

**MASTER'S MINUTE, June 10, 2016 "What Warrants a Charter?”**

My Brothers,

Among several meanings of the word "warrant", the Standard Dictionary gives the following: "That which gives authority for some act or course; sanction; authority." It defines "charter" as: "A writing issued by the authorities of an order or society empowering certain persons to establish a branch or chapter." The two words can be effectively used interchangeably in meaning. "Warrant" is more largely used in Great Britain; "Charter" is more common in America. Both of these words to Masons in America, Scotland and Ireland mean the legalizing and empowering document issued by Grand Lodge to brethren for the formation of a new lodge. In England a warrant for a new lodge is issued by the Grand Master, not the Grand Lodge.

The first Masonic charter, so far as is known, was that issued by Prince Edwin, with the consent of his father, King Athelstane, at York, in 926 A.D. This charter, told of in numerous copies of various old Masonic Constitutions, or "The Old Charges", provided fundamental right of Masons to assemble, work, take apprentices, make their own laws, have their own organization. It is, in the thought of many, the fundamental landmark of the Craft.

But to modern Speculative Masons, the charter of a lodge is a document, setting forth the consent of Grand Lodge that certain brethren become the Master and Wardens of a new lodge, and that the new lodge is of right and of necessity must be, recognized as an equal by all other lodges, with no authority over it and its Master except Masonic law, the Grand Master and the Grand Lodge.

The charter of a lodge is so important that, according to common Masonic practice, it must be present in the lodge-room whenever a lodge is open. Proceedings had without the physical presence of the charter are generally considered null and void.

There are further etymological differences between our use of words, and their meanings as understood by our brethren of 1717. An American Mason knows charter, or warrant, to mean the *document* given by Grand Lodge, creating his own lodge and in its possession. Our early brethren at first understood no more by the word "warrant" than we understand by the word "permission"; the written document was not at first held necessary. The Grand Master, his Deputy, or some brother empowered by the Grand Master, gave *permission* to certain brethren to form a new lodge. When the Grand Master gave this authority to another, that authority was contained in a paper termed a deputation. But a deputation is not a warrant or a charter-it is merely the authority given by the Grand Master to another brother to act for him in "warranting"---giving permission to certain brethren to be a new lodge.

The charter of a lodge today is its symbol of legitimacy. It gives the power to work, to make brethren, to do all that any lodge is empowered to do. It is its attestation that it is duly constituted, dedicated and consecrated, and is one among its sisterhood of lodges, with rights equal to all other lodges, rights greater than those of no other lodge.

By the granting of a charter a Grand Lodge offers the greatest of evidence of its belief in the trustworthiness and dependability of the brethren named as the principal officers, and the successors they are to install. The charter of a lodge is its life. The privilege of asking Grand Lodge for one is great. The responsibility of Grand Lodge in giving life to a new lodge in the Masonic fraternity is heavy. The charter, as a result, becomes the most venerated and loved of Masonic document by the brethren whose Masonic life is determined by it.

Our ritual refers to operating “under the usual Masonic Restrictions”. These restrictions are different than requirements. The requirements imposed Enlightenment Lodge were unusual, but understandable and not beyond the expectations of any Lodge in Oregon. Though not every Lodge would have been able to maintain these requirements, and many active Lodges still do struggle to maintain them, we strove to establish this Lodge against great adversity, and we have done it. That does warrant some accolades. May we ever venerate and love the Charter this Lodge holds, and has established though some very challenging Masonic Labors.