



Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Colorado AF&AM

August 1, 2023

Volume 5 Issue 7

Tidings from the East by way of the West

Grand Lodge Scholarship Committee Awards Scholarships and Grants
.....more pictures and story next month



Victoria Clark
Sponsored by Paonia Lodge # 121
University of Northern Colorado
Nursing
\$28,000.00



Maddy Zink
Sponsored by Sterling Lodge #54
Vocational Grant
Northeastern JC studying
Cosmetology



Elanor Fugate
Sponsored by Manitou Lodge #68
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Biomedical Engineering
\$28,000.00 Scholarship



Understanding The Masonic Cipher

BY RUSS ROGERS (JR DEACON) – CENTURION LODGE #195

21 JULY 2023

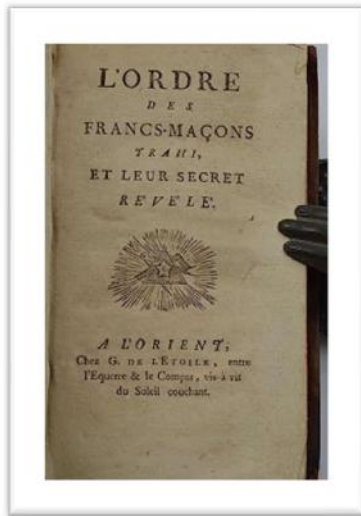
Freemasons like their secrets, but that's probably not a surprise to you. In fact, if it weren't for secrets, I think most of the world wouldn't have much suspicion about what we do in Freemasonry. Those secrets, truths, and mysteries within our craft are what drive good Masons to continue learning, growing, and improving themselves and the communities around them. We call this educational and self-improvement journey "Seeking Light".

Masonic information conveyed across generations of Freemasons was historically transmitted from mouth to ear; the spoken word. It's difficult to gain access to information before its time if it hasn't been written down. There simply weren't books, documents, or written records for many of the earliest years of the Fraternity. If nothing is written down, there's really no need to protect written information from prying eyes. But as with most things, the craft collected larger amounts of information over time, and it became untenable to depend on word of mouth to pass the data along.

If you've done much reading about Masonry you've probably heard the term *Masonic Cipher*. The Masonic Cipher is also called a "pigpen cipher"; believed to be an ancient cipher developed by Hebrew Kabbalists and used by the Knights Templar for their records and communications during the crusades. While there is a rich history of the use of this style of cipher, the use of this cipher by Freemasons is only really evidenced as early as the mid 1700s. In the United States, in the Trinity Cemetery in New York, resides the oldest known tombstone to contain the Masonic Cipher. The symbols on the tombstone also indicate the resident interred there was a Freemason.



Figure 1 - Gravestone of James Leeson. Born in 1756. Died in 1794. Freemason.



There was a published book that describes this style of "grid cipher" as early as 1685, in the book *Cryptographia*, by author Balthasar Friderici. But the first evidenced written use of the cipher by Freemasons was discovered in a French book written in 1745 titled "L'Ordre des Francs-Macon Trahi". This translates to "The Order of Freemasons Betrayed". This doesn't limit the use of the cipher to 1745 and later, necessarily, particularly if it was known to have been used prior, but this is just the earliest evidence we have of its use. We can safely say we have documented evidence this cipher has been in use for at least 338 years.

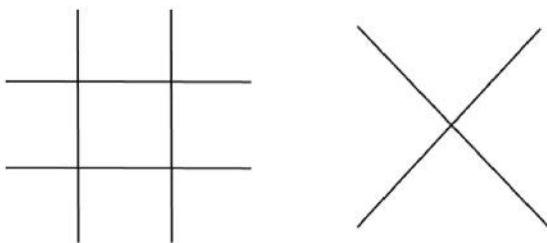
The actual origins of the cipher are lost to time but we know it was heavily used in the new world, with even George Washington's army found with documentation for using the cipher with a randomized alphabet, to increase its security.

Ciphers are a method for hiding the meaning of information. They're not terribly complex, compared to modern techniques of encryption, but they worked well enough at obscuring information. But the truth of the matter is that these ciphers' primary purpose was likely to provide a means of granting knowledge to the next level higher of degree. When a 1st degree freemason was passed to a 2nd degree, they would have been given the key to decipher text at that next level. Until then, the mason did not have sufficient "light" to see.

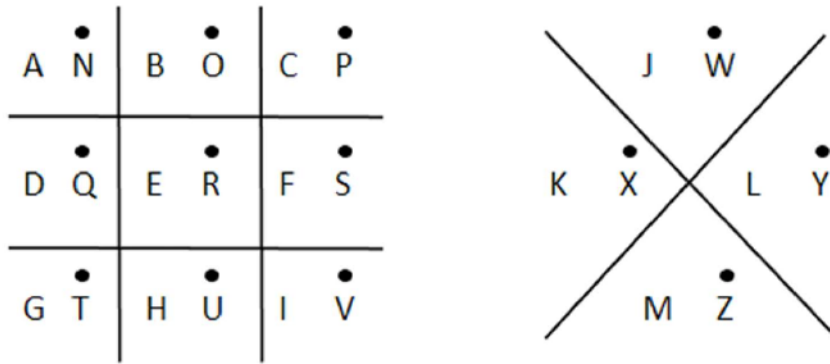
Now, just so it's said, ciphers like this are relatively easy to decipher if you know how. In fact, in 1843 Edgar Allen Poe wrote a short story for The Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper, where he won \$100 for *The Gold Bug*. Within *The Gold Bug*, Poe describes exactly how to break ciphers like the Pigpen cipher. The methodology uses something called "frequency of letters" to guess what each of the symbols in a cipher translate to.

What is the Masonic Cipher? It's a substitution cipher, where a single character or symbol represents one other single letter, regardless of the language. While many ciphers such as the Caesar Cipher rely solely on a letter-to-letter replacement, the pigpen or Masonic Cipher has taken a slightly different approach.

The Masonic cipher key consists of one or both of either a "hash mark" (resembling a tic-tac-toe board) or a Maltese Cross (a giant X).



The letters of the appropriate alphabet are dispersed across the two graphs, in order. Once a single letter sits in each open space, we begin at the next letter in the alphabet, adding a “dot” with the letter, to distinguish it from the other letter in the same space. If we do this with the English alphabet, we end up with something like this:



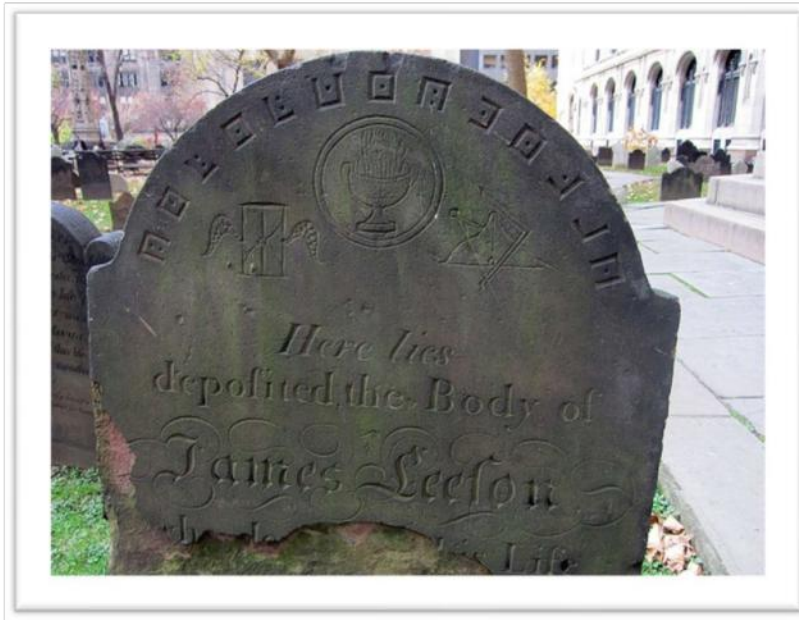
Let's write a message using this layout, so you can get a better sense of how this works. The symbol we will use for each letter of our message is constructed from the lines of the grid where our letter sits, plus the dot, if required. If I wanted to use the letter “e” in my message, the symbol I would use is a four-sided square. If I wanted to use the letter “r”, I would use the four-sided square with a dot in it. Let's decipher a message together:



To decipher the message, we look at the grids to find a section that matches. To me it looks like the Tic-Tac-Toe grid, in the center on the right side. Then we determine if there is a dot, which tells us which of the two letters in that grid we should use. In this case, there's no dot and the first letter is an “F”.

The second letter is a four-sided square with a dot in it. That looks like it belongs in the Tic-Tac-Toe grid, in the very center. The dot tells us to use the second letter in that space, which is an “R”. If we follow this same strategy until we reach the end of the message, what does it say?

And while the methods used for the pigpen cipher are similar, there will be some differences. This is demonstrated on James Leeson's headstone. The grids used are a little different. They didn't use the Maltese Cross grid, only the hash grid. And they have symbols with TWO dots this time, not just one. That means there are three letters in each section of the grid, or three separate grids altogether.

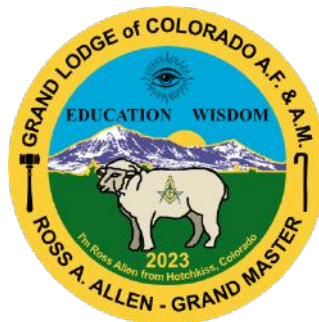


And there is one more catch! Did you know the letter “J” is a relatively modern invention? The letter was created for use in the Italian language in 1524. It had been seen prior to that during Roman times, but only as an alternative to writing the letter “I”. It wasn’t its own letter. In fact, Jesus’ name was pronounced Yeh-soos prior to the introduction of “J”. I’m not sure if the author of the message on the headstone didn’t use the letter because it wasn’t well used at the time, or if they were trying to stump folks. But they didn’t use the letter in the grids. Here’s the actual key used to make the message. Using what you’ve learned so far, what’s the message on the headstone for James Leeson?

À	ß	Ç	Ë	Ï	Ö	U	V
Ð	È	Ê	Ñ	Ô	Þ	W	X
Ġ	Ĥ	İ	Œ	Ŕ	Š	Z	-

To finish up this education, I want to answer the question I think you already have forming in your mind. “If the grids are different, how can I decipher these messages?”. This question brings us back to our friend Edgar Allen Poe. The key to breaking a substitution cipher is knowing which letter occurs most frequently in a language. In the case of English, “e” is the most occurring letter. This means the symbol you see most in a text is likely “e”. The 2nd most occurring letter is “t”. The third is “n”. You can remember this using the phrase **ETNORIAS**. An anagram for this would be “NOTARIES” or “SENORITA”. If you can guess a few of the letters, that tells you where in the grid the letters go, and all the other letters should just fall into place.

That's really it for the Masonic Cipher. It's an interesting look at our fraternity's history and how we have obscured information from the eyes of non-brethren or brothers not yet ready for the information. As you can tell, it's not a terribly secure method. The goal was never to keep information super-secret, it was to make the gradual introduction of light into a brother's life impactful and meaningful. It created veils through which brothers could not see clearly. With each transition into the next degree, those veils were removed, and light granted. Those transitions through the degrees, through the knowledge, were given a mystery that made them more meaningful to brothers.



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Calendar of Grand Lodge Events

To help your lodge plan your Official Visits please note that activities may change due to various issues that may arise.

Sat Aug 5, 2023

7am Anniversary "Budget" Communication of the Grand Lodge of Colorado

Where: 1150 Panorama Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80904, USA

Description: Registration starts at 7:00am Lodge Opens at 9:00am

Sat, Aug 12, 2023

THE LODGE OVER SIMPKINS STORE at Fairplay.

Where: 422 Hathaway Street, Fairplay, Colorado

Description: Coffee and Donuts at 9:30 AM. Lodge opens at 10:00 AM

Sun Aug 13-, 2023

All day 147th Annual Communication of Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Colorado & Jurs.

Where: Courtyard by Marriott Pueblo Downtown, 110. W. 1st Street, W City Center Dr, Pueblo, CO 81003, USA

Sat Aug 26, 2023

9:30am Cornerstone Douglas County Library

Where: 100 S Wilcox St, Castle Rock, CO 80104, USA

Description: Douglas Lodge No. 153 host Lodge.

10:45am Cornerstone for Douglas Lodge No. 153

Where: 300 Wilcox St, Castle Rock, CO 80104, USA

Description: Cornerstone for Douglas Lodge No. 153 Lunch will follow at Douglas Lodge No. 153

1:30pm Cornerstone for EPIC Campus

Where: 190 E Littleton Blvd, Littleton, CO 80121, USA

Description: Sponsored by Weston Lodge No. 22

Fri Sep 1, 2023

All day Cornerstone Roosevelt High School

Where: 616 N 2nd St, Johnstown, CO 80534, USA

Description: Host Lodge is Longs Peak Lodge No. 197.

Calendar of Grand Lodge Events (Continued)

Thu Sep 8-9, 2023

All day Grand York Rite Sessions

Where: 400 10th St, Golden, CO 80401, USA

Thu Sep 14, 2023

6pm Awards Night @ Mount Moriah No. 15

Where: 114 S 6th St, Cañon City, CO 81212, USA

Sat Sep 16, 2023

3pm Moffat Combined Court Cornerstone

Where: 1195 W Victory Way, Craig, CO 81625, USA

Description: Moffat Combined Court Cornerstone Elk Mountain Lodge No. 118 is the host Lodge. 1198 West Victory Way, Suite 200, Craig, CO 81625

Mon Sep 18, 2023

6:30pm 125th Anniversary Celebration Tejon Lodge No. 104

Where: 1150 Panorama Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80904, USA

Description: 125th Anniversary Celebration of Tejon Lodge No. 104 Agape with Brethren only Steak Dinner Short Program to Commemorate the occasion. Registration for the event is \$50.00 per person this will include a commemorative firing glass. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tejon-104-quasquicentennial-celebration-tickets-628778482367?aff=oddtcreator>

Wed Sep 27, 2023

6pm 181st Anniversary of Miner's Night at Garfield Lodge No. 50

Where: 2029 CO-66, Longmont, CO 80504, USA

Description: Miner's Night with Garfield Lodge No. 50 6:00pm - Dinner 7:00pm
- Lodge will open They will put on the Silent 3rd Degree

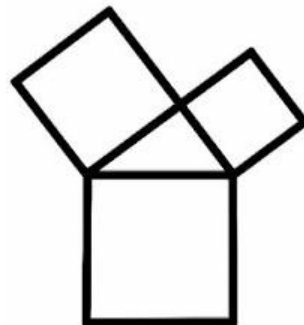
Thu Sep 28, 2023

6:30pm OV @ St. Vrain Lodge No. 23

Where: 312 Main St, Longmont, CO 80501, USA

Description: 6:30pm is dinner 7:30pm Lodge to follow

Calendar of Grand Lodge Events (Continued)



Submission Deadline

Articles and events that you want included in the newsletter are due to the Grand Master, or Grand Secretary, by the 25th of the month prior to the publication month.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Colorado Masonic Family Historical Donations Committee is looking for volunteers to do research. This research is to determine the amount of hours we've donated, the amount of money we've donated, and the number of people we've helped as a Masonic family since our inception in Colorado in 1861. This applies to every branch of the Masonic family. The goal of this research is to shed light on what we've contributed as an organization to our communities. This information will be utilized to educate both to our organizations internally and to the residents of the State of Colorado. This is a daunting task and we are looking for help. If you're interested in working on this project please contact WB Mike Brewer at mike.brewer@allurdata.com.

Colorado Masons, were you in DeMolay, from any state?

Please use the following link address from DeMolay International, and let us know where you are and what you are doing in your Masonic life:

<https://beademolay.org/update-info/>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Saturday , August 12, 2023, THE LODGE OVER SIMPKINS STORE at Fairplay. 422 Hathaway Street, Fairplay, Colorado. Coffee and Donuts at 9:30 AM. Then walk to lodge over Simkins Store at 10 AM to open lodge and do the first section of the 1st degree. Then return to lodge for lunch. After lunch return to the lodge over Simkins Store for the second and third sections and charge and other activities of the event.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Continued)

BOULDER LODGE #14

will host an **Autumnal Equinox Festive Agape September 19, 2023**

Where: Shepard of the Hills Lutheran Church - 7077 Harvest Road, Boulder, CO
80301



Presentation by Alexander Herbert



Subject: The Esterwegen Concentration Camp

At its height in 1944, the Esterwegen concentration camp housed over two thousand political prisoners from occupied Europe. Among them was a small band of Belgian Freemasons who, by chance or providence, found themselves assigned to the same barrack. In the midst of these terrible conditions, they came together to form the secret Masonic lodge *Liberté chérie*.

Years of painstaking research and translation have yielded, for the first time, a comprehensive telling of these events for English readers. It is a story that transcends personal differences and the borders of Masonic jurisdiction. This camaraderie and compassion laid the foundation for the most important work in the history of the world's oldest Fraternity.

This event is open to all Masons

Please RSVP to RWB Kevin Townley at ktownley8@gmail.com

Space is limited to 70.

Traveling Gavels

In an effort to promote visitations among lodges in the state of Colorado we are going to attempt to provide information in each newsletter about where the travelling gavels are located

There are two gavels that travel around the state. One we are going to call the **Regular Gavel** and one the **Western Slope Gavel**. Check the requirements for claiming the gavel including the number of brethren required to attend the visit.

Regular Gavel

Location: Grand Junction #173 , 2400 Consistory Court, Grand Junction, CO 80501

Meeting Dates: Meets 2nd Friday at 7:30 p.m., dark until September

Master: Craig A. Miller

Western Slope Gavel

Location: Lakewood Lodge #170 , 2460 Youngfield Street, Lakewood, CO 80215

Meeting Dates: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Master: Justin H. Kirkland

Al Kaly Southern Colorado Golf Tournament



Monday, August 14, 2023

Elmwood Golf Course

3900 Thatcher Ave

Pueblo, Colorado

8:00 a.m. (shotgun start)

4 Person Scramble

(\$90 Per Person)

Hole Sponsor (Returning): \$100

Hole Sponsor (New): \$125

**(*Hole Sponsors will have their business sign placed at a hole(s)
along the course)**

Mulligans: 3 for \$10

(Available--Putting Green/Driving Range at 7:00 a.m.)

Signup: No Later Than - August 7th

Directions:

Coming from the South:

**Pueblo Blvd to Thatcher Ave... Right onto Thatcher Ave... Golf
Course will be on your Right**

Coming from the North:

**Pueblo Blvd to Thatcher Ave... Left onto Thatcher Ave... .. Golf
Course will be on your Right**

**Questions/Concerns: Contact Joe Albo (719) 671-3780 or email:
joealbo1@msn.com**

AL KALY SHRINERS GOLF TOURNAMENT SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorship Levels Sign Up:

Returning Hole Sponsor \$100.00

Returning Hole Sponsor and 4 players \$460.00

New Hole Sponsor \$125.00

New Hole Sponsor + 4 players \$485.00

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Scottish Rite Golf Classic

August 18, 2023 - Willis Case Golf Course, Denver, CO

Denver Scottish Rite is hosting the second annual Scottish Rite Golf Classic to Support the Scottish RiteCare Foundation of Colorado and the Scottish Rite Masonic Center.



*Sign Up Today For The Scottish Rite Charity Golf Classic
Spots For Players and Sponsors Are Going FAST !!!*

Join us for a great day of golf on August 18, 2023 to support the Scottish RiteCare Foundation and the Scottish Rite Masonic Center

Forget the boring, all day long 4-person scramble! This truly unique event will feature:

- Multiple Par 3 holes and hole in one prize opportunities
- Long Drive and Closest to Pin contests
- Putting contest
- \$1,000,000 Shootout following golf
- Delicious meals, beverages
- Team prizes and player gifts

This is an important fundraiser for our organization so your participation and sponsorship will be much appreciated.

Foursome Teams are \$800 each. We expect a full field so register now. Great sponsorships available! Early Bird Registration prior to July 1st 2023 Teams at \$ 700.



Learn More and Register TODAY on ScottishRiteGolf.com

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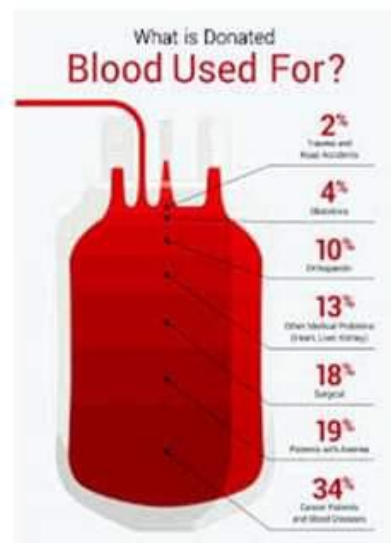


Eastern Star Masonic Retirement Community Blood Drive August 24, 2023 9am-1:30pm

2435 S Quebec St Denver, CO 80231

In our Fraternal meeting Room

To schedule an appointment call 303.363.2300



Or visit donors.vitalant.org and use blood drive code **0474**

or

Contact Pati Sawyer Boex 303.753.2160 patis@esmrc.com

If you have received a COVID-19 vaccine, you may still give blood.

Get more information on blood donation and your impact on patients in need:

[Donor Eligibility](#) | [Donation Experience](#) | [Lifesaving Stories](#) | [Minor Donor Permit](#)

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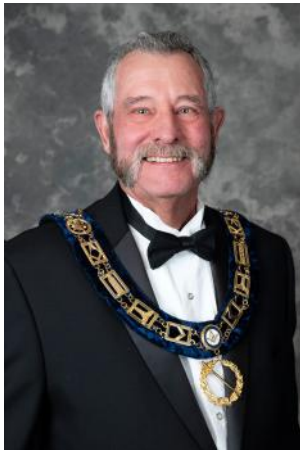
MEET YOUR GRAND LODGE OFFICERS



W.Bro. Ricky L. Benish
Grand Chaplain



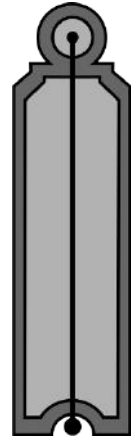
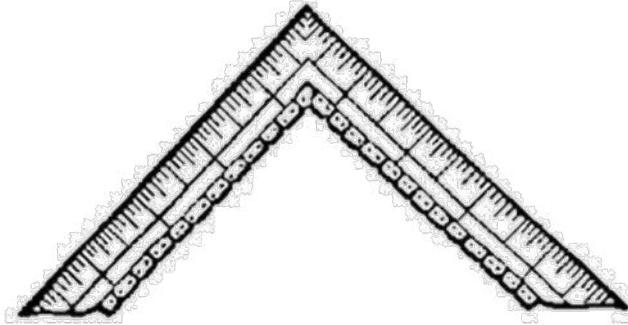
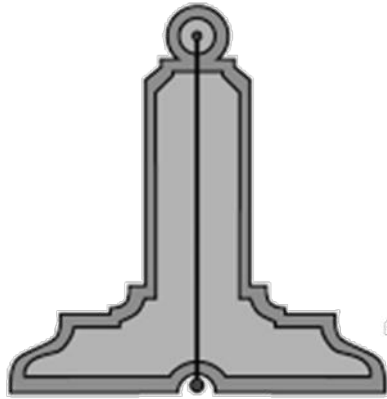
W.Bro. B. Boe Hawkins
Grand Orator



W.Bro. Richard G. Stewart
Grand Tiler



W.Bro. John P. Trainor
Grand Musician



**If your lodge is having special events or activities please send the information to the Grand Master
(grandmaster@coloradofreemasons.org)
and the Grand Secretary
(grandsecretary@coloradofreemasons.org)
so that it can be included in the next edition of the newsletter.**

Contacts

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Grand Master

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COLORADO MASONS - SPREAD THE WORD ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES ABOUT A NEW WEBSITE ABOUT MASONRY: BEAFREEMASON.ORG

The Grand Lodge Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:00pm. All are welcome as long as you are not feeling ill. For the front door please ring the door bell for access.

