

## **WHITE RIVER LODGE No. 153**



**Brotherhood & Friendship**

### **Traditional History (3rd Degree Tracing Board)**

We left off at that part of our traditional history which mentions the death of our Master Hiram Abiff. Abiff loss so important as that of the principal architect could not fail of being generally and severely felt. The want of those plans and designs which had hitherto been regularly supplied to the different classes of workmen was the first indication that some heavy calamity had befallen our Master. The Menatschin, or Prefects, or, more familiarly speaking, the Overseers, deputed some of the most eminent of their number to acquaint King Solomon with the utter confusion into which the absence of Hiram had plunged them, and to express their apprehension that to some fatal catastrophe must be attributed his sudden and mysterious disappearance. King Solomon immediately ordered a general muster of the workmen throughout the different departments, when three of the same class of overseers, were not to be found. On the same day the twelve Craftsmen who had originally joined in the conspiracy before the King and made a voluntary confession of all they knew down to the time of withdrawing themselves from the number of the conspirators. This naturally increased the fears of King Solomon for the safety of his chief artist. He therefore selected fifteen trusty Fellow Crafts and ordered them to make diligent search after the person of our Master, to ascertain if he were yet alive, or had suffered death in the attempt to extort from him the secrets of his exalted Degree.

Accordingly, a stated day having been appointed for their return to Jerusalem, they formed themselves into three Fellow Craft Lodges and departed from the three entrances of the Temple. Many days were spent in fruitless search; indeed, one class returned without having made any discovery of importance. A second, however, were more fortunate, for on the evening of a certain day, after having suffered the greatest privations and personal fatigues, one of the brethren, who had rested himself in a reclining posture, to assist his rising caught hold of a shrub that grew near, which to his surprise came easily out of the ground. On a closer examination he found that the earth had been recently disturbed. He therefore hailed his companions and with their united endeavours reopened the ground and there found the body of our Master very indecently interred. They covered it again with all respect and reverence, and to distinguish the spot stuck a sprig of acacia at the head of the grave.

They then hastened to Jerusalem to impart the afflicting intelligence to King Solomon. He, when the first emotions of his grief had subsided, ordered them to return and raise our Master to such a sepulture as became his rank and exalted talents, at the same time informing them that by his untimely death the secrets of a Master Mason were lost. He therefore charged them to be particularly careful in observing whatever casual sign, token or word might occur whilst paying this last sad tribute of respect to departed merit.

They performed their task with the utmost fidelity; and on reopening the ground one of the brethren looking round, *WM rises,* observed some of his companions in this position *WM gives Sign of Horror* struck with horror at the dreadful and afflicting sight *WM drops Sign* while others, viewing the ghastly wound still visible on his forehead, smote their own *WM gives Sign of Sympathy* in sympathy with his sufferings *WM drops Sign, sits*. Two of the brethren then descended the grave and endeavoured to raise him by the Entered Apprentice's Grip which proved a slip. They then tried the Fellow Craft's, which proved a slip likewise. Having both failed in their attempts, a zealous and expert brother took a more firm hold on the sinews of the hand, and with their assistance, raised him on the five points of fellowship, while others, more animated, exclaimed Machaben or Machbinna, both words having a nearly similar import, one signifying the death of the builder, the

other the builder is smitten. King Solomon therefore ordered that those casual Signs and that Token and Word should designate all Master Masons, throughout the universe until time or circumstances should restore the genuine.

It only remains to account for the third class, who had pursued their researches in the direction of Joppa, and were meditating their return to Jerusalem, when accidentally passing the mouth of a cavern they heard sounds of deep lamentation and regret. On entering the cave to ascertain the cause, they found three men answering the description of those missing, who, on being charged with the murder and finding all chance of escape cut off, made a full confession of their guilt. They were then bound and led to Jerusalem, when King Solomon sentenced them to that death the heinousness of their crime so amply merited.

*Immediate Past Master hands Tracing Board and pencil to WM.*

*WM with pencil points to various items on Tracing Board as words require:*

Our Master was ordered to be reinterred as near to the Sanctum Sanctorum as the Israelitish law would permit; there in a grave from the centre three feet East and three feet West, three feet between North and South, and five feet or more perpendicular. He was not buried in the Sanctum Sanctorum, because nothing common or unclean was allowed to enter there, not even the High Priest but once a year, nor then until after many washings and purifications against the great day of expiation for sins, for by the Israelitish law all flesh was deemed unclean. The same fifteen trusty Fellow Crafts were ordered to attend the funeral, clothed in white aprons and gloves as emblems of their innocence. You have already been informed that the working tools with which our Master was slain were the Plumb Rule, Level and Heavy Maul. The ornaments of a Master Masons Lodge are the Porch, Dormer and Square Pavement. The Porch was the entrance to the Sanctum Sanctorum, the Dormer the window that gave light to the same, and the Square Pavement for the High Priest to walk on. The High Priest's office was to burn incense to the honour and glory of the Most High, and to pray fervently that the Almighty, of His unbounded wisdom and goodness, would be pleased to bestow peace and tranquility on the Israelitish nation during the ensuing year. The coffin, skull and cross bones, being emblems of mortality allude to the untimely death of our Master Hiram Abiff. He was slain

three thousand years after the creation of the world. *WM returns Tracing Board and pencil to Immediate Past Master.*

In the course of the ceremony you have been informed of three Signs in this Degree. The whole of them are five, corresponding in number with the five points of fellowship. They are the Sign of Horror, the Sign of Sympathy, the Penal Sign, the Sign of Grief and Distress and the Sign of Joy Exultation, likewise called the Grand or Royal Sign. For the sake of regularity I will go through them and you will copy me.

*WM illustrates Signs as he repeats appropriate words:* This is the Sign of Horror; this, of Sympathy; this, the Penal Sign. The Sign of Grief and Distress is given by passing the right hand across the face, and dropping it over the left eyebrow in the form of a square. This took its rise at the time our Master was making his way from the North to the East entrance of the Temple, when his agony was so great that the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead, and he made use of this Sign as a temporary relief to his sufferings. This is the Sign of Joy and Exaltation. It took its rise at the time the Temple was completed, and King Solomon with the princes of his household went to view it, when they were so struck with its magnificence that with one simultaneous motion they exclaimed 'Oh Wonderful Masons!'

On the Continent of Europe the Sign of Grief and Distress is given in a different manner, by clasping the hands and elevating them with their backs to the forehead, exclaiming 'Come to my assistance, ye children of the widow' on the supposition that all Master Masons are brothers to Hiram Abiff, who was a widow's son. In Ireland and the States of America the Sign of Grief and Distress is given in a still different manner, by throwing up the hands with the palms extended towards the Heavens and dropping them with three distinct movements to the sides, exclaiming 'Oh Lord my God, Oh Lord my God, Oh Lord my God, is there no help for the widow's son?'