

Official Procedure
TABLE LODGE
GRAND LODGE OF NEW JERSEY
APRIL, 2003

The ceremonies of conducting a Table Lodge may be traced over two centuries in English Masonry and detailed records exist of their even earlier observances in France. The ancient customs of proposing and drinking toast by our Scottish brethren is recorded during the reign of King James the First of Scotland in 1430.

Freemasonry has two great festivals, the traditional Feast of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist. They are observed at the time of the summer and winter solstices, June 24th and December 27th and predate Christianity. The holding of a Table Lodge is an appropriate means of observing these feasts.

A Table Lodge should be relaxed and enjoyable! It is, however, a Masonic Ceremony and a certain amount of dignity and decorum must be observed. It may be conducted at the festive board after the Lodge is closed and members have retired to the Banquet Hall, or may be held as a separate meeting. The same precautions should be taken as for a Regular Lodge meeting for it is a tiled ceremony and all present must be a Freemason!

MANNERS: The Brethren should be attired in a manner that will reflect their respect for their Lodge and the Craft; clothed as Masons and Officers with their jewels. There should be **NO SMOKING** at a Table Lodge and that fact should be made clear by the Worshipful Master or Printed in the Program.

ROOM ARRANGEMENT: It is preferred that the tables be arranged in a horseshoe pattern, with the speakers' table representing the East. The Brethren should be seated around the outer rim of the horseshoe with the Altar in the center. If the size of the group will not permit this traditional arrangement, the tables for the Brethren may be placed at right angles to the speakers' table, placing the Altar immediately in front of the Master's chair. The Altar should **NOT** be crowded, however, and must be given a position of Honor.

ENTERTAINMENT: The entertainment should be chosen with due respect for the dignity of a Lodge function. A Table Lodge is not a place for magicians or comedians. Of course, as in Lodge, discussion of partisan politics and religion is forbidden! Appropriate music may, and should, be part of the ceremony and provided by musicians who are members of the Craft.

SINGING: A Table Lodge is an excellent way to bring singing back into Masonry. Appropriate odes may be sung during the proceedings at the discretion of the Worshipful Master.

SPEAKER: The success of a Masonic festival depends greatly upon the quality of the address. It should be inspirational and limited to approximately twenty minutes. The subject matter should be appropriate to the occasion and Masonic in nature. The Festive Board of Freemasonry is not a time for solicitation of funds or pushing a project or certain movement. Keep it Positive!

BOX OF FRATERNAL ASSISTANCE: (Optional) The time-honored Masonic custom of providing Charity finds a natural setting in the surroundings of a Table Lodge. The Worshipful Master should state the charitable purpose for which the gift is to be used.

THE BEVERAGE: alcoholic beverages may be served if dispensation is acquired from the proper Masonic authority for that purpose **PRIOR to the Table Lodge.** Serving size of alcoholic beverage is limited to two fluid ounces per member for each of the seven toast.

REHEARSALS: The Opening and Closing and the ceremony of the seven toasts should be rehearsed prior to conducting a Table Lodge. As in ALL ritual, there is no substitute for a rehearsal and success will depend upon the effort expended.

TRADITIONAL TOASTS: there are always seven toasts; no more, no less! Traditionally, the first toast, "To Our Country", is given by the Worshipful Master. The seventh Toast, "To All Freemasons Wheresoever spread Over The Face Of The Earth", is called the Tyler's Toast for it is always given by the Tyler. A toast to _____ Lodge, No. _____, is given by the Junior Warden. A toast to Our Visiting Brethren of the Evening is always given by the Senior Deacon. Other toasts are given by the Worshipful Master or a Brother designated by him. Suggested toasts are:

To the Holy Saints John
To the Memory of Our Departed Brethren
To the Office of the President of the United States
To Our Brethren in the Armed Forces
To the Founders of Our Lodge
Or the Charter Members

To the Grand Lodge
To the Grant Master
To the Past Masters
To the Newly Raised Brethren
To Our Masonic Home and
Our Guests Therein

WHO PARTICIPATES: All the Brethren participate in the toast at exactly the same instant, except those who are being toasted. Thus when the Junior Warden offers a toast to the Lodge, the Worshipful Master remains seated and does not participate; when the Senior Deacon proposes a toast to the Visiting Brethren, the visitors remain seated and do not join in the toast. Those present who have been honored with a toast (the Worshipful Master, the Grand Master, the honored guest, or one representing a group) may reply in appropriate words and then drink to the health of the Brethren. It would be appropriate for the District Deputy Grand Master or the highest ranking present or past Grand Lodge

Officer to reply to a toast to the Grand Lodge or the Grand Master. A member of the Home Board could reply to a toast to the Masonic Home.

Those who are to propose a toast or are to reply should be notified in advance so that they may be prepared. The Lodge is raised for each toast and seated before the reply. The Worshipful Master raises and seats the Brethren except for the Junior Warden's toast to the Lodge when he has that privilege. After the Tyler's Toast the Brethren immediately cross arms, join hands and sing "Auld Lang Syne".

INSTRUCTIONS: Before opening the Table Lodge the Brethren should be shown the Table Lodge Grand Honors (clap hands three times three) and the manner of toasting should be explained. Before the first toast the Worshipful Master should explain: "Brethren, we are about to begin the ceremony of the seven toasts. Our first duty is to charge our Cannons with powder, being the terms used for glasses and beverage at like occasions in days of yore. We will now charge our Cannons."

Example: (First toast)

(One rap of the gavel by WM, SW, and JW. Everyone remain seated.)

WM: (rises) Brothers, Senior and Junior Wardens, cause the Cannons to be charged and aligned for the first toast (SW and JW rise, brethren remain seated.)

SW: (SW and brethren on the North hold empty Cannons (glasses) at arms length) Brethren on the Column on the North, in all your grades and stations, charge and align your Cannons for the first toast of obligation which the Worshipful Master is about to propose. (on the word "propose" all glasses are brought sharply to the table in unison.)

JW: (JW and brethren on the South hold empty Cannons (glasses) at arms length) Brethren on the Column on the South, in all your grades and stations, charge and align your Cannons for the first toast of obligation which the Worshipful Master is about to propose. (on the word "propose" all glasses are brought sharply to the table in unison.)

The Cannons are charged at this time by the Stewards (or acting Stewards).

Worshipful Master raises the Lodge.

WM: Brethren, I have the honor to propose a toast To Our Country; Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light' Protect us by Thy might, Great God Our King! With me, Brethren – To Our Country.

Brethren: To Our Country.

WM: Right hand to arms. (all reach out and grasp glass as it sits on the table)

Ready! (glasses raised. Arm outstretched.)

Aim! (glass brought to lips)

Fire! (first sip – 1/3 of liquid)

Good Fire! (second sip)

Fire All! (finish drink)

Present Arms! (hold empty glass at arms length)

The Battery! (bring glass to left breast, right breast, return to arms

Length-done THREE times, then bring glass forcibly onto Table IN UNISON)

ALL; VIVAT, VIVAT, VIVAT!

WM: Advance Swords! (hold knife at arms length-pointed straight out)
Poise Swords! (tilt knife back to 45 degree angle)
Salute with Swords! (bring knife to chin-keeping 45 degree angle)
Swords at Rest! (bring knife forcibly to table-IN UNISON)

ALL: VIVAT, VIVAT, VIVAT! (raising right arm with each VIVAT!)

WM: (one rap) Brethren, partake of the first course.

Each toast should be handled in this manner.

After each of the first five toasts should be a course of the dinner and the speaker or presentation should follow the sixth toast. The dinner may be as elaborate as desired but need not be expensive. A suggested five course meal could be: Fruit cup, salad, soup, entrée, and desert.

OPENING OF TABLE LODGE

At the discretion of the Worshipful Master, a Table Lodge may be opened on any one of the three degrees.)

WM: (one rap of gavel) brother Senior Warden.

SW: (rises) Worshipful Master.

WM: Invite the brethren to assist us in opening this Table Lodge.

SW: Brother Junior Warden.

JW: (rises) Brother Senior Warden.

SW: It is the order of the Worshipful Master that the brethren assist us in opening this Table Lodge.

JW: (raises the Lodge with three raps) Brethren, you have heard the order of the Worshipful Master communicated to me by way of the Senior Warden. Take due Notice thereof, that it may be accordingly so done.

WM: Brother Senior Warden.

SW: Worshipful Master

WM: Are you a Mason?

SW: All my brethren know me to be such.

WM: What is our first care?

SW: To see that the Lodge is duly tyled.

WM: Brother Tyler, you will cause this Table Lodge to be tyled.

TYL: (Moves from his seat to the door, closes it and locks it, returns to his seat.)
Worshipful Master, this Table Lodge is duly tyled.

WM: Brother Senior Warden, what is the second care?

SW: To see if the brethren are in order and are Masons.

WM: Are you satisfied that all present are Masons?

SW: I am satisfied on the North Column, Worshipful Sir.

WM: Brother Junior Warden, are you satisfied that all present are Masons?

JW: I am satisfied on the South Column, Worshipful Sir.

WM: Are the brethren satisfied with each other? (Master stands) I declare this Table Lodge opened on the (EA, FC, or MM) degree. Brethren, the Grand Honors. (Public)

ALL: (Clap hands, three times three.)

WM: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
Brethren, let us pray.

CHP: Supreme Ruler of the Universe, we reverently invoke Thy blessing on us now Assembled. Wilt Thou be pleased to grant that this meeting, thus begun in order, May be conducted in peace and harmony. Amen.

ALL: So mote it be.

WM: Brother Senior Deacon, you will attend at the Altar.

SD: (Attends to the Altar, salutes with due guard and sign of (EA, FC, or MM).
Worshipful Master, your order is obeyed.

WM: It is well. Brethren you will face the flag of our Country and Pledge Allegiance To it. (Sits, raps to seat the Lodge.)

CLOSING OF TABLE LODGE

Just after the singing of "Old Lang Syne" and prior to the closing it is suggested that the Worshipful Master leave the Brethren with some closing remarks. A sample closing statement:

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 put forth in the Great Light in Masonry, the rule and guide for our faith and practice. Craftsmen in the quarries, I summon you to greater loyalty to your Lodge and to your Fraternity --- to integrity in all your dealings with your fellow man --- to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed. Guard against 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 friendly counsel in the ear of him who needs encouragement.

Let us each make use of the Trowel to spread the cement of Brotherhood. Let us labor with the Common Gavel that these Rough Ashlars may be Perfect Ashlars. Finally, my Brethren, remember how you once stood in the Northeast Corner, a just and upright Mason. I give it to you strictly in charge, ever to act, walk and conduct yourself as such."

WM: Brother Tyler, see that this Table Lodge is duly tyled.

TYL: (goes to door, returns and salutes) Worshipful Master, this Table Lodge is Duly tyled.

WM: Brother Senior Warden, what is the time?

SW: (stands and salutes) Worshipful Master, the time is past and naught we can Never return the smallest bit of it.

WM: Brother Junior Warden, what is the hour?

JW: (stands and salutes) Worshipful Master, the hour is late and we must strive To capture every fleeting moment that slips from our lives as sand slips through our fingers.

WM: Brother Senior Warden, in consideration of the hour, invite the Brethren to Assist us in closing this Table Lodge.

SW: Brother Junior Warden.

JW: Brother Senior Warden.

SW: In consideration of the hour, it is the order of the Worshipful Master that the Brethren assist us in closing this Table Lodge.

JW: Brethren, you have heard the order of the Worshipful Master Communicated to me by way of the Senior Warden. Take due notice thereof, that it may be accordingly so done.

WM: (three raps) Brethren the Grand Honors. (clap, three times three)

W.M.: Brethren, let us pray.

CHP: Father of us all, bring into this room tonight the knowledge of our Many blessings. May we recognize that what we have done has Been to promote fellowship and a better understanding of our Fellow man. Bless our efforts to serve humanity and we pray that You will be our Strength and our Shield. Amen

ALL: So mote it be.

WM: I declare this Table Lodge closed. Brother Senior Deacon, attend to the Altar.

SD: (salutes, attends to Altar) Worshipful Master, your order is Obeyed.

WM: It is well. (sits and raps gavel).

Note: If the Grand Master or Deputy Grand Master is present at the Table Lodge, at the appropriate time that he would receive Grand Honors, they will be the Private Grand Honors (used in a Tiled Lodge) no matter what Degree the Table Lodge is being conducted under. He receives Grand Honors even though the Public Grand Honors were given earlier during the opening.

Auld Lang Syne

Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind
Should Auld acquaintance be forgot, and days of auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne, my dear for auld lang syne;
We'll take a cup of kindness yet, for auld lang syne.

A Seating Chart is Attached!

For NEW LEADS A. Case: better seating arrangement is acceptable. D/L/AM at WM's right, speaker, and other dignitaries around head table.

