



**MW Bro. Edward A. Clarke .....1**  
**The Baltimore Convention of 1843....2**  
**Celebration of the Craft .....4**  
**Distribution of our membership .....4**  
**Thank you from the Grand Master...4**  
**A perfect freedom of inclination .....4**  
**Leaders .....4**  
**Grand Master's itinerary.....4**

# The Baltimore Convention

by MW Henry C. Chiles, Missouri

The "Baltimore Convention of 1843", held 8 to 17 May, attempted to agree upon a "mode of work" to recommend to the various Grand Lodges, that masonic ritual might become uniform throughout the United States.

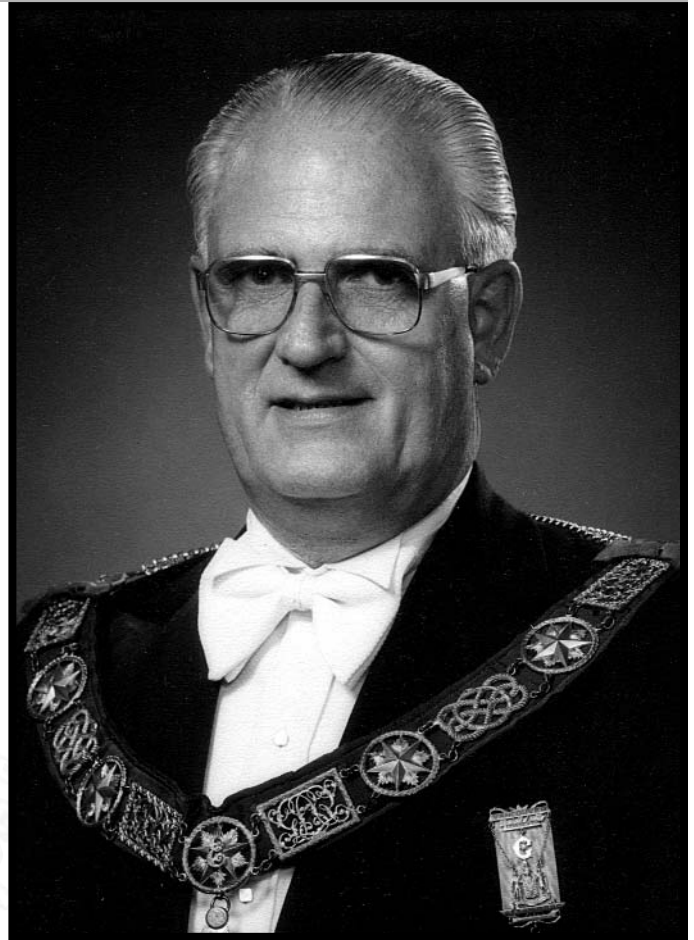
The catechism form of lectures came to that country with Freemasonry. The system originally arranged by Anderson and Desaguliers was revised and "improved" by Martin Clare, Thomas Dunkerly, William Hutchinson and, most important, William Preston, who suggested, if he did not exactly teach, the esoteric parts of the work by illustrations of symbols and emblems, depicted on floor cloths or carpets—even today we retain a reference to the Master's Carpet.

The Prestonian work was largely spread in the United States by Thomas Smith Webb, who published his first *Freemason's Monitor* in 1797. He is supposed to have had the

Prestonian work from a pupil of Preston's, John Hanmer. Almost every jurisdiction (Pennsylvania excepted) adopted some or all of Webb's modifications of Preston. Webb's labours were greatly aided by Jeremy Cross, whose *True Masonic Chart* (illustrated by the Connecticut engraver Amos Doolittle) is the foundation of those often terrible examples of art seen today on masonic charts and lantern slides.

In the early days of Freemasonry in the United States a ritual, with every word prescribed, had not been evolved. According to Rob Morris: "The catechism being committed to memory the learner was supposed to possess the method of work, that is, the drill and drama, or ceremony of Masonry, which was made literally to conform to the lectures."

Dr. Mackey, in his *Lexicon* said of the lectures: "These constitute the simple text of Masonry, while the extended



**MW Bro. Edward Annetts Clarke**  
**11 March 1923 - 19 August 2010**

Born and educated in Vancouver, BC, MW Bro. "Ted" Clarke was initiated into St John's Lodge No. 3 in Quebec City on 16 October 1944, receiving his Fellowcraft degree on 25 November 1945 and Master Mason degree on 9 February 1946, as a courtesy by Ionic Lodge No. 31 in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. He affiliated with Vancouver Lodge No. 68 on 14 November 1946, serving as Worshipful Master for 1967-1968 and, upon moving to Chilliwack, affiliated with Ionic Lodge No. 19 in 11 June 1973. Elected as Junior Grand Warden in 1977, he progressed to serve as Grand Master for 1980-1981, when his goal was to promote awareness of the need for freemasons to live their Freemasonry at all times.

illustrations which are given to them by an intelligent Master or Lecturer constitute the commentary, without which the simple text would be comparatively barren and uninteresting."

A joint committee report

recommending the adoption of the Webb lectures to the Grand Lodges of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, in 1806, stated: "In the three degrees every Master of a lodge should

*continued on page 2*



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## **The Baltimore Convention** *from page one*

be indulged with the liberty of adopting historical details, and the personification of the passing scene, as most agreeable to himself, his supporting officers and assisting Lodge."

That "the lectures" meant a catechism which the Baltimore Convention wished to make uniform throughout the nation, is revealed in its official printed proceedings:

"The Chairman of the Standing Committee on work, stated that the committee had, after mature deliberation, decided on the lecture of the first degree, and proceeded to report, Bro. Moore giving the answers."

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century the establishment of lodges rapidly followed the westward march of the pioneers. Many prominent, substantial and influential men became freemasons. But the second quarter saw the fraternity almost wiped out of existence. The excitement created by the disappearance of William Morgan, of Batavia, New York, in September 1826, ripened into a nationwide and extraordinarily bitter anti-masonic movement, a crusade which became relentless persecution.

Anti-masonic newspapers, pamphlets, almanacs and addresses were distributed in large quantities. Itinerant lecturers traveled the country over, each striving to outdo the other in denunciation of the Institution. In public exhibitions before large audiences, crusaders purported to open "Masonic Lodges" and confer "Masonic Degrees" upon disreputable persons. Exposés, pretending to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry, were published.

These widespread persecutions nearly wrecked the fraternity. A very large number of lodges either gave up their

warrants, or became dormant. Grand Lodges ceased to meet. Freemasonry was seriously affected everywhere.

During the years of the Morgan warfare against the Craft little masonic work was done, and the older and more skilled members either died or lost their proficiency.

Professional masonic lecturers sought other means of livelihood. So that when the tide receded and petitions once more were presented to lodges, the younger generation often received only imperfect instruction.

On the defensive, the fraternity was obliged carefully to guard against cowans and evesdroppers. Evidence of membership of a would-be visitor was critically tested. Examining committees proceeded on the theory that the presumption of regularity was against the would-be visitor.

Under such conditions, lack of uniformity of masonic work among the several Grand Lodges, or even among lodges in the same state, was a formidable obstacle to fraternal intercourse.

Possible relief from these chaotic conditions it was thought might be found in uniformity of the lectures. Identification of members could thus be the more readily made and lodges could discontinue turning away visitors, among whom many must have been in good standing, even if unable to prove themselves.

In 1840 the Grand Lodge of Alabama requested all Grand Lodges in the United States with which she was in fraternal intercourse, to send a delegate to meet in a general convention the first Monday in March, 1842, in Washington, DC "for the purpose of determining upon a uniform mode of work throughout all the lodges of the United States, and to make other lawful regulations for the interest and security of the Craft."

As a result, representatives of Alabama, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Virginia, convened.

On 9 March, a committee of five, appointed "to revise and suggest a uniform mode of work" reported that, among its members, "there exists a satisfactory degree of uniformity" but because many Grand Lodges were unrepresented, it recommended that "every Grand Lodge in the United States appoint one or more skillful brethren to be styled Grand Lecturers, who shall meet and agree upon the course of instruction necessary and proper to be imparted to the lodges and the fraternity in their several Jurisdictions."

Following the adoption of this report, the Convention "Resolved, That should the Grand Lodges or a majority of them determine to adopt the recommendations contained in the report of the committee, respecting the appointment of Grand Lecturers, that it be further recommended by this convention that the first meeting of said Grand Lecturers be held in the City of Baltimore, on the second Monday in May, 1843."

The Baltimore Convention met Monday, 8 May 1843, and remained in session (Sunday excepted) to and including Wednesday, 17 May.

On the second day, agenda were adopted declaring the objects and purposes of the Convention to be:

1. To produce uniformity of masonic work.
2. To recommend such measures as shall tend to the elevation of this order to its due degree of respect throughout the world at large.

To accomplish the first object, four committees were appointed, viz:

1. On the work and lectures in conferring the degrees.

2. On the funeral service.
  3. On the ceremonies of Consecration and Installation.
  4. On masonic jurisprudence.
- To accomplish the second object, three committees were appointed, viz:

1. To report on the expediency of adopting a regularly authorized masonic trestle-board and further to report on the propriety of publishing a work of antiquarian research and learning the origin and history of the order, of such a character as shall exhibit the excellence and antiquity thereof in its true light.
2. To report on further measures necessary to carry out the programme of the Washington Convention of 1942, in reference to Grand Lodge certificates.
3. To report on the expediency of issuing a letter addressed by this convention to the fraternity throughout the United States on the general state of Freemasonry, etc.

The Committee on Work and lectures in conferring the degrees consisted of Dove of Virginia, (chairman), Moore of Massachusetts, Barney of Ohio, Wadsworth of New York, and Carnegy of Missouri. It made its first report the next morning. Except as to one member, a "satisfactory degree of uniformity existed."

The chairman of the Standing Committee on Work, stated that the committee had, after mature deliberation, decided on the lecture of the first degree, and proceeded to report, Bro. Moore giving the answers."

Herndon, Past Grand Master of Alabama, offered the resolution: "That the lecture on the first degree of Freemasonry, as reported by the committee, be by this convention now adopted, as the authorized work in that degree, to be recommended to the fraternity throughout the Union." The proceedings then state, "After

an animated discussion, the question was taken of the resolution, and it was adopted, 14 to 1 — the delegate from New York (Wadsworth of the committee) dissenting."

Then, "The chairman of the same committee reported on the opening and closing of a lodge in the second degree. After some discussion the report was adopted. Bro. Wadsworth requested to be excused from serving longer on the Committee on Work. Excused, and Bro. Herndon of Alabama substituted."

On Friday morning, "The chairman on the Committee on Work presented a verbal report on the first section of the lecture in the third degree", which was adopted "after a slight amendment."

At the afternoon session of the same day, "Bro. Moore reported the second section of the lecture in the third degree. Bro. Case moved an amendment, which was adopted.

At the afternoon session, Saturday, 13 May, the Committee on Work reported on the work of the third degree. The report was adopted by a vote of 12 to 1, Wadsworth of New York dissenting.

In a letter written twenty years after the convention, quoted in *The Builder*, June, 1916, RW Bro. Charles W. Moore said:

"The work and lectures of the first three degrees, as adopted and authorized by the Baltimore Convention, in 1843, were, with a few unimportant verbal exceptions, literally as they were originally compiled by Bro. Thos. S. Webb, about the close of the last century, and as they were subsequently taught by him during his lifetime, and also by his early and favorite pupil, Bro. Benjamin Gleason, from the years 1801-02 until his death in 1847. I had the honour to be a member of the committee, and to report the amendments and

the lectures as amended, to the convention. This I did without alterations from the original; and these are now in my possession. They are mostly verbal, few in number, and not material in their results. The only change of consequence was in the due guards of the second and third degrees, which were changed and made to conform to that of the first degree in position and explanation. This was analogically correct."

To the Grand Lodge of Vermont, Grand Master Phillip Crosby Tucker said, at the annual communication of 1861

"There can be no doubt then that the lectures communicated by Henry Fowle to John Barney were the genuine lectures taught by Thomas Smith Webb and Benjamin Gleason; the same which Gleason received from Webb in 1801 or 1802, the same which he taught as Grand Lecturer of Massachusetts from 1805; the same that I found among the Boston freemasons in 1823 or 1824; and the very same which are taught there now."

A. I. Kress, in *The Builder* September 1926, stated:

"In 1760, what is now the EA sign was called the FC's due guard or sign. What are now the EA and FC DGs were unknown or at least not used as such. There was only one sign each in the EA and FC degrees. Some time about 1800 (the date is indeterminate when it occurred to someone to incorporate the movement or action to be known as the due guard and the other as the sign. These were as follows: In the EA degree, what is now the due guard was then termed the sign and what is now the sign was called the due guard. In the FC degree, the two were given almost as now, except they were never given separately. In the MM degree, the due guard was given with the right hand only.

In 1843, a convention was

held at Baltimore, Md., to agree on a uniform ritual. Among other things, they reversed the procedure in the EA degree. What was then the due guard they made our present sign and vice versa. In the MM degree, they adopted the use of both hands in giving the MM due guard."

Under the title "Immovable jewels" Dr. Mackey's *Lexicon* says:

"According to the old system in England, the immovable jewels of the Lodge are the Rough Ashlar, Perfect Ashlar and Trestle Board; but in this country, by the decision of the Baltimore Convention, in 1843, they are made to consist of the Square, Level and Plumb."

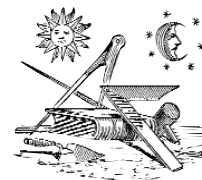
Apparently only three major changes of importance were adopted by the Baltimore Convention. The third is seen in *The Masonic Trestleboard* the manual or monitor issued by the authority of the convention (the same may be seen in many modern manuals and monitors). On plate 3 appeared the following cryptic figures:

7 (3/4) 5 (3/2) 3.

An explanation by Dr. James W. S. Mitchell, P.G.M. (Mo.) in his magazine, *The Masonic Signet and Literary Mirror* for March, 1852, reads:

"About the time of the rage of anti-masonry various schemes and devices and non-essential changes were proposed, among which it was gravely suggested that all members of lodges must be M. Ms, that the business of the lodge should be done in the third degree, which would require all applicants to visit to prove themselves to be MMs. In some jurisdictions this system was adopted, in others, the good old way was adhered to."

Doubtless the reasons which impelled the convention to take this action were those which had moved it to adopt the other changes or amendments to prevailing words and practices.



Freemasonry:  
the art and science  
of right living



GRAND LODGE  
of BRITISH COLUMBIA and  
YUKON



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Dogwood Lodge No. 192  
Third Saturday  
Meridian Lodge No. 108  
Second Saturday

However that may be, it seems clear that the Baltimore Convention adopted, with only three major changes of importance, the lectures as taught by Thomas Smith Webb, and recommended their adoption by the several Grand Lodges then in existence. ■

*Henry C. Chiles was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri in 1939.*

## Thank-you

*MW Bro. J. Alan Cross*

On behalf of my family, I wish to thank the brethren, their ladies and our lodges for the huge outpouring of support and encouragement during the last few months leading up to and after the passing of my wife Moya. I was overwhelmed at the cards, letters, and emails which have helped me get through this tumultuous period of our lives.

Moya was a great inspiration. I was so pleased that she rose to the occasion and was with us at the Grand Lodge Communication in Kamloops. She was not only my wife and mother to our two sons, but also my best critic and cheerleader. Again, thank you for your care and concern! We really appreciate it! ■

## Lodge event

On 17 October, District 13 Education Officer, Bro. Wes Regan of **Mount Hermon**

**Lodge No 7** will act as Master of Ceremonies for *Craft Night at the Cobalt*, a celebration of the creative contributions of freemasons past and present, and a casual evening of entertainment for brethren and their friends and family.

Brethren from several lodges will be honoring past brothers such as Oscar Peterson, Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, Robert Burns, Peter Sellers, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and others with live performances,

readings of their work, or a brief biography honouring their achievements. W. Bro Mike Kruk, Worshipful Master of **Cascade Lodge No. 12** will be dj for the evening.

Admission is by donation with proceeds going to support both the Cancer Car Project and the Digital Freemason Podcast — a volunteer masonic education podcast from Bro Scott Blasken of Calgary Alberta.

The location will be Bro Ezra Kish's newly renovated Cobalt Hotel, 917 Main Street, from 7:30 pm until last man musing.

For more information or to contribute to the evening by honoring a past brother you've admired contact Bro. Wes Regan at wes.regan@shaw.ca ■

## Our members

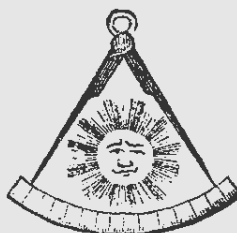
Our membership, currently at 9,722, is distributed across nine regions with approximately 8% of our members in the north, 27% in the Interior, 40% in the Lower Mainland and 25% on Vancouver's Island.

Region	Membership	%
North	818	8.4
Cariboo South	1008	10.3
Okanagan	910	9.3
Kootenay	720	7.4
South Fraser	1147	11.8
Vancouver	1353	13.9
Lower Mainland	1345	13.8
North Island	982	10.1
South Island	1439	14.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>9722</b>	

## Freedom

Freemasonry requires a perfect freedom of inclination. No candidate should ever feel coercion into joining, while equally, no member should feel any external pressure to remain a member. Freemasons are freemasons because they want to be freemasons.

Every lodge should regret the loss of any member, and do whatever possible to gain the



### GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY OCTOBER 2010

2	S	Centenary	Tsimpsean No. 58	Prince Rupert
3	Su	Church Parade	Anglican Cathedral	Prince Rupert
12	T	Board of General Purposes, Grand Lodge		Kamloops
13-15	W-F	Canmore Western Canada Conference		Banff, Alta
16	S	<b>District 8</b>	Creston No. 54	Creston
21	Th	Railway Night	Acacia No. 22	Vancouver
22	F	Hands across the Border,	Lynden No. 56	WA
23	S	Installation	Doric No. 18	Nanaimo
24	Su	Church Parade	Oakridge United Church	Vancouver
30	S	<b>Districts 4N, 4S</b>	Prince George No. 178	Prince George

interest, involvement and commitment of its members.

But if a member in good standing finds himself, for whatever personal reason, unable or unwilling to maintain his association with Freemasonry, he should be aware that he may voluntarily withdraw from Freemasonry by requesting a dimit, which he is entitled to receive.

If a member of a recognized lodge in the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon is free of all charges (fiscal and conduct) and is in possession of a current dues card at the time of his dimit or death, he is known as "a member in good standing at that time."

However, a member in good standing at the time of dimit is not a "member" nor in "good standing" thereafter, as he has voluntarily withdrawn himself from the rights and privileges of Freemasonry.

The dimit form available from the Grand Secretary's Office reads "...at his own request has been discharged from membership".

Taking a dimit is preferable to being suspended for non-payment of dues. A dimitted member may still, with some restrictions, visit lodges; he will

also find it easier if he wishes to affiliate with a lodge in the future.

Just as important is the potential bearing of his masonic status on his family. Membership in appendant organizations such as the Eastern Star for women, Job's Daughters for girls, and other bodies, requires that a relative be, or have been, a freemason. A member who is suspended does a potential disservice to his children or children's children.

Although different Grand Lodge jurisdictions will have their own definitions and requirement, all entitle their members to voluntarily withdraw if they so desire. There is no coercion or penalty; only, as in most things masonic, a proper form. ■

## Leaders

*Laozi (f. 400 bce)*

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worst when they despise him. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, "We did this ourselves." ■