

The Square and Compasses

Fidelity Lodge No. 428 – December 12, 2011

The square and compasses is probably one of the best internationally known logos. There may in fact be logos better known in Canada; better known in the USA or better known in Italy however on an International basis I would suggest that the square and compasses is one of the best known, if not the best known logo.

Are you wearing one now? Do you wear it regularly? Do you have one on your car or truck?

Are you aware of what you represent when you put it on?

Do you recall the Senior Wardens words when he invested you with your apron – “____ if you never disgrace that badge it will never disgrace you.” The same could be said about the displaying of the square and compasses the well known symbols of Masonry.

When wearing or displaying the square and compasses you are informing friends and strangers that you are proud to be a Mason and I encourage you to do so. Just think for a moment when displaying this logo what you are saying to the public, to your relatives and friends and may be more importantly to strangers that you may never meet. When anyone sees for just a moment, your Masonic logo you then represent your lodge, your District, the Grand Master, the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario and every Mason in the World. This is because the person you are meeting when displaying the square and compasses may never have met another Mason and consequently you provide a light, good or bad for him or her into our fraternity.

Do you recall recently when you were so frustrated with another driver on 401? You felt like giving that driver a less than complimentary non-Masonic sign, but as a Mason you didn't. Imagine with the square and compasses on the back of your vehicle what that driver would have said to his friends about Masonry if you had treated him or her in a rude manner. Be aware that when you place that well known logo on the back of your vehicle you have taken on an awesome responsibility.

By the way, the compass is an instrument that points to the magnetic north and has only one point. The compasses that are in our logo have 2 points and are therefore plural and are correctly referred to as, the compasses.

Webster's dictionary indicates that the instrument used to draw a circle may in fact be called a compass, compasses or a pair of compasses. According to Helms, Coil would agree with this, as it is consistent with the singular noun in the plural form such as with scissors, pliers, pants or trousers. Helms points out that Mackey's Masonic Encyclopedia indicates that using the word compass is an embarrassment to Masons as we should only use it in the plural form. Really it is a moot point. Our ritual uses the singular noun in the plural form, therefore we should be consistent with our ritual.

The square is to regulate our lives and actions and the compasses is to keep us within due bounds of all mankind. The jewel of the Worshipful Master is the square and that of the Grand Master is the compasses.

Historically the sun and the moon have appeared in the centre of the Square and Compasses. I've been told that the "G" in the centre of the well known symbol of Masonry was a jeweler's innovation and appeared in our symbol approximately 100 years ago. If you search other Masonic Websites you will notice that not all display the "G" in their logo. You may also note that the "G" is not present in the carvings of old Masonic furniture in our Lodge rooms.

The "G" is standard in our Masonic Logo referred to in our Constitution, Section 3.1. Our present Standard Logo was approved in 1989. However from my observation the "G" is not a required part of the symbol in many Masonic jurisdictions. As a child seeing my father's Masonic ring I thought that the "G" stood for Galt.

In late April of 1958 I had just finished my first year of Veterinary Medicine at Guelph. The first morning at home I was greeted with the news that my Grandfather had just died. I vividly recall seeing the Square and Compasses on the lid of the rough box which was close to the grave site. The fact that he took the emblem to his grave said to me how important Masonry was to him. I mention this because of the effect of something as simple as displaying the square and compasses on a rough box that was going underground, never to be seen again.

It is also interesting to note that the square and compasses are used for the Insignia of the Ancient Order of Free Gardeners. If you search the web you will find that in the centre of the square and compasses they display a pruning knife, an instrument important to their trade. This Order was based in Scotland and was a very large fraternity in the 1700 - 1800s however it would appear that it has essentially died out. The ritual, history and symbolism have a lot in common with Masonry.

I have also come across in Helms book "Twice Told Tales" of the arm and hammer in the centre of the Square and Compasses used by the Junior Order of United American Mechanics.

The square and compasses are not unique to our fraternity however the square and compasses with "G" in the centre is indeed specific to The Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.

I encourage you to proudly wear and display our logo to let the world know about our craft. Carry in your wallet the information card, "Freemasonry is ____". Since you and I are proud to be Masons, then we should display with pride, our membership in the craft. From my observation, the image of Masonry is steadily improving. Let's keep it going.

I leave you with this, if you are proud to be a Mason then display our Standard Logo with pride and remember that "____ if you never disgrace that badge it will never disgrace you."

Book of Constitution – Grand Lodge
Twice Told Tales – L.C. Helms

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