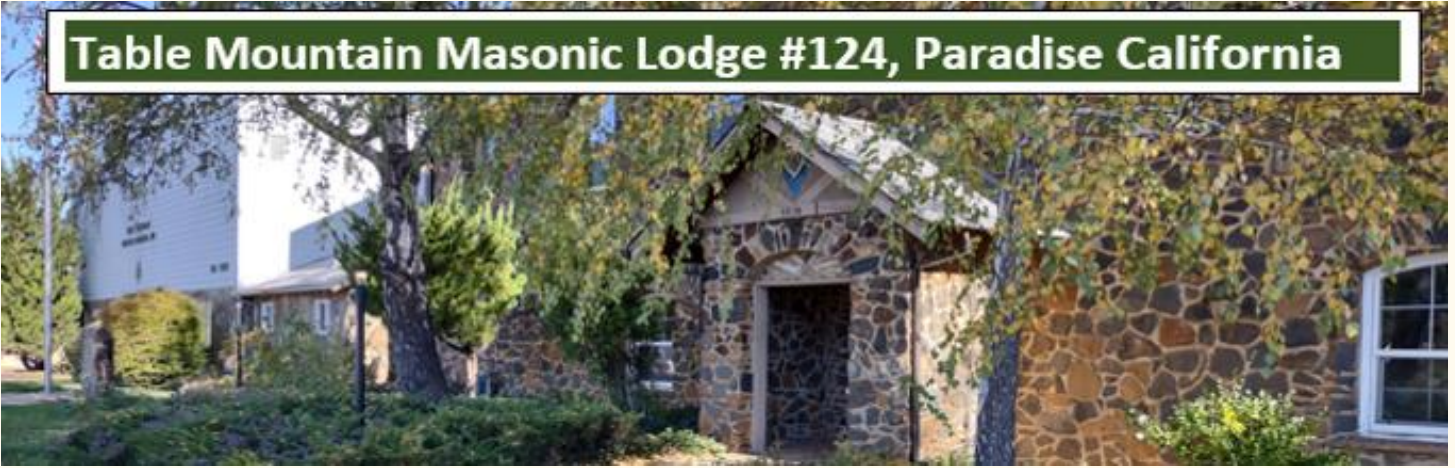


Table Mountain Masonic Lodge #124, Paradise California



August 2022 Journal and Trestleboard

Vol 2, Issue 8, Table Mountain Masonic Lodge Journal / Trestleboard

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Website: <https://lodge124.freemason.org>

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Worshipful Master's Corner

Hello Brothers and Friends,

This month we begin with the ***calendar of events***, followed by a ***summary of our last stated meeting***. Then there is a report on the recent ***Grand Master's cornerstone laying and unity day picnic***. Next there is a report on our recent ***lodge workday***, then information about the recent ***3rd degree***. Then there is the announcement of ***our future outdoor degree***.

This month we have two Masonic Formation essays. The first is ***a short guide to doing your own Masonic research***, followed by the essay ***Freemasonry: religious men or a religion?*** Then for your consideration and reflection we share some ***quotes about Freemasonry – on moral principles***.

There is also some information about ***obtaining your own custom Lodge polo shirt***, and our unique ***150 year history of table Mountain Masonic lodge***. We are also providing instructions on ***how to print your dues card*** using

your personal computer. Also, Finally, there is ***contact information*** for our lodge and other Masonic organizations. Please feel free to share this Journal / Trestleboard with other lodges.

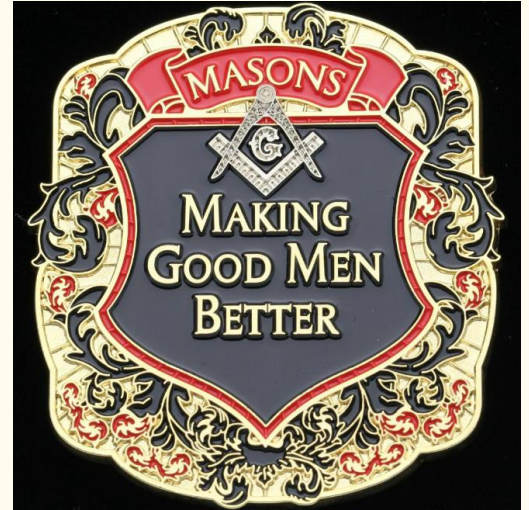
This Journal / Trestleboard is posted in our lodge's message board at the Grand Lodge website at:



Calendar of Events

Table Mountain Masonic Lodge (3 months)

- Aug 6, Saturday, Stated Meeting starting at 2 pm.
Lunch at 1 pm.
- Aug 20, Saturday, 2nd degree date, at 2 pm.
- Sept 3, Saturday, Stated Meeting starting at 2 pm.
Lunch at 1 pm.
- Sept 10, Saturday, 1st degree date, at 2 pm
- October 1, Saturday, Stated Meeting starting at 2 pm.
Lunch at 1 pm.
- October 15, Saturday, [Outdoor evening 3rd degree, at 6:30 pm](#) (also see page 10 for details).
- October 21 - 23. [Grand Lodge Annual Communication event in San Francisco.](#)



Other local area Masonic Events

- DeMolay –Aug 4 DeMolay Social meeting, Aug 18 Stated Meeting. All events at 7 pm.
Also, Sept 17 DeMolay competition in Roseville.
- Rainbow – Stated meetings Aug 1 at Chico Masonic center. Starting at 7 pm.
- Shrine (Cibara) – Sept 4 Fall River Mills Parade.
- Golden Feather Chapter Eastern Star - Sept 7 in Oroville at 7 pm, Sept 24 in Paradise at 2 pm.
- Scottish Rite – Aug 27 Sip and Paint event, Sept 20 stated meeting – all events at 5:30 pm at the Sacramento Scottish Rite center.
- Chico Leland Stanford lodge – Stated Meeting, 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm.
- Oroville Lodge – Stated Meeting, 1st Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.
- Gridley Lodge - Stated Meeting, 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 pm.
- Forbestown lodge - Stated Meeting, 1st Saturday of the month at 7 pm.
- Orland Lodge - Stated Meeting, 1st Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.

Other scheduled Community Events at the Table Mountain Masonic Center

- Paradise Rod and Gun Club – Executive meeting first Wednesday of every month at 6pm.
General membership meeting third Thursday of every month 6:30pm
- Butte County Family Health classes and counseling , Every Wednesday until December 2022, 4:30 to 9 pm.
- PG&E and contractors will be having regular work meetings in our facility.
- Intermittent use of the kitchen by various contractors, and private parties for special events. Check with Woody Nelson for available dates

Table Mountain Building/Rooms Rentals - **Woody Nelson, (530) 877-7852 or (916) 202-6942**
email: paradisefreemasons@gmail.com

Our Recent July 2022 Stated Meeting

At 1 pm, just prior to our Saturday July 2, 2022, Stated Meeting, we (the brothers and their wives) met for a classic 4th of July weekend lunch of barbecued chicken, barbecued beans, corn bread and refreshments provided by Brother Doug Campbell. Everyone enjoyed themselves and the lively conversations.

At 2 pm, Table Mountain Masonic Lodge opened on the 1st degree of Masonry, for the purpose of conducting the stated meeting business. Again, it was a highly productive and enjoyable meeting.



There was the normal business of paying bills, reading communications and we discussed several projects and ideas. Another petition for degrees was read.

Updates were given on the state of our building rentals, and some new users of the facility. This lead to discuss of both our building and lodge finances. Worshipful Woody shared that it looks like we have sufficient building rental income to pay the unexpected building insurance bill and our other costs, without using our financial investments.

Concerning the lodge's finances, while we are in a good position, we are still concerned about the upcoming annual assessment we must pay to Grand Lodge. Some of the brothers expressed dismay that Grand Lodge wants us to pay an annual assessment on delinquent brothers for at least 3 years before we can remove them from our roster. Brother Campbell agreed to explore the legality of Grand Lodge's demand, and to reach out to Grand Lodge for a change of policy. However, it was stressed that it appears we will be able to pay that bill as is, if necessary, without resorting to withdrawing any money from our investments.

Worshipful Nelson did not have an update on our future Masonic Camp Fire memorial, but Brother Gingery did assure us that approval is forthcoming to place the memorial in the park in Magalia. Worshipful Nelson promised additional information on that project for the next stated meeting.

We also reviewed the calendar of upcoming projects and degrees. The Brethren were reminded of the scheduled July 8, Grand Lodge cornerstone laying ceremony at the Chico VA clinic. They were also reminded of the Grand Master's unity day picnic scheduled for Sunday July 10 at the Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area. The Brethren were greatly encouraged to attend these events if possible.

Concerning the upcoming lodge workday scheduled for Saturday July 16, at 1pm, the local DeMolay Chapter will be assisting us. Brother Hamilton, the DeMolay chapter leader stressed the importance of him having a specific list of things the DeMolays could work on. It was again stated that we would provide some remuneration to the boys.

Concerning the upcoming 3rd degree on July 23rd, Brother Gingery informed us that his Shrine club (Cibara) had a traveling 3rd degree team, who had expressed an interest in assisting us in a future 3rd degree. The brethren were very receptive to the idea, and Brother Gingery agreed to contact them about presenting the next 3rd degree, and to see if they were interested in doing the October 15, outdoor nighttime 3rd degree, at our outdoor facility current under construction. Worshipful Nelson said that he would be prepared to have a different team do the July 23 degree if Cibara was not available.

Worshipful Nelson updated the brethren on the work and plans for the October 15, outdoor nighttime 3rd degree. He spoke of work that has been done and well as the work still to be for the outdoor lodge facility. He suggested to the brothers that we should have an early dinner at the lodge for attendees, and served by the DeMolay boys. The brothers agreed with the idea. Brother Campbell stated that he would build a webpage with information about the degree, RSVP contacts, local hotel/motel information and a map to the location. There was some discussion about who would be on the degree team. Nothing was decided, so Worshipful Nelson would continue to work on gathering a team.

The building association finance committee was then expanded upon, adding brother Brian Grandfield (PM) and brother Charlie Haggarty (PM). The lodge then voted to advance the Junior Warden \$500 to facilitate rapid reimbursement for refreshments and food.

All agreed that scheduling of events to avoiding conflicting events has been facilitated by including the DeMolay, Rainbow, Shrine and Scottish Rite event dates in our lodge calendar. Also, that the lodge is exploring how to deconflict our lodge schedule with other local lodges' events.

Brother Gingery thanked the lodge for its support of DeMolay and in particular his son Trey, the new DeMolay Master counselor. There was then a brief discussion of how we as individuals and as a lodge can support the youth orders by visiting the meeting and events.

Several brothers expressed a desire to obtain a Table Mountain Lodge polo shirt like the one that some brothers have. Brother Campbell accepted responsibility for that project. Brother Phil Howard then volunteered to provide the August stated meeting lunch. The meeting then ended in harmony and good will; a good day's work being done.



The Recent Grand Master's Cornerstone laying and Unity Family Day Picnic

On Friday July 8th, members of the Grand Lodge of California gathered at the Chico VA center to conduct a Masonic Cornerstone ceremony. The event was widely attended by brothers from many lodges, including Table Mountain Masonic Lodge in Paradise.



Then on Sunday July 10th the Grand Master's Unity Day picnic was held at the Woodson Bridge State Recreation Area, a park located along the Sacramento River in Tehama County. The event was open to all members and family members of all Masonic organizations in the North State region. Members of the Grand Lodge were in attendance, included the Grand Master and the Grand Senior Wardens. The venue was perfect and the large trees provide excellent shade for the crowd. There was good food, good drink and good comradery. This is the second year of this event, and it will be an annual event. In attendance were the members of many different Masonic lodges, and many Masonic affiliated organizations. Again, Table Mountain Masonic Lodge was well represented.



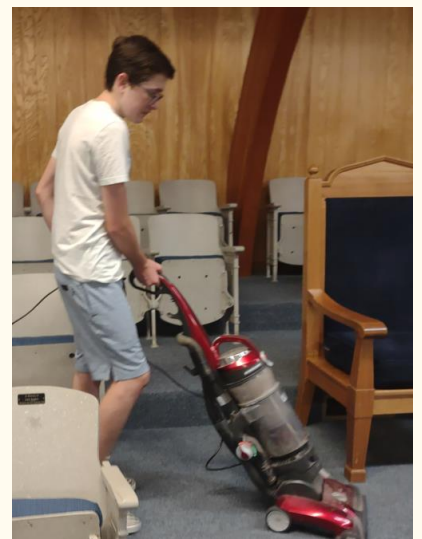
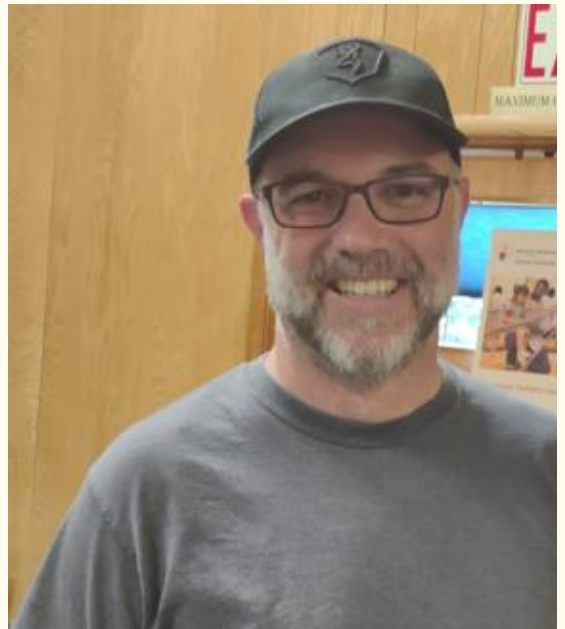
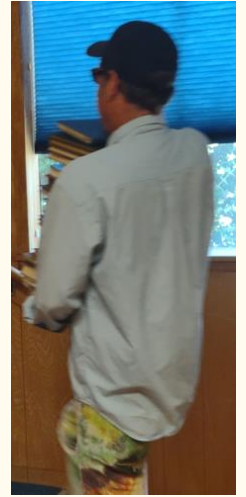


July 16, Lodge Workday

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of our local chapter of DeMolay, our recent lodge workday was a huge success. The boys, with the assistance from their adult leaders, and lodge members and some spouses, cleaned the entire lodge building. The floors were vacuumed or washed, and the restrooms and kitchen were cleaned. Additionally, the books and supplies that were in the downstairs preparation room / conference room were moved upstairs for the new library area. Also, old records were selectively moved and supplies were inventoried and stored for future use.



Table Mountain Masonic Lodge is an active supporter of DeMolay. Brothers Gingery and Hampton are both adult leaders in the Butte County chapter, and now have enough members and interested boys in the Paradise and Magalia area to consider forming a “ridge” chapter of DeMolay. By unanimous vote, the brethren of Table Mountain lodge have offered the free use of the Table Mountain Masonic building to all Masonic youth groups.



July 23, 3rd Degree (Master Mason)

On Saturday June 25, at 2 pm, Table Mountain Masonic Lodge # 124 was opened on the 3rd degree of Masonry, for the purpose of conferring the Master Mason degree on brother Steve Kane. Due to the high temperature, jackets were removed (summer tux mode).

Brother Bill Wieger PM served as the Master of the Lodge for the initiation and presented the lecture. Brother Cole Hamilton delivered the Charge. Due to many people being on vacation we were assisted by many brothers of different lodges. We greatly appreciate their assistance. The degree was beautifully done and brother Kane was very moved by the experience. Afterwards, we met downstairs for refreshments and cream pies.



Table Mountain Masonic Lodge # 124

Free and Accepted Masons
Paradise California, Chartered 1857

Risen from Ashes

Announcing the Table Mountain Masonic Lodge (Paradise CA) first annual Outdoor Evening 3rd Degree

Plan on attending this unique Outdoor Evening 3rd Degree on Saturday,
October 15, at a remote outdoor lodge site near Paradise California.

So that we will know how much food and refreshments to have, please **RSVP** by calling Woody at [\(530\) 877-7852](tel:5308777852) or emailing ParadiseFreemasons@gmail.com . Since this is an evening event, some of you might want overnight lodging. We recommend the [Best Western in Paradise](#) where we have arranged a special room rate (15% discount) for you. Ask for the Masonic event rate.

Event Schedule – Saturday Oct 15

3 pm	Social Gathering at Table Mountain Masonic lodge. (see map: from Chico , or from Oroville)
4:30 – 6 pm	Dinner available to attendees at Table Mountain Masonic Lodge (see map). The dinner will be barbecued meats and accompaniments, and will be served by DeMolay. Cost is \$10.
6:30 pm	Please be at event location by this time. Sunset is 6:30 pm. Travel to the location from the Table Mountain lodge takes approximately 30 minutes. The road is paved most of the way, then gravel for a short distance. (see map and driving instructions from Table Mountain Lodge to the event location). There will also be signs posted on the route.
7 pm	Degree begins. Since this is an outdoor evening event in a remote location, we recommend that you dress comfortably and wear appropriate footwear. It is a very short walk from the parking area to the outdoor lodge location. For those Brothers with mobility issues, we will provide transportation for them from the event parking area to the outdoor lodge location.
9 pm	Estimated completion time.

A Short Guide to doing your own Masonic Research

Many brothers have expressed an interest in doing their own Masonic research. This is a positive thing, but there are some important things to know and consider before embarking on your own research.

An extensive physical library is no longer necessary to do good research. With a computer and a good internet connection, you can access far more resources and information than even the most noted masonic authors of the past. However, to properly avail yourself of the resources, you will have to learn how to do advanced internet searches, practice selectivity, suppress your biases, understand and analyze, and finally to summarize and synthesize the often contradictory evidence, information and opinions. This will take some practice, but is very intellectually satisfying.

Research is the search for truth, and the truth is often elusive. To pursue the truth, Masonic researchers look for evidence, information and stories, that illuminate the past and/or the present. Research about the past, such as ancient history, is of little value if it does not help us understand and better function as a Freemason in the present. We learn about the past to better understand what we currently do and should be doing. We never research simply to confirm our preconceived notions. Trying to prove yourself right about something only introduces bias into the process, which can limit your ability to find and recognize significant evidence that is contrary to your pre-conceived ideas. To see the truth and to obtain a fresh understanding about the past and present requires the researcher to broaden their perspectives, and to be willing to set aside their biases, expectations and egos.

Evidence of the past consists of records and archeology which will help us start to paint a mental picture of what occurred in the past. Evidence about the past, even the recent past is always incomplete. The farther back in time that you are exploring then the more incomplete the evidence will be. Sometimes we have only bits and pieces of evidence. We can therefore never perfectly know what occurred in the past, but we may be able to obtain sufficient evidence to then apply inductive logic to draw conclusions about the past. However, such conclusions must always be subject to modification should you become aware of additional evidence that contradicts the conclusion. Therefore, the past will always have an element of mystery.

Evidence of what is happening now is best obtained by firsthand observations, secondly from recent meeting or event records, and thirdly by direct observation and discussions with participants. In my opinion, not enough time and effort is spent observing, understanding and analyzing current Masonic activities, and far too much time is spent grasping for bits of vague evidence about the past that are very nearly irrelevant to our understanding of the present.

Practicing critical analysis. Being critical is an essential part of searching for the truth. In research terms, critical analysis means carefully and intensively thinking about the supposed facts, evidence, observations, and arguments presented by the author so that you can form an unbiased judgement concerning their reliability, logic, accuracy and usefulness. Critical analysis is a form of rational skepticism used by researchers to obtain new perspectives on a subject. If you are satisfied with simply learning what others have stated is the truth, and you are willing to accept that without critical analysis, then you are not truly pursuing the truth. Almost anyone can publish misinformation on the internet. Such misinformation is often unintentionally incorrect and at other times it is purposely meant to be misleading. Try entering *Google Scholar* into your browser search function. That will take you to a search engine used by scholars and researchers to find more reliable and scholarly information sources.

Popular books, especially older books about Freemasonry generally are not reliable sources of information. Authors will often speculate using limited information from unreliable sources to develop an attractive story that will sell books. These books may even contain false footnotes and misrepresented references to make them appear more reliable. One example of this is the popular book *The Hiram Key*, which is filled with outright misrepresentations, so many in fact that the authors conclusions are not reliable. Much of the supposed information in these popular books is just the author's opinions or their pure fantasy. People are especially drawn to old books to learn what and why things happened in the past, but that is a mistake. Instead of reliable evidence, the authors of those old books mostly provided fanciful conclusions which were based on far less evidence than is available to modern researchers. Therefore, the age of a book is no guarantee of its accuracy, and its age may be more of an indication that it is likely inaccurate. Many of the most quoted Masonic authors, such as Albert Mackey, William Hutchinson and Albert Pike, published their works in the 1700s and 1800s. Those authors stated many factual inaccuracies and then based their limited conclusions on those inaccuracies. For those reasons those books should not be relied upon.

Myths and stories are passed down over time and over generations to communicate ideas and history from the often far past. Myths and stories can be useful for getting a glimpse into the past. While many myths are based on some actual event, the should never be accepted as entirely accurate. Analyze one of many Masonic stories or myths, to try to find the key lesson or event that is likely real. Then look for historical context that may indicate that the story or myth could have some basis in fact.

Magazines, such as *California Freemason magazine*, may be pleasant to read but are **not good sources of information** because they have an agenda to present, and length constraints. A recent issue of *California Freemason magazine* contained an article about the history of the relationships between California Freemasons and Freemasons in Mexico. However, because it provide it provided limited historical context, it leaves a misleading impression of the history

of Freemasonry in Mexico, and therefore there is no opportunity for the readers to learn important lessons from what happened there when the Mexican lodges of different Masonic Rites allowed themselves to be sucked into politics, religious strife and internal wars, which resulted in fraternal conflict and national suffering. In contrast, a research journal focuses on presenting a truthful picture of the past and present, warts and all. The articles in a research journal are generally longer, allowing an in-depth exploration of a subject or event.

Encyclopedias are helpful but flawed. The content of an encyclopedia is determined by a group of writers who convey only the most commonly accepted ideas. Seldom are the findings of recent research included. Sometimes an encyclopedia's definition is a good place to start, but further research should always be done to develop a deeper understanding and to obtain different viewpoints.

Multi-disciplinary research. This is just a fancy way of saying that you should not just look at the work of other Masonic writers and researchers. Instead, you should always seek to understand the **context** (social, political, religious, economics and scientific events) of what was happening when some important Masonic event happened.

Do your internet and database searches using different terms, different words and with a different sequence of the words. For example: In Masonry we refer to "point within a circle", and if you search the internet using that phrase you will primarily be drawn to Masonic websites that for the most part give the same explanation of that symbol. However, if you search by "circled dot" or "circle with a point at its center". You will be drawn to different websites, with significantly different explanations. You will discover that there are many words for that symbol, such as *circumpunct*. Pythagoras, whose is significant in Masonic legends, thought it represented the *Monad* – the point of the beginning of creation, and eternity. To others the circumpunct represents the solar system, or mankind in the universe. To the ancient Egyptians it represented the sun and deity behind it. In the Kabbalah it represents *Keter*, or absolute compassion. In Neoplatonism it symbolically represents the concept of *everything being derived from the one*. It is also the ancient Indian Brahma letter *Tha*. Just by changing the order of the phrase, your internet search will provide you with new information.

Forming research questions. A good place to start your research is by formulating a what, why, or how research question or questions. Here are some examples from my own research:

Why then was the first Grand Lodge established?

How did the leaders of four small lodges in the London area, holding their meetings in taverns, and without any known authority to do so, declare themselves the Grand Lodge, and take it upon themselves the authority to modify the ancient rituals and teachings of Freemasonry, invent new so-called landmarks and then expect allegiance and compliance from other lodges?

How did the Grand Lodge of England obtain official Royal patronage?

It was these questions and my research into the historical conflicts in England, Scotland and Ireland and the political situation of that time that eventually led me to conclude that those lodges were encouraged by the English government which encouraged the creation of a Grand Lodge so that the activities and doctrine of the existing and future Masonic lodges could be controlled, revolutionary attitudes suppressed, and loyalty oaths introduced. I would not have reached these conclusions without having those research questions to guide me.

Synthesis. *Synthesis* is the process of combining information, evidence, and the conclusions of others to develop new perspectives or ideas concerning what has happened in the past or is happening in the present. By looking at a wide variety of research findings, physical evidence and others' conclusions from a variety of disciplines (history, archology, anthropopathy and physical science) and cross-reference all that information you may discover a new perspective on what happened. In scientific language it would be "the combination of parts are greater than the sum of the parts". Synthesis goes beyond just a summation of what you found, instead it is the new understand or new knowledge you created. An example this from my own research into the rapid growth of Freemasonry in the 18th and 19th centuries. When I looked at the differences in Freemasonry in each nation, a new perspective emerged. I realized that the growth of Freemasonry was not the growth of an organization, instead it was the growth of a worldwide movement that was inextricably tied to the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, and that the diversity of Rites was proof of Freemasonry's adaptability and inclusiveness.

Sharing you work.

Share you findings with other interested Freemasons, either in lodge or via one of the many online forums or blogs. You will meet new friends and hear about their research which may help you with your future research. Try summarizing your research for a Trestleboard article or for submission to one of the many magazines or websites focused on Freemasonry. The more you write, the better your writing will be.

Recommended research projects:

The best place to start research is your own lodge and community. Some years ago, a brother of Table Mountain Masonic Lodge spent a few years compiling an in-depth 150 history of the lodge by looking at local records and history, and reviewing all 150 years of existing stated meeting records. That document now can serve as a basis for more local research about why Freemasonry was so successful in our area, even when the population was not much more than it is today. Another recommendation is to explore the reputation of the lodge and Freemasonry in your community. Such research may provide valuable insight into your lodge's activities and community. These are just a few of the many possible avenues of research available to you.

Veritas numquam perit – Truth Never Perishes

Seneca

Masonic Formation

Freemasonry: Religious Men or a Religion?

There are still many people that spread the mistaken idea that Freemasonry is a religion, or that Freemasonry is trying to supplant other religions or is hostile to religion. To address this controversy, we shall explore what Freemasonry says about its relationship to religion, then look at what constitutes a religion and then proceed to comparing the features of real religions to Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is a worldwide movement, consisting of many different and unique Rites, with philosophical and policy differences. This is really often not understood or purposely overlooked by our critics. We shall, for the most part, confine this exploration to the most common Rites of Freemasonry in the U. S., those being our Blue Lodge craft degrees (a part of the York Rite system) and the Scottish Rite.



Concerning our Blue Lodge Craft Degrees, the 1723 Constitutions of the Freemasons addressed God and Religion, as follows:

A Mason is obliged by his tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious Libertine. In ancient times Masons were charged in every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was. Yet now we think it is more expedient only to oblige them to those religious ideas in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves. Those ideas are to be good men and true, and men of honor and honesty, by whatever denominations or persuasions they may be distinguished; whereby Masonry becomes the center of union, and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must have remained at a perpetual distance.

In the above paragraph there are four important ideas expressed:

- First that a Freemason cannot be an atheist, therefore a Freemason is required to believe in God.
- Second, that Freemasons are free to belong to any religions that they wish, which is a clear statement that Freemasonry is not a replacement for religion.
- Thirdly, an early form of ***philosophia perennis***, which is the idea that members of all religions and philosophers, underneath their differences, can agree on a few basic

truths or virtues. In above paragraph those are described as “to be good men and true, and men of honor and honesty”.

- Lastly, because of the first three ideas, Freemasonry can bring people together of different faiths to work in peace and harmony, and thereby facilitate friendships between people that the religious authorities had often tried to keep separate.

Concerning the Scottish Rite there are some significant differences from the York Rite tradition. The traditional explanations of the Scottish Rite degrees are found in Albert Pike’s 1871 work “Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry”. While this book is a brilliant completion of writings and ideas, in my opinion, it is also at times rambling, inaccurate and sometimes lacks a logical flow connecting concepts and ideas. The result is that Pike’s conclusions about the relationships between various philosophical and religious symbols and ideas from around the world, are often just guess work and not convincing. In part of Pike’s explanation of the tenth degree, he wrote:

Masonry is not a religion. He that makes of it a religious belief, falsifies and denaturalizes it.... , But Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundations of all religions...

Pike then goes on to criticize established religions as having corrupted the supposed “old primitive faith”. This idea that there was a supposed old and pure universal primitive faith which is foundation of all current religions is called ***prisca theologia***, and dates from the 15th century. The reality is that researchers have overwhelming evidence that **there was never a single foundational worldwide religion or a single universal religious foundation**. It appears that Pike’s claim is not supported by real evidence. The really unfortunate reality is that the enemies of Freemasonry could claim that Pike’s ramblings are evidence that all of Freemasonry is teaching a form of primitive religion, and is hostile to established religions. From my personal experience with Scottish Rite, I have never seen any indication that it is engaged in advocating for any specific religion, or is hostile to religion in general.

Surprisingly, the definition of religion is a controversial and complicated subject among religious scholars. As a whole, the scholars have failed to agree on any one definition. The reason for this is that the some of the so-called Eastern “religions” often do not fall into our Western concept of what is a religion (Abrahamic religions - (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). To explain all this, we will look at what are currently the twelve largest so-called religions of the world that account for approximately 83% of the world population. They are (in alphabetical order) Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. These account for approximately 83% of the world’s population. I will also briefly comment about the Druze faith. There are hundreds of other current small religious and philosophical movements in the world, but focusing on the primary religious and philosophical movements is most appropriate to

fulfilling our purpose of separating the philosophies from the religions, so that we can determine the commonalities that constitute what is a religion.

The general Western perspective is that a religion is a specific practice that involves believing in and worshipping a God or gods, according to a documented set of doctrine and practices. Such a God or gods would respond to prayer or supplication and to some degree is directly involved in the human condition on earth. This general Western perspective serves as the conceptual framework for this inquiry.

Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism and Confucianism are not religions in the general western understanding of what constitutes a religion. Instead, they are sophisticated philosophies about morality, governance and customs. However, most of the western population mistakenly refers to them as religions because of their lack of familiarity with these philosophies. Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism and Confucianism each lacks a God or pantheon of Gods, and therefore are defined as non-theistic (not having a God). Specifically, Buddhism don't specifically address the issue of the existence of God because that is not its focus, instead the focus is on promulgating a form of right living. This might surprise many people. In the West it is often thought that the word Buddha is the name for the Buddhist god, or that the historical figure referred as Buddha is worshiped as a God. Neither are correct.

Taoists believe in spiritual immortality, where the spirit of the body joins the universe after death. The Tao Te Ching, or *The Way and Its Power*, is a collection of poetry and sayings from around the third and fourth centuries B.C. that guides Taoist thought and actions. However, these writing are not thought of as sent from any god, instead they are the products of respected and enlightened humans. It is similar for the followers of Confucianism. However, in Confucianism there is a reference to a supreme force (Tian) in the universe, but it is not a concept of a God the intercedes or is worshiped. In the writings of Confucianism, Tian is described as awe-inspiring forces beyond human control. Jainism specifically rejects the existence of a supreme creator, making it atheistic yet spiritually oriented.

This doesn't mean that some individuals of these groups don't believe in the existence of a God, because some do, but it is not in itself an integral part of these philosophies. Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism and Confucianism each lacks a prophet sent by a deity that is a source of divine revelation, and instead rely on the teachings of wise men. Each employs a form of logical argument to win over followers. Also, each has had followers that were also animist or belong to other groups.

Animists believe that spirits exists in both living and nonliving things in nature (trees, rocks, rivers, etc.). Animism is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and perhaps even words—as animated and alive.

Animism is the belief system of many indigenous peoples. Shinto, in modern Japan can be correctly classified as a form of Animism.

In Japan it is common for people to say they are both Buddhist and Shinto (animist). Tibetan Buddhism is also a combination of Buddhist philosophy and a form of animism with a pantheon of spirits . In the Western world there are devoted Christians and Jews that have adopted some aspects of Buddhist, Taoist or Hindu Yoga philosophy, without finding any intellectual or spiritual conflict. For these reasons, in many ways these Eastern philosophies are similar to the philosophical schools of the ancient western world; Platonism, Neoplatonism and Stoicism. Note: some of the arguments and tenets of the Platonists, Neoplatonists and the Stoics philosophers have been incorporated into the practices of modern Judaism and Christianity.

We must acknowledge that these eastern philosophies have many variations, and some followers of these philosophies do profess a faith in the existence of a one God, even though that belief is not systemic to their chosen philosophy. According to the Grand Lodge of California, sincerely professing a belief in God and the possibility of an afterlife is sufficient to become a Freemason. Therefore, in the state of California some adherents to the philosophies of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shinto can join Freemasonry. However, since Jainism specifically rejects the existence of a Creator, therefore I don't see how a follower of Jainism could ever become a Freemason.

Since we have already introduced the term non-theistic (not having a God), it is appropriate for us to introduced the terms theistic and deism. Theism is broadly defined as the believing in the existence of a Supreme Creator or a pantheon of Gods, that to some degree is actively involved in the world of humans, and will respond to prayers or supplications. The Supreme Creator's earthly involvement includes sending prophets or representatives to humankind and through them providing guidance in the form of holy writings. Theists worship God and pray to God for assistance and guidance. All Christian churches, as well as the Jewish and Muslim faiths and some other major faiths are theists. All of regular Freemasonry in the US and the UK requires an applicant to believe in God, and therefore accepts theists from whatever religion or philosophy.

Deism is the opposite of theism. Deists do not believe in a God that intervenes, or that has representatives on earth. Therefore, deists do not pray for intervention or guidance, and they do not accept the existence of any holy writings. Effectively, deism is sort of a nature spirit worship, a less primal form of Animism.

There are still ignorant or disingenuous people who falsely claim that Freemasonry is a form of deism. As any visitor to a regular Masonic lodge can plainly see, located in the center of room is the Holy Bible siting on the alter. Just like many service clubs and public government

meetings, Masons begin and end every meeting, both public and private, with a prayer to the almighty Creator to offer thanks, request guidance and ask for positive intervention. Therefore, obviously Masons are not Deists. Deists would not have a bible and would not pray such as we do. Some opponents of Freemasonry have falsely claimed that the term Great Architect or Creator of the Universe implies deism or a separate God from the Judeo/Christian/Islamic shared concept of God. Such claims are false because the terms Great Architect or Creator is just in keeping with the geometrical and architectural theme of Freemasonry, and similar terms are found in Judeo-Christian scriptures and also long represented in western Christian religious art. Also, numerous Christian theologians have used those terms to describe God.

- Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote in the *Summa Theologiae*: "God, Who is the first principle of all things, may be compared to things created "as the architect is to things designed".
- John Calvin (protestant reformation leader), in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), repeatedly calls the Christian God "the Architect of the Universe", also referring to his works as "Architecture of the Universe", and in his commentary on Psalm 19 (*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*) refers to the Christian God as the "Great Architect" or "Architect of the Universe".



God, the Divine Architect.
Illumination from *Bible moralisée*, c. 1250.

However, the irregular French family of so-called freemasons, sometimes referred to as continental freemasonry, also exist, which we do not recognize as true or regular because they do accept deists and atheists. Opponents of Freemasonry often refer to these irregular organizations to falsely paint regular Freemasonry as deists or worse.

By western standards, Zoroastrianism is clearly a religion in the same general vein as the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest organized theistic religions, with a unique theological doctrine based on the teachings of the ancient Persian prophet Zoroaster, it has a dualistic cosmology of good and evil, is monotheistic (has only one God), predicts the ultimate conquest of evil by good, is messianic (the belief in the advent of a messiah who acts as the savior of a group of people). The followers of Zoroastrianism believe in a benevolent supreme deity, free will and judgement after death, heaven, hell, angels, and demons, among other concepts similar to the Abrahamic religions. Zoroastrianism has a holy book, temples, worship services, worship rituals, pilgrimages and regular clergy, just as the Abrahamic religions. Zoroastrians are sometime known as Parsi, also spelled as Parsee. There is evidence that some Zoroastrians in India and perhaps in Iran became Freemasons. In the state of California, a Zoroastrian can become a Freemason.

Sikhism is also clearly a religion by western standards. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that originated in the late 15th century in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. It has sometimes been described as a synthesis of Islamic, Hindu and even some Buddhist teachings. Sikhism has its own unique theological doctrine. The followers of Sikhism believe in a benevolent supreme deity, free will, judgement after death, and a strict moral code of kindness and service, among other concepts similar to the Abrahamic religions. *Sikhism* too has holy books, temples, worship services, worship rituals, pilgrimages and regular clergy, just as the Abrahamic religions. There are many Sikhs that are Freemasons.

The Bahá'í faith is also a religion by western standards. Bahá'í is a relatively new religion and its followers admit to it being a synthesis of many religions. It is monotheistic and stresses the essential worth of all religions and the unity of all people. Established in the 19th century in Iran and the Middle East, it has been subjected to persecution since its inception, especially by Muslims. Bahá'í has its own unique theological doctrine. The Bahá'í followers believe in a benevolent supreme deity, free will and judgement after death, kindness and service, among other concepts taken from the Abrahamic religions. Bahá'í has holy books, temples, worship services, worship rituals, and regular clergy, just as the Abrahamic religions and Zoroastrianism. However, I do not know of any members of the Bahá'í faith that are currently Freemasons.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest, most complicated and most difficult to understand religions. Depending on who you are listening to or who you believe, it is either monotheistic

or polytheistic (the belief in multiple deities, which are usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, along with their own religious sects and rituals). While many Hindu scholars claim that there is one primary god, and that the rest are just various manifestation of the one to facilitate understanding among the less educated, most observers say that Hinduism is clearly polytheistic, at least at the level of the common people.

In Hinduism there are holy scriptures expressing various theological doctrines, but there is no one specific scripture for the entire religion. There are temples, worship services, worship rituals, and regular clergy, and some of its sects have aspects of messianism. There are Hindus that are Freemasons.

The Abrahamic (Semitic in origin) religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) are all theistic, messianic, and each have their own holy scriptures, unique theological doctrines, temples, worship services, worship rituals, and regular clergy. The members of any Abrahamic religion can become a Freemason.

The Druze are a small esoteric ethnoreligious faith of about one million followers, primarily in Syria, Israel and Lebanon. The religion of the Druze is about 1000 years old. While their faith originally developed out of Ismaili Islam, most Druze do not consider themselves Muslim. The Druze believe in only one supreme God and have their own holy books, but there are no set holy days, regular liturgy or obligations for pilgrimage that we know of. The Druze are very secretive about their practices and ceremonies.

We do know that their faith incorporates elements of Islam, Christianity, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Pythagoreanism. No one is allowed to convert to their faith; they must be born into it. Among theistic religious groups, the Druze are unique. I mention them here only because some authors have compared their doctrine and secret practices to Freemasonry. The symbol of the Druze is a five pointed star of five colors, which coincidentally bears a resemblance to the Order of Eastern Star symbol (but with a different sequence of the colors and different meanings). We are not drawing any conclusions here about any perceived or imagined relationships. However, we can say with confidence that the Druze are not Freemasons, and Freemasonry is not the Druze faith.

We have delineated between the non-theistic, which are simply philosophies (Buddhism, Confucianism, Jainism and Taoism), the animists (Shinto and Deists) and the theistic “real” religions (Baha'i, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism).



We argue that **the definitional commonalities among the real religions (as we have identified them)** are that they are all theistic, have their own unique theological doctrine, their own places of worship, worship services, worship rituals, and regular clergy. **Additionally, they promulgate themselves to the public as the one true religion.**

By these standards Freemasonry is clearly not a religion. To join Freemasonry a man must believe in the existence of God (in the theist sense) and believe in the possibility of life after death. We limit ourselves to men of faith, because without a belief in God a man is not trustworthy. Regular Freemasonry does not present or claim, in public or private, to be a religion or a replacement for religion. While each Masonic meeting is opened and closed with thanks to God, there are no worship services, no worship rituals, no wedding, no baptismal rituals and no Masonic clergy. A Masonic lodge is a place where men come to have fellowship, plan good works, work and learn. Additionally, Freemasonry does not have its own holy scriptures and does not have a separate theological doctrine. No Freemason is required to jettison their own religion's doctrine when becoming a Freemason. Instead, Freemasonry, at least as we know it in the U.S., encourages men to learn more about their own religion and to earnestly practice it, whatever it may be. Most of the Freemasons that we personally know do attend church services. While we never discuss one's religion in lodge, we are aware that our lodge brothers belong to different churches of different denominations, including Methodist, Episcopalian, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Congregationalist, Baptist and various other Christian denominations. We also know Masonic brothers at other lodges that are Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

What binds men of different religions, denominations and churches together is the Masonic philosophy, which is a synthesis of some of the common and shared moral and ethical principles of the Abrahamic religions, complimentary elements of some ancient western philosophies, symbolism commonly used in the Mediterranean world for thousands of years, Renaissance humanism, and some of the key ideas from the Age of Enlightenment.

These are summarized below:

- Faith and trust in God (by whatever name or term you wish to use to describe him).
- Brotherly love, relief, and truth.
- The cardinal virtues of Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice.
- The theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.
- Knowledge and respect of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Math, Geometry, Music and Astronomy).
- Knowledge and understanding of your Holy book (whatever it may be).
- Honor, and that a man has a responsibility to behave honorably in everything he does.
- The right of self-determination and the pursuit of happiness.

- The pursuit of knowledge obtained by means of reason, the evidence of the senses and scripture.
- The ideals of liberty, fidelity, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state.
- Support for non-sectarian quality public education
- Care of the widows and orphans
- Public service
- Continuous and lifelong self-improvement and intellectual growth
- Patriotism and good citizenship

Even a perfunctory review of Masonic philosophy should convince the honest person that Freemasonry is not a religion, does not function as a church, and is in fact supportive of its members' religious development, whatever religion or church they belong to.

Final Comments:

There are some among our Masonic brethren that have not yet found a church, temple or denomination that satisfies their spiritual needs. Despite their strong belief in God and strenuous efforts, they have been disappointed with the avenues that they have explored. They speak, with real frustration, of having observed inconsistencies, hypocrisy, intolerance, manipulation or bad conduct at different types in the churches that they explored. Because of that disappointment, they feel more comfortable with the men of faith in Freemasonry than in any church they have encountered. This does not mean that Freemasonry serves as their religion or church. Their experiences do not change the nature of Freemasonry. Such experiences with churches and denominations are reported to be increasingly common in our society at this time, and not because of Freemasonry. The decreasing membership of many churches and denominations is apparently the result of a disconnect between what people are seeking and expecting, and what churches and denominations are providing. That problem belongs to the churches and the denominations experiencing that problem, and cannot be blamed on anyone else, and cannot be solved by anyone else, and is not effectively addressed by attacking or misrepresenting Freemasonry.



Quotes about Freemasonry – for personal reflection.

Slight edited for readability:

“Most men have sentiments, but they do not have moral principles. Sentiments are merely temporary sensations, but moral principles are permanent and controlling expressions of goodness and virtue. Sentiments are general and involuntary, and do not rise to the character of a virtue. Everyone feels sentiments, they spontaneously flash up in our minds, and soon fade away. In contrast, moral principles are rules of action that shape and control our conduct; and this is why Freemasonry emphasizes moral principles and virtuous behavior.”

Albert Pike

“Always do what is right. It will gratify half of mankind and astound the other half.”

Mark Twain

“Do not be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals.”

The Holy Bible: King James Version

There can be no
compromise on moral
principles.

There are ultimately only two possible adjustments to life; one is to suit our lives to principles; the other is to suit principles to our lives. If we do not live as we think, we soon begin to think as we live. The method of adjusting moral principles to the way men live is just a perversion of the order of things.

Moral authority comes from
following universal and
timeless principles like
honesty, integrity, treating
people with respect.

Miscellaneous

Get your Table Mountain Masonic Lodge Polo Shirt

Show your pride with this attractive lodge shirt.

Embroidered with the **Table Mountain #124 logo**, this high quality, breathable 100% polyester polo shirt is highly attractive and comfortable. Only one color, graphite. The shirt is made by *Port Authority*. The embroidery is done locally. Your for just \$40.

To obtain one of these please contact brother Doug Campbell at **530-519-1695**, or email paradisefreemasons@gmail.com . Please give your name, shirt size and phone number.
Cash or check is acceptable.



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Woody Nelson, [\(530\) 877-7852](tel:5308777852) or email: paradisefreemasons@gmail.com

Table Mountain Lodge Building is located at 5934 Clark Rd, Paradise,

A beautiful and historic venue for meetings, services, and special events. We have hosted weddings, anniversaries, parties, business meetings, memorials, church and funeral services and a wide variety of community fairs and events.

Our facilities include a commercial kitchen, a large dining area, an event hall that can accommodate up to 299 guests, meeting space and plenty of parking. the Historic Lodge Room is perfect for weddings and special ceremonies.

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Our facilities are fully accessible.

For more information and a tour of our facilities, please contact Woody Nelson at **(530) 877-7852**, email: paradisefreemasons@gmail.com

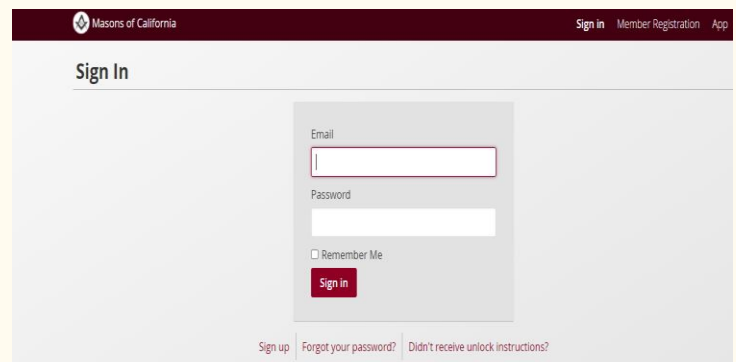
The 150 History of Table Mountain Masonic Lodge # 124

Our 150 year history of Table Mountain Lodge, covering the years 1857 thru 2008, is still available to you. This book contains many rare historical pictures, is enjoyable reading and is well indexed for research purposes. It is professionally produced, spiral bound and available to you at our cost. Unfortunately, the price of paper has dramatically increased, so these copies cost \$30 each. To obtain a copy of this important Masonic historical record, please contact our Secretary - **Brian Grandfield PM, 530-864-6323**, email: bgrandfield@gmail.com

Printing your own Dues Card

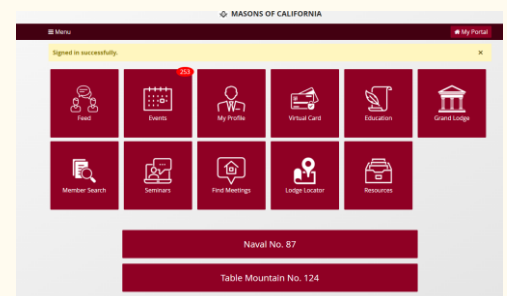
To print your dues card. Using your computer, open your browser and go to <https://freemason.org/>. In the right corner, push “member sign in”

This is the “sign up” and the “sign in” page. If you have never been to this website before, then go to “Sign up” in the lower left. It will only take you a minute to create your password. You will need your member number which is on your dues card. After that you sign in using your email and password

A screenshot of the 'Masons of California' website's 'Sign In' page. The page has a dark red header with the logo and navigation links for 'Sign in', 'Member Registration', and 'App'. The main content area is light gray and contains a 'Sign In' form with fields for 'Email' and 'Password', a 'Remember Me' checkbox, and a red 'Sign in' button. Below the form are links for 'Sign up', 'Forgot your password?', and 'Didn't receive unlock instructions?'.

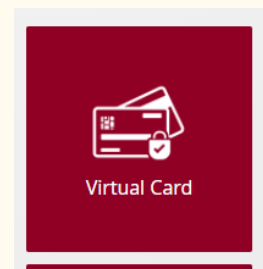
This will be the page you see after signing in

There will be a noticed posted on this page if you have not paid your dues. There will also be a link so that you can immediately pay your dues using a credit card.



To download and print your dues card, go to “Virtual Card”

Follow the very simple instructions to print your Due card. The new dues card does not have to be signed by the lodge secretary.



There is also a I Member 2.0 app for your smart phone. Find out about it at: <https://masonichome.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Intro.iMemberLOApp.pdf>

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[Table Mountain Masonic Lodge #124 - Home | Facebook](#)

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