicits the further honor of receiving the degree of Past Master.
- WJW The Past Master degree begins the preparation for the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. As it is the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry, its membership is limited to Past and Presiding Masters of lodges. Originally, only actual Past Masters of lodges were admitted to the sublime secrets of the Royal Arch, which meant that very few could receive them. However, this virtual Past Master Degree may now be bestowed upon Mark Master Masons.

It teaches the Candidate that he must first learn to obey before he can rule; he must govern himself before he governs others. This lesson fulfills the obligation and qualifies him for advancement.

WJW sits; SD and Exemplar proceed to the West.

- SD ***
- WSW *(Stands)* * Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, regularly passed the Chair, and now wishes further promotion by being received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master.
- WSW The building of King Solomon's Temple was the work of thousands of skilled craftsmen for many years. Its completion and dedication was one of the most magnificent spectacles of all time. The degree of Most Excellent Master represents those solemn and impressive ceremonies. The prayer of Solomon, and his plea for God's approval of his labors, symbolize to us the presentation of our own lives and works, finally, before God.

According to tradition, King Solomon instituted a new order of Masons, called the Most Excellent Masters, to be conferred upon only those, who through diligence and industry, have advanced toward a more perfect life.

WSW sits; SD and Exemplar proceed to the East.

- SD ***
- RWM —* Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, regularly passed the Chair, has been received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master, and now wishes further promotion by being exalted to the sublime degree of Royal Arch Mason.
- RWM (*Stands*) King Solomon's Temple outlived its builders by several centuries. Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif, all passed to their reward, but the Temple still remained as the Most Holy Place of an ancient religion.

In the Royal Arch Degree we learn of its destruction, when, during the reign of a weak and licentious king, Jerusalem was besieged by the King of Babylon. However, the degree continues when, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, we return from the Babylonish captivity and engage in the arduous task of rebuilding the city and Temple. Our labors are rewarded by the discovery of the Grand Omnific Word, for which, until now, we have only a substitute.

The Royal Arch Degree, according to an ancient manuscript, "has always been considered more august, sublime and important than those which have preceded it and is the very summit of perfection in Ancient Masonry."

SD escorts the Exemplar to a seat on the sidelines; both sit.

- RWM And so, my Brothers, concludes the degrees of Capitular Masonry. Our fraternity's origins are unclear, even to us. Over the centuries it has grown and shifted in countless ways. There are dozens of York Rite organizations that expand our story, Masonic knowledge, and friendship. Becoming a Royal Arch Mason opens the door for you to explore, join and lead those organizations.
- RWM Brother Marshal, you will retire the presentation team.

The RWM returns the Oriental Chair to the presiding Master. The Marshal rises and perambulates the Lodge room as the various officers fall in behind him forming a procession exiting through the untiled door. The team changes from Chapter to Blue Lodge regalia. They re-enter the Lodge in procession and line up facing East on the West side of the alter. They salute the Worshipful Master with the appropriate due-guard and sign.

The team takes questions and holds a discussion with the Brethren present. After which they assume their seats on the sidelines.

The Worshipful Master returns the Lodge from recess.

The Rite Way "An Introduction to the Massachusetts York Rite"

FULL FORM

First Section — Chapter

The presentation team processes in starting with the RWM and followed by WSW, WJW, Marshal, Exemplar, and SD. The RWM drops off in the East, the WSJ in the South, and the WSW in the West. The WSW and WJW stand in front of their respective chairs. The Marshal ends in the West, facing East, with the Exemplar beside him on his left. The Senior Deacon ends in the West facing East. When the team is in place, the RWM nod to the WSW and WJW and WJW and they sit.

RWM — My Brothers, York Rite Masonry is composed of three bodies: Chapter, Council and Commandery. Your journey begins with being initiated into a Royal Arch Chapter. The second step, should you choose to take it, is to join a Council of Royal and Select Master Masons. The third and final step is acceptance into a Commandery of Knights Templar. What makes the York Rite unique is that its Chapters, Councils and Commanderies all function like local lodges.

Tonight, we will introduce you to the seven Degrees and three Orders that make up the Massachusetts York Rite.

You may not be aware of this, but, as Blue Lodge Masons, you are already part of the York Rite System. When the two factions of Masonry in England merged in 1813 to create the United Grand Lodge of England, one area of compromise was the Royal Arch Degree, which the Ancients required but the Moderns did not. Their resolution was to include the statement in their Constitution: "...pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, [namely], those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch."

When the Ancients and Moderns merged in Massachusetts in 1792, this was not an area of contention, so Blue Lodges did not continue to confer the Royal Arch Degree. It was moved to Royal Arch Chapters, which also conferred the Mark Master and Most Excellent Master Degrees—essentially, giving us the system we practice today.

In the Third Degree you were raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and there is no higher degree. However, the Hiramic Legend leaves us with some questions: How does a Fellow Craft receive his wages? Was the Temple ever completed? What is the real Grand Masonic Word? These, and many other questions, are answered in the Capitular Degrees.

We will now proceed with the Chapter portion of our presentation.

- SD (Turns to face Marshal and Exemplar)
- Mar ***
- SD Who comes here?
- Mar A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and now wishes further promotion by being advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason.
- SD (Turns to face the sidelines)

And so, my Brothers, continues a Mason's journey through the York Rite. The degree of Mark Master Mason is probably the most ancient degree in our Masonic System. It is a continuation of the Fellowcraft degree and was worked in Scotland long before the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717.

The Candidate represents one of the Craftsmen at the building of King Solomon's Temple. This room represents a quarry in which the stones for the building are hewn and squared. When the hour arrives for the Craftsmen to carry up their work for inspection, The Mark Master Mason Degree teaches us the use and lessons of the "Mark" each Craftsman used to distinguish his work in the erection of the Temple and demonstrates how they received their wages.

SD proceeds clockwise around the Altar followed by the Exemplar. SD and Exemplar stop in the South. The Marshal exits to prepare for the Council presentation.

- SD ***
- WJW *(Stands)* Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, and now solicits the further honor of receiving the degree of Past Master.
- WJW The Past Master degree begins the preparation for the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. As it is the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry, its membership is limited to Past and Presiding Masters of lodges. Originally, only actual Past Masters of lodges were admitted to the sublime secrets of the Royal Arch, which meant that very few could receive them. However, this virtual Past Master Degree may now be bestowed upon Mark Master Masons.

It teaches the Candidate that he must first learn to obey before he can rule; he must govern himself before he governs others. This lesson fulfills the obligation and qualifies him for advancement. SD and Exemplar proceed to the West. WJW fills in behind them and exists to prepare for the Council presentation.

- SD— ***
- WSW (Stands) Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, regularly passed the Chair, and now wishes further promotion by being received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master.
- WSW The building of King Solomon's Temple was the work of thousands of skilled craftsmen for many years. Its completion and dedication was one of the most magnificent spectacles of all time. The degree of Most Excellent Master represents those solemn and impressive ceremonies. The prayer of Solomon, and his plea for God's approval of his labors, symbolize to us the presentation of our own lives and works, finally, before God.

According to tradition, King Solomon instituted a new order of Masons, called the Most Excellent Masters, to be conferred upon only those, who through diligence and industry, have advanced toward a more perfect life.

SD and Exemplar proceed to the East. WSW exists to prepare for the Council presentation.

- SD ***
- RWM Who comes here?
- SD A worthy Brother, who has been duly initiated and Entered Apprentice, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, advanced to the degree of Mark Master Mason, regularly passed the Chair, has been received and acknowledged a Most Excellent Master, and now wishes further promotion by being exalted to the sublime degree of Royal Arch Mason.
- RWM (*Stands*) King Solomon's Temple outlived its builders by several centuries. Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif, all passed to their reward, but the Temple still remained as the Most Holy Place of an ancient religion.

In the Royal Arch Degree we learn of its destruction, when, during the reign of a weak and licentious king, Jerusalem was besieged by the King of Babylon. However, the degree continues when, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, we return from the Babylonish captivity and engage in the arduous task of rebuilding the city and Temple. Our labors are rewarded by the discovery of the Grand Omnific Word, for which, until now, we have only a substitute.

The Royal Arch Degree, according to an ancient manuscript, "has always been considered more august, sublime and important than those which have preceded it and is the very summit of perfection in Ancient Masonry."

SD escorts the Exemplar as they exit to prepare for the Council presentation.

RWM — And so, my Brothers, concludes the four degrees of Capitular Masonry. Once a Brother is exalted to the Royal Arch he is entitled to be addressed as Companion.

We will now continue the presentation with the three degrees of Cryptic Masonry.

Second Section — Council

RWM nods to the Council presentation team. They form a procession led by the IM, followed by the DM, PCW, Exemplar, and CC. The procession proceeds clockwise around the altar. The IM bows to the RWM, and the RMW cedes the East. The RWM joins the procession and exits to prepare for the Commandery presentation. The PCW assumes the chair in the South and the DM assumes the chair in the West. The CC ends in the West, facing East, with the Exemplar beside him on his right.

- IM My Brothers, the three degrees of Councils of Royal and Select Master Masons are concerned with the concealment and preservation of the secrets revealed at the building of the second Temple. The Royal Master Degree chronologically precedes the Master Mason Degree; the Select Master Degree explains why King Solomon selected 24 Craftsmen to work with the three Grand Masters, and the Super Excellent Master Degree describes the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The word "cryptic" in Cryptic Masonry refers to the fact that two of these three degrees are conferred in a crypt—not that there are hidden meanings in the degrees.
- IM We will now proceed with the Council portion of our presentation.
- CC (Escorts the Exemplar clockwise around the Altar to the South) ***
- PCW *(Stands)* Who comes here?
- CC A Companion Royal Arch Mason who wishes to be admitted to the rights and honors of a Royal Master.
- PCW The Royal Master Degree takes us back in time to a day prior to the death of the builder. Its central figures are our Three Ancient Grand Masters and a Fellowcraft in search of that reward which would elevate him to the rank of Master Mason. It reminds us that fervency and zeal should characterize those who have been exalted to the august and sublime degree of Royal Arch Mason. It is the only degree in Freemasonry where the Candidate meets our Grand Master Hiram Abif.

CC— ***

CC and Exemplar proceed to the West. PCW fills in behind them and exists to prepare for the Commandery presentation.

- DM *(Stands)* Who comes here?
- CC A zealous Brother, desirous of participating in your labors.

- DM The Select Master Degree is one of the most interesting degrees in Ancient Craft Masonry and completes the history of the Royal Arch Degree. It explains why King Solomon selected 24 true, tried, and trusty Craftsmen to work with the Three Grand Masters to complete a vital section of the Temple. The degree rationally accounts for the concealment and preservation of those essential secrets which were brought to light at the building of the second Temple and revealed in the Royal Arch Degree. In this degree we learn justice and mercy in the end will be extended to the innocent, and the guilty will be punished.
- CC and Exemplar proceed to the East. DM exists to prepare for the Commandery presentation.
- CC— ***
- IM Who comes here?
- CC A worthy Companion, Royal and Select Master, who desires to receive the Degree of Super Excellent Master.
- Ill. M (Stands) The Super Excellent Master Degree describes the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and the captivity of the Hebrew people in Babylon. This degree completes the Circle of Perfection in Ancient Craft Masonry, and teaches us the beautiful symbolism of Faith, Friendship and Fidelity. It is usually conferred in its short form. The long form is a play that involves dozens of participants and is considered by many to be the most dramatic and impressive of all the degrees of Freemasonry. It is exemplified every other year in Massachusetts.

CC escorts the Exemplar as they exit to prepare for the Commandery presentation.

Ill. M — This concludes the Cryptic Degrees of the Council of Royal and Select Masters. But, to the followers of Christ there is a need and desire for the application of these impressive lessons and beautiful ceremonies in his way of life. To fulfill this need we have the Chivalric Orders of the Commanderies of Knights Templar.

Third Section - Commandery

IM nods to the Commandery presentation team. They form a procession led by the C, followed by the P, SM, Exemplar, and W. The procession proceeds clockwise around the altar. The C bows to the IM, and the IM cedes the East. The IM takes a seat on the sidelines. The SM assumes the chair in the South and the P assumes the chair in the West. The W ends in the West, facing East, with the Exemplar beside him on his right.

- C— My Brothers, the Masonic Knights Templar draw from the Medieval Monastic Order that participated in the Crusades. Commanderies of Knights Templar consist of three Orders: The Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, the Order of Malta and the Mediterranean Pass, and the Order of the Temple. Upon the completion of these Orders a candidate is knighted and is known as Sir Knight.
- C— We will now proceed with the Commandery portion of our presentation.
- W (Escorts the Exemplar clockwise around the Altar to the South) ***
- SM *(Stands)* Who comes here?
- W A worthy Companion who, having received all the necessary preceding degrees of Freemasonry, now solicits the honor of being admitted to the Grand Council.
- SM The Illustrious Order of the Red Cross connects the Capitular Degrees with the Chivalric Orders. It continues the story of the Jewish people and their return from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. One of their numbers, in a powerful testimony to the almighty force of Truth, prevails upon the King to restore to the Temple the Holy Vessels carried away by the Babylonian armies when the first Temple was destroyed. A new Order was founded with the Red Cross as its emblem. Each of its four arms have important symbolic allusions. It encourages the search for Truth, and emphasizes the importance of Liberty and Justice, with a right to worship Deity under whatever name he may be called.

This Order is a simple but powerful testimony to the almighty force of truth. It is designed to impress upon the candidate that there is but one God and that human nature changes little over great cycles of time.

- W (Escorts the Exemplar clockwise around the Altar to the West) ***
- P *(Stands)* Who comes here?
- W A Companion of the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross, who humbly solicits to be admitted to the privileges of the Ancient Order of St. John of Jerusalem, or Knight of Malta.
- P— The Order of Malta and the Mediterranean Pass is rooted in the time of the Crusades and assures safe passage to the Holy Sepulcher. At this period the members of our Order were known as Hospitallers who were famed for their construction and maintenance of

hospitals for the poor. The Order is Christian in its origin and nature and is set amongst scenes and characters referred to in the New Testament. The work is a Masonic interpretation along Christian lines of the New Dispensation.

The Order receives its name from the Island of Malta, whose name has been in the headlines from the period of the Crusades until the present day. A Priory of Knights of Malta still exists on this ancient isle. The Maltese Cross is the emblem of this Order and was conferred upon its membership during the Crusades. We perpetuate this symbol in remembrance of them and to stand for all that is true and holy.

- W (Escorts the Exemplar clockwise around the Altar to the South) ***
- C— Who comes here?
- W A Knight of Malta who solicits the honor of being dubbed and created a Knight of the Valiant and Magnanimous Order of the Temple.
- C— *(Stands)* The Order of the Temple refers to its members as "Soldiers of the Cross." Though not historically connected to the Knights Templar in the warring period of the Crusades, today it is motivated by the same principles: the protection of the weak and oppressed, the relief of the distressed, and the defense of the Christian religion.

The Order is a fitting climax to the humble penitent, who has faithfully performed the symbolic seven years of preparation for the consummation of his endeavors, and is rewarded with his knighting as a Christian Warrior. Its emblem is the Passion Cross. The Cross has ever been a symbol of sacrifice. We are taught that that which is worthwhile is gained through sacrifice, and nothing was ever gained by avoiding pain or sacrifice.

It has been said that no Degree or Order in Freemasonry is more solemn, more impressive, or more sole searching than the Order of the Temple. It retains in its ritual some of the ancient ceremonies of the original Order. Like the Order of Malta, it is founded on the principles enunciated in the New Testament, teaching that Love is the great characteristic of those who aspire to immortality—Love which suffers long and is kind, Love which overcomes all hate and all difficulties, and which will, eventually in time, make all of mankind Brothers.

W escorts the Exemplar to a seat on the sidelines; both sit.

C— And so, my Brothers, concludes the seven Degrees and three Orders of the Massachusetts York Rite. Our fraternity's origins are unclear, even to us. Over the centuries it has grown and shifted in countless ways. There are dozens of York Rite organizations that expand our story, Masonic knowledge, and friendship. Becoming a York Rite Mason opens the door for you to explore, join and lead those organizations.

The team takes questions and holds a discussion with the Brethren present. After which they assume their seats on the sidelines.