

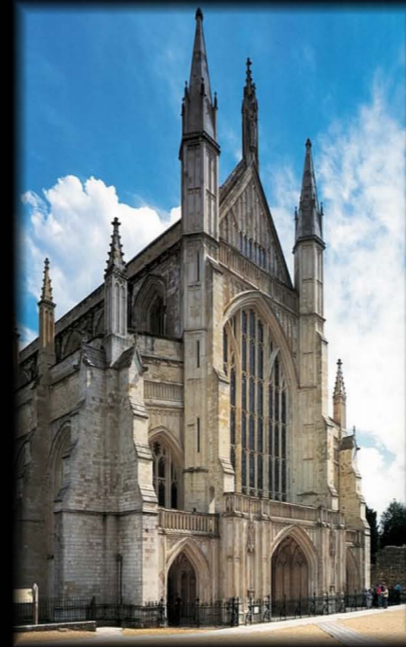
## MASONIC TRADITIONS

Our Masonic traditions can be traced directly to the associations of operative masons. In the Middle Ages, the terms "mason" and "freemason" were used interchangeably.

They were men of outstanding character and high ideals, who built the cathedrals, abbeys, and castles of the Middle Ages. They were stonemasons who built castles and cathedrals in England and Scotland. Because of the inherent danger of their work, many stonemasons formed local organizations, called lodges, to take care of sick and injured members as well as the widows and orphans of those who were killed on the job. The masons also used the lodges as places to meet, receive their pay, plan their work, train new apprentices, and socialize.

With the decline of cathedral building in the 17th Century, many guilds of stonemasons, called "Operative" masons, started to accept into their membership those who were not members of the masons' craft and called them "Speculative" or "Accepted" masons.

It was in these groups, called lodges, comprised mainly of "Accepted" masons that Freemasonry, as we know it today, had its beginning. In 1717, four such lodges, which had been meeting regularly in London, united to form the first Grand Lodge of England under the direction of a Grand Master.



## SYMBOLS & FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry uses the metaphors of operative stonemasons' tools and implements, against an allegorical backdrop in order to convey what has been described by both Masons and critics as "a beautiful system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols."

The Square and Compasses is the single most identifiable symbol of Freemasonry. Both the square and compasses are architect's tools, and are used in Masonic ritual as emblems to teach symbolic lessons.

The tools of operative masons are used to symbolize and teach the basic principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth which Masons are encouraged to practice in their daily lives. Charity is a tangible way in which Masons help those whose circumstances in life fairly warrant it

