

### **SQUARE AND COMPASSES**

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These two symbols have been so long and so universally combined - to teach us, as says an early ritual, "to square our actions and to keep them within due bounds," they are seldom seen apart, but are kept together, either as two Great Lights, or as a jewel once worn by the Master of the Lodge, now by the Past Master - that they have come at last to be recognized as the proper badge of a Master Mason.

So universally has this symbol been recognized, even by the profane world, as the peculiar badge of Freemasonry that it was once the subject of a legal decision.

It appears that in 1873 a manufacture of flour, made application to the United State Patent Office, for permission to adopt the square and compasses as a trade-mark. The Commissioner of Patents refused the request on the grounds that the mark was a Masonic symbol.

An excerpt from his ruling is as follows:- "If this emblem were something other than precisely what it is - either less known, less significant, or fully and universally understood - all this might readily be admitted. But, considering its peculiar character and relations to the public, an anomalous question is presented. There doubt that the device, so commonly worn and employed by Masons, has an established mystic significance, universally recognized as existing, whether comprehended by all or not, is not material to the issue. In view of the magnitude and extent of the Masonic organization, it is impossible to divest its symbols, or at least this particular symbol - perhaps the best known of all - of its ordinary signification, wherever displayed, either as arbitrary character or otherwise. It will be universally understood, or misunderstood, as having, a Masonic significance; and, therefore, as a trade-mark, must

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constantly work deception. Nothing could be more mischievous than to create as a monopoly, and upheld by the power of law, anything so calculated, as applied to purposes of trade, to be misinterpreted, to mislead all classes, and to constantly foster suggestions of mystery in affairs of business."

Perhaps the Commissioner may have been a Mason. If he were not a mason, he certainly did a yeoman service to Freemasonry by protecting the right of Masonry keep our Square and Compasses symbol; for his ruling has been quoted and maintained to this day.

One student of Freemasonry interprets the Square and compasses as being the union between the Old and the New Testaments. This interpretation is not universally accepted.

In another branch of Freemasonry the significance is that the square is the implement of Craft Masonry, while the compasses are the instrument of the more expert Craftsman. Thus, the candidate " passes from the Square to the Compasses" to indicate a progressive elevation in his studies. This interpretation seems to be followed by the Ancient Work; where the Immediate Past Master's Jewel is the Compasses set upon the arc of a circle. A portion of the charge to the I.P.M. in the work as practiced in the

Southern United States, is " as you have now passed beyond the Square, I now present you with the Compasses, with which you are to create your own square."

Whatever the origin, the Square and Compasses are to us, now and for all time, the symbol of a Mason's Duty to the Craft and to himself; and is therefore, the symbol of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and as such, earns the right to be shown to the world as the Symbol of our Order.