

What Made Masonry Great In The First Place?  
by Douglas O. Brenneman

As I try to determine a response for this question, I still keep coming up with the same answer and that is; in her principles, her precepts and her teachings. We all know that these have basically stayed the same for centuries with the tine exception of interpretation in what we will call modern times. I will try and relate my feelings and understandings of Freemasonry's rise to fame in the United States of America from Brother George Washington's time on. Now everyone knows that Brother and President Washington practiced the three great tenants of a Masons profession; Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. However, I feel it was in the way in which this great General, great man, great President and yes, great Mason practiced these great tenants, that made him the exceptional leader he was and helped Masonry maintain its greatness at that time. As we recall Valley Forge, we understand his true greatness and the love that his soldiers must have had for him, to endure what they did that winter. Only a man that had the charity in his heart for all men whether he be prince or peasant, brother or foe, could have made these great accomplishments. As we start winding our way through history, we determine that the little red schoolhouse, the little white church and of course the right arm of Freemasonry, the Blue Lodge helped to make all of our communities great in their own way. We find that the little red schoolhouse, the white church and the Masonic Blue Lodge all were made up of God-fearing men, men with a hope to educate their children, to teach them the laws of the land, to instill the love and forgiveness of God toward all and to practice the Masonic teachings of the Blue Lodge, not only in the lodge room itself, but also in their communities. There were three Presidents - Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Andrew Jackson - who all had a part in making our Nation great by living and practicing the principles of Freemasonry.

Last year the Grand Lodge Officers toured the McKinley monument. Yes, another one of our Masonic presidents. The Grand Master recanted how President McKinley asked the crowd not to hurt the man who had just shot him. What a great example of Masonry and its teachings. We recall Brother and President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Brother and President Harry S. Truman and what they did for our Country when it was involved in World War II. Yes, what strong Brothers and Leaders these great men were.

This year we lost another great man and Mason with the death of Brother and Reverend Norman Vincent Peale. This Brother was a messenger of God and definitely made a great impact on thousands of people in his lifetime. You see, he knew that the teachings of God and the teachings of Freemasonry go hand in hand. So as I said in the beginning, I feel the answer to the question "What made masonry great in the first place?" is in her Principles, her Precepts and her Teachings that have turned our Brethren into great leaders and this is what made Masonry great to start with. The men listed above are only a few of those many thousands over the years that have enabled us to maintain Freemasonry's greatness.

Although our numbers are decreasing I feel that the quality of our Brethren is still there and that they will lead us into the 21st Century with the same strong love that made our Fraternity great to start with. It is definitely the Brethren with the high ideals taught in Freemasonry that has made Masonry great from the very beginning.

So you see, my Brethren, Freemasonry is Life's working tools Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. It is still a way of life and I firmly believe we will be the architects of our own destiny.